

DUNHAM · MASSEY  
 SANCTUARY  
 — from the —  
 TRENCHES

Dear Member,

I offer no apologies for the somewhat sombre nature of this epistle regarding the SCARCE trip to Dunham Massey on Sunday June 1st.

After all, we were acknowledging the centenary (official commencement date July 28th 1914, UK declaration of war on Germany Aug 4th) of the start of the "War to end all Wars" ( if only that were true), and therefore the memory of the 9 million combatants who perished, not to mention the 21 million who were casualties. I am glad I mentioned the idea of switching our usual plod round the classics and rust at the auto jumble at Tatton for the nearby National Trust Dunham Massey where a recreation of the WW1 Stamford Hospital was open for viewing. I hope all who attended enjoyed the day, but also were grateful that our generation have been spared the torment endured by the Tommies on the fields of France and Belgium during those dark days, 282 of whom were treated at Dunham.



Penelope, Lady Stamford, widow, probably decided to open the doors of her ancestral home at Dunham Massey as a hospital for injured Tommies, when she read the newspaper report of the first day of the Battle for the Somme. It was already two years into the conflict that should have ended by Christmas 1914 (according to the top brass) however, on the 1st July 1916 20,000 British soldiers were killed and 30,000 injured. Pause for a moment and think about that.....

Needless to say, it was the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army-and there have been quite a few!

By 1917 the first of the casualties were allowed into what understandably became known by the inmates as " The Safe House". Suffering from such as shell shock, trench feet, trench fever, shrapnel wounds, bullet wounds and poison gas inhalation. The place must have been like heaven to those fortunate Tommies who arrived, after the hell of The Front, tended by such angels as Lady Jane Grey, daughter of Lady Stamford and a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachment.



Our day commenced as usual from The Kingfisher. A decent number attended on what was a beautiful day, and those with rag tops made the most of it!

The route determined by Martin was very enjoyable and he managed to find some winding by-roads to create interest on what is potentially a sterile journey mainly by motorway.

Cars featuring included Martins MGB, Derycks TR6, Ian's Midget (unusually with VC10 exhaust system), Jonathan's XJS, Gerard's beautiful MG VA, Brian's Porsche and rather disappointingly, but comfortably, Jane and I in the XK8. Our chairman turned up eventually, after sorting out the unruly parishioners at Friezland Church, in his superb Arnage.

The journey included, predictably, the tunnels under the runway near Hale Barns. Unnecessarily we all drove through at surprisingly high engine revolutions- the sound was FANTASTIC!! Ha! Top Gear would have been proud of us!! ( Big kids!)



We arrived at Dunham and managed to commandeer part of the car park leaving an adjacent section for our picnic. Salad cream and sun cream abounded- I thought my sandwich tasted a bit odd!

We all managed to get entry tickets for the same time so we all went round the exhibition and house together. I think we all agreed the splendid way the NT presented the hospital rooms made for a very realistic and humbling experience. There was even the ghostly sounds of the inmates coughing and groaning!-or was that the effect of the Ambre Solaire sandwiches?!?

The rest of the house was also open and a very enjoyable hour or so was spent delving into how the aristocracy lived in those pre-war days. WW1 basically saw an end to all that.

It was yet another occasion when we should think ourselves lucky, however, that we have such a splendid institution as the National Trust to not only maintain these fantastic buildings and estates, but also to show us and future generations the history of our nation-sorry-getting all emotional- ok I admit I work for the NT on a commission basis!

Joking apart, we had another great SCARCE day and we look forward to meeting up to compare notes at the monthly meeting if not before.

Happy motoring! ( Mike Littlewood )

