

Wessex Fine Art Tours

FAR HORIZONS:

THE COUNTRY HOUSES
and GARDENS

of the SHROPSHIRE MARCHES

15~21 June, 2025



Organiser:

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Pitchford Hall

FAR HORIZONS: THE COUNTRY HOUSES AND GARDENS OF THE SHROPSHIRE MARCHES

Shropshire is one of the least-known and most unspoilt and beautiful counties of England. Deep in the countryside lie wonderful and important country houses of all periods, many with inspirational gardens, and almost all rarely open to the public. Some have belonged to the same family for over 500 years, giving a wonderful sense of history and continuity. Our week's tour will reveal in privileged private visits the hidden delights and architectural and artistic treasures of this very special county.

Romantic **Pitchford Hall** is one of the finest half-timbered houses in Britain, and has a unique 300-year old treehouse. **Much Wenlock Abbey**, once the Infirmary and Prior's Lodging of Wenlock Priory, is now privately owned and filled with treasures. **Langley Chapel** is a remarkably complete survival of a C17 manorial chapel. **Soulton Hall** is a dramatic and unusual late Elizabethan house. **Acton Round** is the beau ideal of the English Baroque manor house. Here the owner, Thomas Kennedy, a brilliant craftsman and furniture designer, will also give a demonstration of the art of creating scagliola, a plasterwork technique much used in the C18, but only practised by a few artists in the world today. **Hatton Grange** is a handsome Georgian house, richly decorated with Rococo plasterwork, whilst **Weston Park** has a world collection of Old Master paintings and works of art.

Attingham Park, one of the grandest of Shropshire house, built by James Stuart, a contemporary of Robert Adam, has exquisite late C18 interiors, with a stunning Regency Picture Gallery. **Millichope** and **Willey Park** are both outstanding Regency Greek Revival houses with spectacular interiors, whilst **Cronkhill**, designed by John Nash is a delightful Italianate villa inspired by the 17th-century Italianate landscape paintings of Claude and Poussin. Nash also designed charming Tudor-Gothic **Longner Hall** (provisional).

We shall see important **C18 parks** in 'Capability' Brown's landscape at **Weston Park**, and Humphry Repton's magnificent landscape at **Attingham**. **Hatton Grange** has a David Austin Rose Garden and **Millichope Park** is a C19 romantic Picturesque landscape, with a sublime approach through a deep rocky gorge. Finally **Wollerton Old Hall** is a world-class example of a 21st-century English garden. Inspirational in design and plantsmanship, it was runner-up in Christie's Historic Houses Garden of the Year, 2020.



Cronkhill



Wollerton Old Hall Hall



Attingham



Attingham Picture Gallery



Acton Round



Benthall



Weston Park



Pitchford Hall

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Sun June 15 The programme will begin in the late afternoon (approx. 4pm) at Mercure**** Shrewsbury Albrighton Hotel and Spa.

Mon June 16 We visit two contrasting houses: **Willey Hall*** (*Lord Forester*), the magnificent Grecian masterpiece of Lewis Wyatt (built 1813-20), with splendid interiors, set in an arcadian landscape. Romantic and secluded **Pitchford Hall*** (*Rowena Colthurst*) is considered the finest half-timbered Elizabethan house in Britain and was for 500 years the ancestral home of the Colthurst family.

Tues June 17 Hatton Grange* (*Mr and Mrs Rupert Kenyon-Slaney*), built 1764-8, is a handsome Georgian house by the important Shrewsbury architect, Thomas Pritchard. Still owned by the same family, it has fine Rococo interiors and beautiful gardens.

Afternoon visit to **Weston Park** (*Weston Park Foundation*), the ancestral home of the Earls of Bradford, with a world-class collection of paintings, furniture, silver and china, set in a 1000 acre 'Capability' Brown park with numerous 'follies'.

Wed June 18 Wollerton Old Hall Gardens (*Lesley Jenkins*). Designed by the owner, this is one of the most magical and romantic of English gardens. Lunch in the charming old town of **Much Wenlock** with its wealth of historic buildings. A visit to the tranquil ruins of **Much Wenlock Mediaeval Priory** (*English Heritage*) will be followed by the privately owned **Wenlock Abbey*** (*Louis de Wet Foundation*), once the infirmary and Prior's Lodging of Wenlock Priory, which have survived extraordinarily unaltered to this day, and form a wonderful ensemble. The atmospheric and beautiful interior contains many of Louis de Wet's treasures.

Thurs June 19 Acton Round* (*Thomas and Louisa Kennedy*) is a beautiful early C18 house with fascinating and eclectic contents. Thomas Kennedy, designer and craftsman, will also demonstrate the art of creating scagliola. **Soulton Hall*** (*John and Ann Ashton*) is a dramatic late Elizabethan house of fascinating plan, constructed in elaborate codes. It has been the home of the Ashton family for 450 years. Built in 1588 by Sir Rowland Hill, publisher of the controversial Protestant Geneva Bible, it contains a concealed Chapel and priest's hide.

Fri June 20 Approached through a romantic ravine and beautifully landscaped grounds, Grecian **Millichope Park*** (*Frank and Toni Bury*), built 1837-40, stands Parthenon-like above a lake. **Langley Chapel** (*English Heritage*) close by is a very rare example of an early C17 arrangement of a church interior, whilst **Stokesay Castle** (*English Heritage*) is one of the finest surviving fortified manor houses in England.

Sat June 21 Attingham Park (*National Trust*) is a great classical house with fine late C18 and Regency interiors, whilst **Cronkhill** (*National Trust*, but rarely accessible), is an early C19 Italianate villa by the Regency architect John Nash, with superb views over the Shropshire landscape.

*All houses marked with an * denote private visits, where we will be guided by the owner*

TOUR LEADER

The tour will be led by **Barbara Peacock MA FRSA**, founder of Wessex Fine Art and Architecture Tours in 1982. She has since led numerous successful tours in Britain and overseas. Her particular interest is the country house and its associated historic landscape. She lectures internationally for organisations such as the National Trust, the Art Fund and The Arts Society.



PRACTICALITIES

The **** Mercure Shrewsbury Albrighton Hotel and Spa will be the base for our tour. Situated in countryside about 2 miles to the NW of Shrewsbury, the core of the building is a late C17 house, with period features. Panelled rooms now form the attractive restaurant, and a splendid late 17th century staircase leads to bedrooms on the upper floors. Since becoming a hotel in 1985, the house has been extended to provide many more bedrooms and a spa. All the bedrooms are spacious and comfortable. The hotel is peaceful and set in attractive landscaped grounds.

The nearest station is Shrewsbury. Participants coming by train will be returned to the station by coach at the end of the tour, which will finish in the mid afternoon of June 20, 2025. Taxis can be arranged for the day of arrival.

The 7-day tour will cost **£2695 per person** in a twin-bedded or double room, **£320 single supplement**. This will include accommodation B/B/D for 6 nights in the Mercure Albrighton****, three lunches, most coffees or teas, all coach transport, entrance fees and gratuities, and detailed course notes.

Please note: The course is limited to 20-22 participants

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

CANCELLATION

Charges are as follows:

56 days or more before start of course - loss of deposit

55-43 days before start of course - 50% of the total

42-29 days before start of course - 60% of the total

28-22 days before start of course - 85% of the total

21-0 days before start of course - 100% of the total

It is a condition of booking that you arrange travel insurance to protect yourself against loss. In the unlikely event of cancellation by WFASC we undertake to refund you in full within 14 days all monies paid to us in course fees.



Albrighton Hotel

BOOKING FORM

(PLEASE USE **BLOCK LETTERS**)

I/We wish to attend the 2025 Summer Tour and would like to reserve accommodation in a **single/shared** room.

I/we enclose a cheque for **£300 per person** (a non-returnable deposit) made payable to: **WESSEX FINE ART STUDY COURSES**,

OR, I/we am/are paying £300 per person into the following account: Wessex Fine Art Study Courses, Account no.76898668 Sort Code: 30-99-71

Reservations should be sent to: WFASC Enrolments, Church Cottage, Beauworth, Alresford, Hants SO24 0PA or scanned and emailed to: wfasc-tours@wfasc.co.uk

[1] Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other (please include first name)

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Address:

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Postcode:..... Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Signature:

Date:.....

[2] Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Other (please include first name)

.....

Address:

.....

Postcode:..... Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Signature:

Date:.....

How did you hear about this course?

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Please indicate if you wish to receive details of future courses and to be on our mailing list: Yes No

Please indicate if you are a member of: The National Trust
English Heritage The Art Fund Historic Houses

More photographs at www.wfasc.co.uk



In addition to this all-inclusive tour, a 40+ page, fully-illustrated Tour Guide will be provided describing the historical background for each of the visits, supported by plans of the buildings and describing transitions through the ages.



If you would like to be added to the waiting list, or receive information about future tours please email Barbara Peacock on **wfasc-tours@wfasc.co.uk** or complete and return the form below.

Please make contact if you would like to hear more about talks and lectures for your local society or group.

Stay in touch also by viewing the website at **www.wfasc.co.uk**

Name (*title & first name*)

Address:

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Postcode:.....

Telephone:.....

Email:.....

Your area of interest:

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