**HERITAGE VISIT TO CHENIES MANOR.**

On a glorious July afternoon eighteen members of the Society were joined by our friends from BOTRA to enjoy a conducted tour of Chenies Manor and the gardens. The weather could not have been better and we were met by our guide for the afternoon who enlightened us with the history of the house.

Chenies Manor is a Grade 1 listed building that was constructed by Sir John Cheyne as a fortified manor house in the mid-15th century. We were told that Tudor monarchs, including Henry VIII and Catherine Howard and Queen Elizabeth I were regular visitors. The original building was extended by John Russell, 1st Earl of Bedford in the 1600’s and the manor house remained as part of the Russell estate until 1950. The manor house is now the MacLeod Matthews family home

Restoration work has continued until the present day and recently the16th century pavilion has been restored. From an architectural standpoint the house is ‘L’ shaped with the entrance at the meeting of the two wings. Skywards one’s attention is drawn to the 22 chimneys constructed from individually cut bricks each having its’ own character.

Once inside the ground floor one is greeted by a parlour with a beamed ceiling and a wide fireplace. Most of the rooms are filled with beautiful antique furniture and the dining room displays a fine collection of silverware. Proceeding upstairs by way of a spiral staircase one finds a handrail that has been carved into the brickwork and it is in this area that footsteps are still sometimes heard crossing the gallery. Speculation tends towards a ghost of Henry VIII.

Among the various bedchambers on the first floor is the nursery where a collection of antique dolls were on display along with their prams. Also in this room was a ‘priest hole’ which led to secure hiding places.

After the guided tour of the house it was time for tea in the garden before exploring the extensive grounds. Here we saw a wonderful planting of perennial shrubs, roses, annuals and especially Dahlias. Chenies also has a special Physics Garden with ten beds of herbs.

Altogether it was a most interesting and enjoyable local outing.

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