

HADS GRAND FINALE TOUR OF NORTH WALES AND CHESTER

September 2025

On Monday 15th September 2025, 12 members of HADs headed off via minibus for our last-ever study tour. Sadly, two members of our group, Paul and Gill Herbert, had to pull out at the last minute due to ill health. This was particularly sad as both Paul and Gill had been with us from the very beginning and we all wish them both a speedy recovery.

The minibus was provided by Angela Coaches and our driver, Kathy, who we knew previously, managed to drive us all the way to Llandudno with just two breaks on the way. Our selected hotel was the “Wildings” which was near the pier and very close to the main shopping street of the town. Llandudno is an attractive Victorian seaside resort which still maintains a lot of its original charm.

The committee had deliberately decided to make Tuesday 16th September a quiet day, giving Kathy a chance to recover from the driving the previous day, so the group headed off into the town. Some of the ladies made a beeline to the charity shops and others headed for the pier. An unexpected “find” by some of the group was the “Home Front Museum”; a wonderful collection of World War 2 memoranda with mock-up shops and homes from the era.



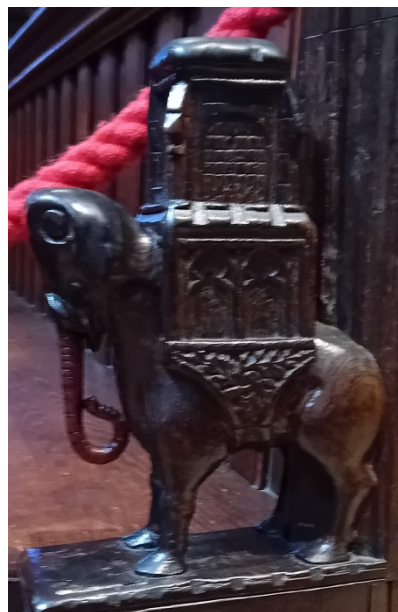
“Don’t Panic!”

In the afternoon we had a short minibus journey to the tram terminus that took us up the “Great Orme” a windy headland offering spectacular views over the town and surrounding area. We then made our way back to the town and met up for tea and coffee.



Tramway ticket office

On Wednesday the 17th we took the minibus back over the border to Chester and we enjoyed a guided tour of the cathedral. Our guide pointed out the development of the cathedral through differing styles of architecture and there were many highlights but perhaps the most interesting were the carved medieval choir stalls which included the most bizarre depiction of an elephant, carved by someone who clearly had never seen such an animal in their life! The rest of the day was given to exploring the interesting city with its Roman remains and unique two story medieval shopping streets known as the “Rows”.



“Elephant” carving at Chester Cathedral



Waiting for the show at the Roman Amphitheatre

On Thursday the 18th we headed in the opposite direction and crossed the Menai Straits into Anglesey. We first visited Beaumaris Castle, the last of Edward I's fortifications built to subdue the natives. The castle was never completed but still offers substantial remains.



Don ac Ed yn y castell



Beaumaris Castle "dry"

We had been lucky up to this point with the weather but, by the time we got to our next planned location, Parys Mountain Copper Mine, it was raining. The mine dates from the early Bronze Age. Copper, being the main component of bronze, was a very important commodity at the time and there is evidence of mining at the site long after the Bronze Age. As well as the bad weather, we were told not to go too far into the site as filming was taking place, although the staff were sworn to secrecy as to what was being filmed!



Parys Mountain Copper Mine "wet"

Our trip to Anglesey ended with a visit to "Bryn Celli Ddu" a much-restored Bronze Age chambered burial mound. There were obvious parallels with Wayland's Smithy and West Kennet burial mounds nearer to home.

On Friday 19th September we visited Betws-y-Coed on the eastern edge of Snowdonia, a very pretty village with spectacular rapids. Even more interesting was the nearby "Swallow Falls", a multiple waterfall system, which can be visited for a small fee. Unfortunately our tour through Snowdonia

National Park was impaired by bad weather and low cloud but luckily this had cleared by the time we got to Caernarfon and we had about one and a half hours to explore arguably the most spectacular of Edward I's castles.



On Saturday the 20th we said goodbye to Llandudno and to Wales and had the long journey back to Hampshire. The roads were better than we dared hope and we arrived back in mid-afternoon. Thank you to Kathy for her exemplary driving throughout.

There were many highlights of this trip and evening meal times were enjoyable with an occasional sing-along and even a rude reworking of Slim Harpo's song "I'm a King Bee"! We hope the other guests didn't mind!

Thank you to Don, Ed, Sally and the rest of the committee for arranging yet another successful trip and for all the other tours dating back to 2010. There wasn't a bad one amongst them!



"Cheers!"

Alan Sandford

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