

## Kirstead Hall visit Report



On April 12<sup>th</sup>, 25 members of the Art Appreciation Group visited Kirstead Hall, a Norfolk brick manor house originally started by Sir John Godsolve, who inherited the land and estate from his father Thomas.

He held the office of Clerk of the Signet and eventually worked for Henry VIII's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell. He was elected as MP for Norwich in 1539. He managed to survive through the reigns of Henry's children Edward and Mary, dying two years before Elizabeth acceded to the throne. His son, Thomas, continued building and created the Elizabethan House and Hall. From above the house can be seen to create an E shape, a style commonly used in that period as a tribute to the Queen.

Upon our arrival, we were greeted by Dermot and Judy Murphy, who bought the house about 40 years ago. They pointed out the differences in the external brick work showing the additions and alterations throughout the years. It was also obvious in places that the walls had subsided due to water below the house. Inside we learnt about the extent of the renovations that had been necessary over the years of their ownership. Some of the original features had survived, including stone floor tiles, ceilings and beams, the large fireplaces were very impressive although the wood carvings decorating them were no longer in place.



The windows were made up of individual diamond shaped pieces of glass in lead surrounds and some of the pieces had writing etched into them. In every room there were explanatory cards, photos and books full of information about the house.

The present family's history was also on display, including a picture showing the owner's great uncle Edward van Cutsem, among those present at the signing of the German surrender in 1945. Other interesting things include a letter to Dermot's aunt from Agatha Christie.

Dermot runs an antique furniture restoring company and took us into his workshop to see some of the pieces he is working on at present. He works with craftsmen who specialise in other skills, such as leatherwork or gilding. His enthusiasm was clear in the fascinating talk he gave about his present projects.

After a visit to see the dovecote we just managed to go back into the house before the rain started. We were invited to wander round and look into the rooms again before being called into the kitchen, (a mixture of Tudor and 21<sup>st</sup> century style) to help ourselves to a delightful spread of scones with jam and cream, cakes and tea or coffee. We were made to feel very welcome and it is certainly a place to visit again.



Report by Jean Hornbuckle Pictures by Marian Rowe