

Blog #96 - Mystery Sampler Progress & Grantley Hall:

Friday, 17 April 2020

As mentioned in my last blog, worked on a jigsaw puzzle (1000 piece) as per tradition over the Easter weekend.

A new one that I had been given at Christmas time.
Works of Art series - Renoir at Work.

Loved doing it. Not difficult and therefore very pleasurable.

To the right is a pic of the finished piece.

I also spent some time stitching over the weekend.

Here is a sneak peek at Part Five of the polychromatic version of the upcoming Mystery Sampler that is to be released later in the year.

I have made a decision as to the title of it - **Ackworth Flowers**.

In the centre of this part is an alphabet worked with the overdyed thread colour and this is bordered on both sides by two halves of a floral motif worked with a solid coloured thread.

The effect gives the impression that the motif has been spilt in half by the alphabet.

Then to the left of this is a different styled alphabet and to the right another styled alphabet.

Both of these alphabets are worked with a solid coloured thread of the same colour.

Because we are still in lockdown, Keith has been unable to go to work but he has **definitely** not been idle. The room in which my needlework gallery was located is to finally become our formal lounge and so he has restored all the beautiful wooden ceiling and skirting boards and created a beautiful header above the doorway. It is the same as he created on the hall side when he was restoring that part of our 124 year old house.



He is now working on restoring all the windows. As done with all the windows in the rest of the house, totally removed them to restore them, replace all the cords of the window weights, etc. To cover up the gaping hole in the wall he's covered it with a huge sheet of very heavy plastic - but, as it is winter - the house is VERY cold. Especially on the frosty nights / early mornings!

And now to continue on with my UK experience -
21st of September and the afternoon of Day 3 of Lady Anne's Needlework Retreat.

As I finished off my last blog ... "A quick bite of lunch and I played 'hooky' from class that afternoon" and in eager anticipation waited for granddaughter, Ashleigh to arrive from Grantley Hall, near Ripon, north of York. (Aerial view pictured to the right).



As wrote in Blog #86, Ashleigh left NZ the previous year to work in the UK after having completed her hotel management degree and to further her experience of working in elite, boutique hotels which she had been doing here in Napier whilst studying for her degree. She had obtained a managerial position and for several months was instrumental in the setting up of the staff procedures for operating the reception and front of house prior to the opening of the new prestigious hotel in a Grade II listed historical house - Grantley Hall.



This hotel opened in July 2019.

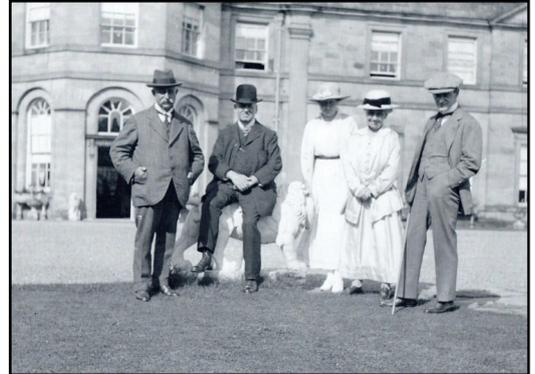


Originally the house had been the home of the Furness and later, the Aykroyd families, and they had often entertained distinguished guests such as the Prince of Wales and his wife and on many occasions, Princess Mary of Harewood House - either as house guests or afternoon tea guests.

A little aside ... further to my Blog #86 which contained all the history and the details of Grantley Hall, one of my lovely needlework customers sent me the following message after receiving this blog

“especially caught my interest as the hotel your grand daughter is working at which used to be a country home, has a slight connection to my family. My grandmother’s older cousin was married to Marmaduke Furness (she was his third wife), he grew up at Grantley Hall.

Grandma used to show us photos from her youth when they would visit her glamorous cousin Lady Furness and her apparently quite disagreeable husband at their country house in Melton Mowbray (they were all mad-keen on fox hunting), in the 1930s. There are some lovely photos of the ladies dressed beautifully to ride side saddle and the Prince of Wales appears in a couple. He (Prince Edward) had an affair with Lord Furness’ second wife causing the end of that marriage, which I suppose was lucky for Nana’s cousin!”



Pictured to the right is a photo of the Furness family outside their home. Marmaduke is the younger gentleman to the right - his reputation : a millionaire playboy of his time.

It’s a small world really, isn’t it?! Thank you Katherine for sharing your family history with us. How awesome to have a titled ‘Lady’ in your ancestral line.

I was so looking forward to seeing Ashleigh and of course, visiting the beautiful Grantley Hall property where she worked and lived (in the staff accommodation situated in the restored/renovated stable building).

After our hugs and tears of joy she drove me north to Ripon and through its streets before we wandered through the Cathedral. From there, I won’t say we drove, but instead hurtled through the lanes (when younger Ashleigh was a motocross bike rider) to the gate entrance to the Hall, being warmly greeted by the gate porters and in a more sedate manner we drove along the picturesque road with the River Skell flowing alongside to the main entrance of the Hall to again be warmly greeted and treated as royalty by the porters.



Parked in front were vehicles I had only seen in magazines or on television or in movies - a Rolls Royce, Maserati, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Bentleys, as well as those I had seen such as Porsche & Range Rovers.

Talk about a country bumpkin amongst the elite.

In March, Grantley Hall was named as one of the world’s best hotels, given this prestigious ranking by Luxury Travel Intelligence, ‘Best Newcomer’ Award at the Oliver Food & Drinks Awards, 2020 Award Winners at the ‘New Tourism Business’, awarded one of the ‘20 of the Best Spa Retreats’ and it has also received an AA Five Star ranking.



Fletcher’s Chef de Parie, Jack Craven, cooked in the British final of ‘Chaîne - Young Chef of the Year’ competition.

The following day (Sunday, the 22nd) was to be Ashleigh’s 26th birthday.

My plan had been to treat her but instead she treated me to a fabulous afternoon tea in the serene and beautifully decorated lounge.

She is obviously a well-respected girl and manager amongst the staff as so many of them came to wish her a happy birthday, give a card or gift or a glass of champagne. And, I too, was treated with great respect.



After our delicious afternoon tea (several courses/treats - savoury, sweet, sandwiches, etc), Ashleigh took me on a tour of all the areas of the hotel. After having worked in the hotel industry myself in my younger days as a Night Auditor/Manager (doing the "grave-yard" shift [11pm - 7am] every Friday and Saturday nights for six years), I found it really fascinating, but I will share with you only those parts that a guest would experience.

The décor and ambience was stunning. No expense spared. Just a few of my many pics



The main entrance to Grantley Hall



Some of the vehicles in one of the car parking areas at the front of the Hall



Above & below - bathroom for non-staying guests



Several courtyards ...



One of the medium priced guest rooms and it's bathroom



for relaxing, having a glass of wine, champagne or a cocktail, or maybe just a cup of coffee, etc. with family and friends

All the guest rooms were wonderfully appointed with thought given to every possible need required by a guest - e.g. bath robe, slippers, umbrellas, wind jackets, gumboots, to name a few.

Room prices per day ranged from many hundreds of pounds to many thousands of pounds.

More pics



One of the many dining rooms



The breakfast room set up for a private dinner

Not exactly needlework, but the drape & upholstery fabrics were fabulous



Two of several bar areas



In addition to Grantley Hall being a luxury hotel, it is also a Wellness Centre and below are a couple of pics of the corridor to it.

It is known as 'The Three Graces Spa'

and pictured to the right is a statue of them ...



In this area is a huge swimming pool (which is both inside and outside - that is, one end is under cover and therefore enclosed, whilst the other end is outside in the open air. One does not have to leave the pool to access either of the areas); a fitness room; a sauna; a snow room, a sun room, massage & therapy rooms, etc. and beautifully appointed changing rooms and lounging areas.

And of course, all is overseen by the appropriate person - fitness instructor/trainer, beautician, etc. etc.



After the guided tour it was time to visit Ashleigh's room in the converted stable block and meet up with more of her friends and other staff members in the communal kitchen/lounge.

Lots of hugs, chatter and laughter as more birthday greetings and gifts were given.

And then, as time was marching on, said my farewells to the beautiful, gracious hotel.

As you can see from the pic to the right, night was beginning to fall.



Ashleigh then drove to the local pub, 'Grantley Arms' for me to meet the owner and his wife and experience their wonderful fish and chips for tea - together with my first experience of mushy peas.

And meet more of her friends and staff - all having a good time together.



It was quite late by the time Ashleigh returned me to the hotel in York and she then had another drive back to Grantley (about an hour), finish packing her bag and just a few hours later she was heading off to the airport to catch a flight to Croatia and all that area for a few weeks holiday.

I climbed into bed with my heart full of happiness. I had fulfilled my dream of visiting the Ackworth School and seen all their awesome samplers and spent a lovely, special, and memorable time with my granddaughter.

Not much about needlework in this blog, but I assure you, lots in the next few as off to Hardwick Hall the next morning.

