

Newark Park Visit

26 October 2008

by John Bird

South West Centre members paid an autumn visit to a National Trust property set amid rolling Gloucestershire countryside, close to Wotton-under-Edge and overlooking Ozleworth Bottom. Newark Park was first built as a hunting lodge for Sir Nicholas Poyntz, a member of the court of King Henry VIII, from stone taken from the nearby, and recently dissolved Kingswood Abbey. The original lodge was finished by 1550 in time for a visit by Henry and Anne Boleyn to the Poyntz family home Acton Court a few miles away at Iron Acton.



The original Tudor east Front

In 1790 the lodge was completely remodelled for new owners by the Georgian architect James Wyatt. The original, east facing Tudor front was retained and a “new” south facing Georgian Gothic was added. Both together with some parts of the interior featured in the recent BBC drama serial *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*.

Newark Park is renowned for its views over the Gloucestershire countryside, and no modern structures such as electricity pylons, motorways, bridges or any other 20th Century buildings can be seen from the lodge.



Later West Front

Newark Park is owned by The National Trust and, as most other NT properties, closes for the Winter months. We chose 26th October therefore, the last Sunday before the winter closure, for the South West Centre visit so we could enjoy the colours of the autumn leaves and hopefully some fine Autumnal weather. However, the early part of the day was rather damp, and as we drove up onto the western edge of the Cotswold hills overnight mist clung to the higher land cutting off not only the tree tops but more distant views. Eventually the sun did break through and the air cleared sufficiently to reveal views over the landscape. I had a very satisfying drive home

Fifteen MG's (one Mazda and a Volvo) converged from different parts of the Centre more or less together. We could so easily have been disappointed by the lack of any view, but after a somewhat chilly picnic lunch the clouds parted, the sun began to shine and the mist cleared affording some spectacular views.

The opportunity to visit a wonderful example of British history proved to have a wide catchment, and attracted members ranging from a TC from Shaftesbury in Wiltshire, and TF from Cardiff, South Wales as well as a more local TD from north Gloucestershire, several MGA's and Midgets. In keeping with the spirit of an entirely social meeting there was no route to follow, no competitive element to the event at all. It was simply a chance to drive our cars to and from a pleasant location, for some for probably the last time before a winter layup. The run was well received and will almost certainly be repeated next year, and possibly in the spring, to another National Trust property. I have several possible locations in mind on both sides of the Severn Estuary, so keep watching the South West Website Calendar for details.



Fallen leaves in the gardens at Newark Park.



Enjoying a cold picnic lunch.



A wide range of MG's.



Trevor and Joy Picken with their TD.



MGA, MGB and Midgets