

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

Visit to Southill House and Gardens on Thursday 19th May 2022

This visit has been organised by John Belling.

Description



Southill House and gardens

photo: John Belling

Southill has been the home of the Whitbread family for over 200 years. The house was bought in 1795 by Samuel Whitbread I from Viscount Torrington whose unfortunate uncle, Vice-Admiral the Hon John Byng, was shot at Portsmouth in 1757 for an error of judgement whilst in Command of the Fleet ('pour encourager les autres'!).

Pevsner, in the Bedfordshire volume of *The Buildings of Britain*, describes Southill as 'one of the most exquisite English understatements. That so refined and reticent a house could be demanded in 1795 by a brewer is a telling illustration of the rarely admitted cultural possibilities of the Industrial Revolution'.

Samuel Whitbread I died in 1796, a year after buying Southill and his son, Samuel Whitbread II, a prominent Whig politician, employed Henry Holland to rebuild the existing house. Holland was the fashionable architect of the day; he reconstructed Carlton House for The Prince of Wales (later George IV) and other examples of his work may be seen at Woburn, Ampthill, the Swan Hotel in Bedford, and at Althorp. The grounds had earlier been landscaped by Capability Brown.

Today, Southill stands very much as it did in 1806, the year of Holland's death. Much of the decoration is as Holland left it and most of the furniture was designed by him for the rooms in which it stands.

Charles Whitbread, the present incumbent, and James Collett-White, the archivist, will take us round the rooms in the house to show us the art and furniture. Southill is not generally open to the public but Mr. and Mrs. Whitbread have most kindly invited us to make this private visit.

Where and when to meet: At the Black Horse pub for lunch, (see entry below) at 12:30.

Getting there: see area map, below.

Lunch: We will lunch at The Black Horse, Ireland, Shefford, Beds, SG17 5QL.



The Black Horse is a family owned Inn with character and style set in a small hamlet in Bedfordshire. It was built in the 17th century, and although it has been updated and given a contemporary style, it still holds its charm and character. The website, <https://blackhorseireland.com/>, gives more details, and menus.

Timetable:

| Time | Details |
|-------|--|
| 12:30 | Lunch at the Black Horse at Ireland |
| 14:10 | Transfer to Southill House |
| 14:30 | Start of tour of Southill House |
| 16:15 | Tea/Biscuits |
| 16:45 | End of tour, but there will be an opportunity to further explore the grounds |

Size of party: max 25

Cost: £15.00 including refreshments. Lunch at cost, see menu below.

Contacts:

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Late arrivals: phone John Belling as above.



Directions to the Southill Estate from A1 (from London or North)

Leave A1 at Biggleswade North roundabout taking road towards Shefford/Old Warden. Sainsbury's supermarket is on this roundabout.

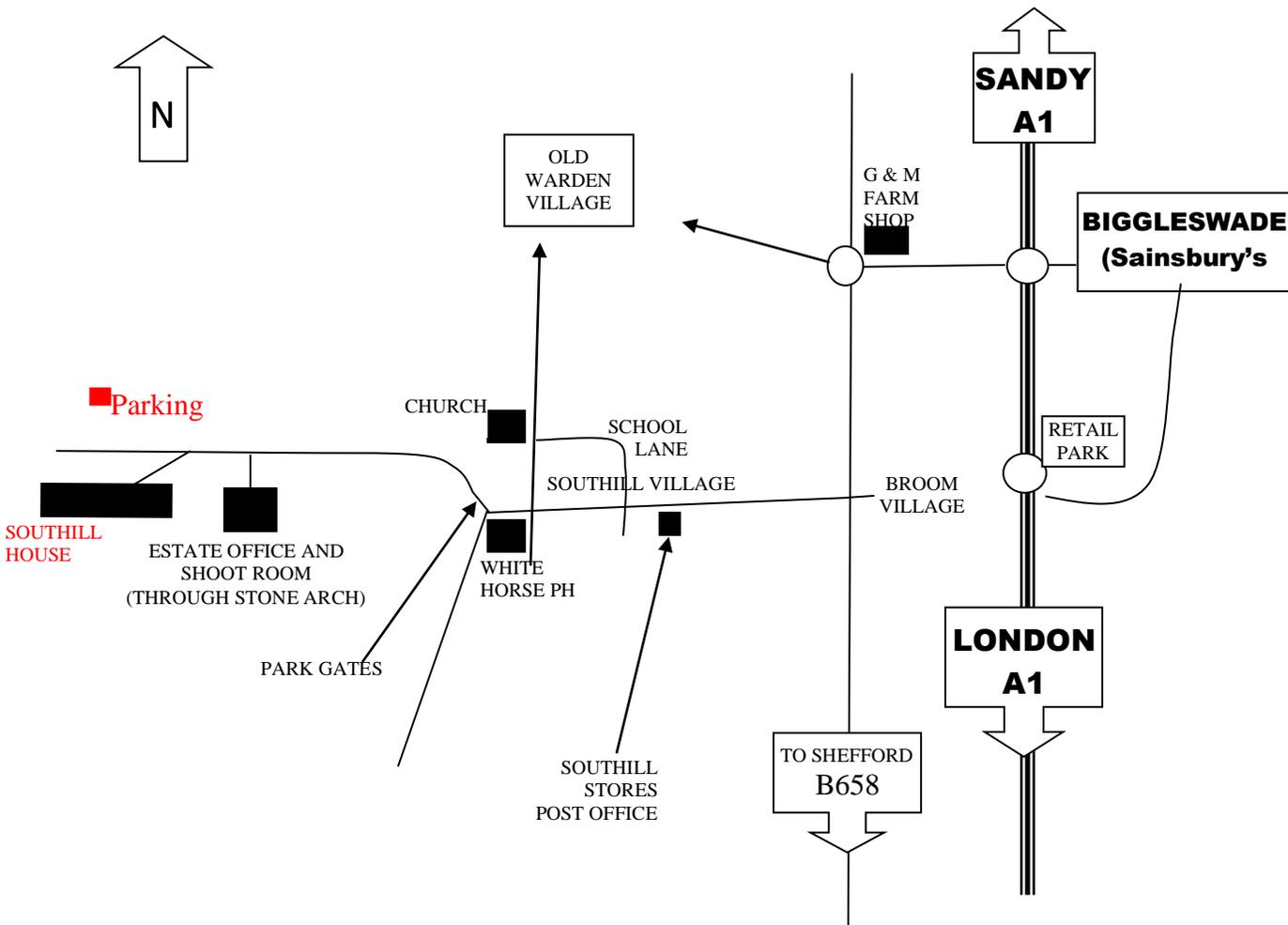
Continue along this road until you reach a small roundabout and take the left hand turn towards Shefford.

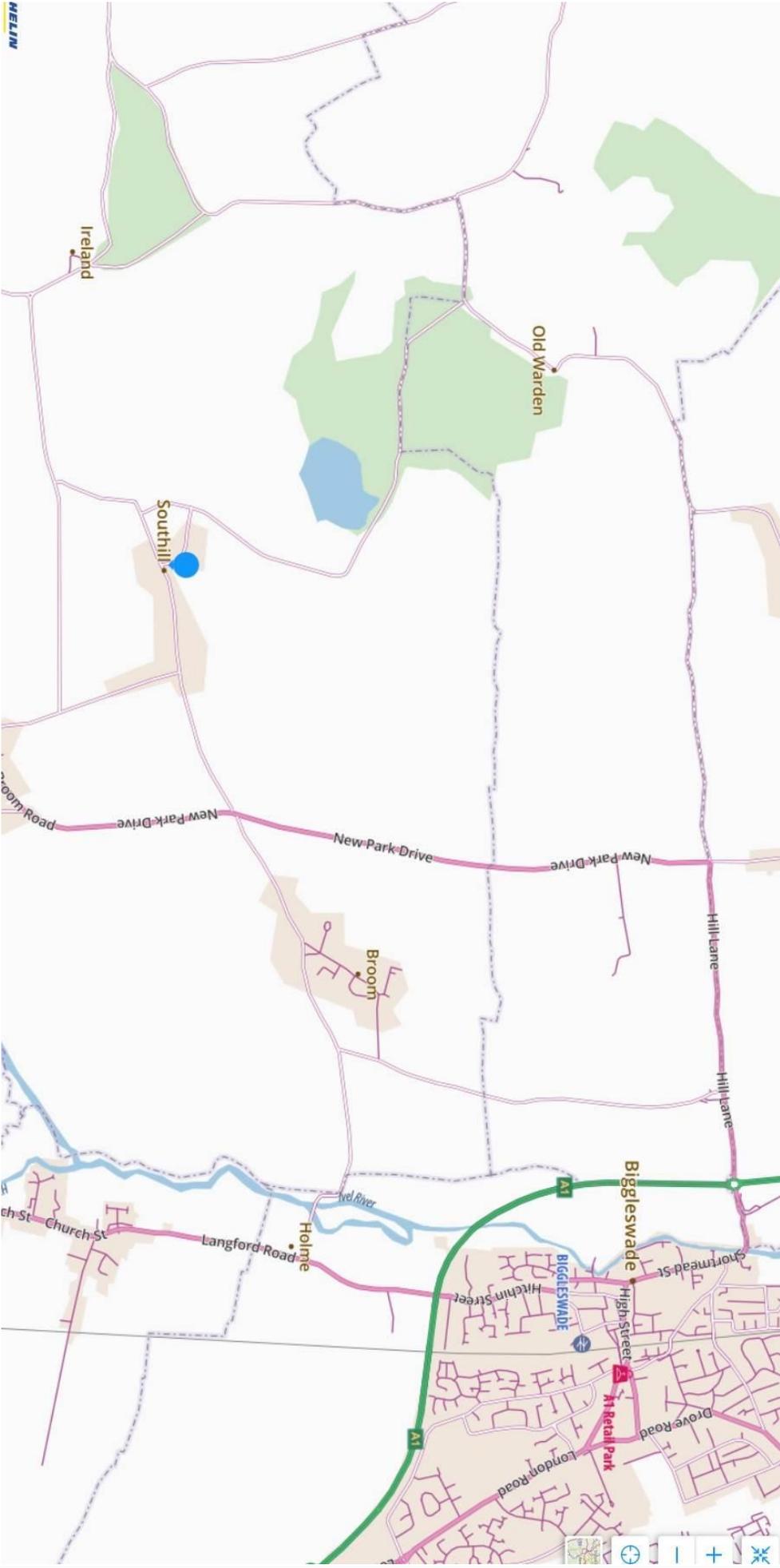
Continue until you come to a staggered crossroads which says Broom to your left and Southill to your right. Turn right and continue through the village of Southill until you reach the White Horse public house on your left.

If you are not having lunch at the Black Horse, then immediately past the White Horse pub at the second turning on the right is the entrance to Southill Park through iron gates with stone pillars and a thatched cottage on the right. (Don't confuse the Black Horse with the White Horse!)

If you are having lunch at the Black Horse, then continue on with the White Horse on your left. When you reach a T junction, turn right (signed Ireland). A little further on, there is another T junction – turn right, and you will immediately see the Black Horse.

House Visits - Proceed through the Park gate, go over two speed bumps and when you reach the fork in the road under the cedar tree go to the left across the front of the House to the far end and park.





NELIN

Ireland

Old Warden

Southhill

New Park Drive

New Park Drive

Hill Lane

Broom

Hill Lane

Biggleswade

Wel River

Langford Road

Holme

A1

A1

Church St

Hitchin Street

High Street

Shornhead St

Drove Road

London Road

At Retail Park

