

# Institute of Physics – London & South East Branch – Retired Members Section

## Visit to Chislehurst Caves and Hall Place on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2016

This visit has been organised by MC Black

We visit the spectacular Chislehurst Caves and, nearby, the stunning former Tudor House, Hall Place, with its famous topiary garden. In both we shall enjoy guided tours.

### Description

**Chislehurst Caves** The caves at Chislehurst are a labyrinth of manmade tunnels, forming a maze covering over 6 Hectares and are up to 30 metres below the homes and woodlands above. They were dug for chalk, used in lime burning and brick making for the Building of London, also for flints to



fire the tinderboxes and flintlock guns of years ago. First open to the public in 1900 as a showplace, the guides told the Victorians' history of Romans, Druids and Saxons, Smuggling and Murder. The last 100 years has added a munitions store for the Woolwich Arsenal in the 1914-18 war. Mushroom growing took place in the 1920s and 30s and the caves became an underground town as the largest deep air-raid shelter outside London, protecting over 15000 people every night during the Blitz. In the 1950s, 60s and 70s it developed as a venue for dances and concerts,

where the most famous names in pop and rock presented Jazz, Skiffle and Folk music.

Our tour will be led by Rod LeGear, former Secretary of the Kent Underground Research Group, who has been researching the Caves for many years and is a volunteer Guide

Further information at [www.chislehurst-caves.co.uk](http://www.chislehurst-caves.co.uk)

**Hall Place** is a stunning former Tudor house with magnificent gardens. It is a Grade I listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument situated beside the River Cray on the outskirts of Crayford in the London Borough of Bexley.

The house dates back to around 1540 when wealthy merchant Sir John Champneys, Lord Mayor of the City of London in 1534, used stone recycled from a nearby former monastery, Lesnes Abbey, to build himself a country house on a site where a manor house was recorded some 300 years earlier in 1241.

In 1649, the house was sold to another wealthy City merchant, Sir Robert Austen (1587–1666), who added a second wing built of red bricks, doubling the size of the house but without trying to harmonise the two halves built in highly contrasting architectural styles.

Ca. 1772 Sir Francis Dashwood, a member of the notorious Hellfire Club acquired the



house. It remained in the Dashwood family until 1926, but was used as a boarding school for much of the 19th century.

In about 1870, Maitland Dashwood returned to Hall Place, restored the building and leased it to various tenants. These included, in the early 20th century, Lord Churston and his wife, music hall singer and actress Denise Orme and, from 1917, the Countess of Limerick. A major figure in early 20th century society, Lady Limerick's social gatherings included the future King George VI. It was she who began the house's topiary garden of traditional heraldic figures, the Queen's Beasts.

After a Guided Tour of the house, members can enjoy a stroll in the 65 hectare estate. Whatever the season, there is always a spectacular show in the award-winning gardens. Members may care to see the Queen's Beast topiary sculptures, the herbaceous borders and the romantic wildflower meadow.

For more information see: <http://www.bexleyheritagetrust.org.uk/hallplace/>

**Where and when to meet** Meet at the Chislehurst Caves Cafe (refreshments and Toilets) at 10.30

**Getting there. By Train:** Chislehurst Caves are a short walk from Chislehurst Station. **By Car:** Drive to Caveside Close, Old Hill Chislehurst, BR7 5 NL (Free Parking on site). From the Caves members will drive the short distance to Hall Place. It will be appreciated if those with spare car places could take those using public transport. Hall Place: Hall Place is located just off the A2 at the Black Prince interchange 5 miles from Junction 2 of the M25 towards London. There is free parking at Hall Place. For Sat Navs the postcode is: DA5 1PQ

**Lunch Either** in Caves Café or at Hall Place Café. This spreads the “crush” between two small cafes

**Timetable** The tour of the Caves will start at 11.15 and last around 1 hour.

**Size of party** Maximum usually 40

**Cost** £12.00 per person

**Contacts** - MC Black [rem@hardknott.org](mailto:rem@hardknott.org) or 01920 467 930

**Late arrivals** - ring MC Black on 07880 980 921 – but if underground it's unlikely to connect!

