

GREAT HOUSES & GARDENS OF NORTH YORKSHIRE

A celebratory tour in association with London Festival Opera staying at the Historic Middlethorpe Hall
in aid of the Noble Caledonia Charitable Trust

14TH TO 19TH SEPTEMBER 2025



NOBLE CALEDONIA

It is difficult to believe that 30 years has passed since our first cooperation with London Festival Opera. In those early days under the stewardship of Philip Blake-Jones the company was known as 'Opera Interludes' changing its name to London Festival Opera in the early 2000s. Philip is still the guiding light, and we could not let this anniversary pass without arranging a special celebration to mark all the marvellous trips we have had the pleasure in organising over the past decades.

As well as being in celebration of our association with London Festival Opera, this exclusive tour has also been designed in aid of the Noble Caledonia Charitable Trust, to which all profit from the tour will be donated.

For such a celebratory tour, we wanted somewhere special as our base and in taking over the wonderful Middlethorpe Hall for the five nights we cannot imagine anywhere better. Built in 1691, the restoration, conservation and conversion of Middlethorpe into a country house hotel has been carried out to exacting and historically accurate standards. Elegantly decorated in the manner of the 18th century and complemented with period furniture, antiques and fine paintings it will be the most perfect place for our celebration and base from which to explore the great houses and gardens of North Yorkshire.

Those who travel with us regularly will know that any trip with London Festival Opera adds another dimension to the experience. Over the years they have performed in some stunning locations for us and for this exclusive tour, marking as it does a special anniversary, there will be very special performances at Castle Howard and the Georgian Theatre Royal in Richmond, a unique small and enchanting theatre. The farewell performance will be in the gracious dining room at Middlethorpe Hall, with some magnificent performances between courses.

In addition to members of London Festival Opera, we will be joined by Guest Speaker Alan Mason, one of the most experienced and best qualified garden designers and consultants in Europe and the tour will be expertly led by Tour Leader Chantal Cookson. Our party size for this exclusive tour is limited to only 50, so early booking is recommended.





**NOBLE CALEDONIA
CHARITABLE TRUST**

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We have arranged this exclusive tour both in celebration of our 30th anniversary of working with Philip Blake-Jones and London Festival Opera, but also in aid of the Noble Caledonia Charitable Trust (NCCT), to which all profit from the tour will be donated. The NCCT was established in 2013 by the owners and founder of Noble Caledonia. During our worldwide explorations over the years we have come across many situations where help is desperately needed, be it following a natural disaster, civil unrest, abject poverty or to save an endangered species. So, we made it our vision to use the Noble Caledonia framework to help improve economic, social and environmental conditions in the areas we work and visit. The Trustees of the NCCT seek to select smaller projects in the places we

travel to, and beneficiaries are often suggested by our staff in the field, local agents and onboard teams who are uniquely positioned to identify projects and lead fundraising initiatives. Noble Caledonia Ltd cover the costs of administering the NCCT so that 100% of all donations go directly to the beneficiaries. Money is raised from a percentage of Noble Caledonia's profits each year and through fundraising by staff and donations from our travellers. Examples of projects we have worked with in the past and are currently fundraising for can be viewed on the Noble Caledonia website, and Chantal Cookson who is one of the Trustees of the NCCT will be leading this tour.

LONDON FESTIVAL OPERA

We are delighted that London Festival Opera will be joining us for our stay and presenting three concerts in superb settings – performing a selection of celebrated arias and ensembles from the operas of Handel, Mozart, Rossini, Bizet and Puccini as well as some lighter pieces from the world of operetta and musicals. We have long been associated with London Festival Opera and each year our music themed tours grow in popularity. London Festival Opera has achieved a considerable reputation for presenting opera in the UK and overseas and has performed for Presidents, Prime Ministers and senior members of the British and European Royal Families. The company has performed at 10 Downing Street, the British Embassy in Paris, the President's Palace in Malta and as a guest company in one of Italy's greatest opera houses, La Fenice in Venice. Bringing together artists from the major British opera companies including the Royal Opera, English National Opera and Glyndebourne the programmes presented include a wide and varied range of repertoire, performed in formal evening dress and authentic period costume for an added visual impact.



Philip Blake Jones

YOUR HOSTS

Guest Speaker – Alan Mason



Alan Mason is one of the most experienced and best qualified garden designers and consultants in Europe. He is a founder member of The Professional Gardener's Guild and the founder of Senior Garden Advisors consultancy group. Alan started his garden design consultancy business in 1987 following a period where he was the youngest Head

Gardener in the country, at Bramham Park and Garden Manager to the Queen's cousin Lord Harewood at Harewood House in Yorkshire. Here, he and his team elevated the gardens into the top ten most visited gardens in the country. During the 80's and 90's he presented television programmes from around Europe, including "Le Manoir" the making of his own garden in Brittany and the long running "Gardens without Borders" from around France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Holland. Alan is also a judge of the show gardens at the prestigious Sandringham Flower Show and a garden design lecturer for The Royal Horticultural Society.

Tour Leader – Chantal Cookson



Chantal was born in Suffolk very near the sea and now lives in Northumberland where her husband farms. Chantal has been associated with Noble Caledonia since the company was founded in 1991 and has led tours, be it cruising or land, all over the world. Chantal's initial experience of cruising in British waters was

in 1991 when Noble Caledonia undertook its first cruise around the British Isles, which was a groundbreaking voyage and led to a very successful and popular concept. Though her main job over the last 25 years has been working for Sotheby's, she is now a Travel and Fine Art Consultant intertwining in her busy life still working periodically as part of the Noble Caledonia field staff team. Chantal is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and a Trustee of the Noble Caledonia Charitable Trust.



Herbaceous Garden



Restaurant



MIDDLETHORPE HALL

This lovely country house hotel is located to the south of York, about one and half miles from the centre. It is our chosen base not only because it is a wonderfully comfortable and historic building in a great location but the bonus is the twenty acre landscape garden. Few hotels so close to a city centre can boast of such a benefit offering as it does the best of both worlds. We will have exclusive use of the hotel for the duration of our stay and from here we will explore some of the greatest houses and gardens in Yorkshire and look forward to returning to the comfort, food and good company of this typically William & Mary house.

Our evening meals will be taken in the hotel famed for its cuisine and each evening will offer a memorable dining experience in the panelled dining room which overlooks the garden. There are several sitting rooms dotted with newspapers and magazines, an outside terrace overlooking the garden and perhaps most surprisingly a swimming pool, sauna and gym housed within two converted Edwardian cottages. Part of the Historic House Hotel collection it was given to the National Trust in 2008, it very much feels like a privately owned hotel where everyone involved offers a perfectly balanced mix of professionalism and friendly service.

There are 29 rooms, ten of which are located in the main building, the remainder are in the adjacent courtyard and in former cottages. All rooms are beautifully furnished with special touches, not over-fussy but traditional in the best sense of the word. Rooms feature Nespresso tea and coffee making machine, television and DVD player, premium toiletries and Wi-Fi access. Some rooms have double beds whilst others feature beds which can be configured as double or twin.

Main House Suites

Located on the first floor, The White Rose Suite is a spacious apartment at the top of the main staircase. The living room contains a comfortable sofa and armchairs, a writing desk and occasional tables, while the comfortable bedroom offers a 'coronet' king-size bed, dressing table and chest of drawers, both rooms having views over the north beech avenue. The Lady Mary Suite is situated on the first floor and overlooks the beech avenue. This junior suite offers the comfort of a sitting room with desk and sofa, and a dressing room leading through to a double bedroom with queen-size bed and ensuite bathroom. Views over the beech avenue can be enjoyed from the padded window seat.

Main House Bedrooms

Superbly furnished with antiques and fine pictures, with views over the south lawn or beech avenue. Eight individually decorated bedrooms are situated on the first and second floors and accessible by a small lift. They are characterised by high ceilings, large sash windows filling the rooms with light and two of the rooms feature a four poster bed.

Courtyard Suites

The four spacious suites are located in the 18th century courtyard, with names connected to the history of Middlethorpe. The Colonel Wilkinson, Sir Henry Thompson, Paget and Sir Francis Terry Suites have a comfortable sitting room and separate bedroom with king-size double beds (that can be twinned). They are furnished with antiques and fine prints and are located on the ground and first floors. The Suites have views over the gardens or to the Courtyard, with the Paget Suite located on the ground floor and suited to guests requiring easier access. There is also a Junior Courtyard Suite for sole use.

Courtyard Bedrooms

Adjacent to the Hall in the 18th century courtyard are the well appointed bedrooms. Situated on the ground or first floors, the bedrooms overlook the gardens or the 18th century courtyard. They are furnished in traditional country house style with attention given to detail making the rooms very comfortable and with the ambience of a private house. There are both Standard and Superior bedrooms available in this category.

Cottage and Garden Suites

Three charming suites offer the comfort of the hotel with a greater degree of privacy. The Garden Suite is located in Middlethorpe Court, approximately 60 metres from the main building and has a parking space and patio garden. It contains a dining/sitting room, two bedrooms (one with a king-size bed and one with a single) and a kitchen. The Cottage Suites are located in a Victorian cottage with its own garden just 50 metres from the main house. They are accessed on the ground and first floors, which can inter-connect if required. The ground floor suite has a queen-size bed, while the first floor suite has a queen-size bed and a single bedroom, and both have sitting rooms and tea/coffee making facilities.





THE ITINERARY

Day 1 York, England. A transfer to Middlethorpe Hall from York Railway Station will be provided to those arriving by train. Those driving may park at the hotel's car park. We will meet this evening for welcome drinks and dinner in the hotel. (D)

Day 2 Harewood House. After a leisurely breakfast meet Andrew Leighton, the Head Gardener at Middlethorpe for a tour of the 20 acre gardens which includes a walled garden and lake. Later this morning we will depart for Harewood House which was built in the 18th century by Edwin Lascelles. After a light lunch, enjoy a private tour of the house and garden. The house was designed by architects John Carr and Robert Adams and features an art collection to rival the finest in the land. Set amongst Yorkshire's beautiful landscape, the 100 acre garden is a gem and one of Capability Brown's most inspiring. After some free time we will return to Middlethorpe Hall for dinner in the hotel and an after-dinner talk. (B, L, D)

Day 3 Beningbrough Hall & Castle Howard. This morning drive to nearby Beningbrough Hall. Our main focus here will be the Mediterranean Garden, recently designed by one of the UK's leading landscape designers Andy Sturgeon, well known for his numerous RHS Gold medals at the Chelsea Flower Show. In addition, there is much to see in this eight acre formal garden surrounded by parkland and mature trees. In the late morning we will drive north to one of England's finest historic houses, Castle Howard, where after lunch we will have the afternoon to explore the magnificent House and 1000 acre garden on guided tours. Our visit will end with a performance by London Festival Opera. It will be a most memorable event as they perform amongst the splendour of this magnificent castle which took over 100 years to

complete from its start in 1699. Return to Middlethorpe Hall for dinner and an evening talk. (B, L, D)

Day 4 Ripon & Richmond. Drive north this morning to the town of Ripon and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Fountains Abbey. The evocative ruins of the abbey are set beside the grounds of Studley Royal, a Medieval deer park with one of the best surviving examples of a Georgian water garden. In the late morning we continue on to nearby Newby Hall, one of Britain's finest Adam Houses. After lunch explore the house with a magnificent Tapestry Room, Library, statue gallery and some of Chippendale's finest furniture. We continue on to the gardens that have been totally restored and replanted over a ten year period. Comprising of a series of rooms in the Arts and Crafts style, they are accessed by the main lawned garden walk which leads down to the River Ure. Later, continue north to the charming North Yorkshire town of Richmond. Here we will be treated to a performance by London Festival Opera in the Georgian Theatre Royal, Britain's oldest working theatre in its original form. Built in 1788 by Samuel Butler, it occupies a unique place in theatre history and its charming and intimate atmosphere is the perfect place for our private performance. Return to Middlethorpe Hall for dinner and a talk by Philip Blake-Jones. (B, L, D)

Day 5 Scampston Hall & York. This morning Scampston Hall awaits our visit. The walled garden is quite unlike any other. Designed by the renowned Dutch plantsman, Piet Oudolf, it features modern perennial meadow planting alongside more traditional areas. The garden had been derelict for nearly fifty years when Sir Charles and Lady Legard undertook the huge renovation work. There will also be the opportunity to visit the lovingly restored fine Regency house. After a light lunch return to the hotel. Those who wish to spend some time in York will be dropped off at York Minster and perhaps make a visit to the Treasurer's

House in Minster Yard. Transportation will be provided back to the hotel in the late afternoon. Tonight the farewell performance by London Festival Opera will take place during dinner at the hotel. It is a magical setting and a fitting finale to a wonderful few days of music, great houses and late summer gardens. (B, L, D)

Day 6 York. After breakfast a transfer will be provided to York Railway Station for those returning home by train. (B)

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Category	Price
Courtyard Standard Bedroom	£2995
Courtyard Superior Bedroom	£3195
Main House Deluxe Bedroom	£3495
Courtyard, Cottage & Garden Suites	£3695
Main House Lady Mary Suite	£3795
Main House White Rose Suite	£3995
Courtyard Standard Bedroom for sole use	£3495
Courtyard Superior Bedroom for sole use	£3695
Courtyard Junior Suite for sole use	£3995

PRICE INCLUDES: Five nights accommodation at the Middlethorpe Hall Hotel • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)

• Drinks with included lunches and dinners • Excursions as described
• Three performances by London Festival Opera • Noble Caledonia Tour Leader • Guest Speaker • Group transfers.

Not Included: Travel insurance, lunch on day 1.

Fountains Abbey



Harewood House



Newby Hall Gardens



Flamingos, Harewood House



Richmond





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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.
Cover image: Castle Howard; Back cover image: Peacock in the grounds of Castle Howard.

