REPORTS ON 1993 SUMMER PROGRAMME

During 1993 a number of excursions were arranged by Neil Anderson (Excusion Secretary). Below are two reports on outings submitted for the Camertonia.

NEWARK PARK Wednesday 11 August 1993

In August members went to Newark Park, a National Trust property that could be visited by arrangement with the American tenant who is restoring the property. Mr Parsons being away, we were shown round by his Secretary, Michael Claydon. He described the ways in which the house had been extended, pointing out the features that revealed how this had been carried out by successive owners. Excavations proved that the original entrance had been through a cobbled courtyard, with stables on the north-east side of the house, which is now covered with the principle lawn and flower beds. The main entrance to the house is now on the north-west side and leads through a spacious hall with the original building of the

Poyntz family on the left. Their Great Hall later divided into two rooms with the upper part reached by a new (but by now old) staircase making two more rooms. Around 1790 the architect James Wyatt built onto the south-west side to make a square house with castellations. It was used as a Hunting Lodge. Ladies could survey the neighbourhood and the progress of a hunt from a superb vantage point, the house being built on the edge of a cliff.

The rooms on the south-east side overlooked the edge of the cliff only three yards away. Much of the stone for the building had been quarried from the cliff. It was possible to walk out onto the strip of lawn above the cliff from the small room right opposite the main entrance hall.

Mr Claydon showed us the collection of toys and household artefacts with which Mr Parsons is furnishing the rooms, and the museum collection in the large area on the top floor. The furnishing in the smallest bedroom took us back to an earlier century.

After seeing the cellars containing items awaiting restoration we were able to enjoy a walk with the peacocks in the gardens by the house. Some of us ventured down the path that led to the wild garden below the cliff before we returned to explore the rose garden and herbaceous borders beyond the gravel courtyard opposite the main entrance. The visit to Newark Park was the most successful of our 1993 excursions, it had been a most enjoyable day.

BARBURY CASTLE ON THE MARLBOROUGH DOWNS.

(and walk with our late President and Chairman Peter Greening)

We visited Barbury Castle and Country Park on Thursday 9 September 1993, arriving at 11am. The weather was overcast, with rain threatening. However, we had a reasonable turnout of members, about a dozen in all.

Neil Anderson, our Excursion Secretary, proposed that we should first look around the fort, return to our transport, have lunch, then either go for walks or look at other points of interest in the near vicinity. We duly surveyed the fort, which was of iron age period and covered an area of some 10 acres. The fort was of single ditch defence. Our tour complete we returned to our vehicles.

During lunch it was agreed that Peter Greening and myself would do a 3-5 mile walk and the others of the group would look at other features of interest. Regrettably I did not have adequate clothing for a cross-country walk, however, being swept along by Peter's enthusiasm, we set out. Our journey took us down hill following the ridgeway then descending into the valley to Ogbourne St Andrew. We were passed by a few people on horseback and as the going became heavier we realised this was probably the best way of travelling in these conditions. The rain stated and turned to hail, unfortunately without waterproofs, I quickly became very wet. At the bottom of the hill we took a bridle path to the village. By now my new training shoes and trousers were soaked and covered in mud and I realised I had made a mistake making this journey without suitable clothing. The bridle path was a sea of mud, very deep in places. We were passed by more people on horseback and a 4x4 Landrover but nowhere did we see anyone on foot.

It was with some relief that we reached the picturesque village of Ogbourne St Andrew. Peter suggested we should look at the church. Whilst we looking around the outside of the church we approached by a man. He claimed to be the church warden and started asking questions. I realised that he was suspicious of us - creeping around the church wet and dirty and looking for a way in. Could we be looking for the church silver? Having convinced him we were bone fide society members, the atmosphere became more congenial.

After resting a while we embarked on the final leg of our journey which took us up hill to the gallops. The weather became brighter but the trackway nevertheless was still very heavy. (I glimpsed Peter's wry smile - me in my trainers and inadequate attire, he in his wellingtons and waterproofs.) His stamina was quite remarkable: he kept up a brisk stride all the time, his military background and fitness quite evident. Though his junior by some 25 years I was grateful for our occasional stops to look at the lovely views. It was as we approached the upper part of the ridgeway that we realised we had already been gone some 2 hours and became concerned that the others would be waiting for us back at the car park. When we eventually reached it, we had been gone some 2-3 hours. Neil, Sue Langdon, her Mother and my Mother had been waiting patiently in the cars.

By David Higgins