

ACTIVITIES OF ASHTON W.I. DURING JULY

Marjory first introduced the speaker to our July meeting, as he had brought along a very special guest who needed to go home early! Mike Cope was welcomed with “Ghost” the barn owl, and it was apparent very early in his talk that she was a very special and much loved owl. Mike is from the Sudeley Castle Falconry Centre and although his job is to work and train birds of prey, he explained his talk was primarily to discuss how we all need to be aware of how endangered the barn owl is in the U.K. and how we can all help to preserve and encourage them to breed and survive in the future. Ghost sat happily on Mike`s wrist whilst he described all the special features the barn owl has. The silky soft plumage helps with the silent night flights while out hunting mice and voles. Special long legs to grab prey from long grass, a flexible neck that can rotate fully to allow full vision front and back. Lovely brown eyes allowing better night vision.

Apparently, other owls that hunt in the daytime can be recognised by their blue eyes. Mike went on to say what action the Barn Owl Trust and RSPB are doing to encourage the barn owl to breed – providing suitable habitat and an environment providing their carnivore diet. Owl boxes can be bought or made and put into high trees etc. To find out more you can log onto www.barnowltrust.org.uk and www.rspb.org.uk/barnowl Members were to come up and stroke Ghost`s lovely feathers and Mike was asked lots of questions. He was thanked by Wendy Sanger-Davies.



Maggie Dunsby gave an interesting report of the visit and guided tour of Oxford on 21st June. Members had travelled by train and all enjoyed coffee and lunch at the Ashmolean Museum. The very knowledgeable guide, took them to St Johns, Lincoln and Exeter colleges – the latter of Inspector Morse fame. She explained the history from the 13th century to the admission of women in the 1870s. The group admired gardens, chapel and dining room and saw the famous Bodleian Library.



Mollie Groom then gave her entertaining account of the visit made on 31st May to Packwood House and gardens which have been owned by the National Trust since 1941. A lovely day out with beautiful weather.