

Institute of Physics

LONDON AND SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH REMS SECTION

Visit to Danson House & The Red House, Bexleyheath, Kent. Thursday 20 October 2005

This visit has been organised by Geoff Cockett

DANSON HOUSE

Danson House is a fine suburban country villa built in 1766 for Sir John Boyd, a wealthy director of the East India company. Sir Robert Taylor, architect of the Bank of England, designed the house which is one of the most perfect examples of English Palladian architecture in S.E. England. In the 1770s, it was embellished by William Chambers, the King's architect. He designed temples, fireplaces etc which survive together with picture frame and mirror designs recreated from original drawings. After a succession of owners, the house fell into a steady decline and a constant search was made for new uses. In 1995, when Danson House was the most famous "building at risk", English Heritage stepped in to oversee and fund a £4M restoration project which lasted 10 years. The conservation of the building's fabric was followed by the restoration of the principal rooms and bedroom storey. Bexley Heritage Trust then completed the interior furnishings of the house which it now manages. Note that on some maps it is marked as Danson Mansion. [<http://www.bexley.gov.uk/visiting/visiplaces.html>]

THE RED HOUSE (NT).

After lunch, we drive about 0.7 mile and park free* about 150 yards from the Red House. It was built in 1860 for the Victorian artist, designer and poet William Morris. Designed in Victorian gothic style by Philip Webb, Red House is of great international significance in the history of domestic architecture and garden design and reflects Morris's love of things medieval. The building is constructed of warm red brick with an emphasis on natural materials. The garden was designed to "clothe" the house with a series of subdivided areas which still clearly exist. Inside, the house retains many of the original features designed by Morris and Webb, as well as wall paintings and stained glass by Burne-Jones. Originally surrounded by orchards and countryside, Red House and its garden now provide an oasis in a suburban environment. It was a family home for nearly 150 years before being acquired by the National Trust in 2003. [*Web site as above*]

Programme

- 11:00 - 11:15 Meet in car park by the "Danson Stables" pub just past Danson House. (loos)
- 11.15 Walk to house
- 11:20 - 12:40 Guided tour of house.
- 12.45 - 13-40 Lunch at Danson Stables or picnic if preferred.
- 13:40 - 13:50 Drive 0.7 mile and park closer to Red House(no loos).
- 14:00 - 15:30 Guided tour of Red House.
- 15:30 Tea in coach house, then disperse

Directions: At J2 M25, take A2 exit signed for London.
 In about 6.3 miles, take A221 exit, signed for Bexleyheath/Welling.
 At 1st roundabout, take A221 exit, signed for Welling.
 In 50 yards at next roundabout take A221 exit for Bexleyheath.
 After 0.6 mile turn left into Danson Park, signed for *Danson Historic House*.
 Nearest rail connection is BexleyHeath a 10 min level walk, with a service to London BR

The visit to Danson House will cost £5, £3.75 for English Heritage(EH) members. The cost for the Red House(NT) is £6, free to NT members. Individuals belonging to both EH & NT, EH only, NT only, pay respectively, £3.75, 9.75 and 5.00. Others pay £11. Bring EH and/or NT cards. Numbers are limited to 28. Note that numbers are restricted to 14 for the visit to Red House but with some delay after lunch, a second party of 14 can be accommodated there.

Would any disabled driver wishing to have a pre-booked parking slot just outside the entrance to Red House, please advise on booking form.

