

Report of May Meeting

Since our last regular meeting, we have enjoyed hosting the annual group meeting, when members from Uplyme and All Saints W.I.'s joined us to hear Dr Taylor speak about the ongoing developments at Axminster Hospital. During the evening we also enjoyed a hilarious collection of songs by a group of singers from Dalwood – great fun! Mary has had a number of letters of thanks and appreciation from those who joined us, and we're glad that they enjoyed the evening as much as we did.

On May 6th, a number of us went on our annual trip, this year to Hartland Abbey, stopping off at Torrington to visit the Dartington Crystal factory shop. We had a most enjoyable time, with a fascinating tour of the Abbey, after which we were free to explore the beautiful grounds – looking particularly lovely with rhododendrons coming into flower. Several of us have already resolved to make a return visit to explore further at our leisure, perhaps to visit the walled gardens, the church, or to wander down to the beach, where the film 'Sense and Sensibility' was shot. The only downside of the day was the weather – a thick sea mist made it a chilly and rather damp day.

This month's speaker was Felicity Harper, who introduced us to the Courtenay family of Powderham Castle. Felicity is not only well qualified to speak of their history, being an archivist there, but she has such an insight into human personality and such a sense of humour, that she was able to breath life into her characters, which was so amusing and will be remembered for a long time. From Reginald Courtenay who came to England from France in the 12th century and went on the Crusades to Jerusalem, followed by his wife (but only as far as France), to the present Countess who is Sheriff of Devon, we were led at break-neck speed through the saga of the family, their travels and mixed fortunes.

Joan Cudmore