

## COMPETITIVE BAROQUE DISCOVERING NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

SUNDAY 30 JUNE - FRIDAY 5 JULY 2019 (6 DAYS)

LECTURER: JAMES MILLER

£2075

- **Wonderful opportunity to explore the art & architecture, sculpture & gardens of this little-known county**
- **Outstanding baroque buildings by Talman, Wren, Vanbrugh & Hawksmoor**
- **Enjoy privileged levels of private access to a series of celebrated country houses**
- **Chance to see magnificent paintings in their original settings from Van Dyck to Pellegrini**



Burghley, Antonio Verrio's 'Heaven' Room

### OVERVIEW

Northamptonshire has not always been the quiet county in the centre of England. During the second half of the seventeenth century its country houses were full of the noise of architects and builders, sculptors, fresco painters, gardeners and waggons bringing in treasures from far afield. The results: a series of outstanding buildings with rich art collections. The sense of competition between the various artisans and patrons is palpable. Amazingly their work survives, and this tour will allow you to see what they achieved, in addition to how each one responded individually to the Baroque.

The county's great country estates are still largely owned by the families who created them. The tour will take you to the most splendid of the period – from Althorp to Boughton, from Burghley to Drayton. It will also include visits to equally fine but less well - known locations such as Kimbolton Castle, and even Hawksmoor's glorious masterpiece, Easton Neston. Each is distinctive, that together they represent a spectacular blossoming of art and architecture.

The tour will include opportunities to examine and discuss close-up a series of masterpieces, including Van Dyck's *War and Peace* at Althorp, the Italian pictures collected by Lord Exeter, sculpture by Rubens's friend Nicholas Stone, the Roubiliac Montagu monuments, and baroque gardens at Boughton and Easton Neston.

In these houses and churches you will encounter some intriguing characters. From the unscrupulous Earl of Sunderland to the Francophile Duke of Montagu, to his cousin the English Ambassador to Venice the Duke of Manchester, to Lady Mary Mordaunt who gave up being Duchess of Norfolk to marry her lover, Sir John German in 1700. These are the very people who made things happen.

We shall be based at the Grade 1 listed Rushton Hall, a handsome country house hotel just outside Kettering. Rushton has a remarkable history. It is largely of sixteenth and seventeenth century date, with later internal alterations. Amongst its owners were the Tresham family, famously recusant and involved in the infamous 'Gunpowder Plot'. It was converted into a hotel in recent years.

### ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Sunday 30 June – Participants should arrive independently at the 4\* Rushton Hall Hotel by late afternoon. A welcome drink will be followed by a group dinner in the hotel. Wine, water and coffee will accompany group lunches and dinners.

**Day 2:** Monday 1 July – Today we will drive to **Althorp**, the seat of the Earls Spencer, to study the internal changes to the house commissioned by Lord Sunderland, described by John Evelyn as rooms such “as may become a great Prince”. Here we will also thrill to the ladies painted by Sir Peter Lely, and enjoy an informal discussion between Dr Christopher Brown and James Miller on Van Dyck’s masterpiece *War and Peace*. After a group lunch, we leave Althorp and travel south to **Canons Ashby**, the seat of the Dryden family, to see the effects of the baroque style on a more modest house, including the wall paintings by Elizabeth Creed in the house and adjacent church. There will also be an opportunity to see the early eighteenth century gardens. We return to hotel and the evening will be free.

**Day 3:** Tuesday 2 July – Today we have a private visit to **Burghley House**, the seat of the Marquesses of Exeter, to view the transformation to both house and collection brought about by the 5<sup>th</sup> Lord Exeter. This will include the great painted state rooms as well as the private rooms on the ground floor where Grindling Gibbons can be seen at his best. After a mid-morning break for coffee, John Somerville will introduce the collection of Old Masters formed by Lord Exeter in Italy on his Grand Tours. After lunch at the house we will briefly visit Lord Exeter’s tomb at **St Martin’s Without** which he commissioned from Monnot in Rome and which was transported to England and assembled here. The coach will then drive us to **Kimbolton Castle**, the former seat of the Dukes of Manchester where between 1690 and 1720 two separate baroque projects were undertaken, the latter involving Vanbrugh, Galilei, and the painter Pellegrini. Tea will be taken in the parish church before returning to the hotel, and a free evening.

**Day 4:** Wednesday 3 July – This morning we take a short drive to the valley of the river Nene for a private tour of **Drayton**. Before arriving at the house, we will stop at **Lowick Church** to introduce you to the various families who have contributed to the history of the house. At Drayton we will be met by the archivist (and author of Pevsner’s *Northamptonshire*), Bruce Bailey. Weather permitting, he will talk outside on the works of the main architect William Talman, putting it into the context of his other houses such as Chatsworth and Hampton Court. After coffee we then take a tour of the baroque elements of this great house before a group lunch at the *Snooty Fox* in Lowick. Next a visit to the 1720s church at **Stoke Doyle** built for Sir Edward Ward and his elegant memorial; an early work by Rysbrack. We will then visit the nearby market town of **Oundle** for a stroll through the streets and a chance to see Cobthorne House, built for William Boteler, Oliver Cromwell’s Lord Chamberlain in 1658. We return to the hotel and the evening will be free.

**Day 5:** Thursday 4 July – Our day begins with a private visit to **Boughton**, the seat of the Duke of Buccleuch. The house was transformed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Montagu in the French baroque style. The tour will include the largely unaltered suite of state apartments which have slept for over 300 years. You will also be given a chance to study the splendid baroque furniture, both English (Huguenot) and French, as well as the armoury. After lunch in the stables we will walk the early eighteenth century water gardens and then make the short journey to **Warkton Church**. Here you will see the pair of baroque monuments, masterpieces by Roubiliac. We travel back to the hotel where we shall have our last group dinner later that evening.

**Day 6:** Friday 5 July – This morning we will depart the hotel in our own cars to visit the centre of **Northampton** to see the rebuilding of the town after The Great Fire of 1675 – the splendid town church of **All Saints** and the adjacent **Sessions House** designed by Henry Bell of Kings Lynn. Then south to **Easton Neston**; architect Hawksmoor’s favourite country house, for a private tour of the house and gardens commissioned by Lord Lempster around 1700, which remains in private hands. Our tour comes to a formal end just before lunchtime.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £2075    **Deposit** £275    **Single Supplement** £195 (Double/Twin Room for Sole Use)

**Hotels** 5 nights with breakfast at the 4\* Rushton Hall Hotel, near Kettering

**Price includes** 2 dinners & 4 lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, the services of James Miller & Tom Duncan

**Not included** Travel to/from Rushton, 3 dinners



CICERONI TRAVEL  
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL  
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167    Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188  
Email [info@ciceroni.co.uk](mailto:info@ciceroni.co.uk)    Website [www.ciceroni.co.uk](http://www.ciceroni.co.uk)

