



To offer friendship through social and educational activities

EUC Exeter Branch Newsletter

Number 55

<http://eucexeterbranch.org.uk>

June 2023

July to September 2023

Future Events

Monday 3 July 2023 at 11 s.m.: Annual General Meeting

We are holding our AGM as an in-person event at our new meeting place – The Stables in Cowley. We shall receive reports from our secretary and treasurer, elect new officers and committee for the coming year, and discuss possible activities to be included in the programme for the next 12 months. Please inform the secretary of your intention to attend. We shall stay on for lunch afterwards.

Wednesday 19 July 2023: Visit to Ugbrooke House and Gardens



Source: Wikipedia

After several false starts and forced cancellations, our long-awaited visit to Ugbrooke House and Gardens is finally taking place. Ugbrooke is steeped in centuries of history, with stunning architecture and landscaping. It featured in the Domesday Book of 1086, and it has been the Clifford family home for almost 500 years. The house was remodelled by Robert Adam, and the gardens by Capability Brown.

Date: Wednesday 19 July 2023

Event: Visit to Ugbrooke House and Garden, Chudleigh

Meet: Gates open at 12 noon. Meet in the Orangery Tearoom at 12 for a light lunch, or bring your own picnic to enjoy in the grounds.

Cost of admission: £10. Ugbrooke provides free house tours for its visitors. We are booked in for the 2.15 public tour.

Address: Ugbrooke House, Ugbrooke, Chudleigh, Newton Abbot TQ13 0AD www.ugbrooke.co.uk. There is wheelchair access to the ground floor of the house, but mobility scooters are not permitted. Please note that there is no lift in Ugbrooke House. Well-behaved dogs (if on a lead) are allowed in the gardens.

Transport: **By car:** From Exeter, take the A38, then the A380 towards Newton Abbot. Turn off at the slip road at Olchard Ideford Dip. Turn left at the junction and continue for 1 km to Ugbrooke. Please offer car share.

By bus: Bus travel is not recommended. Car share if possible. If going by bus, take the No. 7 bus for Totnes from Exeter Bus Station (Stand 1) at 10.45. Get out at Olchard, Ideford Dip at 11.18 (the stop is 10 minutes after the Kennford Gissons Inn stop). Walk down the slip road, and turn left at the junction. Continue for 1 km to Ugbrooke. Return buses at 3.57, 4.57, 5.55 and 6.55.

To book: Contact Frances Canning by 12 July on 01392 209542 or at francesandedward@blueyonder.co.uk.

Monday 7 August 2023 at 11 a.m.: EUC Committee Meeting

The elected officers and committee will meet in the upstairs room at The Stables, Cowley, to plan the programme for the coming year. Those at the meeting, and any other members who choose to come, will then have lunch downstairs at about 12.30 p.m.

Tuesday 12 September 2023: Visit to Torre Abbey

Torre Abbey is Torbay's most historic building, dating back to its monastic foundation in 1196, and set within 18 acres of garden and parkland. It houses an impressive collection of 600 works of art, while the 800-Years Gallery uses state-of-the-art technology to tell the abbey's fascinating history. Torre Abbey is a haven away from the busy town that surrounds it. It will give you a feeling of 'Spirit of Place'.



Source: Wikipedia

- Date:** Tuesday 12 September 2023
- Event:** Visit to Torre Abbey
- Meet:** Meet at the café from 1 p.m. It serves refreshments and light bites. Afterwards we can enter Torre Abbey together and pay as a group.
- Cost:** £10.50 per person, but £9.50 per person if we go in as a group, and the latter price includes a tour if we have at least 10 people.
- Address:** Torre Abbey, The King's Drive, Torquay TQ2 5JE. Open 10 – 5 p.m.
<https://www.torre-abbey.org.uk/>

Transport:

By car: From Exeter, take the A380 to Torquay, and then go left along the A3022 (Riviera Way and Newton Road) which run into Avenue Road and then The King's Drive. Torre Abbey is on the left. If you want the car park, turn right into Walnut Road just before you reach The King's Drive.

Parking: There is no parking at the Abbey, apart from three Blue Badge parking spaces near the entrance. The nearest car park is at Torre Valley car park on Walnut Road. Approximate cost: £1, plus £1 for each hour. However, cars can drop off passengers near the main entrance before going to the car park.

By public transport: There are direct trains from Exeter Central and Exeter St David's. The main Torquay Station is five minutes' walk from Torre Abbey, and is closer to the Abbey than Torre station. Several buses (e.g. 12, 22, 60, 61, 62) stop nearby.

To book: Contact Steve Pooley by 5 September on steve.pooley7@gmail.com or at 01803 293 976

Tuesday 26 September 2023: Talk on Exeter Community Initiatives

Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI) is a dynamic local charity working not just in Exeter but across Devon. It helps people facing poverty, inequality and homelessness to get their lives back on track. It does this by involving people in community projects to improve their mental, emotional and physical wellbeing, increase their sense of belonging and provide skills to help them succeed in life.

- Date:** Tuesday 26 September 2023
- Speaker:** Name of speaker to be advised
- Topic:** Exeter Community Initiatives
- Place:** The Stables, Cowley. We shall meet downstairs for lunch (order food and drink at the bar) from 12, and the talk will be upstairs at 2 p.m.
- Access for wheelchairs:** Using the direct route from the car park to the meeting room requires negotiating a few small steps. A better alternative for a wheelchair user is to go back down the slope a little way from the car park, and then enter the meeting room via the Fire Door from the patio. Here there is only one small step into the meeting room.
- Transport:** The pub is located on the Crediton Road, just after Bernaville Nurseries. There are excellent parking facilities. Turn left up the slope just before the pub, then immediately right.
- Bus:** There is a good bus connection (5, 5A, 5B, and 5C) from Exeter every 20 minutes or so. For instance, there is a Stagecoach bus 5 running from Exeter bus station (Stand 7) at 11.45 which reaches Bernaville Nurseries at midday.
- To book:** Contact Frances Canning before 19 September on 01392 202 542 or at francesandedward@blueyonder.co.uk

Event reports

Lunch at the Manor Inn, Lower Ashton, 28 March 2023

On a damp Devon day towards the end of March eight members joined our event organiser, Anne Mayes, braving narrow lanes, even narrower hump-back bridges, pot-holes and highway diversions, for lunch at the Manor Inn in the hamlet of Lower Ashton.

The travel difficulties proved to have been well worthwhile. The Manor Inn, a family owned and run restaurant and pub, was easy to find following clear directions provided by Anne. It was warm and welcoming. We were directed to a comfortable restaurant area on the upper floor. Service was excellent, as was our food.

We enjoyed excellent company with conversation covering many diverse subjects before we emerged, again into the rain, for our journeys home. 'Thank you' to Anne for introducing us to one of her 'locals', and I certainly will make a return visit before too long.

Mike Aspray

Lunch at the Smugglers Inn near Dawlish, 25 April 2023

Twelve of our members met up for lunch at the Smugglers Inn, located on a hill midway between Dawlish and Teignmouth. It was a convivial gathering, with much lively conversation.

Many of us took advantage of the excellent carvery, and some of us enjoyed the range of local beers, but unfortunately one or two of us forgot to pay for their drinks! In future we must encourage members to pay for their food and drink when they place their orders.

At the end of our meal we were delighted to welcome Chris Pashley as a new member of Exeter Branch. He and his wife were having lunch in the Inn at a neighbouring table.

Peter Wingfield-Digby

Talk on the History of Bideford, 10 May 2023

Peter Christie, a retired geography teacher who has been Mayor of Bideford four times, gave us a comprehensive talk about the history of this important north Devon town. Bideford's importance waxed and waned over the centuries. The town is sited astride the River Torridge and its two halves are linked by a thirteenth century bridge which is managed by the Bridge Trust, of which Peter is a trustee. The bridge has 24 arches of varying sizes, as they were paid for by different parishes.

After its first settlement in the 7th century, Bideford was at the centre of numerous skirmishes between the Saxons and the Danes. In 1066 Matilda, the wife of William the Conqueror, owned it but never visited. Twenty years later details of the land holdings are shown in the Domesday Book.

It was at this time that the Grenville family owned it and held it until the eighteenth century. Elizabeth I granted the town a Charter in 1573. Richard Grenville helped Sir Walter Raleigh to set up a colony, Roanoke, in North America. Grenville returned home with one of the first native Americans. He was baptised and named Raleigh but lived for only 18 months; his baptism and death are recorded in the local registers. Bideford was important for its wool trade where the sheep, as in London, were allowed to be driven across the bridge. Other trades at this time were fishing and wine.

Bideford was Puritan in the Civil War period. Skirmishes with other local towns still continued and one in 1643 with Torrington was a disaster. In 1681 three witches from Bideford were hanged in Exeter, the last to be executed in England for witchcraft. Trade continued to expand, coal was traded from South Wales as was limestone; rock salt was brought from Cheshire, and Bideford pottery was much sought after. John Davy built large houses which impressed the author and resident Daniel Defoe.

Bideford was now becoming a shipping town as one can tell from street names such as Rope Walk. However, the growth of Bristol saw Bideford's importance decline.

In the nineteenth century Bideford became an emigration port to the USA and provided ships for the Royal Navy, however it gradually lost its port status and 1886 really saw the end of its shipbuilding. Barnstaple was used by many as the port to register ships, making it for a time the largest port in North Devon. (Bideford later had its port status reinstated by Winston Churchill.)

In other areas Carnegie gave money towards a new library in 1906. Charles Kingsley had been a resident and a statue of him was erected, also in 1906. The bridge was widened in 1864 and 1874. The arrival of the railway in 1855 brought tourism to the area. In the Second World War minesweepers were built and it became a centre for evacuees; four trains brought 3500 evacuees in 1941. Westward Ho! beach was used by the Americans to prepare for the D Day landings. In 1968 two arches of the bridge collapsed, and a second bridge was built. The ship yard at Appledore took over the mantle as North Devon's shipbuilding centre.

Bideford will, no doubt, continue to go its own way, with more interesting stories to tell in the future.

Rob Simons.

Walk in Topsham and pub lunch, 24 May 2023

A group of members met at the Lighter Inn in Topsham for lunch. This Inn was originally the Custom House when the town was a bustling port due to the cloth trade with Holland. After lunch we had the option of touring the museum or taking one of the two town trails.



Photo: Chris Pashley



Photo: Chris Pashley

Those who took the trail around the town with its historic buildings had 28 sites or areas of significant interest to see. Apart from the many buildings associated with its connections to the sea there were other noteworthy places such as St Margaret's church. The current church is at least the 4th to have been built on the site. The first was perhaps in Saxon times and houses a Norman font which was probably the oldest item we saw.

The view of the estuary on leaving the church is very picturesque and Cara Place which is a square of 9 houses built around a beautiful garden was another stunning

area. The Holman family had a great influence on the town and apart from their maritime influence they were responsible for the unusual design of the St Nicholas Methodist Church. Something else that couldn't be missed was the huge telegraph pole which served the town's first telephone exchange. The base of this pole was almost too large to wrap our arms around and the top of it was apparently struck by the trailing lines of a low flying Zeppelin in 1917.

The second walk which was for another day had more architectural interest plus lovely river and countryside views and is well known for its internationally important RSPB bird reserve.

Some of our members visited the Topsham Museum which occupies one of the merchants' houses built around 1688 and was at one time Dorothy Holman's home. The museum itself explains the importance of the Davy and Holman families and their shipbuilding business which grew from the cloth trade Exeter had with Holland. It shows the story of the town as well as presenting a series of period rooms which are furnished in the Dutch style, a style that is very much in evidence when walking the town.

The museum also houses an impressive large model of the town and has a section on Richard (Pincher) Pym born 1893, Exeter's most important footballer in its history who was England's goalkeeper. The maritime history is continued in the outside boat sheds and features unique historic river craft including the famous Cygnet. There are other unusual items one of which is the nightdress worn by Vivien Leigh in the film "Gone with the Wind" (Vivien's first husband was Dorothy Holman's brother). The museum's tea room and garden offered respite for us to gather for tea and recount and discuss this charming town.

Rob Simons.

Local news

Exeter nurse wins major prize

You may recall that a year ago we had a valuable talk from Dr Elisa de Franco about her work as the lead person for Exeter's neonatal diabetes genetic testing service. The small speaker fee that we gave her on that occasion was put towards supporting genetic testing.

Now Professor Maggie Shepherd from the Royal Devon University Healthcare and University of Exeter Medical School has been declared the winner of this year's £200,000 Aster Guardians Global Nursing Award for her work in improving diagnosis of diabetes. She was chosen from 52,000 applicants across 202 countries.

When asked how she plans to spend the money, she said she would like to put part of the prize towards supporting those countries that cannot afford genetic testing for diabetes, so that it is free and they can be diagnosed as necessary with neonatal diabetes.

Programme of activities for the period July to December 2023

All our meetings are held at The Stables, Cowley

- Mon 3 Jul **Annual General Meeting** at 11 a.m., followed by lunch.
Contact: Peter Wingfield-Digby, pwdigby@btinternet.com or on 01392 424781.
- Wed 19 Jul **Visit to Ugbrooke House and Gardens**, Chudleigh. Meet in the Orangery tea room at 12. Tour of the house at 2.15.
Contact: Frances Canning, francesandedward@blueyonder.co.uk or on 01392 209542
- Wed 9 Aug **Club committee meeting** at 11 a.m., followed by lunch
Contact: Peter Wingfield-Digby, pwdigby@btinternet.com or on 01392 424781.
- Tue 12 Sep **Visit to Torre Abbey**, Torquay. Meet in the café at 1 p.m.
Contact: Steve Pooley, stevepooley7@gmail.com or on 01803 293976.
- Tue 26 Sep Talk on '**Exeter Community Initiatives**'. Name of speaker to be confirmed. 2 p.m. Lunch at 12.
Contact: Frances Canning, francesandedward@blueyonder.co.uk or on 01392 209542.
- Thu 12 Oct **Lunch at the Three Crowns, Chagford**. Meet at 12 for 12.30.
Contact: Mike Aspray, mikeaspray@btinternet.com or on 01884 242606.
- Mon 30 Oct Talk by Xiomara Farthing on the '**Churches Conservation Trust**'. 2 p.m. Lunch at 12.
Contact: Peter Wingfield-Digby, pwdigby@btinternet.com or on 01392 424781.
- Tue 7 Nov **Lunch at @34 Exeter College**. Meet at 12 for 12.30.
Contact: Frances Canning, francesandedward@blueyonder.co.uk or on 01392 209542
- Mon 20 Nov Talk by Alex Graeme on '**Tales of a Devon Tour Guide**', 2 p.m. Lunch at 12.
Contact: Steve Pooley, stevepooley7@gmail.com or on 01803 293976.
- Wed 6 Dec (provisional date) **Christmas lunch** at The Stables. 12 for 12.30.
Contact: Peter Wingfield-Digby, pwdigby@btinternet.com or on 01392 424781.