

St Mary's.....the Parish Church of Selly Oak

AROUND CROOME LANDSCAPE PARK

BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY, 1ST MAY 2006

This Spring Ramble is an easy one in south Worcestershire, with lovely views of the whole range of the Malvern Hills and only one short hill to walk up. The civil parish is called Croome d'Abitot, having been the property of the first Norman Sheriff.

Croome Park was "Capability" Brown's first complete landscape, created in the 18th century out of a wild heath and worthless morass for the 6th Earl of Coventry whose country seat was Croome Court. Launcelot Brown thereby made his reputation and established a new style of garden design which became a model for the next half century.

Brown had much to do with the design of the Court, rebuilt the church on a low hill as an eye-catcher in 1760 and dotted the estate with gothic ruins, obelisks, and temples, at a cost of £400,000. He would be turning in his grave if he knew that a 20th century motorway had been built across his park, albeit only the western edge.

Croome Court, decorated by Robert Adam who also designed the church interior, became a special school and has now been divided into private apartments.

The National Trust acquired 670 acres of the park in 1996 with substantial grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a generous donation from Royal & Sun Alliance, and are now completing a major programme of restoration works to return the park, including the Pleasure Grounds and the artificial Croome River, to its original character.

Although paying for parking we do not have to pay the admission charge as we are using public footpaths just outside the park. Firstly we shall visit the church of St Mary Magdalene, a perfect fantasy of the period, now in the care of The Churches Conservation Trust, and largely a mausoleum to the Coventry family. The vista on leaving the church is superb.

We cross the northern end of the park to High Green, a hamlet of estate cottages whose sober inhabitants lost their inn by closure some years ago, and make our way over the M5 to Kinnersley whose only claim to fame is that the local riding stables are where Fred Rimell trained a Grand National winner.

On returning to the park we skirt the mile-long lake of Croome River, the longest artificial river of its kind in England, and climb past a Greek-style folly, the Park Seat, to reach a high field. We can now see the radar establishment on Defford airfield, a vast early-warning complex of dishes and "golf-balls", with a good view of Bredon Hill beyond.

This serves as an early warning that the ramble is almost finished, and after passing the Rotunda we come to the Bullring – no, sorry, I mean the elegant arched gateway to Croome Court – and our circuit is complete.

For anyone who wants a closer look the Pleasure Grounds remain open until 5.30pm, but why not come again another day.

ST MARY'S RAMBLE
BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY, 1ST MAY 2006
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- MEETING TIME:** 10.30 am for start at 10.45 am
- PLACE:** CROOME LANDSCAPE PARK CAR PARK (National Trust) (Grid Reference 888452), off A38 south of Worcester. There is a parking fee of £2 unless a driver or a passenger is a NT member.
- LENGTH OF RAMBLE:** 5.25 miles of field paths, lane and parkland, with a number of stiles.
- MAP:** O.S. Landranger Sheet 150
- HOW TO GET THERE:** Follow A38 to Lydiate Ash, then M5 Southbound, leaving at Junction 7, signposted Worcester, Malvern, Hereford, and taking 3rd exit from roundabout above motorway. At next roundabout turn left, following signs to Worcester West and Malvern along the Worcester Southern By-Pass.
- Continue straight on at next roundabout, and at the following one turn left, signposted A38 Tewkesbury. Proceed through Kempsey and turn left as directed by a brown tourism sign to Croome Landscape Park.
- Continue for 2 miles and take 2nd turning left, following brown sign, through High Green, turn right at T-junction, and right again into car park. Please park on left, against the side nearest the road.
- DISTANCE:** 31 miles. Allow 50-60 minutes from Selly Oak.
- REFRESHMENTS:** Will be provided at the Royal Oak Inn, Kinnersley (bear right, not left, at 2nd brown sign).
- A selection of sandwiches and ploughman's lunches is available to order. Please consult the list in the church porch or circulated to St Gabriel's and St Michael's; it gives details and prices. Please enter your order fully and clearly.
- The list will be taken down after Evensong on **SUNDAY, 23RD APRIL**, but please **DO NOT** leave it until the last minute.
- June Sutton (472 4248) must know by then how many are coming, what you all want to eat, and whether you need a lift there and back.
- Ramble queries to Peter Washbourne (476 2406).