

BAS visit to Upton House and Farnborough Hall, 4 July 2016

On Saturday 4 July the Society visited Upton House and Farnborough Hall. The, late 17th century, Upton house was substantially remodelled in 1927–8 for the merchant bankers the Bearstedts of Samuels bank fame. During the Second World War the bank transferred it's London operation to the house and at the time of our visit we saw a recreation of the arrangements made to accommodate the bank's offices and staff in the house "for the duration".

The highlight of the visit to the house was seeing the, surprisingly little-known, Bearsted collection of old master paintings in the specially built gallery. Members enjoyed viewing many fine paintings by a catholic range of artists including Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Canaletto, William Hogarth, George Stubbs and El Greco. To the south of the house a sweep of lawn leads onto a delightfully surprising, hidden valley with garden terraces down its side.

On to Farnborough house built in 1684 and partly remodelled circa 1750. The interior has an interesting collection of Roman sculpture collected by William Holbech on his mid 18th century grand tour. Much of the house and gardens remains as they were in his lifetime. Unfortunately a number of paintings by Canaletto and Panini which formed part of the integral decoration of some of the rooms in the house, have since been replaced by copies. A charming terraced garden overlooking the River Avon provided a peaceful pause before returning home at the end of our days perambulations.

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