

AG
TO

association of group travel organisers

MAGAZINE

Winter 2018





WELCOME

Welcome to the 1st edition of the new-look AGTO magazine – we've combined national and branch news into one to make it simpler for you to find out what is going on with other organisers – in your own branch & around the country.

Hopefully, you can learn how and what other organisers are doing and maybe pinch an idea or two or even join in with other branch activities.

In all associations feedback is important and we look forward to hearing from you with your thoughts.

If you would like your own articles to be considered for use within the guide then please go to your branch committee members to see where you should send your relevant information.

We hope you enjoy the new publication.

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Visit our website:

www.agto.co.uk

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National News Update

AGTO SHOWCASE & AGM 2019

22nd - 24th Feb – Eastwood Hall Hotel, Nottingham - **BOOK NOW!**

Sponsorship opportunities available, please contact ceo1@agto.co.uk for further information.

GROUP LEISURE & TRAVEL EXHIBITION & AWARDS EVENING

Congratulations to AGTO Director Joan Hanks who was shortlisted for GTO of the Year Award, a great achievement Joan. Unfortunately she was pipped at the post - always next year Joan!

It was a great evening where AGTO sponsored Best Guided Tour which was presented by Wendy Hartley-Scarff to Woburn Abbey & Gardens.

A picture gallery can be seen on www.agto.co.uk.

NB: The 2019 Group Leisure & Travel Awards will take place on Wednesday 9th October at the Hilton Hotel at Stadium MK, Milton Keynes.

SUCCESSFUL WTM 2018 FOR AGTO

AGTO again worked with WTM as an Association partner and gained access for its members for the full 3 days, including Invitation Only Monday. The Board Directors who attended - Wendy, David, Steve and Emma - had full schedules, which resulted in a number of new members, both GTOs and Associates, joining us, together with successful discussions on future partnerships for AGTO during 2019.

UPDATE ON BREXIT FROM TOURISM ALLIANCE

A helpful slideshow has been produced by the Government on the Withdrawal Agreement and the Political Declaration Outline. The full slideshow can be accessed at www.agto.co.uk.

While this presentation is obviously from the Government's perspective it is nevertheless a very good slideshow that as simply as possible explains the process, issues like the backstop and what the UK's future relationship could look like.

A BRIEF UPDATE ON ABTA CONFERENCE FOR GROUP TRAVEL

A great day on 26th September at the ABTA Group Travel & Escorted Tours Conference where AGTO's CEO delivered a session on Engaging and Working with GTOs, alongside companies such as G Adventures, Exodus Travels, Tour Hound, Wendy Wu Tours, Titan Travel and Headwater. The Conference was moderated by Giles Hawkes, CEO of Cosmos and Chair of The Association of Touring & Adventure Suppliers (ATAS).

It was a great opportunity for AGTO to appeal to a wider audience and to educate the market about the Association. Surprisingly only about 2% of the attendees knew about AGTO, but they certainly know about us now!

For full information and reports from the Conference check out www.agto.co.uk.



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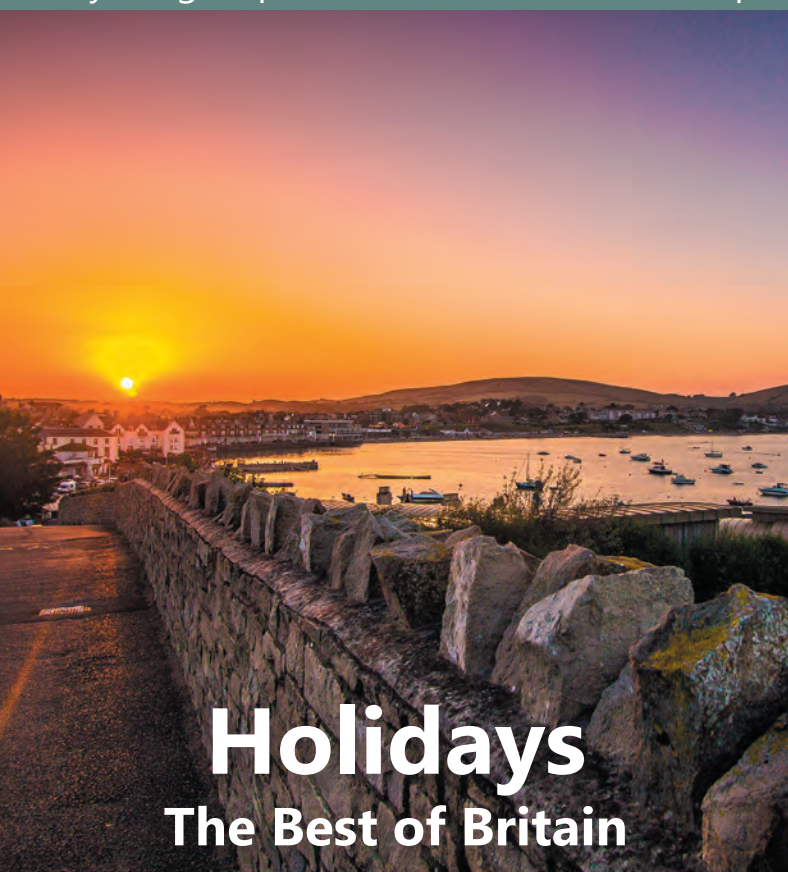


Theatre Breaks

Regional & West End



From steam train trips & gin factory tours to theatre breaks & river cruising, we cater for all your group's needs. The team at Groups Direct are dedicated to make your life easier.



Holidays

The Best of Britain



Cruises

European Rivers & Oceans

Guest columnist – Fiona Jeffery OBE



Fiona Jeffery OBE, UN World Ethics Committee for Tourism, Chair of African Travel & Tourism Association (ATTA) and Senior Partner at Finn Partners Global Responsible Tourism Practice, discusses our responsibility to the planet when promoting destinations.

One of the biggest challenges faced when engaging in the sustainability agenda is understanding what sustainability actually means. The truth is it covers a very broad church and too often the language used has been either academic or technical in its nature, turning off and alienating the ordinary person in the street and in business, as something too complex to understand, never mind engage with.

As a consequence there's been an over-reliance on 'experts' within larger companies to lead the agenda and demonstrate what can and should be done within the tourism arena. Companies including TUI, Rezidor and specialist operators like Intrepid, Wilderness Safari's and many like them have taken time to understand, embraced the sustainability agenda and embedded it within their DNA.

Encouragingly however, and not since Al Gore's 2006 film *An Inconvenient Truth*, sustainability issues are hitting consumer consciousness as we are now seeing and experiencing the impact the lack of sustainable practises are having on our destinations and communities and impacting the customer experience.

Take the overcrowding backlash experienced last summer in Barcelona, Dubrovnik and Venice. This isn't a new issue, Venice has suffered from tourist overcrowding for over a decade, but for the first time local people began actively protesting and the tourism industry has had to respond. Consumers have to consider changing their behaviour, be it the destination or time of travel. The cruise sector has had to change its operational practises. As an industry we should be more concerned with effective Destination Management than Destination Marketing and appreciate the difference.

Blue Planet has raised massive consumer awareness regarding

the health of our oceans and marine life, leading to the long-awaited debate on the use of single-use plastics. This too has led to a change in behaviour from companies such as Sky, BBC and Hurtigruten who are banning single use plastics, and many more will follow.

The water crisis in Cape Town brought into stark public awareness the fear of what Day Zero might look like, with water queues at centralised taps. It resulted in wholesale behavioural change by residents, businesses, and local government, but was also positively embraced by the tourism businesses and the tourists themselves. A lot has been learnt from their experience that should be shared across the world in the interests of water conservation and management.

The killing of Cecil the Lion by a trophy hunter in Zimbabwe created a worldwide outcry and again raised awareness of a growing public desire to protect our planet's wildlife for generations to come.

It is a massive global issue and

sustainability & the potential negative impact of 'over tourism' is not new to the UK. Cities are starting to react to protect local communities and land marks; Edinburgh for example is considering introducing a city tax in order to cope with the extra waste management and general city pressures caused during the festival. More developments will follow as destinations draw people

to alternative city locations and outside main hubs by developing local cultural experiences and other attractions, as well as encouraging people to travel to destinations off season.

So for the first time in many years I feel more positive about our industry's role in contributing to this growing movement for behavioural change in the interests of preserving our planet

and communities. The movement has been around for 25 years but progression in my view has been too slow, but as understanding grows as to what sustainability actually means in practical terms, so does our need to respond. If we as an industry don't take more responsibility to protect the very product (our planet) we seek to promote, we don't deserve to be in business in the next 25 years.



New Members

We are delighted to note the following new members of AGTO and extend a warm welcome:

GTO Members

2744	Hilary	Jenkins
2745	Eileen	Marsh
2746	Richard	Frood
2747	Jo	Rammell
2748	Ann	Eden
2749	Diane	Jackson
2750	Lindsey	Grey
2751	Susan	Churchill
2752	Theresa	McAninch
2753	Maureen	Findlay
2754	Kenneth	Morum
2755	Sandra	Crawley
2756	Mike	Breakell
2757	Ian	Thomas
2758	Anne	Bartlett
2759	Constance	Nunn
2760	Eunice	Kirby

2761	Graham	Russell
2762	Pam	Russell
2763	Jannine	Taylor
2764	Pam	Davidoff
2765	Barry	Jones
2766	Christine	Kotowicz
2767	Ernest	Jones
2768	Cheryl	McLeod

Associate Members

5100	Greatdays Travel Group
5972	Travelbeat
5973	Amberley Museum
5974	Ffestiniog Travel
5833	Birmingham Museums
5976	Floors Castle Enterprises
5977	Voyages to Antiquity
5978	Prestige Holidays

Central Branch's Chairman's Message

Back in May when our last Central Branch magazine was produced, Pauline Hutchinson (past Chairman of Northern Branch), who had been printing the magazine for several years, reluctantly had to retire and, as Editor, I was placed in somewhat of a quandary. My computer system doesn't support Microsoft's Publisher that Pauline used. To cut a long story short David Steele and I got talking, and ended up having what we described as an accidental brainstorming session. The ideas went to the Board and the outcome is what you are reading today - a National Magazine encompassing all the Branch Magazines. Central's

problem solved, more cost effective, a professional looking magazine. AGTO members can see all the news from around the branches in one publication and a great marketing aid for new members at the various Trade Shows. Enjoy.

Tina Mott of Visit Hull & East Yorkshire invited Central Branch members to a familiarisation visit in August, and my thanks to Jim Barling for the excellent article within these pages.

Despite having given 12 months notice of retiring from the committee and Chairmanship, we

still haven't had any volunteers to come on board. There's plenty of laughs and great friendships made along the way on Central's committee. Maybe it's the word 'committee' that's the problem as in my club I have no committee but 22 volunteers who are as 'committed' to helping me as any designated committee member. Please can we have some 'volunteers' to come to committee meetings to help – that would be a start.

I will be continuing as editor and remain the person to send all your copy for Central's pages in this new format National magazine.

Fam trip: Visit Hull & East Yorkshire

Wow! What an eye opener this 'Fam' trip to 'Ull was for me. Organised through Central Branch by Tina Mott of Visit Hull and East Yorkshire, I was amazed at the transformation that has been achieved there. I must at this point say that my last visit to Hull was in 1959 as an Engineer Cadet on Ellerman Lines MS *City of Durban* and it was a dump, still many scars of wartime bombing.

If you haven't been to Hull ever or even recently, then you really must make it a priority. The transformation from a dirty fishing and commercial port to a vibrant city of culture is amazing.



There is something for everyone – shopaholics, museums, art galleries, theatres, real ale micro breweries, gin palaces and a variety of eating places from Haute Cuisine to greasy spoon!

On arrival at our hotel, the 4* Hilton by Doubletree, near the railway station, close to the centre of the city, we were greeted by Tina and Katya (the Hotel's Sales Manager). Over refreshments, our itinerary and domestic arrangements

were explained, after which we embarked on a walk through the town to the marina, with Tina pointing out various landmarks on the way. Returning to the hotel, we were treated to a splendid evening meal, at which there was lots of lively conversation. Afterwards, we were invited to the Lexington, a rooftop bar with an open air section, where evening entertainment is often provided, though unfortunately not on this particular evening!

After a good breakfast, we were introduced to Paul Schofield, born and bred in Hull, who was to be our guide for the day. Starting by retracing our steps of the previous evening, Paul took us through some of the old city that had been undamaged by the bombing and had been kept in good condition, all the while giving us some stories of the history of the City. We finally arrived at The Minster, formerly Holy Trinity Parish Church, where we were given a talk on the history and ongoing regeneration of this 13th century church. After a tour around, including

climbing the tower (for those amongst us still capable of climbing many narrow and winding steps!) we were treated to a splendid lunch in the café - prices are reasonable so well worth considering!

We then boarded a vintage bus for a visit to Burton Constable, an often overlooked gem of an historic mansion, with a fascinating history, and very knowledgeable room guides. Certainly worth a visit if you are near this area, with a splendid café. The cream teas were out of this world!

I wouldn't want to spoil your surprise by detailing all the attractions that we were shown, I suggest that you organise a visit and find out for yourself! Many of them, particularly the museums and art galleries are free, very interesting and informative. Should you require more details, contact Tina.

I was really surprised and delighted with this city, and I can thoroughly recommend it as a group destination. Try it and see for yourself.

Jim Barling, 1834C



An Associate in the Spotlight!

I have always loved travelling and exploring so a job where I get to travel and arrange other people's travel plans is perfect for me and I can't really imagine doing anything else!

I was lucky enough to have parents that enjoyed adventure too so we had exciting family holidays when I was younger. Between school and university I went off to Canada for a few months of work and travel and after University (where I studied Travel and Tourism) I got my first real job in the travel industry as a ski & summer adventure rep in the French Alps. At 21 years of age it was quite daunting to be in charge of, and organising so many people coming out on their annual ski trip, but it was a steep learning curve and I quickly learnt how to deal with any situation thrown at me. My French improved, especially

vocabulary to enable me to deal with the emergency services and hospitals regarding broken bones and such like!

Initially the job in France was to improve my French and allow me to save for my round the world backpacking tour a few years later. And that's what it did - so from France to Australia, New Zealand, South East Asia & Canada - not quite round the world, but a fair amount of it.

About 18 months later I came home, broke, and a little fed up of living out of a suitcase. I decided the sensible thing to do was to get a job based in the UK



but that allowed me to travel.

I got a job working for an Oxford based tour operator specialising in day trips and although I was the reservations manager there, we all had to take our turns in escorting the day trips to the various European cities. I put my hand up more than most for these duties. I loved it and was given plenty of chances to see Europe, of which I took as many as I could!

Moving on I found myself working for a Group Tour Operator, which was new to me. I found I loved the interaction with the group organiser and being able to give ideas of great places to visit. Planning an itinerary, finding hidden gems of the area – nothing gives me more satisfaction than when I hear that the places that were unexpected turn out to be the highlight of a tour.

So, 20 years later, here I am, still loving to travel, loving working with groups and suggesting and arranging tours to a wide range of destinations. I do what I can to get to know the group so that each tour is matched to their interest, needs and expectations. Every tour is tailor made which keeps the job really interesting.

After 13 years commuting between the Cotswolds (where I live) and London (where I worked) I decided enough was enough and started working a little closer to home. I joined Success Tours (Associate members of AGTO) five years ago. Although the job I do is essentially the same as I have always done, for me, what sets Success Tours apart is its ethos. Customer care is the priority. We work as a team at all times and can rely on everyone in the office to be at their best and we all have the client's satisfaction at the heart of what we do. We want to make life as easy as possible for the GTO.

We also know that the big wide world out there does

not always read our very well planned itineraries. We adapt to what is needed. When things do not quite go to plan (strikes, ash cloud, illness, unforeseen circumstances etc) we are there 24/7 to support, help, listen, plan, change and answer. The true quality of a tour operator is how they deal with things when the unforeseen happens!

If I were to pick one of my favourite Success Tours holidays it would have to be Sicily. The island offers so much variety and diversity – something for everyone – bit don't try to explore it all too quickly. It's bigger than you think and it's worth spending time in each quite distinctly different area. Italy is my favourite country in Europe, no doubt, but I also love Portugal – Lisbon is a fantastic city and north of there, up the Silver Coast offers something different. I love the little white-washed town of Obidos, with its narrow streets, and the Ginja de Obidos – a cherry liquor in the chocolate cups that are the local speciality!

Some of my top travel tips:

- Don't pack too soon – you'll take too much
- Explore the back streets & take time to enjoy local life – go to the markets and the local cafes and restaurants not the tourist ones
- Look up and out and around– not always from behind the lens of a camera!
- Learn at least a couple of words of the local language, hello, please and thank you go along way
- Pre-book any must-see galleries or attractions to avoid the queues
- Always take your sunnies – I don't go anywhere without mine - I even needed them in Iceland!

Contact me at Success Tours on 01225 715054 or jo.blair@successtours.com

AGTO Central Branch Committee

Pauline Johnson - retiring Chairman & magazine editor
pauline_a_johnson@hotmail.com

Julia Passmore - Secretary & acting Treasurer
julia1cpassmore@aol.com

Sally Davidson - Committee Member

Jo Blair - Success Tours - Associate Member

Sue Day - West Midland Safari Pub - Associate Member

Stuart Parker - InterChoice Holidays - Associate Member

Eastern Branch's Chairman's Message



It is the end of an era for Eastern Branch as at our AGM on 16th October, Enid Pamment stepped down as Chair of the Branch after more than 20 years' service. Enid

also served on the GTOA National Committee and was Membership Secretary for three years. Enid feels that joining the organisation in the early days was the best thing she had ever done and has met some lovely people over the years, all with a common interest in travel.

She will be a hard act to follow, but she is not giving up on the organising though and will still continue with her very successful Shefford Group Leisure.

The branch continues to expand with a dedicated committee to guide us through the year. This year our Secretary has introduced an E-Blast which goes out each

month to highlight information from the branch to every member. Still more contact is made by Our Friends of Eastern Branch who telephones members for a quick chat and more information. Just because members have to give up their membership does not mean we give up on them.

Next year we are all looking forward to a full programme of events and fam trips courtesy of our Associates. These should be finalised for our Annual General Meeting on 16th October at Hylands Country Estate & Visit Essex. We look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

Director's Report

Our Board meeting took place in September and as usual, it was a full and interesting meeting creating ideas and opportunities for the ensuing year.

Bookings are coming in at a steady rate for the Showcase at Eastwood Hall, Nottingham. So, if you have not booked yet don't delay. With a packed itinerary we are looking to meet old friends and create new ones.

Please remember to look for offers for transport to Nottingham. The railways will do

an alert system for best price tickets - do it now and you will be surprised at how cheap you can get tickets. Also, there will be taxis to take you from the station to the Conference Centre - just say you are AGTO and the bill will be paid by us.

Book for the extra Fam trip on Sunday after the Show, courtesy of Newark Tourist Board. What a lovely way to round off the weekend!

We look forward to seeing you there.





TOWIE is the only place to be!

A very full and varied day started from Biggleswade to the Heybridge Basin on the River Blackwater for morning coffee and cake at the Tiptree Tea Rooms. The weather was clear and bright but very windy, so the walk along the towpath was indeed very bracing. The views across the estuary were spectacular and there was a constant jingle of flags and masts from yachts at their moorings.

Back on our coach we drove along country roads and through pretty villages on our way to Clacton. The seafront was still ablaze with colourful flowers and, of course,

we visited the pier which has had millions of pounds of Lottery money spent on it, to bring it back to its former glory and it's FREE!!

Nothing beats fish & chips at the seaside, so we were very well looked after at Armstrong's Restaurant, with unspoilt sea views and, of course, the pier. Our coach picked us up in time for what was billed as 'A Surprise Afternoon'. After a 30-minute drive we arrived at Beth Chatto Gardens, where we were met by the Head Gardener and her fellow horticulturalist. After introductions we split into two groups for a fascinating tour and

talk of the Gravel Garden which Beth designed after a trip to New Zealand, where she saw an old river bed awash with coloured plants which survived in drought conditions. Her Essex garden has not been watered in 25 years and survives, truly remarkable.

Needless to say, we then needed more refreshments and the ladies in the Garden Cafe did not disappoint. Homemade scones arrived, still warm from the oven with cream and jam, for a scrumptious Cream Tea.

Yes, we all agreed "TOWIE" was the only place to be and we will be back!

KEEPING IN TOUCH!

A MESSAGE FROM MAUREEN



This is a brief introduction, so that you will know who is telephoning you, to members who joined the Eastern Branch of the AGTO some time ago, or even more recently, but who, unfortunately, have not been able to come along to any of the Branch meetings, arranged at sites of particular interest for groups. I am the Social Member of the Eastern Branch Committee!

For many years I was a Group Organiser and a

Committee Member until, owing to illness and the folding of my group, my personal active service almost folded. However, Joan Hanks, found a job for me to do and so I have been able to keep in touch with members in the Eastern Branch area. I understand that age, lack of mobility and transport prevents many members from attending meetings.

That is why I will be phoning you from time to time to see how you are and bring you up to date with events.

I will repeat my calls following the next issue of the AGTO Directory, and hope to meet many of you, in person, at some of our functions and to hear about the exciting trips you have organised recently.

Maureen Hardingham,
Social Secretary.

Visit to England's Smallest County

My group, Exel Retired Staff Association, visited Rutland Water this year. The lake is considered to be one of the largest artificial lakes in Europe. Whilst there, we took time to visit Normanton Church which is on the edge of the lake and was saved from the water when the reservoir was created. The church is open on selected days and it is possible to hold weddings there as well as concerts. After visiting the church, we continued our

tour of the area, passing the birth place of King Richard III, the site of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots at Fotheringhay and then on to Oundle, where we saw how parts of the destroyed castle have been re-used in various buildings.

We continued our journey to Wansford, on the River Nene, where we had a very enjoyable lunch at the Haycock Hotel.

After lunch, driving through the countryside of Rutland, we

then proceeded to Stamford. Stamford is regarded as one of the finest stone towns in England. It is the location for many films and TV productions, such as *Middlemarch*, *The Da Vinci Code* and *Pride & Prejudice*. It also has some delightful independent shops, tearooms and cafes. Our visit was most interesting and enjoyable and our thanks to Greatdays Holidays for arranging it.

Yvonne Hodson, E1275



A Life on the Ocean Wave!

Armed with seasickness pills, lifebelts and armbands, an intrepid band of the Bedford Branch of the Exel Retired Staff and friends, set sail on the River Ouse (Bedford) on the *John Bunyan*, with the aim of having tea at The Barns Hotel, situated downstream.

The journey, which took in not only beautiful scenery, but the new developments along the river banks in Bedford town, was most interesting.

To proceed downstream, the boat has to travel through an old lock that was built in Victorian

times and, like most Victorian things, still works.

The buffet tea was voted 'delicious' and there was plenty of it. To use a hackneyed old cliché, "a good time was had by all".

Yvonne Hodson, E1275



Eastern Events News Round Up

This year's events proved popular, but we would still like to see a few more of you at them. Please let us know about any difficulties that might prevent you from attending and we will do our best to assist where we can.

It was with regret that we had to cancel the weekend in Chigwell Essex for our Branch AGM. This took place at the Visit Essex Trade Fair held in October.

This was Enid Pamment's last function in office. Enid is standing down after more than 20 years as head of our ship, a position which she has fulfilled diligently, with understanding and help to all members, throughout the years. Time a for a rest, although Enid will still be organising for her own Group, Shefford Leisure.

A difficult act to follow, but I am pleased to announce that one of our hard-working committee members was elected, at our AGM. This is Patricia Maltby and I am sure you will

all welcome and support her.

The dates for our Fam trips and events for 2019 have yet to be confirmed, but they will include Bletchley Park, The Shuttleworth Collection, at Old Warden and much more. We welcome any suggestions and places of interest you might like to visit.

The Eastern Branch Committee manned the Travel Trade Show on Tuesday, 16th October, for AGTO. Our thanks to Martin Hay of "Go

Cruise – First 4 Groups" for joining us on the day, to talk to prospective Associates who might join us.

There was plenty of interest in our Association and 4 people signed up to become members on the day.

The Eastern Branch AGM followed the show, where sadly we said our farewells to Enid Pamment, after her long service as Chairman of the Branch. A certificate and flowers were presented to Enid by our incoming Chair, Patricia Maltby.



image © English Heritage

AGTO Eastern Branch Committee

Patricia Maltby - Chairman
Joan Hanks - Director and Events Coordinator
Maria Maltby - Secretary
Linda Nicholas - Treasurer
Maureen Hardingham - Communications
Lesley Terrell - Associate Member

Kent Branch's Chairman's Message

It's been another active year for the Kent Branch and I thank our committee of Eileen, Carol and Carol2 for the help in arranging our meeting schedule for the year. With a special thank you for Carol Blackmore (Carol2) for volunteering to join the committee and then talking on the arrangements for Brogdale Farm and Mount Ephraim. Brogdale was a difficult challenge even to the last minute when our tractor broke down and the apple blossom failed to appear.

Our members gave us excellent support at the events we organised and I thank you for that. We also welcomed and met many new members during the year.

At Excursions™ 2018 in January we said goodbye to Mike Bugsgang, our CEO, and welcomed his replacement Wendy who I am sure will bring her experiences of the travel industry to help in the challenges ahead.

The introduction of GDPR brought us concern together with new documentation to both AGTO and

our own clubs and organisations and even now in my mind it's still unfinished. But at least none of us are in the same boat, or should I say plane, as BA.

The Kent branch remains a key element of the organisation with our increasing membership and activity at AGTO. I was asked to write the article Spotlight on Kent for the final version of the AGTO newsletter and apart from the editorial team listing us as Central branch committee it didn't turn out too bad, and I managed to get my photo with the Dover Mayor's mace included.

The new magazine format will now take the place of the newsletter and with each AGTO branch given pages to write up their own articles and activities. I will be asking for contributions.

My thanks is also extended to our regular Associate Members who attend our meetings and especially to Crosskeys Coaches, City and Village Tours, Thames Clippers and Tower Bridge Experience for our

day out in June and we even saw the bridge raised.

Sadly I attended two funerals during this term. Jenny Barling, a former member, and Jill White from West Kingsdown ARA. Both will be much missed.

As there will be no Showcase Weekend this year it was suggested that we organise something ourselves and this we did with Warner at Bembridge IOW for the weekend November 23rd to 26th.

Eileen Booker is standing down as our secretary so I must mention all the work and commitment she has given us. She is a very busy GTO herself so thank you Eileen for taking on our duties for more years than you signed up for.

Our AGM at Deal Castle was by courtesy of English Heritage. They presented their plans for Deal and Walmer Castles and then gave us a guided tour and history of Deal. We then drove a short distance to Walmer Castle for lunch and then an audio self tour.



'Bye from Eileen

I have been Secretary of the Kent Branch of AGTO for the past eight years. In those years I have seen the Kent branch more

than double in size. We are now one of the largest groups of all the branches.

When I first became Secretary my 'boss' (Chairman) was Jim Barling and I served under him for 5 years. Jim moved away and Jim Silvester became our Chairman. Under Jim's guidance we have increased

not only our membership but also the range of meeting places and experiences we have been able to offer our members.

During the past 8 years we have held branch meetings at such a wide range of venues – Lullingstone Castle, Walmer Castle, Deal Castle, Tower of London, Timbers (part of the National Garden Scheme), Eltham Palace and the Kentish Lady Boat on the Medway to name but a few.

It has been a pleasure to serve the Kent branch but as a busy GTO myself I decided it was time to hand over my pen to someone else. I will be staying on the committee and helping the branch whenever I can.

Fam Trip: Visit Essex

I have been organising trips for my Gardening Society for many years now but until I joined AGTO two years ago I had never heard of a 'fam trip'. As a result when I was told about a trip to Essex to visit nine venues in two days I thought, 'let's go for it'.

On arrival at Ingatestone Hall there was a large 'A' frame across the entrance saying HOUSE CLOSED. Being very English and fam trip novices we didn't want to go past the sign, but all other routes lead to farm buildings. We took a very bold step and went past the sign and walked 100 yards down the drive, but there was not a soul to be seen. We were beginning to wonder if this had been a good idea when, to our great relief as we approached the house, we heard voices and a light shone in a room to the side of the drive. We entered the room to find 24 other people there and were greeted with a cup of coffee, biscuits (we found this to be what always happens when arriving anywhere) and a goody bag with lots of information about the places we were about to visit.

After a short introduction talk we were taken around the house by the owner, whose family have owned the house since it was built in the 15th Century. It was impressive. It was then back to the waiting coach for our next stop.

We visited Hyde Hall (RHS), Beth Chatto's Gardens and the Barfield Vineyard. On arrival at all three we were given coffee and biscuits/cakes, a talk from a high official and then a conducted tour at a good pace as time was of the essence. The

tours ended with lunch, cream tea or dinner and could feel the weight going on with every tasty mouthful.

Exhausted we were taken to a hotel in Chelmsford for a well earned sleep. After an enormous breakfast we were off again to five more places and five coffee and cream cakes and a lunch.

We started our day at Layer Marney Towers then Marks Hall Arboretum, Paycocks House (NT), Spencers Garden for lunch, and ended at Audley End (EH), after a very informative tour we had, yes you guessed it, a cream tea. It was then a long drive back to our cars at Ingatestone Hall and back home.

I must say it was exhausting but wonderful. We saw places we would not have found on our own and the guides/owners of the destinations we visited were so enthusiastic about the places they were showing us, it was infectious. I can't wait to take my group to Essex and show them the glorious places that we experienced on our fam trip.

The only surprising thing I found on the trip was that I seemed to be the only person that belonged to AGTO. The people I spoke to had not heard of it and so I gave them a telephone number and told them how wonderful being a member was and the benefits they could get from being a member. We are now looking forward to hearing of another fam trip that we can go on. We are hooked!

Carol Blackmore, Blean Gardeners



A Group Night Out on *Edith May*

Gerry March, a keen sailor, organised a full day's trip on the *Edith May* from Chatham for his group 'Night Out'.

Edith May is a wooden Thames sailing barge built in Harwich in 1906. She was used to carry various cargoes (mainly grain) until 1952, when a diesel engine was fitted, after which she was used in various Thames Sailing Barge matches, winning several. She was a museum ship for a time, and was restored in 2010 to offer charter trips on the River

Medway. Her winter moorings are at Lower Halstead where she opens during the weekend as a tearoom.

Coffee and croissants were served as soon as we boarded and set sail at 09.00, following by bacon sandwiches. At around 12.30 we had lunch together with a glass or two of wine and beer. Late in the afternoon a cream tea was served. In between eating and drinking the barge made its way down river until it turned to make the journey back.

A few members took turns at the wheel.

The Kent Branch plans to hold its 2019 Spring meeting on-board the *Edith May*.



Booker Trip goes to Switzerland

In May my husband Bob and I set off on a 5-day family visit to Switzerland with Travel Editions. We were met at Gatwick airport by Adrian Milan from the Swiss Travel Centre and along with 14 other GTOs we flew to Basel. Upon arrival in Basel we were met by Ellen Walker from Travel Editions and then had morning coffee and a tour of a local hotel. Refreshed we took the train to Bern where we checked into the Allegro Hotel. After lunch we were met by a local guide who took us on a walking tour of Bern. The next day we travelled by local transport to Emmental for a demonstration on making cheese, which was great fun. That evening we ate in a local restaurant which had originally been a granary and was an outstanding example of baroque style.

After two nights in Bern we travelled again by local transport to the beautiful village of Murren where

we stayed in the Alpenruh Hotel. Whilst in Murren we took the cable car to the top of Mount Schilthorn for a fantastic breakfast. The restaurant is famous because it was where the James Bond film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* was filmed and there are reminders of the film everywhere. Coming down the mountain slightly we then had the opportunity to do the Thrill Walk – definitely not for the faint-hearted, but I surprised myself and did it (not sure I would do it again though!) We also visited Tremmelbach Falls, which is a very impressive waterfall inside a mountain.

All in all this was a wonderful insight into this picturesque part of Switzerland. The scenery was stunning and all the outings were very interesting and gave me a good overview of this part of Switzerland. We travelled everywhere by public transport and I

was very impressed at how easy this was.

Familiarisation visits are such a good way of experiencing what can be offered to a group.

I was so impressed that I have now booked this for my group for next May.



AGTO BRANCHES' VISIT TO CYPRUS

A small band of GTOs from the Central, Kent and Southern branches of AGTO took a fam trip to Cyprus, courtesy of Constantinou Hotels. Our host was Associate Member David Townend who met us at the Athena Beach Hotel, Paphos and along with the Hotel Management welcomed us into the superb 4* hotel. During our stay we had a presentation of what the hotel can offer group travel, a guided tour of the four hotels in the chain, all adjacent on the Paphos beach front, as well as viewing various room types. Our trip included a short excursion within Paphos of the Tourist Harbour area and the old town, recently renovated as part of the City of Culture 2017.

We visited a local Arts and Craft shop, where local artists exhibit their wares, and were given a demonstration of how to throw a pot followed by a glass of local wine and olive tasting.

A full day of guided excursion followed, firstly to Aphrodite's Rock, and then to the Limassol district. It was here that we saw the newly-built Marina, the old town, the castle and cathedral. The highlight, however, was the stop at

the ancient Curium and in particular the wonderful Roman amphitheatre where the acoustics are so good you can hear a coin drop from the centre of the stage. It was here that Norman Adams (Southern branch) recited his poem, written overnight for Keith Prince (Central Branch and lifetime WBA supporter) in memory of the late Cyril Regis, and our group and the other visitors heard every word.

The day concluded with lunch at the village of Omodhos, on the road to the Troodos Mountains, for a 10-course meze of typical Cyprus dishes finishing with a slow cooked suckling pig with crackling and a glass of red wine. The journey back was very quiet with most catching up with sleep.

Our last day was "at leisure" which turned out to be anything but. With a lesson on the outdoor bowling green, a ballroom dancing lesson, and then for those still able a seafront walk to the harbour and back. If that was not enough an impromptu golf competition was arranged on both the crazy and mini golf courses at the hotel. Winners of both emerged from the Kent branch; David Tamsitt with a 1 under

par score on the crazy golf and Jim Silvester with a 3 over par on the mini golf.

Our final evening was a gala dinner with David, our host and the hotel manager, Lambros.

Our thanks are expressed to David and the Constantinou management for arranging such a full, interesting and informative fam trip for the AGTO members and for the fun and friendship forged between the branch members.



AGTO Kent Branch Committee

Jim Silvester - Chairman

Carol Gower - Treasurer

Carol Blackmore - Secretary

Eileen Booker - Committee Member

David Steele - Board Director

Northern Branch Chairman's Message

I would like to express my grateful thanks to the Northern Branch Committee for the work they have done in the past year. I would in particular like to thank Mark Wilson, who recently stood down, for his contribution.

It has been a difficult year but membership has now stabilised and we look forward to increased activity

in the future. All branches suffer on occasions from a lack of volunteers, and Northern is no exception, so anyone who feels they could contribute would be more than welcome!

AGTO continues to go from strength to strength and Northern Branch are keen to play their part as the Association moves forward.

London Fam Trip with Ellen Smith Tours



Associate Member Ellen Smith Tours are running a Familiarisation Trip to London in January to coincide with Excursions™ at Alexandra Palace. A coach will run from the Manchester area, but there is space for other AGTO members to join us at the hotel. Coach travel will be provided during the weekend. A provisional itinerary is listed below:

Friday, 25th January 2019

Depart from the Manchester area and travel to London, making suitable stops on route. Alternatively, meet the group at the hotel. We enjoy dinner at the hotel in the evening.

Saturday, 26th January 2019

Enjoy a full English breakfast at the hotel before departing to Alexandra Palace for Excursions™ 2019. We have secured VIP Entry with complimentary Wine Reception on arrival, courtesy of Denbies Vineyard, Fast Track badging and entry to the show, and a special giveaway in the Street Market feature. There will be a visit to an attraction in the afternoon, TBA. We return to the hotel for dinner in the evening.

Sunday, 27th January 2019

After breakfast we depart the hotel

and meet our professional Tour Guide for a panoramic tour of the Chiltern Hills. We then travel to Windsor for a little free time before enjoying Afternoon Tea on the Thames! Dinner will be in the hotel in the evening.

Monday, 28th January 2019

We say goodbye to those who have joined the trip at Gerrards Cross after breakfast. For those coming back to the north of England, we make a stop at magnificent Blenheim Palace for a visit to include tea/coffee & cake before continuing homeward.

We are pleased to offer all of the above for the heavily discounted price of £149.00 per person sharing a twin/double room, £45.00 per person single room supplement. 1 room per group organiser. Included in the price is:

- 3 nights at The Bull Hotel, Gerrards Cross
sarova-bullhotel.com
- Full English breakfast each morning
- 3 course, choice menu dinner
- with tea/coffee each evening
- Executive Coach & Professional Tour Driver throughout (unless joining at the hotel then coach provided for the Saturday/ Sunday only)
- VIP Entry to Excursions™ 2019 at Alexandra Palace with visit to an attraction to be advised
- Guided tour of the Chiltern Hills, Afternoon Tea Cruise on the River Thames from Windsor
- Entrance to Blenheim Palace

with tea/coffee & cake (only for passengers joining the coach in Manchester)

In addition, the full amount paid will be refunded if you book your group with Ellen Smith Tours in 2019 or 2020!

For more information or to book, please contact Pam at Ellen Smith Tours on 01706 648126. £50.00 per person non-refundable deposit is due at the time of booking, balance due by 31st December 2018.

Discover Sicily



41 MANCASS members took to skies for an 11 Day visit to Sicily. The flight took us over the Alps with a great view of the Matterhorn poking through the clouds, then down the Italian coast to Catania.

With 198km to travel to our hotel we had planned a visit to the Villa Romans del Casale. I must say that the mosaics in this villa are the best I have ever seen, they are fantastic!

We arrived in Cefalu to find out that there was a Street Food festival taking place making progress to our hotel (Hotel Tourist) somewhat slower than anticipated. The location of the hotel is excellent, right on the beach and a nice 10-15 minute walk to the town. All settled in we were treated to a gala Night dinner.

For the next two days excursions were planned to Monreale and Palermo to see the Doumo, catacombs (not a pretty sight) and the historical parts of the city.

Erce perched on the top on the mountain, with its castle, Doumo and narrow streets was a nice place to visit even though we were in the clouds at times! Down by the coast the town of Castelmarre proved an excellent place to stop, relax and have lunch in the sunshine. Back at our hotel we were treated to a Sicilian Night with typical local food and even a folk group!

Next was a day off in lovely hot Cefalu. There was plenty to see and do in Cefalu or time to just relax around the pool.

After this is was goodbye to Cefalu and hello to

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4

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As a not for profit social enterprise, through our charities and initiatives we are able to give something back to the places and communities we operate in. The Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust supports walking projects and charities both in the UK and overseas. Whilst The Walking Partnership helps provide direct financial support to local walking clubs throughout the UK. If you're a member of a walking group it's free to join us as a partner. You will earn rewards and funding of up to £30pp for your walking group every time you or your group members book a holiday with us. We are also the official walking holiday partner of The Ramblers. We've invested millions of pounds, for more than 70 years, to educate and encourage everyone to look after our world today, for others to experience and enjoy tomorrow.

5

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Our knowledge and heritage in adventurous travel spans seven decades. When you holiday with us your group will be in the safe hands of experts. We are fully bonded and regulated with ATOL Licence, plus members of ABTA and AITO authorities for 100% peace of mind. Plus, we are also a BA Preferred Partner with our own in-house flights team who are adept in large group bookings. Add to that our Best Price Guarantee and you'll be hard pushed to find a better value or more financially secure group holiday.



Our holidays include: flights, accommodation, local transport costs, most meals and a dedicated leader!

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There's so much to see and do - your group can explore the British Isles, Europe or walk the world; cruise oceans, trek mountain ranges, ski and even take up a new hobby with us! When travelling in a group with any of our three travel brands you can venture to those places where you might not have been confident enough to travel on your own. And remember we can always create a bespoke itinerary to include most things on your wishlist.

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- ✓ Tailor-made holidays and itineraries to suit your requirements
- ✓ Expert, qualified leaders accompany your group on your holiday
- ✓ Value guaranteed with great discounts for groups of 16+
- ✓ Financial security, low deposits and no credit card fees
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- ✓ No single room supplements (on selected tours)

START NOW & SAVE

Organising a group holiday can be an exciting but an onerous responsibility. There's so much to think about, so why not leave the hard work to us? Our Private Groups Specialists can put together specific walking programmes for your walking club or group of friends and if our brochured arrangements don't suit you, we will aim to adjust a holiday to suit your needs.

We want your group to travel with us not just once, but for many years to come. As a thank you for your continued loyalty we offer a range of exclusive benefits, including our **Group Organisers Reward Scheme** (see right) as well as other great offers, such as 5% discount on the standard holiday price for groups of 16 and more people. ***For further details, please contact Amber, our Private Groups Manager, on 01707 386723 or email groups@rwhtravel.com.**



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Acireale via Mount Etna. We couldn't have asked for a much clearer day to go up to the top (well nearly, as we didn't get quite to the top) of this active volcano. There was plenty of steam and smoke though. We did, however get to walk around on of the craters formed from the last eruption and the ground is still very warm from that!

Our hotel Acireale was right in the heart of the town on a pleasant square with gardens. All the towns' attractions, shops etc were relatively close by. As Acireale is situated up the hillside it was about a 30 minute walk down through the nature reserve to the harbour and Lido. It is worth doing and you could even get the local bus back if you didn't fancy the walk!

Our next stop was Taormina and I think the pictures tell the story - a lovely place with narrow streets and a Greek/Roman amphitheatre.

Another day off followed and for some the call of the sea won while others decided to explore Acireale.

We were soon on the road again with a full day out to Syracuse & Notto. It was very hot and tiring but we saw a lot of Sicily's history.

After this we were off into the hills again, with a more relaxing day following *The Godfather* trail in Savoca and Forza D'argo. Afterwards we had a fantastic Sicilian seafood lunch and that was after the wine tasting!

Our last full day today involved a mass transit to Catania for the day! Some did the beach and the rest explored far and wide in Catania. It was a nice day out.

We even managed an ice cream and people watched a wedding back in Acireale!

Sadly, all too soon it was time to depart for home. It had been a wonderful holiday, with lovely company, a fantastic driver and great guides.

Many thanks to Success Tours for arranging the holiday, it was fabulous!

Bob Walker, MANCASS



AGTO Northern Branch Committee

Jenny Robinson - Chairman

Avril Redfern - Treasurer

Pam Wharton - Secretary

Bob Walker, Ray Howarth and Hazel Jones - Committee Members



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Southern Branch's Chairman's Message

Greetings everyone. I hope that you have all enjoyed our amazing summer, either with your groups or on personal vacations. Now is a busy time for Group Organisers planning ahead for 2019 and beyond. I am sure you will want to join us for our next two events, our AGM on Monday 29th October at Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking, (yes, an opportunity for a tour and some sampling!) and our winter Branch Meeting on Friday 8th February at Hampton Court Palace. Members from other branches are always welcome to attend Southern's meetings.

I attended Southern Branch's Familiarisation Day to Westminster Abbey, the Supreme Court and the Cavalry Museum on 19th September and thoroughly enjoyed the day. Thanks to Lucy Hillyard for arranging this super day, and for the venues for welcoming us and showing us around. These meetings and visits

are always a good way of getting ideas for future visits for our groups.

Another really important date for your diaries is the AGTO Showcase Weekend and AGM at Eastwood Hall, Nottingham from 22-24 February, 2019. The costs are being kept as reasonable as possible and this is a location that many of us should not find too difficult to reach. There will be a choice of Familiarisation visits on Saturday and our branch had requested that there be another half day optional Familiarisation visit on Sunday to make it worthwhile travelling to this area - and I am pleased to hear the news that this idea has been implemented. I am hoping that there will be a good representation from Southern Branch, which is, of course, the largest branch in the country.

This is the first report I am writing to be included in the AGTO National Newsletter in a new magazine

format with pictures and reports from branches. Each branch has a generous allocation of space and it is hoped that branches will submit interesting reports of visits and details of their events. Some branches, like Southern, might continue with their own newsletter, but we fully intend to support this great idea to have a more appealing windowcase and we will be submitting some of our articles. The articles, reports and photographs can be so inspirational to other organisers! It also proves to our Associate Members that we are active organisers.



BRANCH MEETING

11.00am, Friday 8th February 2019, Hampton Court Palace, East Molesey, Surrey, KT8 9AG

After the meeting we will be given a guided tour of this stunning royal palace and gardens, including the 'new' Tudor kitchens, the maze and Great Vine. The building of the house was begun in the early 16th Century, and it became famous as the home of Henry VIII and his wives. Other royals added and adapted the house into an elegant baroque palace with splendid interiors. Later, impoverished 'grace and favour' aristocrats moved in. It was opened to the public by Queen Victoria and has remained popular with visitors, drawn to the grandeur, the ghosts and the fabulous art collection.

Further details and booking information will be available nearer the time.

Please contact Jackie Ring, Southern Branch Secretary, for further information and details on how to book.

Tel: 01483 824450 Email: ring_jackie@yahoo.co.uk



image © Historic Royal Palaces

A MEETING AT POLESDEN LACEY



Usually I find attending meetings a chore, but this is not the case with AGTO because we meet at such interesting and beautiful places. The Southern branch meeting in July at Polesden Lacey near Dorking was no exception.

The property is run by the National Trust. They provide plenty of car and coach parking, a restaurant, a shop, guided tours of the garden and specialist talks. Although many coach companies use it as a refreshment stop, I would recommend that you spend all day at the venue.



We were given an information pack, informed about the facilities and told about the history of the house. The house was built in 1821 by Thomas Cubitt; it was remodelled in 1902-6 by Sir Ambrose Poynter and again by Mewes and Davis (architects of the Ritz Hotel) for Mrs Margaret Greville, who bought the house in 1906.

The exterior of the house retains the air of a Regency villa and roughcast and yellow-washed walls. The interiors are of Edwardian style. The formal gardens are very colourful. We learnt on the garden tour that the roses require a lot of care and attention due to the fact that they are in chalk and that is not their natural environment.



Mrs Margaret Greville was the daughter of William McEwan, a brewery multimillionaire who was later elected as an MP. In 1891 she married the Honourable Ronald Henry Fulke Greville. She organised many parties and soirees for royalty and the social elite. She was a close friend of Queen Mary. Margaret bequeathed her jewels to Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, including a diamond necklace reputedly belonging to Marie Antoinette. A replica of one of the tiaras can be seen in the house.

Margaret had an internal telephone system installed in the house which was very advanced technology in its time. It made me smile to see the phone with an earpiece and speaker I wondered whether children in this century would have a clue what it was or how to use it.

For further information about group visits:

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/polesden-lacey/features/visiting-polesden-lacey-with-your-group

Telephone: 01372 452048

Pre-booking of groups is essential.

Anne Barnes 20235

FAM DAY AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Westminster Abbey promotional literature boasts of:

"One thousand years of history"

"So many secrets waiting to be revealed"

"Meet the greatest achievers"

"Be captivated by the space".

resting place for the great kings, queens, poets, musicians, scientists and politicians.

A visit to the Abbey provides what it promises in the literature. I cannot do it justice in this article and revealing too much would spoil your own visit.

Since 1066, the Abbey has hosted every coronation, and is the final

The day started with teas and coffee in the Cellarium Café where we

were greeted by Lucy Hillyard, the Travel Trade Manager at the Abbey. She must be congratulated for arranging the whole day of visits to Westminster Abbey, the Supreme Court and the Household Cavalry Museum.

I had previously been at the Abbey for a Carol Concert and sat in the Nave near the Grave of the Unknown



Warrior. From there you can see the screen in front of the Quire which is where I thought the Abbey finished. I had not appreciated that there are many other areas behind the screen containing magnificent architecture, memorials, sculptures and the newly opened Queen's Diamond Jubilee Gallery in the Abbey's medieval Triforium Gallery.

Although you can access the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Gallery via a lift, it is an advantage to take the stairs, so that you can view the roof areas, stained glass windows

and gargoyles which you cannot see from street level. Once in the gallery (70 feet above the Abbey floor) you will see a wealth of treasures and collections which highlight the many aspects of the Cathedral's history as well as uses today. Remember to look out of the windows for a view of the Palace of Westminster and over the balcony for a bird's eye view of the naves, altars and monuments.

Groups of up to 30 visitors can visit the Abbey during normal opening hours and should be accompanied by a Blue Badge Guide to gain the most out of their visit. On this occasion we were given a guided tour by a Verger who informed us of the Abbey's history and took us to some areas which are not usually open to the public such as the tomb of King Edward the Confessor. It must have been a spectacular tomb when it was covered in gems and decorations, however medieval pilgrims were prone to taking a souvenir from the tomb and only a few pieces remain at the top where they were unable to reach. The new stained glass window by David Hockney was still under

scaffolding while we were there, but has since been unveiled.

As with most familiarisation tours our visits are fairly short. I would recommend that you spend at least four hours at this venue and allow time for your guests to wander around on their own to go to the other places not on the tour.

Contact Details: Lucy Hillyard, Travel Trade

Email: Lucy.Hillyard@westminster-Abbey.org or tours@westminster-abbey.org

Telephone: 0207654 8587 Website: Westminster-abbey.org

Anne Barnes 2013S

For those who were able to, Lucy had arranged for us to return to the Abbey for Evensong at 5pm. This was a lovely experience sitting in the Quire stalls. It is sometimes Sung with a choir and sometimes Said, so do check if you want a particular type. Seats can be reserved so a group can sit together.

The Supreme Court



If you are interested in the law, architecture, portraits, history and a mixture of old and modern art, then this building is well worth a visit.

The Law - The Supreme Court is the final court of appeal in the UK for civil cases and for criminal cases from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It hears cases of the greatest public or constitutional importance affecting the whole population.

The Tour - Our tour was led by Albie, an experienced member of staff

who gave us an introduction to the court's role in the UK Justice System, and gave examples of the cases heard by the Court - such as how the judges debated and interpreted the law in the recent case brought before them of whether it is lawful for the Secretary of State to give Notice to exit the European Union without Parliament's prior authority.

We were lucky enough to attend on a day when no cases were being heard so we were able to enter all three courtrooms and had special access

to the Justices' Library, which is rarely open to the public. Please be aware that in the event that a courtroom needs to be used for an urgent court matter or event, the tour route might be amended slightly.

Albie pointed out that almost all the proceedings are filmed and broadcast on the court website and sometimes on major TV and radio news networks.

The Artworks - The building is full of old art in the form of stained glass windows, paintings, and a tapestry. It also contains modern art such as poems and quotes engraved in glass panels, the Supreme Court Emblem, carved benches and a Welsh slate clock to name a few.

Comprehensive lists of the artworks both new and old can be found on:
www.supremecourt.uk/visiting/art-collection
www.supremecourt.uk/visiting/new-artwork

The Architecture – Standing outside

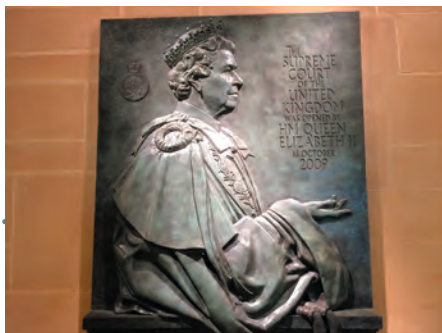


the court you will be impressed by the detailed carving on the corner turrets, parapets and frieze. Scenes on the frieze include King John handing the Magna Carta to the barons of Runnymede, the granting of the charter of Westminster Abbey and the Duke of Northumberland offering the crown of England to Lady Jane Grey.

Inside the building you will find examples of a vaulted fan ceiling with the Royal Coat of Arms at the centre, moulded timber beams, tall stained glass windows, an enclosed courtyard, marble busts and chandeliers.

Photographs – At last we have a venue where you can take as many photos as you like because they are so proud of the building!

Booking – The building is open to the public from 9.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday and any member of the public can enter the building during these hours without booking in advance.



The venue offer pre-booked guided tours for up to 25 people, led by a member of Court staff which will take about an hour and a half. The tour may change according to the court schedule. The tours are held on most Fridays throughout the year (except Public holidays) at 11am, 2pm and 3pm. Tours may also take place on selected dates in August.

Tours cost £7.00 per person, Concessions £5.00 per person and Free to people under 16 and carers for wheelchair users. Payment can be made on arrival for your tour by cash or card.

To make a booking – Call on 020 7960 1900/1500 or email: enquiries@supremecourt.uk

Our thanks to Rebecca Lowson, Media and Communications Manager, for arranging this visit.

Phone: 020 7960 1894
 Email: rebecca.lowson@supremecourt.uk



Next.... Cavalry Museum

The next visit on our itinerary was a short walk away at the Household Cavalry Museum in Horse Guards. We were greeted and shown round by Alice Pearson.

Alice explained the very interesting history of the two regiments, the Life Guards and the Blues and Royals, and why they are based here at the site of the old Palace of Westminster and the original official entrance to Buckingham Palace. She also told us about the Garrison Inspections which take place every day without fail at 4pm – this was introduced by Queen Victoria who had

made a surprise visit one day and found it to be a dirty place with no-one on duty (except for a few drunken soldiers and some loose women!) She said that they had to improve and to check on this there would be an inspection every day for 100 years! At the end of this period, Queen Elizabeth was told, 'We've finished, Ma'am' - to which she replied 'Carry On'. So they do. This is a short but interesting thing to watch when you know the stories behind the ceremonies – and we can do ceremonies and pageantry well, can't we?



We learnt about the different parts of the uniform and the military history behind what they wear and do – why they have a length of gold rope, and how they keep their boots so shiny (and how long it takes to do this) – and the considerable rivalry between the two regiments, and the competitiveness to win points and get the best jobs on the following day, or at least avoid the worst.

As well as these ceremonial duties, they are all serving in the Army and can drive a tank on active deployment as well as they can sit on a stationary horse in central London for hours. We were able to see the horses through glass (so they aren't disturbed) – and it was interesting to hear about how they are trained and the sorts of duties they are involved in – and where they have their holidays.

The Museum is a small venue so large numbers would be divided up into smaller groups to be taken round. As well as the Garrison Inspection at 4pm, there is also the Changing of the Guard at 11am – I recommend seeing at least one of these as it brings the ceremonial pageantry to life, whatever fits in with your itinerary.

They recommend a visit to the nearby Guards Chapel – which does sometimes also have short lunchtime concerts (free, but donation welcome) – check their website.

Further information on group bookings
www.householdcavalrymuseum.co.uk/group-bookings/

Our thanks to Alice Pearson, Director/Head of Commercial Development and Operation, for arranging this visit for us. Phone: 020 7930 3070
 Email: museumdirector@householdcavalry.co.uk

Cardiff & South Wales with Woking Area U3A

About 3 years ago I went on an AGTO fam trip to Cardiff area and I finally got around to taking a group back there. We stayed in a different hotel, with a slightly different itinerary but used Mainline coaches, who had looked after us on the fam trip and whose drivers with local knowledge were a great advantage. They are a local family business based in South Wales with a large fleet of comfortable modern coaches. Our

coach was just 8 weeks old and our driver, Jim, was extremely helpful. We stayed at Cardiff's largest hotel, the 4* Clayton Hotel, which is part of the successful Irish hotel chain. It is a high rise building ideally situated in the town centre but with a good set up for their frequent coach clients. The staff all went out of their way to look after us and to ensure we were happy with everything.

Our 4-night trip started with a visit en route to see Brunel's SS *Great Britain* in Bristol, the world's first great ocean liner. A one hour guided tour of this historic ship brought it to life with the sounds and even smells of life on board ship at that time in 1843.

Our first day in Wales started with St. Fagans National History Museum where we saw many varied buildings

from around different areas of Wales reconstructed, including a farm house, bake house and shops to a chapel and the surprise interior of St. Teilo's church. We drove to Big Pit Coal Museum on a very scenic route through the Rhonda Valley and over the highest point in South Wales. The underground tour is not for the faint-hearted but we were pleased that many were determined not to miss out and our hard hats were certainly needed as some areas were very low and we all experienced some 'head banging'...Do we look like miners?

Our next day started with a step back in time at the haunted Llancaiach Fawr Manor, a living history museum in Treharris. Costumed servants were our guides, speaking in old English and showing us around the Great Hall, bedrooms and finally the kitchens, sharing stories of the day-to-day life in 1645 for themselves & the Prichard family during the reign of Charles I & the Civil War. The Royal Mint Experience at Llantrisant was next where we enjoyed a very informative factory tour and time in the exhibition afterwards. It's amazing what we learnt about the history of our coins and their production of 90 million coins weekly here since 1968.

Our last full day was dedicated to Cardiff with a blue badge guide, starting at the Cardiff Bay Barrage in beautiful sunshine and were lucky enough to see the barrage lift for



a yacht and RNLI training in the bay. We then drove to the Mermaid Quay area & the Millennium Centre for our behind-the-scenes tour of this iconic building with its mystical inscription, which was opened on 26th November 2004 by the Queen. The highlight was the amazing auditorium, which seats over 2000 people. We then walked around the vibrant Mermaid Quay and here we arrived outside the Welsh Assembly in the warm sunshine. We had some free time either in the town centre or at the National Museum, which houses many famous art treasures, and then onto the amazing Llandaff Cathedral to see Jacob Epstein's stunning *Christ in Majesty*.

The last evening was at Cardiff Castle with a short tour of some of the elaborate rooms created by the 3rd Marquis of Bute, which were quite stunning. We then enjoyed a Welsh Banquet in the undercroft of

the Castle with a harpist and musical entertainment by the very talented performing staff.

It was then time to leave Wales homeward bound, with an early visit to the fascinating Newport Transporter Bridge across the River Usk, which opened in 1906 and is still operating, and we enjoyed a ride on the gondola. We had a few hours at Dyrham Park (NT) to enjoy the rest of the day in the house and gardens before returning home. There was some surprise at just how much Cardiff had to offer and we still felt there was enough to return another day maybe to see a performance in the Millenium Centre. We also learnt how different things are in Wales with traffic regulations and fines, litter fines, free prescriptions and free university tuition fees, etc. All very interesting....

Sheila Whittaker S2331



Weekend in Lucerne

Following a thoroughly enjoyable weekend to the Christmas Markets in Montreux in December 2016 organised by AGTO Associates STC (Switzerland Travel Centre), my group were so impressed with Switzerland that they asked about visiting again at a different time of year. So using their knowledge of the area and what they knew my group would like, STC planned an interesting itinerary for a three-night trip to Lucerne in June.

It's only a short flight to Zurich and then a train ride (with reserved seats) direct from the airport through beautiful countryside to Lucerne, where we arrived in the early afternoon. A taxi had been arranged to take our luggage to the hotel, which meant we could take the short walk along by the river and past the famous bridge unencumbered. The hotel was the excellently-placed Wilden Mann – this building is over 500 years old and full of character, with each room being different. We were welcomed with iced tea and after a freshen-up, we were taken on our own guided tour of the town. It was so nice to have a guide to ourselves – she was very informative and gave us some extra tips, such as recommending a self-service cafeteria where we could have a fresh lunch at a reasonable price on the roof-top terrace of an ordinary-looking department store. Dinner that night was included at the hotel in their traditional restaurant.

The next full day was our trip to Rigi 'Queen of the Mountains', the main highlight of our weekend. A detailed itinerary had been booked by STC – first we had a cruise across the lake on a paddle steamer to Vitznau (these don't operate at all the times, so this sailing was specifically booked) and then a cog-wheel train to take us up the mountain. We were impressed that seats had been reserved for us at the very back of the train, giving us the best views as we went up to the summit. Once we arrived at the top, the view was breath-taking – the air was clear and fresh, and we could see for miles to the wonderful panorama of the snow-capped Alps. After lunch and time to wander, we returned part of the way on the cog-wheel railway, and then took a cable car back down the mountainside to the lake at Weggis where another paddle steamer took us back to Lucerne. An added bonus was that people in national costume played alpine horns at each landing stage. There was a short, interesting commentary on the boat, and, of course, all these different modes of transport ran to time and every connection fitted perfectly! We had earlier earmarked a restaurant serving traditional food in the town for our evening meal – and while sitting outside we could hear some 'oompah' music coming from a nearby building, so afterwards we ventured in and were treated to part of a concert over coffee and a nightcap – a great bonus to end the day.

The next day was a 'free day' so people did a variety of things – there is a wide choice in and around the town. A ticket from the hotel gives free travel around the town, plus discounts in various shops and attractions, and our train tickets give a 50% discount if people wish to travel further afield. We went to the Glacier Museum which was very interesting and topical, on a sightseeing train, some shopped for cheese and chocolate (one shop had a whole wall of the stuff), and we all made a trip in an old



funicular up to a hotel with wonderful views where we relaxed over a coffee for a while.

On the final morning, some of us walked around the lake shore to visit the home of Richard Wagner – an enjoyable flat and quiet walk through woods and parks, passing yacht marinas and people who were sunbathing and swimming in the lake, and all so near to the main town. There had been the option for any who wanted to, to take an earlier train to the airport and have time in Frankfurt, but we all decided that Lucerne was too nice a place to leave early.

I had feedback from one lady as soon as we got home to say that this was the best holiday she had ever been on!

Switzerland has a reputation for being quite expensive, but if you know that, you can plan and be prepared for it. We went on an early-morning flight and returned in the evening to make the most of the time we had there. We had a full itinerary and a lot was included - so we didn't spend much more while we were there. I thought that a glass of wine was a reasonable price - until I found out that the measures were about a third the size of what I'm used to! It didn't seem right to order a 'double wine'. I would rather spend three nights somewhere nice and

pack all this in, than four nights which are cheaper and then you have lots of extras to pay for when you are there.

If you would like to find out more about taking your group to Switzerland, STC runs regular Workshops where they explain all you need about visiting and the various options for travelling around there. Contact Adrian Millan or anyone else from their Groups Dept: 0207 420 4903.

Jackie Ring S2221

CHATHAM DOCKYARD INCLUDING *CALL THE MIDWIFE* TOUR



We recently took a large group to Chatham Dockyard, which we booked through Groups Direct. It was an extremely successful day and so good to receive nothing but compliments from everyone. Our package included a ropery tour, *Call the Midwife* tour and a two course lunch with tea/coffee.

For the tours we had to split into two groups as each tour takes a maximum of 25 people. The

ropery tour, which is included free with normal admission, was very informative and some members assisted in making ropes. The *Call the Midwife* tour is extra and is led by a midwife who shows where filming takes place as well as some of the props. The lunch was superb and we were all seated together in a private area. The timings were all arranged for us by Groups Direct and worked perfectly. Some members even

managed to squeeze in visits to the ships/submarine which are also included in the normal admission price.

Beryl Edwards, Wayfairer S2335
Sylvia Bliss, WOFA, S2408

See also Group Direct's article in July's *Group Leisure & Travel* magazine with more pictures as Gavin joined the tour - thanks for the mention of AGTO!

AGTO Southern Branch Committee

Sue Povey - Chairman
Anne Barnes - Treasurer
Jackie Ring - Secretary
Diane Salter, Pat Lake, David Lote,
Lesley Terrell - Committee Members

Western Branch's Chairman's Message

The final edition of *Western Ways* magazine, as an individual entity, has been issued and we are excited that our Branch news and articles will now be incorporated into the AGTO national newsletter. This will be a wonderful way of promoting what we, in Western Branch, are involved in, what our members are organising and where they are taking their groups. We will also be able to promote our own Branch events more widely.

We encourage all Western Branch GTOs to continue to send reports,

stories, events and ideas to Helen as she will remain the co-ordinator for input into the AGTO Newsletter. Email: helenssims@aol.com or post to: 24 Bownham Park, Rodborough Common, Stroud, GL5 5BZ

Articles should be in Word format, with picture contributions as separate, high resolution jpegs. Helen is also happy to receive any hand-written articles if you don't have access to a computer. Copy deadlines to Helen will be by the middle of the months March, June, September and December.

I am looking forward to seeing you all at the AGTO Western Branch AGM & Fam Visit to Cornwall, Friday 19th - Sunday 21st October 2018.

If you haven't booked your place yet please see the information in the previous edition of *Western Ways*, and contact Martin Gibson on mgibson.gts@talktalk.net immediately!

Western Branch Spring Event

Combined weekend activities:

**AGTO National AGM, AGTO Showcase Weekend and Western Branch meeting
22nd - 24th February 2019 Eastwood Hall, Nottingham NG16 3SS**



Don't miss out on what will be an exciting and informative weekend of excursions, networking meetings, entertainment – making new contacts and reconnecting with old friends.

Located in an unforgettable setting, easily accessible and just a short drive away from the city of Nottingham, Eastwood Hall is a contemporary hotel and conference venue. It is the perfect blend for business or pleasure with 150 comfy guest rooms, fresh dining options and a leisure club where you can unwind after a long day.

Warwick Castle Visit

In April, Carol Swiecicka, with her husband Richard, took a group of 42 to Warwick Castle for a Medieval Banquet & visit to Stratford.

We visited the Castle first in the afternoon, enjoyed looking around

and then travelled a short distance to the Q Hotel at Chesford Grange.

It was a quick change into our medieval costumes before returning to an evening of fun and laughter. We had paid extra to have the event to

ourselves in the Undercroft. It was such a laugh seeing how the group had dressed as nobody really knew what others were wearing until we came to catch the coach.

We had one lady drop out in the

morning so even our coach driver got kitted out with the help of one of our talented members, who, with the extra bits people had brought along, quickly made up an outfit.

The entertainment was brilliant and I don't think most have laughed so much for ages, though it could also have been something to do with the wines that were flowing. The food was very good and plentiful and all the staff were excellent.

The next day was St. George's Day

and also Shakespeare's birthday and as we were visiting Stratford-upon-Avon most of the group also wore their costumes for the day. In the morning we had a visit to the RSC for the exhibition *The Plays the Thing*, but having booked for 10.30 and the sign saying open from 10.30, the staff said it opened at 11.00.

Most of my group found the attitude and exhibition more in line for school parties and were very disappointed. The RSC has since apologised and refunded some of the charges.

In the afternoon we visited Shakespeare's schoolroom, which was excellent. Some had a go at writing with a quill and remembered the days when we were at school and used fountain pens and real ink. We still managed to get ink blobs until we were shown how to write properly.

Most of the group remarked they will never forget the trip as it was one of the best they had ever been on and laughed so much.

Carol Swiecicka 1656W



Westland Retirement Association visit Cotswold Farm Park

I took my group to Adam Henson's Cotswold Farm Park. We stopped at the M5 Gloucester Services, which is the best service station on the run from Yeovil; a little expensive though, and it was pouring with rain when we arrived there, though luckily it had stopped before we got to the park.

The Cotswold Farm Park proved to be very interesting. They are in the process of making a visitor centre and enlarging the restaurant and shop, which will be an improvement. The site is very accessible and has concrete, gravelled and grassy walkways. They run a safari tractor around the farm which covers quite a few acres.



The farm has a lot of rare breeds on show and lots of things to do and see. We saw some day old pigs which were very sweet, but they have pork sausages on their menu!

There are various animals from rabbits to any domestic animal you can think of and various shows going on.

All in all it was an enjoyable day and the sun shone for part of the day, which always helps.

June Coleman 1888W

www.cotswoldfarmpark.co.uk

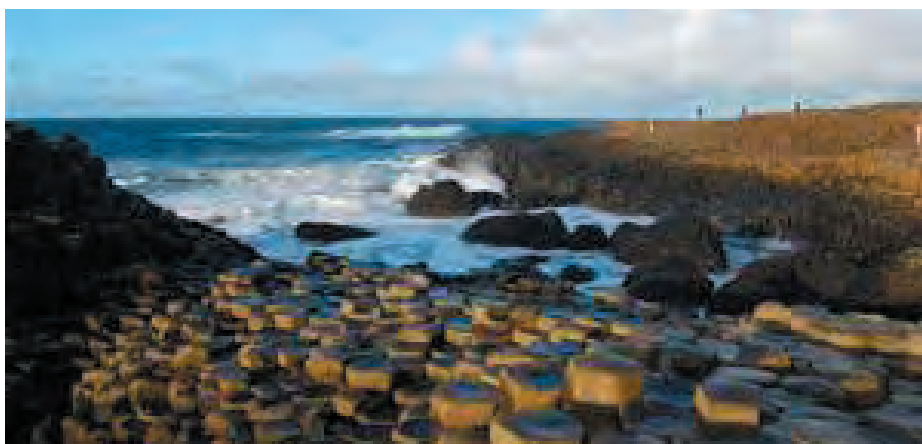


5 Day short break to Titanic Museum

On Sunday 1st July my group set off from Weston-super-Mare for this trip to Ireland. We travelled to Pembroke Docks, then on to Rosslaire and spent the first night in Wexford. This trip was put together by myself and David Lote, one of our associates.

On the Monday morning after breakfast we began our journey up the east coast, stopping en route at Powerscourt House for a visit to the house and gardens and lunch. After lunch we called in at Powerscourt Waterfall, the highest in Ireland, but due to the drought in Ireland there was not a lot of water tumbling down! After these stops we made our way to Belfast for a two night stay.

The next day we travelled to The Giants Causeway, a very interesting place.



From there we made our way to The Bushmills Distillery, the oldest distillery in Ireland, where we had a tour and finished off with a taste of the whiskey.

We boarded the coach back to Belfast and on the way we went down the Falls Road to view the Wall Murals and the Peace Gate.

Next morning we set off for the Titanic Museum. On the journey you could see the two massive cranes named Samson and Goliath that dominate the skyline.

The Titanic museum is a fantastic building and it is something Belfast must be very proud of. This was the reason for organising this tour and we were not disappointed. It made the long journey worthwhile and after five hours at the museum we moved on to Stormont for a one hour tour. However, because of a mix up with the security guard and myself, we thought the tour was cancelled, but we were allowed to go up to the building to take photos.

We then left for Dublin for our last night. My friends and I found a lovely Irish pub in which to spend three hours singing and enjoying Irish dancing.

The next morning we caught the ferry home. It was a long, but very enjoyable, tour and our thanks go to David and his company and Mainline Coaches and driver Stuart for making this tour a memorable five days.

The late Dave Tysall 1607



AGTO Western Branch Committee

Roger Sims - Chairman

Martin Gibson - Treasurer

Gill Brooker - Secretary

Helen Sims, David Lote, Andy Holmes and Martin Hay - Committee Members

Scottish Region Update

It is great news that National Trust Scotland have agreed to work in partnership with AGTO and its members to offer complimentary access to all properties and gardens to AGTO GTO members. This is in line with the National Trust in England and offers members access to 88 properties and 76,000 hectares of countryside FREE OF CHARGE.

To celebrate the partnership with the National Trust Scotland (NTS) a successful fam trip was organised with NTS through David Urquhart Travel to the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum in November. Despite the weather being a little chilly and sometimes wet, a very good informative day was had by all. Followed by a magnificent afternoon tea, amazing haggis bon bons, sandwiches, lemon possets and scones.

Our thanks go to Sandrine and Liz from NTS, our very own Board Director Emma McMillan for the organisation of the day and a very special thanks to our very knowledgeable guide dressed in traditional costume, pictured below.

Holiday Highlights

To celebrate our partnership with AGTO, David Urquhart and The New Lanark Mill are hosting a member's event which will be free.

Come along free of charge to enjoy great hospitality and meet your fellow AGTO members and the David Urquhart Group Bookings Team at New Lanark World Heritage Site, which is a beautifully restored 18th century cotton mill village situated close to the Falls of Clyde. Discover the fascinating history of New Lanark and the life and times of mill manager and social pioneer Robert Owen in the award-winning New Lanark Visitor Centre. As you explore the village it is easy to imagine how people lived and worked in Owen's time. A highlight of any visit is the fascinating Annie McLeod Experience ride, which features the ghost of mill girl Annie who magically appears and takes you on a journey back in time to 1820.

What's included

- Free trip on behalf of AGTO & New Lanark Mill
- Buffet lunch
- Guided tour of the New Lanark Mill with presentation
- Travel Throughout
- Pick Up Information
- Pick up likely to be: Edinburgh TBA and Glasgow TBA





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AGTO members are welcome at any of the listed Branch and National events.For more information go to the Branch pages at: www.agto.co.uk

Date	Branch	Events	Contact
5th Dec	Kent	Christmas Gathering at Penshurst Place Kent	James Silvester jamessilvester600@msn.com
27-30th Dec	Central	Twixmas in Scarborough Red Lea Hotel	Julia Passmore julia1cpassmore@aol.com
2019 26th Jan	National	Excursions™ 2019 Alexandra Palace London	www.excursionsshow.com
30th Jan	Scotland	New Lanark Mills, Scotland	www.newlanark.org
8th Feb	Southern	AGM at Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking, Surrey	Jackie Ring jackie@yahoo.co.uk
16th Feb	National	South West Show at Longleat	www.southwestgroupshow.com
1st March	National	Sainthill Manor, East Grinstead	www.sainthillmanor.org.uk
20-21st March	National	B.T.T.S at NEC Birmingham	www.tourismshow.co.uk
24th March	National	Holiday and Leisure Show Maidstone	www.theholidayandleisureshow.co.uk
26th March	Kent	Pre-opening Betteshanger Coal Museum	James Silvester jamessilvester600@msn.com
16th April	National	Go Travel Show at Kempton Park	www.gotravelshow.co.uk
16th April	Eastern	Family Day at Bletchley Park An opportunity to see the brand	Joan Hanks joan.hanks@virginmedia.com
29th April	National	Group Buyers Forum Painshill Park	www.stevereedtourism.co.uk
TBC May 2019	Kent	Visit Guildford and Wisley Gardens	James Silvester jamessilvester600@msn.com
14th June	Eastern	The Shuttleworth Collection, Old Warden and The Swiss Gardens	Joan Hanks joan.hanks@virginmedia.com
15th June	Western	Branch Meeting and Visit to Castle and Gardens at Sherborne Castle	Martin Gibson mgibson.gts@talktalk.net
1st July	Kent	Ship Visit, Boudicca with Fred. Olsen, Dover	Martin Hay (01202 027559) martinhay@gocruise.co.uk
27-29th Sept	Western	AGM Weekend at Salisbury and surrounding area	Martin Gibson mgibson.gts@talktalk.net
14th Oct	National	Group Buyers Forum Salford Quays	www.stevereedtourism.co.uk
19th Oct	Eastern	Family Day at Hampton Court, River Trip and much more	Joan Hanks joan.hanks@virginmedia.com

Theatre Tip

Our resident critic, Carlie Newman, reviews *42nd Street*, playing now at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, London.

A special gala evening was held to introduce Bonnie Langford as the new Dorothy in this wonderful musical. 42nd STREET (Theatre Royal Drury Lane, London booking until 5 January 2019 Box office: 0844 412 2955) shows that the West End can present another musical with outstanding dancing.

In a very different style from some of the other musicals of the same era, this show opens with the curtain going up on a row of dancing feet. From then on we witness fantastic tap dancing from the two leads as well as a large well drilled chorus. The show bills Bonnie Langford as the star but actually she is not the main character. As in the 1933 movie, the story is about one of the chorus, Peggy (Clare Halse), who has come from out of town to try to make her way on Broadway. She manages to get a job in the chorus of a new musical. When the older star, Dorothy Brock (Sheena Easton), breaks her ankle - partly the fault of Peggy - the rest of the cast persuade the director, Julian Marsh (Tom Lister) to give her a chance to play the lead.

Langford gets to sing a couple of songs which show that besides being able to dance, Bonnie has a good singing

voice. She puts across her songs as an actress. There is a lovely rendition of *I only have eyes for you*.

However, the two stars of the show are young Clare Halse, who dances superbly and sings attractively alongside Tom Lister as the dominating director, Julian. There is, naturally, a comedy duo in the shape of Emma Caffrey and Christopher Howell who are great singing *Shuffle off to Buffalo*. The fantastic choreography of Randy Skinner and direction by Mark Bramble keep all the cast literally on their toes.

There are some excellent dance sequences such as a mirror at the back of the stage reflecting the dancing girls spinning around. The huge chorus as well as the leads all wear beautiful costumes, with many changes of dress, some of them very exaggerated. As in the original Broadway musical in the early 1980s many of the lyrics are distinctly sexist in tone but songs such as *We're in the money* with the chorus tapping on huge nickels and dimes will have you almost leaping in joy!

Rating *****

(Booking until 5 January 2019. Box office: 0844 412 2955)



THE LAST WORD...



In the last couple of months as Chief Executive of AGTO, I have been wondering about an issue close to my heart, and no doubt close to many other heads of similar organisations driven by a membership model – that of keeping associations relevant.

In an ever competitive and challenging market, Return on Investment has never been more important. Where should budgets be allocated to help achieve business objectives? What benefits can be gained by joining an association? Which one should I choose? Should I be a member of more than one?

In a world where technology and social media allow individuals to gather information and network online for free, professional associations must evolve and change their offering to members to stay relevant. Those that don't will face a worrying future.



We know that some of the clear benefits of joining an association include being the voice of an industry and being represented at the 'top table'; prestige; education content; events conferences; networking; special membership offers and rates and commercial business advice.

But, the value placed on these member benefits seem to be decreasing across generations. At AGTO we know that the world of group travel organisers is changing. We know that millennials who organise group holidays, whether they realise it or not, are very different to their predecessors. Where many baby boomers were attracted to membership organisations by simply 'being associated to it', millennials are far more demanding in questioning the 'value' of their membership subscription. They are used to accessing and receiving information digitally.

Let's face it, social networks provide easy and convenient ways for industry members to find each other and network, and the proliferation of online content has led to a massive amount of free access to information, insights and training that professionals used to be able to access only through association membership and industry conferences.

Whether a baby boomer or a millennial, the challenge for every association, AGTO included, is staying relevant in a digital age where information is at everyone's fingertips in seconds and we can communicate with virtually anyone anywhere. Professional associations have no choice but to think how their combination of experience, guidance, knowledge and trust can serve their members in a way that no one else can.

Every profession is living in what can only be described as a world of uncertainty. Associations and societies have a responsibility to try and make sense of that uncertainty and identify the emerging trends that are most likely to impact on them. What is the point of an association if it is not responsive and proactive in thought leadership and being a major player and influencer within their sector?

I have only touched on a few of the issues, but standing still and trusting members will renew their membership and relying on new members joining is not an option. Those that take this approach will not survive. It behoves all membership associations to look to their future and adapt.

*Wendy Hartley-Scarff,
CEO, AGTO*



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*The free place is not allocated until the guest target has been achieved and is a free berth not a free room; the target excludes 3rd/4th guests sharing. Free place Terms and Conditions apply. **Benefits are available on selected cruises. The group drinks party is for hosted groups only and is not applicable on cruises of two nights or less. Group Shore Tours are subject to charge. Group Shore Tours and exclusive use of on board facilities must be arranged prior to your cruise departure. Funding towards coach transfers relates to Eavesway services only. E&OE.

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