

# Secret Shropshire

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**Monday 23 to  
Thursday 26 October 2017**

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A tour of Shropshire's finest private houses and collections curated by the RA Friends' Events team for the Academy's Friends and Patrons



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**Weston Park**  
Weston-under-Lizard, Shropshire

We are delighted to offer this very special, all-inclusive, four-day tour of some of Shropshire's most exceptional privately-owned houses.

The RA Friends' tours often visit stately homes to view their magnificent state rooms and painting collections, and then sadly have to leave. However on this tour, Friends will actually be staying and dining in a beautiful stately home, Weston Park, surrounded by a remarkable collection of paintings, furniture, ceramics and tapestries.

*"You will find Weston beautiful. I marvel whether I shall ever see the like again! It is a place that always pleased me."*

– Benjamin Disraeli, 8th June 1878





Our first-class accommodation will be in the 28 individually decorated and designed bedrooms at Weston Park, which include all the amenities you would expect of a luxury hotel, but which also contain family heirlooms from Weston Park's original owners, antique furniture and period design features, that you wouldn't. Every room has either an en-suite or private bathroom and offers breath-taking views of the formal gardens, 'Capability' Brown Parkland or the Temple of Diana.

Weston Park passed by family descent from the first owners in the medieval period, through to 1986 when the 7th and present Earl of Bradford gifted the house, collections and 1000 acres of Capability Brown parkland to the nation in lieu of tax. The House is now vested in the Weston Park Foundation, an independent educational and conservation charity, and it will be home to the group for the duration of the visit.

Of the earlier house little is known, except for the depiction of a gabled structure on an estate map of the 1650s and some evidence of timber framed construction that has been discovered in parts of the present House. Rebuilt by the architect William Taylor for Lady Wilbraham in 1671, the House had further Palladian alterations by James Paine in the 1760s for Sir Henry Bridgeman and then was further added to by William Burn and John MacVicar Anderson for the 3rd Earl of Bradford in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Since 1735 the House has held a remarkable collection of paintings assembled by Francis Newport, 1st Earl of Bradford, of the first creation, and his son Thomas, Baron Torrington. Francis at one time owned van Dyck's celebrated self-portrait and the collection still at Weston Park includes judicious purchases from a sale by Sir Peter Lely, along with other sources. As a result, the Dining Room contains a splendid array of six van Dycks including his pre-eminent portraits of Sir Thomas Hanmer and Thomas Killigrew. Later generations have added to the collection with paintings to admire, including works by Gainsborough, Reynolds, Constable, and Stubbs.

Weston Park's decorative art collections are of equal measure to its paintings, with furniture by Chippendale, Gillows, Morel & Hughes and numerous French makers, outstanding silver from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, Oriental and European ceramics, and Gobelin tapestries showing the lives and loves of the Roman gods and goddesses.

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## Monday 23 October 2017

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**12.45pm**

### Meet RA representatives at Wolverhampton railway station.

Our local coach will be waiting to load guests' luggage, after which we will travel half an hour to Weston Park which will be our base for the three nights of our stay.

On arrival at Weston Park Friends will check into their rooms and after a little time to freshen up we will meet in the Library for an introductory illustrated talk about the house given by Gareth Williams, the Curator and Head of Learning to the Weston Park Foundation.

Following the short talk we will have afternoon tea, after which Gareth will lead a tour of the art collection located in the magnificent rooms on the ground floor of the House and give us a brief orientation of where dinner and breakfast will be served.

After some time to freshen up, pre-dinner drinks will be available in the drawing room and dinner will be served in The Orangery.

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## Tuesday 24 October 2017

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### Willey Park and Burwarton House



Today we are privileged to have tours at two private houses that Gareth has organised for the Friends of the Royal Academy, whose owners only welcome groups very rarely, but are delighted to receive the RA Friends for this special tour. Gareth is familiar with the collections in all the houses we are visiting and will join us on these tours, which will be led by the owners of the properties.

In the morning we visit **Willey Park**, the home of the 9th Lord and Lady Forester.

Willey Park is the creation of Cecil Weld-Forester, 1st Baron Forester and his wife Lady Katherine Manners, a daughter of the 4th Duke & Duchess of Rutland, for whom the house was built on a new site in 1813-20.

A richly grand neo-classical mansion of finely cut Grinshill stone, the house stands boldly in a vast, well-timbered landscaped park gazing down over a chain of lakes. With its noble Corinthian porte-cochere and, around the corner, a domed hemispherical full height

bow ringed by further Corinthian columns, the house is the masterpiece of the architect Lewis Wyatt (1777-1853).

Its interiors are breathtakingly grand, the main rooms of Drawing Room, Dining Room, Library, Morning Room and Conservatory all arranged around a galleried top-lit hall which terminates in a sweeping pair of staircases each with brass balustrade.

Little altered since the date of its completion, the house contains much of its original furniture and an excellent collection of old masters, sporting art and family portraits – many by Royal Academicians.

The tour and lunch following will be hosted by the present Lord and Lady Forester, whose family still own and live in the property.

After lunch we travel half an hour to Burwarton House, home of Viscount and Viscountess Boyne.





**Burwarton House** (or Burwarton Hall) sits within a splendidly wooded park on the slopes of the Brown Clee Hill – the highest peak in England south of the Pennines – and must be one of the highest country houses in Britain. The estate has passed by inheritance from the Holland family, who owned the estate from the fifteenth century, to the Baugh family in the early seventeenth century. In the late eighteenth century Harriet Baugh married Gustavus, 6th Viscount Boyne and carried Burwarton to the Boyne family, whose seat the house remains. Our hosts will be the 11th Viscount & Viscountess Boyne.

In 1835-9 Burwarton was rebuilt as an Italianate country house by the architect Anthony Salvin and was then further added to by Salvin in the 1870s. The house continued to expand with further extensions added in 1900 and then again in 1922. The twentieth century, though, caught up with the house dramatically and in 1956-7 it was radically reduced in size to the more manageable house that it is today.

Recently altered, with a newly added portico, Burwarton retains the great library with a handsome marble chimneypiece brought from the Boyne's former seat in Co. Durham at Brancepeth Castle. The interiors provide a fitting setting for the family's art collection which has been acquired by several different generations of the family. The 2nd Viscount was a noted patron of the artist William Hogarth and a number of the artist's works remain in the collection, along with Nazzari's conversation piece of the 2nd Viscount's ship cabin and companions during his Grand Tour and several old master works.

Following our tour of Burwarton House, tea and homemade cake will be served before we travel back to Weston Park for time to refresh ourselves before a relaxed dinner, which will be served in The Granary.

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## Wednesday 25 October 2017

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### Chillington Hall and Upton Cresset



Today we visit two houses on very different scales.

**Chillington Hall** is a wonderful Georgian country house near Brewood, Staffordshire, only four miles northwest of Wolverhampton. Chillington has a Tudor shell, but the Grade I listed house we see today was designed by Francis Smith in 1724, with a 1785 redesign by Sir John Soane. The park and lake were landscaped by Capability Brown.

Chillington Hall has been the home of the Giffards since 1178, the present house is the third on the site. In the 12th century there was a stone castle, a small corner of which can be seen in the cellars of the present house. This house was replaced in the 16th century by Sir John Giffard, who was High Sheriff of Staffordshire no less than five times. Peter Giffard began the third building by demolishing and replacing part of Sir John's Tudor house in 1724.

The present hall is a red brick, stone porticoed Palladian mansion containing original Baroque rooms and a magnificent central saloon by Soane. Much work has been done to the interiors of the House by the present owners, John and Crescent Giffard, to restore Soane's original vision. The central Saloon has seen its great lantern fully restored and the room repainted in a pink shown in Soane's original drawings. The Entrance Hall, with its grand screen of unfluted Ionic columns,

has also seen inappropriate post War colours yield to the gentle tones of Soane's pink. Portraits in the house include two exquisite family portraits by Batoni that recall the Grand Tours of father and then son, Thomas Giffard and his namesake.

From 1759 onwards, Capability Brown designed the landscape park and lake to the south of the house. Chillington's park contains one of Brown's largest lakes, which he created with a dam. The garden also encompasses remarkable park buildings including a bridge by James Paine and a temple attributed to Sir John Soane - as well as a Grecian temple, purportedly designed by Robert Adam.

The Giffards will be away at the time of the visit, but Gareth will be leading our tour of Chillington, which will focus on Soane's extraordinary interior architectural scheme.

After departing Chillington we will travel for approximately 45 minutes, arriving at Upton Cressett where we will have lunch before embarking on our tour.





**Upton Cressett** is a sixteenth century moated Elizabethan manor with turreted gatehouse set in remote and beautiful Shropshire countryside near the market town of Bridgnorth. Located next to a fine Norman church, Upton Cressett's gatehouse, featuring original oak spiral staircase and rare 16th century ornamental plasterwork, has been likened to Sissinghurst Tower. The hall was a royalist stronghold in the Civil war; Sir Francis Cressett was Treasurer to Charles I and attempted to rescue the king from Carisbrooke Castle in 1648. The ill-fated Prince Rupert also stayed in Upton Cressett's gatehouse.

The property was described as 'remarkable' by Nikolaus Pevsner and is included in Simon Jenkins' 'England's Thousand Best Houses' who described the gatehouse as an 'Elizabethan gem'. The hall fell into a very sad state of disrepair, leading it to be put on SPAB's 'Buildings at Risk' register in the 1950s and 60s. The Cash family purchased the hall in 1969, and it was only when Bill and Biddy Cash began renovation in 1970 that the Hall was removed from the register. Various phases of restoration have continued since 1970-1973 concluding with a major three-year refurbishment from 2008 until 2011. After the extensive renovation work, Upton Cressett Hall was upgraded to Grade 1 listed designation status by English Heritage in 2012 along with the Gatehouse and the Norman church of St. Michael.

Upton Cressett is now owned by Bill and Biddy's son William and his wife Laura, who commissioned renowned artist Adam Dant to undertake the vibrant and authentic interior redecoration. Many of Dant's works have been showcased in the RA's Summer Exhibition, and are held in major institution and individual art collections, including HRH The Prince of Wales and the Government Art Collection. Dant's painstaking restoration was undertaken using only original Elizabethan techniques and materials, including sourcing pigments using plants from Upton Cressett's grounds.

William Cash and Lady Laura will lead our tour, focusing on the extraordinary restoration project. We are also fortunate that Adam Dant will join us to discuss his work in creating the wonderful interiors we see today.

We return to Weston Park where we have time to pack and relax before our final celebratory dinner in the magnificent Dining Room surrounded by a splendid array of paintings including six van Dycks together with works by Sir Peter Lely and Robert Edge Pine.



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## Thursday 26 October

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### Oakly Park

Photo © Paul Barker/Country life Picture Library



Today we need to have an early start following breakfast and checking out to depart at 08.45 to drive to **Oakly Park**, the home of Viscount and Viscountess Windsor, which is situated near Ludlow.

Our tour will be hosted and led by Lord Windsor himself who is delighted to welcome the Friends of the Royal Academy.

Oakly Park is situated in an oak-studded park on the banks of the River Teme near Ludlow. The mansion consists of an early eighteenth-century house with alterations made mid-century. It was then extensively enlarged and remodelled between 1819-1836 by Charles Robert Cockerell RA. Cockerell's surviving works are few and far between; Oakly Park is the only substantial remaining example of Cockerell's domestic architecture.

In his book *The Architecture of Northern England*, the architectural historian John Martin Robinson describes a tour of the interior of Oakly Park as 'a magnificent spacial experience,' as Friends will see for themselves when Lord Windsor shows us around his very special home. We begin in the magnificent Staircase Hall with its wonderful sense of space created by the use of flat Grecian coffering around a central dome. We

also visit the Library, designed by Cockerell in 1821 and considered his finest surviving domestic interior, and the Dining Room and the Drawing Room which contains a wealth of portraits, fine furniture and items from the porcelain collection.

Highlights of the painting collection include portraits by Pompeo Batoni, Nathaniel Dance, Sir John Lavery RA, Sir Peter Lely and Sir Thomas Lawrence PRA. Additional works by artists such as Claude Lorraine and Benjamin West PRA sit alongside more contemporary acquisitions which include sketches by Tracey Emin RA.

Following our tour of Oakly Park we drive a short distance to The Ludlow Kitchen, also owned by Lord Windsor's estate, where we have a farewell two-course lunch with wine. There will be time to browse in the adjacent award-winning farm shop before we board the coach to drive to Worcester Shrub Hill railway station.

We will arrive at Worcester Shrub Hill station in time to catch the 16.05 train to London Paddington which is due to arrive at 18.29. (Train times are correct at the time of publication but should be checked again nearer the time of booking any tickets).