



PRE-CHRISTMAS INSCAPE RETREAT
ANGLO-SAXON MALMESBURY MEDIEVAL

Wednesday 11 DECEMBER - Friday 13 DECEMBER 2019

Malmesbury, site of an Anglo-Saxon Burh of such significance that the first king of all England, Athelstan, was buried there; where its Bishop Aldhelm invented the first organ in the 8c; where in 1010 the monk Eilmer decided to try his hand at flying from the Abbey tower in a hang glider (he succeeded, but broke both his legs); a town renowned for its learning and its library by the 11c, such that by the Norman Conquest it was one of the most significant towns in England; whose Abbey spire reached higher than Salisbury Cathedral, and whose Abbey guest house is now the oldest hotel in England. Malmesbury and its surroundings have fostered a clutch of fascinating writers and artists: Bishop Aldhelm of Malmesbury in the 7c was the first Anglo-Saxon to write in Latin verse. William Of Malmesbury, the most important English historian of the 12c, worked as a monk in Malmesbury Abbey where he wrote, 'De Gestis Regum Anglorum' (the Deeds of the Kings of the English). John Dryden wrote 'Annus Mirabilis', a poem commemorating the remarkable events of 1665-6, while staying at nearby Charlton Manor in 1667. Thomas Hobbes, the philosopher and writer of 'Leviathan' was born in Malmesbury in the year of the Armada 1588. The inventor and photographer-artist William Henry Fox Talbot lived at nearby Lacock Abbey, a house converted from a medieval monastery, where he produced some of the most beautiful images of early photography, and Robin Tanner, major educationalist and creator of exquisite woodblock engravings in the mid 20c, lived in a village close to Malmesbury.

To complement the pre-classical glories of Malmesbury we have arranged private visits to Elizabethan Chavenage, the home of the Lowsley-Williams family (and recently standing in as Trewith, the family home of the Poldarks for the TV series) and to Lacock Abbey. The warm stones of Chavenage date from the late 14c. The house was granted to the Seymour family after the Dissolution, and then grandly rebuilt by Edward Stephens in the 1580s. Its mysteries are celebrated by the present owners. Lacock Abbey was founded in the late 13c as a nunnery, converted after the Dissolution to a private house, still with its cloister, and later became the home of Henry Fox Talbot the pioneer of photography, who celebrated the antiquity of the building in his delicate and beautiful images.



RECTORY HOTEL

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In between Malmesbury and Cirencester - in the heart of the Cotswolds- just inside the village of Crudwell sits the elegant stonewalled Rectory Hotel. Across the road is her sister enterprise, The Potting Shed Pub, championing outstanding pub food and fine wines and ales. The hotel harks back to the era of country house parties.

The hotel has 18, simply but beautifully, furnished bedrooms – 15 in the main house and 3 in a separate cottage, all with goose down bedding, fast wifi and, a library of favourite films streamed direct. Classic food with a contemporary edge is a serious focus here presented and served in the elegant dining room itself a striking glasshouse.

WEDNESDAY 11 December

- 10.00 London Paddington: suggested train
- 11.12 Arrives Chippenham Station. Minibus to Crudwell.
- 12.00 Arrive Rectory Hotel Crudwell for introductory drink, talk and welcoming lunch
- 1.30 Minibus leaves for Malmesbury Athelstan Museum
- 1.45 Athelstan Museum Malmesbury with introduction from curator Maria Marsh
- 2.45 Short Architectural walk in Malmesbury : 15c Market Cross and the 17c rubblestone High Street
- 3.30 Tea in Malmesbury Abbey
- 4.00 Leave for hotel and rest
- 7.00 Opening Dinner in hotel

THURSDAY 12 December

- 10.30 Coffee in hotel (room to be announced later)
- 11.00 NF lecture : 'Ancient Malmesbury from Athelstan to Roger of Salisbury'
- 12.30 Lunch in hotel
- 1.45 Leave for Malmesbury Abbey
- 3.00 Leave for the Elizabethan Manor House of Chavenage for private tour with owner David Lowsley-Williams
- 4.30 Tea at Chavenage
- 5.00 Leave for hotel
- 5.30 Arrive hotel
- 7.00 Dinner in hotel

FRIDAY 13 December

- 10.30 Coffee
- 11.00 NF Lecture 'The Writers and Artists of Malmesbury: William of Malmesbury, Thomas Hobbes, John Dryden, Henry Fox Talbot, Robin Tanner
- 12.30 Closing lunch in hotel with NF final remarks
- 1.30 Leave for Lacock Abbey
- 2.00 Arrive Lacock for private view with Claudia Hirschmann.
- 3.30 Tea at Lacock
- 4.00 Leave for Chippenham station
- 4.27 Train leaves for Paddington
- 5.39 Train arrives Paddington

COST: £1195 Members, £1245 non-members, £95 single room supplement, deposit £250 Includes all day and evening lectures, tuition, and readings, private visits, entries, and transportation during the tour, two night's accommodation with breakfast, lunch and dinner with wine, all coffees and teas. Please note that this cost excludes travel to and from Chippenham (with regrets limited to 10 participants).