

Blog #86 - A Dream Which Never Was A Dream

Thursday, 5 September 2019

In a week's time I embark upon a dream - that in actual fact until a few years ago was never a dream, as all through my life I had never expected, nor even thought, never even dreamed, that I would ever have the opportunity to visit England. The birthplace of all my grandparents.

In 1997, to renew our eligibility to continue living in the States, the US Immigration Dept told Keith and I we had to leave the States for a short time and then re-enter.

Instead of returning to NZ we chose to go to London for five days - and this was the most wonderful experience!

To this day I can vividly recall stepping off the train from Heathrow Airport and beginning our walk down one of the Kensington suburb streets towards our hotel, returning a smile to a policeman on foot patrol and turning to Keith and placing my hand on his arm and saying, "I feel like I'm at home!".

It was the most uncanny feeling and I can still feel that feeling today.

Those five days went by far too quickly. We virtually "ran" from place to place, from experience to experience. Just fabulous. I LOVED London.



When we left I thought I would never ever have the opportunity to visit again. But - one of my grandmothers left me a wonderful gift and as an early 70th birthday present (eight months early), I'm treating myself to a visit to her homeland and indulging in my passion for needlework and all things beautiful.

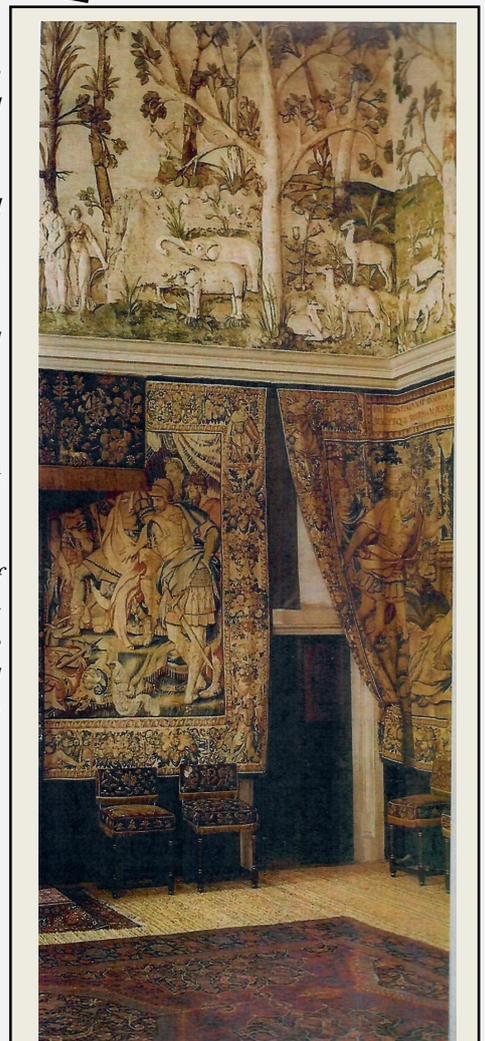
It is a Lady Anne's Needlework Retreat/Tour, hosted by Phillipa Turnbull - owner and the designer of the Crewelwork Company which specialises in crewel work designs. These designs are reproductions of portions or partial pieces of crewel work patterns stitched centuries ago on furnishings (cushions, drapes, bed coverings & bed hangings, etc.) in the grand stately homes located throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Phillipa's daughter, Laura, also helps her mum to host the retreats/tours. Together they conduct at least six to eight retreats a year and one chooses the one that appeals to them.

I have chosen the 'All England Tour Part II' beginning in York on the 19th of September and finishing in the London area on the 30th of September, after having travelled down the east coast to Kent. Each day is occupied with learning new needlework techniques and stitching, visiting and viewing the magnificent centuries old needlework items in many different stately homes and listening to and learning from wonderful lectures.

There are three needlework projects to be conducted by three different tutors - Alison Cole (Australia) : Meredith Willett (USA) : Phillipa Turnbull (England).

All projects will be created with different needlework techniques.



Lady Anne's Needlework Retreat

To follow is a quick overview (as per the itinerary we have been sent).

Days 1, 2 and 3 : York

We will begin our tour in the medieval city of York where will enjoy two full days of tuition with Phillipa, Meredith and Alison as well as free time to explore the city and nearby York Minster.

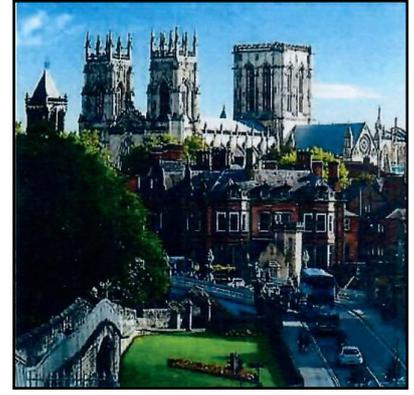
While in the area we will visit historic houses including

Fairfax House
and
Ackworth School

where we will view the famous Ackworth Samplers.



Fairfax House



York



Ackworth School

Days 4 and 5 : Stamford, Lincolnshire

We will then travel to Stamford in Lincolnshire, where we will continue our needlework tuition before visiting

Harwick Hall

where we will enjoy a private visit when the hall is closed to the public to view superb Elizabethan embroideries, including the artefact which inspired Alison's workshop design.



Harwick Hall



Burghley House

We also visit **Burghley House**, which houses the colourful crewel work you will replicate with Phillipa.

Days 6, 7 and 8 : Suffolk, Norfolk and Kent

We will then spend three nights in the picturesque town of Lavenham, Suffolk.

You will have free time here before visiting two stately homes in the area, including

Ightham Mote
and
Oxburgh Hall



Ightham Mote



Oxburgh Hall

where we will view the small needlework panels made by Mary, Queen of Scots and Bess Hardwick in 1564-84 - the famous and beautifully displayed Marian hangings, one of which inspired Meredith's workshop design.

Days 10, 11 and 12 : Sussex and Windsor - See next page

Days 10, 11 and 12 : Sussex and Windsor

Our final three nights will be spent in a little pocket of heaven just south of London.

This hotel is the perfect place to round off our needlework tuition with two full days of peaceful stitching.



Knole House



We will enjoy Lady Anne Clifford's childhood home,

Knole House

and the most stately of all reserved for last,

Windsor Castle

where we will end our tour.



Windsor Castle

And finally, our tour Route Map -



And so - aren't we going to have the most wonderful time!

I can hardly believe that this is happening for me.

It all begins next Thursday - the 12th of September.

Midday we fly from Napier to Auckland and that evening board the Emirates plane for a direct flight to Dubai. 17 hours.

Rather than rushing to catch a connecting flight, having a stopover in the airport for a few hours and then again flying Emirates direct to Manchester, arriving there Friday evening at 7.30pm.

Lady Anne's to take us to York where Joy and I have chosen to stay at Middleton's until the following Wednesday.

Our plans for the days prior to the commencement of the tour are as follows:

Saturday - meeting up with a friend of mine.

Jacob de Graaf is a needlework designer whom I met when he and I were exhibiting at Fili Senza Tempo in Italy in 2017.

Jacob lives in York and so in addition to seeing him again and enjoying his company, he will be able to tell us some of the best places to visit in York.

Jacob's designs are lovely and almost all of them are created with Quaker medallions and motifs.

The name of his company is, Modern Folk Embroidery.



Middleton's

Sunday and Monday - we have tickets for the 'Hop On, Hop Off' bus and once we have travelled a circuit we will then choose which

which places we wish to visit. We already have a long list of possibles!

Tuesday - this day we have tickets for the train that travels through the Yorkshire dales to the coastal town of Whitby where we will spend the day before returning back by train to York.

Wednesday - this morning we move from Middleton's to the Dean Court Hotel which is situated next to York Minster.

This is the venue for the first few days of our retreat that begins the next morning.

The remainder of this day will be visiting the last of the places on our list.

On the following Saturday, I am going to excuse myself for the day as meeting up with my granddaughter, Ashleigh.

She has been in the UK since November of last year and in March she began work as part of the hotel management team to set up an upmarket venue, opening at the beginning of July - Grantley Hall.

Here are a few pics of the luxury hotel -
And this is what the 'up-market' brochure has to say about it -



Dean Court Hotel



A *Magical* SETTING

Nestled in the picturesque Yorkshire Dales, North Yorkshire, only a stone's throw away from Harrogate and Ripon, the Grade II* listed Grantley Hall is set along the banks of the River Skell within magnificent woodland and manicured gardens.

The original Hall combines heritage with modern design, a historical setting for inspired artwork and sculptures and round every corner you will find intimate spaces which will delight in their attention to detail.

EXPERIENCE THE *Unforgettable* AT GRANTLEY HALL

Immerse yourself in Grantley Hall.

As you pass through the gates and follow the meandering river through the beautiful parkland setting, prepare to be surprised as you catch your first glimpse of the Hall and manicured gardens and relax in to the tranquil oasis that is Grantley Hall.

A perfect haven uniquely combining vibrancy and serenity, fun and relaxation, sophistication and country charm; it's the perfect setting to create unforgettable moments.

Perfectly blending rich heritage with modern sophistication and vitality, Grantley Hall offers you an exceptional variety of restaurants and bars, ranging from fine-dining to tempting Pan-Asian.

Complemented by a tranquil spa, luxury gym and executive wellness, forty seven exquisite rooms and suites, a late night champagne and cocktail bar and a selection of both intimate and elegant event spaces, perfectly suited for any occasion.

I don't know if you enjoy history, but the older I get, the more I enjoy it, and so sharing with you the history of Grantley Hall.

A *Rich* HEIRITAGE

Dating back to the 17th century, the original Hall was built by Thomas Norton to celebrate his marriage.

The Hall remained in the Norton family for over 200 years, being passed down throughout the generations which included Lords, Barons and Members of Parliament, before being bought

by the multimillionaire shipping magnate, Sir Christopher Furness, in 1900.

Sir Christopher instigated the building of the leat running parallel to the River Skell whilst his wife created one of the earliest Japanese gardens in the country.

Lady Jane Furness was a very keen gardener and the gardens, using rocks from Brimham Rocks,

were constructed and formed during her time at the house.

Their son, Marmaduke, a millionaire playboy of his time, sold the house to Sir William Aykroyd, a carpet manufacturer from Bradford in 1925.

Sir William was High Sherriff of Yorkshire and during his time in residence, entertained Queen Mary in 1937. During this century, Grantley Hall was given over to the war effort as a convalescence home for injured soldiers and proudly welcomed Vera Lynn as she sang to the troops.

Upon Sir William's death, the estate was sold to West Riding County Council who ran the Hall as an adult training centre which was hugely successful. The current owner bought Grantly Hall in 2015.

Like many old houses Grantly Hall has a myriad of tales to tell; it has hosted royalty, Members of Parliament and famous entertainers, and has been painted by many artists including LS Lowry, best known for his industrial landscape works.

On the Saturday I am going to spend the day with Ashleigh and as she lives at the Hall (in the staff accommodation area), she is going to take me to Grantley Hall for me to experience it. We are to dine there together that evening.

The following day it is her birthday. Great timing!

And so I think I have brought you up to date with all that is happening in the next few weeks.

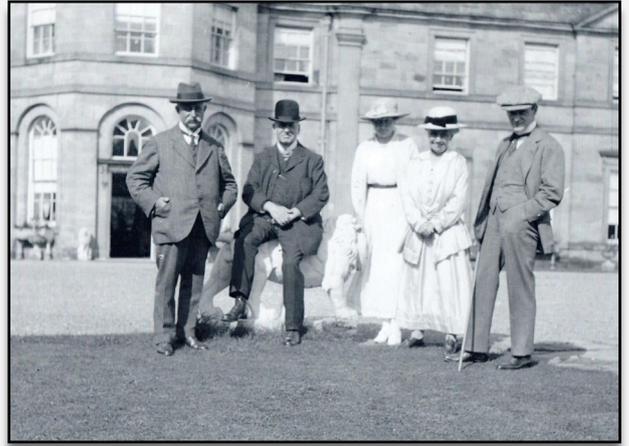
A reminder though - as I will not be here, the Needlework Gallery will be closed for several weeks.

Reopens: Friday, the 11th of October.

As for needlework news, I have been stitching as often as possible. I have completed the finishing of the alphabet ornaments - letters A, C, K and N. Now I have to write up the instructions for these letters, photograph the finished pieces and insert the images on to the back and front cover of the instructions. Then it's off to the printer for them to be printed. However, not sure that these tasks will be completed before I go away.

I have also been stitching the letter 'T'. To date one side is completely finished and about half of the back piece is done. The next letter to be worked will probably be the 'D'.

Sincerely hoping this finds you enjoying life and making the most of every day. How sad it would be to look back over ones life and live with regrets.



The Furness Family

