



ARCADIAN BLISS WILLIAM KENT'S NORFOLK

SUNDAY 5 – SATURDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2021 (7 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

FROM £2495

- **Discover the hidden treasures of North-west Norfolk**
- **Private “connoisseur” visits to 3 magnificent houses where William Kent worked: Houghton, Holkham & Raynham**
- **Other private houses & gardens not normally accessible also included**
- **Wonderful gardens at their late summer best**
- **Comfortable country house style hotel in idyllic surroundings**



Holkham Hall

OVERVIEW

North Norfolk's broad rolling acres have long been home to great estates and important country houses; the income from agriculture one source of much of the area's wealth. A second, equally important source was trade with North West Europe and Scandinavia, managed through the mighty Hanseatic League, of which King's Lynn was an important member. At the outset of this tour, a day will be spent in and around King's Lynn, and we shall be guided by the town's most informed local guide. He has arranged private access to the town's most important recently restored historic house, in addition to some of the town's fine churches and civic buildings.

Thereafter, our days will be spent exploring the houses, gardens and wonderful churches of this part of the world, subject to any government restrictions that may be in force when we visit. A remarkable figure looms large over the best of these houses – the Yorkshire genius, William Kent. Houghton Hall was a 'new build' mansion, commissioned by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, where Kent was called in to 'mastermind' the interiors and their decoration, most of which are remarkably well preserved. Raynham Hall was already a fine house when Kent was employed to adapt it to the latest ideas associated with a revival of interest in all things 'Palladian', his expertise honed during his time in Italy. However, it is at Holkham Hall, the magnificent seat of the Earls of Leicester, that Kent's remarkable abilities to sculpt space are at their most inventive and where the original 'Grand Tour' collection remains mostly intact.

Other periods and styles will not be neglected: Mannington Hall is a late medieval moated manor house surrounded by fine gardens. Nearby, Wolterton Hall is the focus of a major restoration project which we shall see. A private visit to Gunton will show us how a great estate can be rescued with flair, including in the park the only surviving church built by Robert Adam. Sandringham needs no introduction and we have a private visit.

Wool was the source of Norfolk's great wealth in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and few counties in England can match the quantity of beautiful and important churches that Norfolk possesses. We shall include some of these as and when time and access permit.

We stay at the 3* Superior Congham Hall Hotel, a privately owned former Georgian manor house, set in 30 acres of parkland with extensive gardens. The comfortable bedrooms are divided between the original house and larger, more modern rooms set around a handsome garden courtyard. You may also wish to take advantage of the hotel's spa facilities which include a heated swimming pool.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Sunday 5 September – Participants should plan to arrive at **Congham Hall** by late afternoon, either using one's own transport or by rail to Kings Lynn and then to the hotel by taxi. A welcome drinks party will be followed by our first group dinner – wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Monday 6 September – Norfolk's flat and fertile terrain, combined with its very long coastline made it the ideal place for everything to do with ships, ports and trade, especially with the very lucrative trade in the Middle Ages with Flanders, the Low Countries and, particularly, the Baltic. In late medieval and Tudor times all the major trading along the West and North coasts of mainland Europe was centred around and controlled by the Hanseatic League and **King's Lynn** was a member port - almost the only one in Britain - of this prestigious trading association. Indeed we shall spend the best part of a day in this beautiful and ancient town where we can admire the wonderful variety of medieval, Tudor and Georgian architecture that it contains. The town's important churches will be included together with a stunning private house, which has been the subject of a marvellous restoration. Our day will be broken by some free time for lunch, not included, eventually returning to our hotel where we have a group dinner later that evening.

Day 3: Tuesday 7 September – **Mannington Hall**, the residence of Lord & Lady Walpole, is a late medieval moated manor house upgraded by the Victorians and is surrounded by superb gardens with a special collection of roses, chosen by the late, and great rose expert, Peter Beales. We continue to a nearby hostelry, The Saracen's Head, for lunch. Next door is **Wolterton Hall**, built for Robert Walpole's younger brother by Thomas Ripley, recently sold by Lord Walpole and now undergoing a magnificent restoration by the new owners who will be our hosts. We shall enjoy private visits to both these houses. On the journey back to our hotel we hope to visit the church at **Salle**. Standing proud and alone in open countryside with neither village nor town to keep it company, the magnificent church of **Sts Peter and Paul**, bigger than some cathedrals, was constructed entirely in the middle of the fifteenth century and remains virtually untouched since, including its original furnishings. It is simply the finest church in a county of fine churches. We return to Congham and the evening will be free.

Day 4: Wednesday 8 September – **Houghton**, the magnificent home created for Sir Robert Walpole, has amazing interiors designed and furnished by Kent, working in a truly opulent manner inspired by the splendours of Baroque Rome. We shall have a private tour of the house after which there will be free time to wander in the gardens and we have a group lunch. For over forty years Kit Martin has been saving, rescuing and restoring private houses which would otherwise have been pulled down. He has lived for many years at **Gunton** and he will be our host for the afternoon. He will tell us about restoring and saving houses and in particular what he is currently doing to the parkland at Gunton. He will guide us round the estate and we shall see his recently restored water saw-mill, many of the estate buildings built by Samuel Wyatt, and the chapel which is the only surviving church built by Robert Adam. We return to Congham and the evening will be free.

Day 5: Thursday 9 September – **Holkham Hall**, the magnificent seat of the Earls of Leicester, is without doubt the finest ensemble designed by Kent and in no other house in England do we sense the extraordinary influence of 'The Grand Tour'. We shall have a private tour of the house followed by a group lunch. You will then have some free time before we leave for our late afternoon private visit to **Sandringham**, the private home of HM The Queen, which hardly needs introduction. We return to Congham and the evening will be free.

Day 6: Friday 10 September – **Raynham Hall**, not open to the public, is home to the Townshends (first Viscounts and then Marquesses) for over four centuries. It is a major and wonderful seventeenth century house remodelled internally by William Kent for "Turnip" Townshend in the eighteenth century, still retaining much of its original contents. Lord & Lady Townshend will guide us round their home and host lunch for us in the State Dining Room – a great treat! On our way back to Congham it is hoped to visit another spectacular church and later that evening we have our final group dinner at the hotel.

Day 7: Saturday 11 September – After breakfast, we disperse at the end of what should be a memorable week!

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2495 **Deposit** £250 **Single Supplement** Please note, places are limited in DSU rooms
£475 DSU (Classic Rooms) £695 DSU (Superior Garden Rooms)

Hotel 6 nights with breakfast at the 3* Superior privately owned Congham Hall Hotel

Price includes 3 dinners & 4 lunches with water, wine & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities

Not included Travel to/from Congham Hall, 3 dinners & 1 lunch



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