



# **SOUTHERN BRANCH**

## ***SOUTHERLY BREEZE***

**FEBRUARY 2020**

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

**AG  
TO**

ASSOCIATION OF  
GROUP TRAVEL  
ORGANISERS

## Message from the Chairman

Hello Members,

You should receive this just as some of us are about to attend the AGTO AGM and Showcase Weekend at Stratford upon Avon – I hope the current weather improves.



Since our last Magazine, Southern have held two very successful events. Our AGM was in Arundel at the WWT Wetlands Centre where we had a lovely room with views of the lakes and wildlife – a pleasant distraction! This was well attended and some of us enjoyed a guided tour after the meeting, whilst other members explored Arundel with all it has to offer to tourists. This was followed in November with a Familiarisation Stay at Warners, Cricket St. Thomas. 35 members attended this, including some from other branches of AGTO, and everyone enjoyed themselves and several made bookings for their groups. Do not forget, we are all able to attend events held by other branches if we wish and it is a good way to get first hand advice about other areas.

I am pleased to tell you that we have co-opted Wendy Savage, who works part time for Tourism South East, on to our committee. I am sure Wendy and her contacts will be a great asset to us and I welcome her. Our next branch event is on 20th April when our meeting will take place at the BA i360 Tower, Brighton. I look forward to meeting you there and chatting over a sociable lunch.

*Sue Povey*  
*Chairman Southern AGTO*

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

S2861—Ross Williams—8th Day UK Ltd  
S2865—Elizabeth Morris—Xcursions  
S2869—Jane Hopkin—The Arts Society, East Sussex  
S2875— Pat Lee—Woodley Townswomen's Guild  
S2876— Catherine Grancoise  
S2882—David Rowland—Visitez Londres Ltd  
S2892—Judi Willis—Woodley Women's Club  
S2893—Carolyn Wildman—Woodley Women's Club  
S2894—Joan Unwin—Newton Park Horticultural Society  
S2912—Martin Foster—M and M Historic Tours

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

**Picture on the front cover** — on a Hurtigruten coastal cruise in Norway in January, in search of the Northern Lights. Please remember not to use pictures which may be copyright on your group's publicity material.



## **Dates for your Diaries**

**21st—23rd February—AGTO Showcase Weekend and AGM—Ettingham Chase Hotel, Stratford upon Avon**

**20th April—i360 and The Royal Pavilion, Brighton—Southern Branch Meeting and Fam Visit**

**22nd April—GO Travel Show, Kempton Park**

**8th March—Spencer House, St James', London— Eastern Branch**

**20th June—Chavenage House, nr Tetbury— Western Branch**

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

### **AGTO SOUTHERN BRANCH**

**Officers and Committee Members are :**

Chairman:	Sue Povey
Treasurer:	Anne Barnes
Secretary:	Jackie Ring
Committee:	Sylvia Adams, Pat Lake, and Wendy Savage (co-opted)

### **Tips, Hints and Recommendations.....**

Anne Barnes has arranged tickets for her group to visit the Chelsea Flower Show. Although there is no discount, the benefit of booking as a group is that you DO get a ticket whereas members of the public don't necessarily get one.

Seegroups offer a discount to Hampton Court Flower Show, which seems to be more popular as it's less crowded. The exhibitors start to sell off the plants at 4pm on the last day, so that could be a good time to visit if you're interested in taking plants home..

Sylvia Adams has pointed out a potential issue over passports. Even though we have officially left the EU, if we (or anyone in our group) are planning to travel soon we need to check the new expiry date on our passports. This can be checked on the UK website. Hers was reduced by 15 months, which would be very important if the original expiry date was within the next two years, she wouldn't have six months left which is a requirement to travel. This is because if the passport had been renewed for more than 10 years, ie it was renewed early, you no longer get that extra grace period. We strongly recommend people check before they travel. New rules and regulations come into force when travelling after 1st January 2021. This website has all the information and updates.

**<https://www.gov.uk/check-a-passport-for-travel-to-europe>**

## **SOUTHERN BRANCH MEETING, BRIGHTON**

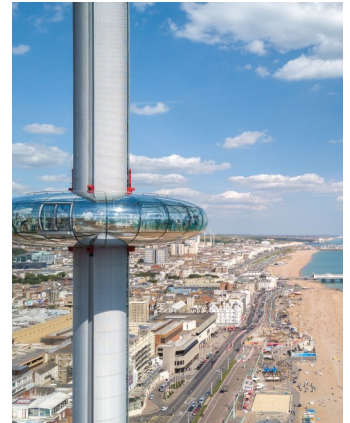
**Monday 20th April at 10.30am**

**British Airways i360 and the Royal Pavilion**

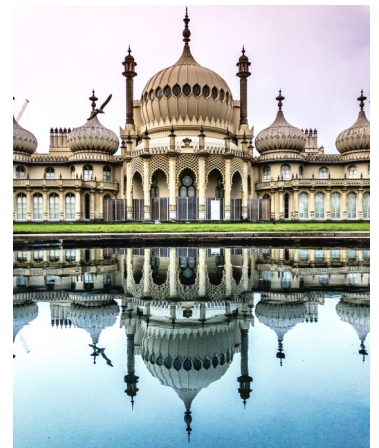
Tea/coffee will be served from 10.00am.

After the meeting we will have a lunch, and then take a flight on the i360 which lasts about 25 minutes.

British Airways i360 is a 531ft observation tower on the seafront of Brighton. From the fully enclosed viewing pod, visitors experience 360-degree views across Brighton, the South Downs, the English Channel and, on a clear day, as far as the Isle of Wight. On the flight you glide gently up to 450ft in a futuristic glass viewing pod. This is fully enclosed and spacious – it's 10 times the size of a London Eye capsule. There is room for up to 175 visitors to stand at the edge of the pod and look out, or to move around and see the view from different angles. The Sky Bar on-board serves local drinks, and in-flight crew will point out landmarks and answer any questions. The pod is heated and air-conditioned to ensure year-round comfort and it is fully accessible for wheelchair users. A viewing map is available and a multi-lingual app can be downloaded before you board. The app has 'pre-flight' information about how British Airways i360 was built, as well as an in-app viewing map.



In the afternoon we can also visit the Royal Pavilion, known as the Brighton Pavilion, a Grade I listed former royal residence in the centre of the town. This was originally a modest 18th century lodging house, but transformed by George, Prince of Wales, later to become Prince Regent, from his humble seaside retreat into a handsome neo-classical villa and pleasure palace. The design can only be described as extravagant and opulent - Regency grandeur with the visual style of India and China. As well as the stunning different rooms to see, there is currently a special exhibition on loan from the Queen of decorative works of art that were originally commissioned by the Prince Regent for the Royal Pavilion.



Brighton also offers other places to visit so this will be a good opportunity for you to have a look around the town with a view to bringing your groups back.

We would like to thank AGTO Associates Leela D'Arcy from British Airways and Lucy Cheffy from Brighton Royal Pavilion and Museums for hosting our Branch.

Cost for the day is £15pp to include tea/coffee on arrival, two-course lunch, flight on the i360, entrance ticket to the Royal Pavilion. Or £19pp to include a three-course lunch option.

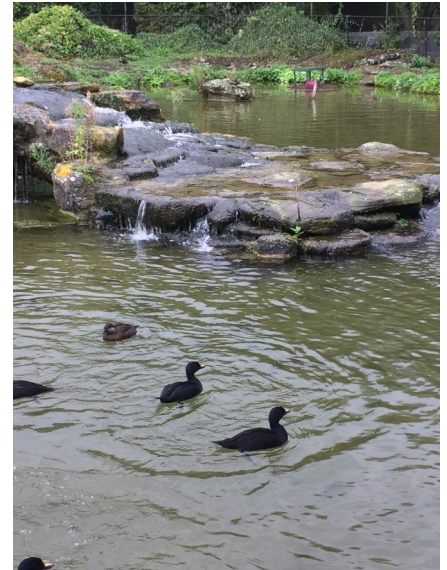
**To book, please complete the enclosed booking form and send to Anne Barnes, Southern Branch Treasurer. Deadline for bookings – 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020**  
**Or for further information, please contact Jackie Ring, Southern Branch Secretary.**  
**Tel: 01483 824450 or Email [ring\\_jackie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ring_jackie@yahoo.co.uk)**

*Credit for Royal Pavilion picture - Damian Kwasnik*

# ARUNDEL WETLAND CENTRE

The meeting room at the Arundel Wetland Centre had a wonderful view of the Castle and the lake, so it was no surprise that some of our members were a little distracted during the Southern Branch Annual General Meeting.

On our guided walk of the lakes, marshes and waterways we learned of the history of the founding of the Wetlands centres by Peter Scott, the son of Antarctic explorer Captain Scott. Peter was an Olympic sailing medallist and a well-known painter and broadcaster. He created the IUCN red list which measures whether species are threatened or endangered. He was the founding chair of WWF – he even drew their famous panda logo. Peter particularly loved the wild open marshes of Britain and the mysterious geese that visited from unknown shores. He started as a wildfowler and learned to protect first the birds, and then their wetland habitats. In 1946 he set up the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge as a centre for science and conservation. Uniquely at the time, he opened it to the public so that anyone could enjoy getting close to nature. Peter and his family presented the BBC's first live television wildlife programmes from his artist's studio overlooking the lakes at Slimbridge, from where he brought a love for the British countryside into millions of homes.



WWT grew from strength to strength during Peter's life and since his death in 1989. They now welcome a million visitors each year to nine Wetland Centres in the UK, and undertake more research and conservation projects around the world than ever.

We visited one of the most comfortable hides I have ever seen, with soft armchairs, colourful decor and huge windows. We learned about the conservation projects and when an endangered bird lays eggs they are taken by "egg ambulance" to Slimbridge where they are hatched and monitored in special incubators.



Groups of 12 or more will enjoy an extensive range of benefits including:

- Generously discounted group admission rates
- Free familiarisation trip for the group organiser
- Free on the day entry for the group organiser
- Plentiful free coach and minibus parking very near to entrance
- Free entry for the coach driver (groups of 24+)
- Free coach driver refreshments (groups of 24+)
- Selection of special group catering packages (please pre-book)
- A range of publicity materials to help advertise your trip
- Arundel is fully accessible site with Disabled pick up and drop off zones
- A range of accessible hides
- Wheelchairs and 3 wheeled rollators for visitors to borrow
- Talks tours and special events.





The wetland centre staff recommended that your groups be granted free time in Arundel, not just to visit the castle, but to admire the Cathedral, the multitude of art and antique shops and perhaps go for afternoon tea.

One of the Southern Branch members recommended an overnight stay or two as there are many attractions of interest to groups such as stately homes, vineyards, Bignor Roman Villa, Amberley Museum and Heritage Centre, Tangmere Military and Aviation Museum and hiking trails along the South Downs.



Anne Barnes 2023S

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## **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED FACTORY TOUR—** **NEW HOLLAND TRACTORS**

I took a small group of my members to the **New Holland Tractor Factory** in Basildon Essex.

The tour started at 12.30 pm (to fit in with their shifts) and lasted to just after 3pm. We started in the showroom which had a selection of all different size tractors plus combine harvesters, we were allowed to sit in the driver seats and have a close look at these magnificent machines.



We then had coffee and biscuits before we went into the theatre for a talk on the history of the New Holland tractors, with slides showing the progress of the factory. After this we all had to put on yellow jackets and safety glasses, and we were given audio guides for our guide to talk to us.

Then we went into the factory for a very interesting tour watching how parts arrived and followed the assembly line right round to the finished product. The whole tour was excellent and well organised. I would recommend a small group of 15/16 as a large group would be difficult to manage, the cost is £150 for a group of 15 plus extra for tea and coffee,

I recommend Tesco Extra café for brunch only 10 minutes away from the factory. And there is coach parking on site

**Contact Amy Quarrel 01268 292403.**

Richard Moore S2167

## RECOMMENDATION – THE SKY GARDEN

I took a group of 50 of our members to the **Sky Garden** which is at the top of the Walkie Talkie in Fenchurch Street and I cannot recommend it enough, it is a unique experience. Every one of my group said how much they enjoyed it and that they would return with family or friends. The views were wonderful (I personally thought that they were better than from The Shard) and the gardens can be enjoyed with seating dotted all around.

Entrance is free, but you have to book in advance, and you can spend as much time as you wish there.

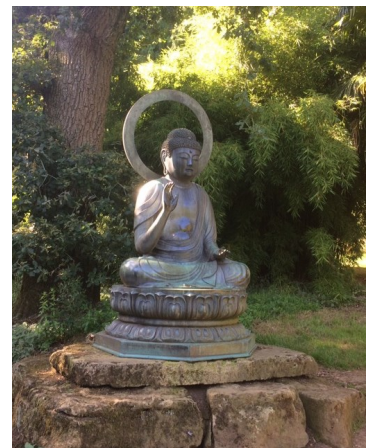


*Sylvia Bliss, WOFA, S2408*

## More places our members would recommend

Sezincote is an unusual privately-owned family home in the Cotswolds - you don't expect to see an onion-domed Indian palace in this typically English landscape. The house is open to the public on some afternoons a year, but they will open to groups specially, which is lovely because you get the place to yourselves. A guided tour of the house was very interesting, and then we were free to explore the gardens which are set out beautifully with lakes and waterfalls.

Note that if you have a private tour in a morning, there are no café facilities open, but recommended is Batsford Arboretum just across the road for a coffee stop in their garden centre before your visit. You can then return there for lunch and an afternoon visit. Their gardens include specimen trees from around the world, but focussing on the Far East and some parts are set out with flowering cherries and a Japanese feel to them. There are different self-guided routes you can take to explore.





## **SOUTHERN BRANCH**

### **FAM WEEKEND AT WARNERS,**

### **CRICKET ST THOMAS**



At the end of November 35 AGTO members and guests had a very enjoyable weekend at 'Grantleigh Manor' the setting for the TV series *To The Manor Born*. Although this was filmed over 30 years ago, the older part of the manor house still felt as though we were in the home of Audrey fforbes-Hamilton. The story focused on her not accepting that Richard had moved in to her old house – he had made his money from 'trade' – but he was to later become her husband. On a guided tour we also learnt more of the history of the house and grounds. Although originally built as a private house, it had also been a safari park and home to another famous resident, Mr Blobby while he lived here at *Crinkley Bottom*. Evidence of Cricket's past could be seen around the grounds and also in pictures and photographs in the manor house. The tour was given by a very informative local guide who had worked there for quite a few decades so knew a lot of stories – she also showed us around some of the historic bedrooms which can be booked by guests.

Warners took over the estate in 1999 and they added the bedrooms, dining room, entertainment and leisure facilities. During our weekend we were given a drinks reception and met the staff, with a presentation on this and their other properties. There is always a wide choice of things to do at all Warners properties – you can do as much or as little as you like. During the day, there are things to do at set times such as quizzes, musical bingo, dance lessons, archery, bowls competitions, and films, or demonstrations of make-up or wine tasting, and you can also use the extensive leisure facilities which includes a swimming pool and sauna, or book yourself a treatment. Breakfast and dinner is included – this is usually a self-service buffet with a wide choice of dishes to suit all tastes, as well as some which are served to your table. After the evening meal, there is entertainment which you can go to if you wish. The headline act will be something different each night - while we were there we had a tribute to Michael Bublé, a soul singer and the excellent Warner entertainment team performing a selection of the Jackson's music. If you want to stay up later, the entertainment continues with a disco, or for something quieter, there is usually a singer in the bar.





When I take my group to Warners (which I do a lot), we 'do our own thing' in smaller groups during the day and maybe go for a walk or visit a nearby place of interest – near to Cricket are Lyme Regis, the Seaton Tramway, a number of National Trust properties and gardens. It's nice though to enjoy meals together and sort out what we're doing, and to talk over what we've done that day. Some groups go in a coach and organise visits during their stay depending on the interests of their members. In the evenings, you may prefer to do something quieter - my group usually have a couple of packs of cards with them and sometimes find a quiet room and play bridge or a word game of some sort. All guests can enjoy the communal rooms in the old part of the house which tend to be quieter, if you want to relax or read. In the summer there are activities outside, maybe a lunch time barbecue and some music - we find it's especially relaxing to enjoy a pre-dinner drink in the gardens as the sun goes down. We find it's all very sociable.

Warners now have 14 properties around the country, ranging from coastal villages set near to the sea and perhaps with chalets in the grounds, coastal resorts which are more modern. Their historic houses are always centred around an old house of character with many links to the past – for instance Henry VIII met Jane Seymour at Littlecote House, and the US Air Force used the house and grounds as a base for their Parachute Regiment during World War II, with flights taking off from the nearby airfield on the eve of D-Day. All of Warners bedrooms are very comfortable and decorated to a high standard, some with a patio or a balcony, and you can request a bath or shower if you prefer. They also have accessible rooms. And almost all floors have a lift. Some Warners are also able to offer a lunch for groups so you can visit on a day trip if that suits your members.

Please speak to Barbara Flood at Warners if you would like to find out more or to make a group reservation. If you are flexible on dates or venue, she will be able to advise you on the best prices and availability.

We'd like to thank Barbara and Sarah Goldsbrough for hosting a very enjoyable Weekend for us.

**Email [barbara.flood@bourne-leisure.co.uk](mailto:barbara.flood@bourne-leisure.co.uk) or Phone 0330 100 9772**



*Jackie Ring S2221*

Do you have any Recommendations, Tips or Hints which may help other GTOs, especially new ones, to organise a successful event or trip? 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](mailto:ring_jackie@yahoo.co.uk) or by post to  
14 Manston Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU4 7YE**

## **BRICK LANE MUSIC HALL**



Having sold all the tickets, thirty members and guests set off from the Meadhurst club, Sunbury to tackle the tricky journey the Silvertown in far off 02 Land on Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019.

Travelling East (and following a star) we journeyed to see “*Vincent’s Jinglebell Christmas Show*” complete with afternoon tea, performed by some very talented and entertaining artistes.

Our journey took in many of London’s landmarks, passing the likes of Twickers, the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, the Shard, the Tower of London, the Thames Cable car, to name but two, all beautifully illuminated on the return journey.

Then on with the show, hosted by the very talented and experienced Vincent Hayes MBE, who not only had the audience rocking with laughter but also his fellow artists, several times bringing the show to a halt with fits of giggles, especially as the Philipino ships waiter, lots of Christmas themed acts, singing and comedy and a very talented violinist extraordinaire Victoria Yellop (who has played with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra) gaining rapturous applause on two occasions. Two very good medleys of Christmas songs by the supporting cast both individually and collectively, entertained us throughout with an outstanding finale bringing tears of joy to everyone.

A delightful plentiful afternoon tea with teas and coffee was served during the interval and later in the show two members won prizes in the charity raffle, and I was presented with flowers for bringing along our group, a very nice thought. We will be back.

*Sylvia Adams*  
Meadhurst Club RMS S2322S

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## **Leisuretime**

I would publically like to thank Katie Lewis-Davies of **Leisure time** (AGTO Associate member) for her exceptional help with finding us a Turkey and Tinsel break when we had been let down by another company at the last minute last November! We all had a fabulous time, thanks to her; she couldn’t do enough to help us. This is a company to keep in mind when arranging your breaks away with your groups.

*Sylvia Bliss, WOFA, S2408*



## **STRICTLY 'BEHIND THE SEAMS'** **COSTUMES TOUR AT DSI-LONDON**

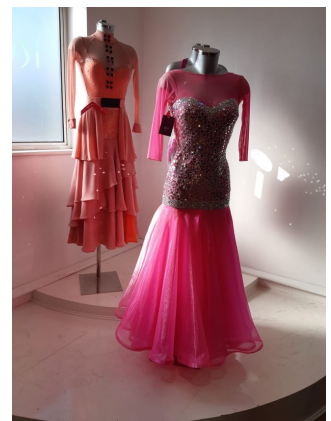


Following a recommendation from a fellow AGTO Member Eileen Moore at a Southern Branch Meeting, I booked my group for a tour of the DSI-London workshops in Croydon last October. This is where costumes are made for the fab-u-lous sparkly world of ballroom dancing— and that was an excellent time of year to go as we heard all about the costumes which were being made for the current series and tour of *Strictly* – and what goes on ‘behind the seams’.

The workshops are set in an unremarkable residential street on the outskirts of Croydon, but as soon as we stepped inside we were in a different world. We were greeted with a glass of bubbly and some chocolate, while the excellent Carole explained what they did there, the work that goes into making the costumes, especially how they need to fit the shape and style of the different celebrities – and their size often changes as the series progresses. The whole process starts from the idea usually on a Monday, through the design on a Tuesday, making the costumes up with the thousands of sparkles that are added, the first fitting at the studios maybe Thursday, the dress rehearsal on a Friday, and with a deadline of the live performance on a Saturday – and that is a costume for each professional and celebrity, plus extras for the professionals’ dances. By the following Tuesday, these costumes are up for sale on the internet, and the team is already working on the next week’s. We learnt how DSI themselves actually pay to make the costumes, and the BBC just hires them for the weekend!



In two groups we then went on a tour of the workshops and storerooms, one with Carole and one with Gerald, who is one of the owners. We were told about different types of material, colour matching and stock control, shown how multiple patterns are cut out, and saw up close the incredible creative and intricate skills of their staff. After the tour we were then allowed to try on some of the dresses. This was a highlight – with everyone feeling like a queen! There was a lot of swirling and swishing in front of full-length mirrors.



Public tours are available on Mondays, which you can just book on-line, but they will arrange private group tours on other days. These are usually for up to 15 people, so if there are a lot of you who want to go, you can arrange multiple days, but I had 26 so they agreed to do that as two tours on the same day. The cost was £20 pp. We had a morning tour, which should have lasted about two hours, but they seemed in no hurry for us to leave as everyone was enjoying the dressing up so much. Afterwards we had lunch at the local (about a mile away) Miller and Carter pub, where they put us in a private room which was nice as we could then talk over what we had done in the morning and look at each other’s photos.

**Email - [carole@dsi-london.com](mailto:carole@dsi-london.com) phone - 020 8664 8188**

**<https://www.dsi-london.com/behindtheseams>**

*Jackie Ring S2221*

## **AGTO Eastern Branch Meeting and Fam Visit**

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020 – SPENCER HOUSE, St James, London SW1A 1NR**

Spencer Houses was recognised as the most ambitious and private palace ever built in London. It was built between 1756 and 1766 by the 1st Earl Spencer, ancestor of the late Princess Diana. It was formerly re-opened in 1991 by her, following the restoration carried out under the guidance of Lord Rothschild and funded by the Rothschild Investment Trust.

The tour of the house will be led by a Blue Badge Guide. And afterwards a lunch in a local pub has been arranged.

See full details and booking form attached.

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## **AGTO Western Branch Fam Visit**

**Saturday 20<sup>TH</sup> June 2020 – CHAVENAGE, near Tetbury**

This Elizabethan House and has been used as a location for many TV shows and films, such as Lark Rise to Candleford, The House of Eliott and Poldark. For those of you who watch Poldark, you will know it as Trenwith House.

Western Branch has made arrangements with Caroline the manager of Chavenage and elder daughter of the owners, for a FAM visit with a guided tour followed by a buffet lunch. Joanna, Caroline's younger sister, runs the in-house catering, and she can cater for all needs and is arranging a buffet lunch. The tour will also give you details of the history of the house and the two families that have lived at Chavenage since the reign of Elizabeth I.



See full details and booking form attached.

Southern's Committee Member Pat recently took his group on a tour of Chavenage House and can highly recommend it—he described the visit as 'quite an experience'. A family member took them around the house and explained about what was there, and the links with Poldark – and all family members were roped in to make and serve the lunches!

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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

An item in the last National Magazine explained how we need to be aware of email scam alerts. I attended a U3A Conference last year when a Cyber Crime Police Officer was an interesting speaker—he said we should not use public wifi to check our emails, especially when travelling abroad. We don't know who is sitting at the next table in the café or whether they have a device to intercept. When we are warned that the connection is not private, that means it's not! It's ok to use it for Googling the weather, or the train times, but if there is anything you want kept private, keep it private. Always use your own data from your provider as this is more secure. He said we wouldn't allow a stranger to go through all our paper post, so don't give anyone easy access to our electronic post. Jackie

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.