

The background of the entire page is a vibrant landscape photograph. On the left, a tall, slender palm tree with green fronds reaches towards the top. The foreground is filled with lush green grass and several purple flowers. In the distance, a blue body of water meets a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds. A small, dark island is visible on the horizon. The AGTO logo is positioned in the top left corner, and the title text is centered in the upper half of the image.

**AG  
TO**

ASSOCIATION OF  
GROUP TRAVEL  
ORGANISERS

# **SOUTHERN BRANCH**

## ***SOUTHERLY BREEZE***

**AUGUST 2019**

**In this issue:**

- **Dates for your Diary**
- **AGM and Fams Visits**
- **Branch Meeting Report**
- **Members' Trips and Ideas**

**[www.agto.co.uk/southern-branch](http://www.agto.co.uk/southern-branch)**

## Message from the Chairman



Hello Members,

I hope you have had a good summer and gained some new ideas for your group outings and holidays through your own travels. I have just travelled to Iceland and really loved its remoteness and awesome scenery and peace but not sure I could live with the threat of an imminent eruption. Now that Autumn approaches, it is the start again of a busy time for groups to travel.

Thank you for your continued support of Southern events. Our last two were extremely successful and well supported and I hope to see some newer members come along and join us in these useful and friendly days out. You will have details of our upcoming events and how to book within this newsletter. The committee have worked hard to secure interesting venues, so I look forward to meeting you at some of these events. Do, also, consider our short Familiarisation holiday at Cricket St. Thomas as we are very lucky to have been allocated this slot and it would be good to have places filled quickly

Happy Organising!

Sue Povey  
Chairman Southern AGTO

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### Places our members would recommend to visit.....

**Croydon Airport** is the site of London's first international airport. The hotel was used during WW2, and planes based here were used to defend Croydon and London. Winston Churchill had lessons here, and Amy Johnson and many celebrities flew from here. There is a Spitfire simulator which you can have a go on to test your flying skills. It is open on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month and free to visit. They will be celebrating their centenary next year, so that could be a good time to visit.

**The Painted Ceiling at the Old Naval College** in Greenwich has now re-opened following a major clean and restoration. It is easy to get to when travelling by Thames Clipper. There are a lot of different things to do at Greenwich such as the Cutty Sark and Market —the Old Brewery pub is recommended for refreshments, or a pie and mash shop.

**Layer Marney Tower** is an Tudor Palace in Essex, built to impress Henry VIII, and is recommended for a good day out. Your visit can include lunch or tea. They also arrange special events at Christmas time such as carols, plays, Christmas lunch, etc and seasonal decorations.

**Stationers' Hall** in London, where printing has been going on for 600 years, including the King James' Bible. The tour lasts 90 minutes and cost approx £10-£12. This can be combined with a visit to **St Brides Church** in Fleet Street.

**Bombay Sapphire** is a very interesting visit and includes tastings, and can be combined with a visit to nearby **Whitchurch Silk Mill**. Or a tour of **London's Beefeater Gin** can be combined with a fish and chips lunch and a visit to the **Cinema Museum**. Or **Silent Pool Distillery** (near Guildford) which is quite small but interesting.

**The Mini Factory** in Oxford—see report in Issue 3 of the National Newsletter.

**The Southern Branch Members extend a warm welcome to new members:**

S2809— Gwen Wright—The Arts Society, Cranleigh  
S2810— Jacqui Camfield—The Arts Society, Cranleigh  
S2811— David Apps—U3A, Croydon  
S2812— Robert Jarrett—N.E.U. East Surrey  
S 2813— Sunita Singal—Neil's Club  
S2814— Jacky Oakley— Camberley U3A  
S2819— Sharon Penfold—Friends of Shoreham Fort  
S2839— Walter Hill—British Masters Athletics Federation  
S2840— Barbara Frost—Liphook Young Wives  
S2841— Bob Jeffery—Eastbourne Rambling Club  
S2842— Pat Oldcom—Windsor  
S2843— William Dedman—Canors Leisure Centre  
S2848—Victor Shepherd—Chichester and District Gardens & Allotments Society  
S2849— Ruther Pearson—London Ashridge Circle  
S2850 - Balwinder Kaur—Mehak Travel Club  
S2851—Mark Chandler—London International Meet Up  
S2854— Keith Sutton—Burpham Bowling Club  
S2855— Anthony Lien—Royal European Tour  
S2856—Penny Kingsmill—Caterham & District U3A  
S2857 –Anne Brown—Camberley U3A MOTO Group  
S2858 –Bharti Kotecha

We look forward to meeting you at one of our meetings soon.

**AGTO SOUTHERN BRANCH**

**Officers and Committee Members are :**

Chairman:	Sue Povey
Treasurer:	Anne Barnes
Secretary:	Jackie Ring
Committee:	Sylvia Adams, Pat Lake

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Please note that due to the cost of printing and postage, Southerly Breeze will be sent by email to those members with an email address. If you require a paper copy for some specific purpose please let Jackie know. Paper copies will be posted as normal to those active members without computer facilities, and a few will also be available at Branch Meetings.

Some of the articles here will also appear in AGTO's new format newsletter. Members have expressed a wish for Southern Branch to continue to produce its own newsletter. The feasibility of doing this will be reviewed from time to time. .

# Dates for your Diaries

## SOUTHERN BRANCH

**Wednesday 25th September —ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING —Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre, Arundel**

**Thursday 3rd October —SOHO SCANDALS Guided Walking Tour—hosted by City and Village Tours**

**Friday 29th November—2- or 3-night Fam Weekend to Cricket St Thomas— hosted by Warner Leisure Hotels**

**We are very grateful to AGTO Associates and Venues for hosting our meetings. Please mention AGTO if you return with your Groups.**

## NATIONAL EVENTS

**Thursday 10th October— Group Leisure and Travel Show, Milton Keynes**

**Friday 21st—Sunday 23rd February 2020— AGTO NATIONAL SHOWCASE WEEKEND— Stratford upon Avon**

**Southern Branch Members are also welcome to attend other Branches' Meetings.**

**Picture on the front cover** — St Martin's in the Isles of Scilly. Please remember not to use pictures which may be copyright on your group's publicity material.

If you contact any of the attractions or suppliers mentioned here, please say that you read about them in *Southerly Breeze*, the Newsletter of the Southern Branch of AGTO.

Do you have any Recommendations, Tips or Hints which may help other GTOs, especially new ones, to organise a successful event or trip? Have you visited a particularly interesting place? Or enjoyed a successful holiday?

If so, please let me have your articles, photos and reports for inclusion in Southerly Breeze or AGTO's National Newsletter

**Jackie Ring: ring\_jackie@yahoo.co.uk or by post to  
14 Manston Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU4 7YE**

**SOUTHERN BRANCH**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**11.00am, Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2019**  
**at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre,**  
**Mill Road, Arundel, West Sussex, BN18 9PB**



WWT Arundel is one of nine wildfowl and wetland nature reserves managed by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, a nature conservation charity in the U K. On this 60-acre reserve, situated in the Arun valley, they provide a variety of habitats for its large number of different species of 'residents', as well as visiting wildlife.

After the meeting and visit to the WWT, you are free to wander around the lovely market town of Arundel to see what else there is which might be of interest to your group – perhaps the tea shops, Arundel Castle (paying your own entry) or the Cathedral, or nearby Amberley Museum.

Tea/coffee will be served from 10.30am.



**Please contact Jackie Ring, Southern Branch Secretary to book. Tel: 01483 824450 or Email [ring\\_jackie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ring_jackie@yahoo.co.uk)**

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**'SOHO SCANDALS' FAMILIARISATION TRIP**  
**Thursday 3rd October 2019 at 1pm**  
**hosted by City and Village Tours**

We will meet our guide outside Charing Cross Station, London

This tour includes VOX Wireless Tour Guide headsets for the guide to talk live to the group. This is not a taped commentary, but a Blue Badge guide talking to you live, over the noise around you. The sound is crystal clear and you never miss a word. This is a great chance to try out this guiding system.



We begin the walking tour down through Soho. We are immersed in the glamour and sleaze from the 1600s until the present day. You need very broad minds and stout shoes.

Total walking distance will be less than 2 kms. The guide will lead the group back to head home from Piccadilly Station, finishing at 3pm.

**Please let Pat Lake, [plake1970@aol.com](mailto:plake1970@aol.com) or 01608 643458 know if you would like to come on the trip.**

## **RHS GARDEN WISLEY –** **SOUTHERN BRANCH MEETING** **– JULY 2019.**

After the meeting, members had an opportunity to socialise during a lovely lunch. It was great to learn that many of the lunch ingredients were grown at Wisley.



Whilst most of the Southern Branch members enjoyed the horticultural tour lead by an experienced Gardener, I chose to take the shorter guided tour so that I could have more time to explore the garden and the Sculpture at Wisley Trail. The Sculptures will be displayed until 1 December 2019, featuring works by Henry Moore, Henry Bruce, Lynn Chadwick, Tracey Emin, Philip Haas, and Phillip King.

If you take your group, make sure that you allow a whole day. The gardens are vast but you don't realise how far you have walked because there is always something different around each corner which grabs your attention. The view of the valley from the top of the Rock Gardens was amazing, the Glasshouse was full of colourful plants, a waterfall and a hippo! The orchards will look fantastic when in flower or at harvest time. Other areas to enjoy are the herb garden, Bonsai walk, the colourful borders and the rose garden. As stated on the promotional material this is a "Garden for all seasons" and "Where inspiration grows".

Oops! I have to report that I got asked to leave the gardens. You will be relieved to know that it was not due to my bad behaviour, but unfortunately the gardens were about to close and I had simply run out of time.

I didn't get to see all of the gardens, so I am looking forward to revisiting it with my group.

### **Exclusive Group Benefits**

Discounted rates for groups of 10+

Ample free coach parking

Welcome Meet and Greet from a member of the Groups Team

Special group rates for admissions and catering

Free entry for coach driver and tour leader

Free refreshment voucher for coach driver

£5.00 discount retail voucher for all group members (minimum spend applies)

To book call 0207 831 3170

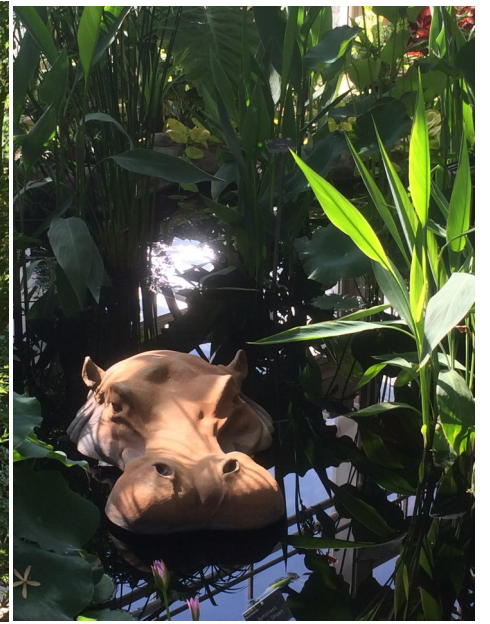
[www.rhs.org.uk/groups](http://www.rhs.org.uk/groups)

We are very grateful to Caroline Gilbert, RHS who was our host for the day.

[carolinegilbert@rhs.org.uk](mailto:carolinegilbert@rhs.org.uk) **01483 212 445**



*Anne Barnes, Southern Branch, 2023S*



## **DELIGHTS OF TUSCANY**

The upper Tuscany region was where I took my group of 34 in late May for 7 days. This was organised through Success Tours and it certainly turned out to be a very successful trip. We flew to Pisa and our itinerary was deliberately based in this region to avoid long coach journeys on the days out and to include some lesser visited destinations, whilst also including Florence. Our hotel, The Palace Hotel in Viareggio, was an excellent 4 star hotel with spacious rooms, classic and stylish furnishings and it served one of the best huge buffet breakfasts we have had. It also had a lovely roof terrace and bar for pre dinner drinks or watching the sunsets!

On our first morning we visited the delightful town of Lucca. There is so much to see here within its city walls: packed full of historic churches, towers, a palace, medieval architecture and small, local gastronomic shops and restaurants. Some of our group climbed up the 225 steps of Tower Guinigi to see the amazing views of the ancient buildings and mountains beyond! After a well earned break for lunch we then travelled on to the village of Borgo a Mozzano on the Serchio River to see the famous Ponte della Maddalena, known as the “devil’s bridge”. This is a very steep and narrow medieval bridge and worth visiting.



No visit to Tuscany is complete without a visit to Florence and so the next day we braved the crowds and had a walking tour of the city’s highlights. This was quite tiring for some on a hot day and it worked well to have free time to explore further or take a rest. Later in our itinerary we visited Pistoia, known as “little Florence” for its similar architecture but without the crowds. I highly recommend this town as it was most attractive, very easy to walk around and far less touristy.



On one of our other days, we visited the spa town of Montecatini Terme to see its famous spas fed by mineral water springs and the hill top town above, Montecatini Alto, that is reached by funiculaire (but there is also a small car park a pre booked coach can reach). After this we had a delightful but lazy afternoon visiting a lovely local vineyard and sampling some of their excellent wines.



On our free day, Viareggio had one of the largest markets in the area and so some chose to stay in the town and explore or shop and others found that the nearby railway station with regular trains and short journey times to Pisa, Lucca, Florence, etc gave them ample opportunity for independent sightseeing.

I was very happy with all the arrangements on this tour and can highly recommend being more selective when visiting an area as big and popular as Tuscany.

*Sue Povey S1972*

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### **More places our members would recommend.....**

**BATTLE PROMS Picnic Concerts** Held at various venues across the UK, with the nearest one for Southern Members at Highclere Castle. The programme includes Napoleonic re-enactments, Red Devils, Spitfire display, live cannon fire and fireworks to accompany the music. If you register your interest early, the organisers will extend the time limit for the early booking group discount—and as an AGTO member they will give you two free tickets if 12 or more in your group.



**DSI in Croydon** is where the costumes are designed and made for *Strictly*. The tour is called *Behind the Seams* and costs £25pp – and this includes a glass of champagne and chocolate. They can only take 10 or 15 at a time, so if your group is larger, then organise more than one. (*Thanks for recommendation—I've already booked by group in—Ed.*) A similar tour is that offered by **Angels in Hendon** which is where they make and store a large number of costumes for different theatrical shows. This is housed in a working warehouse which includes steps.

**The Poppy Factory in Richmond** You can see the poppies being made by disabled ex-servicemen, and on the tour you learn about the rules on how the different Commonwealth countries want their poppies and wreaths to be made. It is easy to get to Richmond by public transport, and easy access in the factory. Well worthwhile.

# **A HIDDEN TREASURE IN EAST SUSSEX**

## **A Day Trip to Michelham Priory, Hailsham**

I took 30 of my Stages members to the above Priory on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August this year.

What a wonderful day out we had, after a lovely ride through the East Sussex countryside we arrived at this wonderful location, a beautiful old Priory surrounded by stunning gardens and country views.

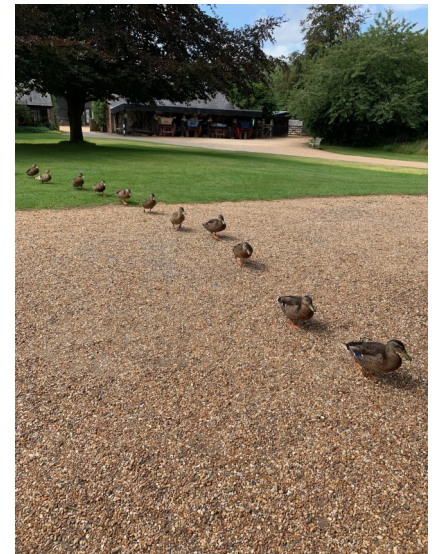
We had tea and biscuits on arrival in the courtyard Café, where they serve light lunches and all types of sandwiches and home-made cakes.

We had arranged a guided house tour with an excellent guide David who brought the house to life with his knowledge and humour.

We all then had lunch in the café which was very well prepared and served by very efficient staff.

After lunch we had free time to revisit the house and wander the estate, and feed the large amount of Ducks wandering the estate.

All of my group said what a wonder full day out we had and would like to go back again. For details [WWW.sussexpast.co.uk](http://WWW.sussexpast.co.uk)  
01323 844224



*Richard Moore (Chairman of Stages) Southern 2167*



## BRICK LANE MUSIC HALL

Stepping back in time – to a time when variety acts were performed in taverns, where singers, dancers and speciality acts ‘did a turn’ while the audience joined in (or not, as they wished but they usually did). We were treated to some great songs (if we couldn’t actually remember all of the words we just la-la-ed along because the tunes were so familiar), some rather risqué jokes (but no swearing) about life in general and love in particular, and they also played the spoons (a lost art). Acts included ‘Puttin’ on my top hat’, a selection of Marie Lloyd and Al Johnson songs, and Irish songs and dances. One of our members was called upon to assist the derring-do of the escapologist – ‘How did he do it?’ I could hear people ask! A lunch was included for our visit, although this can be afternoon tea if you prefer. Brick Lane Music Hall is not in Brick Lane (although it used to be which is how it got its name) but is now located close to London City Airport near the old docks, and housed in a fabulously decorated building, an old church, which added to the atmosphere. They are well set up for coaches, with a drop off right outside and free secure parking nearby, always a consideration when visiting London.



One of our members wrote this piece afterwards and sent it to the Music Hall – and it appears on their website. It’s so nice for them to receive such positive feedback.

*So did our audience think we passed muster with our Music Hall shows?*

*“It was absolutely wonderful! My Dad was an East End boy and was in at the tail-end of all the music halls when he was a little boy, taken by his parents. He taught me music hall songs instead of the usual nursery rhymes and I was pleased to join in on Wednesday with “The boy I*

*loves sits up in the gallery”! The whole thing was so professional, so slick, so perfect – I hugely enjoyed everything and was weak with laughing and singing – it was a blast! The food was so good too and so expertly served, great staff, and at the bar. Your costumes were great too! Thank you for a wonderful afternoon! I shall always remember it!”*



*Jackie Ring S2221*



**2- or 3-night FAM GETAWAY WEEKEND  
to WARNER LEISURE HOTELS,  
CRICKET ST THOMAS, SOMERSET  
Friday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019**



This Grade II listed Regency mansion doubled as Grantleigh Manor in BBC TV series *To The Manor Born*. More than 30 years later, there's still the invitation to enjoy the good life and the space and grandeur of it all. Historic rooms make it easy to wind down, while open fireplaces, squishy sofas, framed photos and tapestries in the lounges offer a traditional backdrop for afternoon teas. Plus, it's all enveloped by 160 acres of beautiful grounds which you can explore on foot – either joining the gardener's chatty tours or following the signposted trails through the formal gardens, woodland, and around the chain of lakes. Activities which Warners arrange during the day will keep you entertained, but if you wish to explore the area, Cricket St. Thomas is situated right in the middle of classic English fields and valleys, just 15 miles from Dorset's heritage coastline. After dinner, evenings play out with live music and shows.

**Included in your fam visit:**

- Welcome drinks reception
- Presentation by Warner Leisure Hotels
- Introduction to the team and orientation tour of the hotel and grounds
- Delicious breakfasts and three-course evening dining
- Daytime activities such as archery, Nordic walking, yoga and rifle shooting
- Complimentary access to the hotel's leisure facilities
- Live music and shows
- The chance to talk to the Warner group sales team with any questions or quotes
- Opportunity to see different accommodation options at the hotel

**DISCOUNTED PRICES**

- £100pp in Signature accommodation (based on two sharing) for two nights or
  - £140pp in Signature accommodation (based on two sharing) for three nights
- A limited number of twin/doubles are available as singles with a reduced supplement.  
Warner Holiday Protection can be added for an extra £9pp

AGTO Southern Branch thanks Warner Leisure for arranging the weekend and showcasing the holidays it can offer groups.

**For further details or to make a booking, please contact Jackie Ring, South Branch Secretary  
Call 01483 824450 or Email [ring\\_jackie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ring_jackie@yahoo.co.uk)**

