

Visit to The Manor at Hemingford Grey

8 October

After a good lunch at the Cock Inn the group walked alongside the River Ouse to the 12th century Manor of Hemingford Grey. The house, once moated, stands in four acres of garden renowned for its collection of over 200 roses. It is reputed to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited houses in Britain. As we walked through the 'coronation' and 'chess piece' topiaries, our first view of the manor was the Georgianised south gable. This turned out to be part of a much larger façade, added in 1730 but destroyed by fire in 1798. The original house, built with all the qualities of Norman wisdom, survived and is the bulk of what stands today. We were greeted by Diana Boston, custodian of the house and the daughter-in-law of its most celebrated occupant, Lucy Boston.

Lucy Boston purchased the house before the onset of World War II, restoring many original features during the

Norman hall now called the Music Room with its first floor exterior doorway. This room, full of atmosphere, was used during World War II to give twice-weekly gramophone record recitals to visiting airmen from RAF Wyton. The 1930s gramophone, made by E.M. Ginn, has an enormous papier-mâché horn and is still working today, sharpened bamboo being used as a stylus. The room still contains cobbled together settees made of mattresses, blankets and even an old car seat.

The group were also shown the other main rooms: the dining room where all the books were written, the main bedroom with its arched norman window, and the children's attic bedroom containing many toys featured in her books and an early *en suite* facility for use by guests. We were also shown the collection of exquisite quilts, stitched by Lucy Boston during the winter months when the demands of the garden were less. The day finished with a walk through the gardens, along the riverbank, returning to the village.

Mike Copperwheat