

Shell Travel Club Newsletter

ISSUE 375 September 2026

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Dear Shell Travel Club Members,

Mid August, the thermometer is reading 35C, the curtains are drawn shut. It feels as if we could be living in a sub tropical country yet here we are in England sheltering from the heat and the hottest year ever recorded. I am taking the opportunity to prepare the September 2026 issue of the Newsletter. Perhaps as I write, you might be on holiday somewhere cooler with your family and friends exploring new areas of interest and adventure.

Following on from two very well supported visits to the Society of Apothecaries, (Black Friars Lane City of London during November 2025), Frieda followed this up with a visit to the Chelsea Physic Garden on Wednesday 17th June 2026. Thankfully the weather was just perfect for our visit.

The Chelsea Physic Garden was established as the Apothecaries' Garden in London in 1673 by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries. The garden was acquired to grow plants to be used as medicines, edible and useful plants and has a world woodland garden of some 192 trees. It is the second oldest botanical garden (353 Years old) in Britain after Oxford and became a registered Charity in 1987 when it was opened to the general public for the first time. It is Grade 1 listed in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest.



We were most fortunate to be shown round the four acre garden by Jessica (a volunteer) who is extremely knowledgeable on trees, their latin names and the importance that they contribute to the health and wellbeing of mankind.

Approximately 21% of Greater London is covered by tree canopy, an estimated 8.4 million trees technically making the capital an urban forest. The trees intercept rain, prevents flooding, provides shading and cooling, removes air pollution and provides food and shelter for people, animals and insects. The existing drought is not helping and the tree canopy is clearly showing signs of distress (early leave and branch fall) due to the lack of rain now and in previous years. A microclimate emergency was declared in 2022 and the Chelsea Physic Garden is working alongside Kew and other world organisations on a tree succession plan able to stand more arid climates. It is the first time that we have heard the term “heat bombs” mentioned on the news. We have had five so far this year.

The picture above captures an image of the shield and crest of The Apothecaries found over the south gate to the gardens. Imagine Agatha Christie, who trained as an apothecary’s assistant, coming to Chelsea Physic Garden to learn about medicinal plants and poisons for her crime stories.

When the Physic Garden was established in 1673, the Worshipful society of Apothecaries leased the land from Charles Cheyenne, the Lord of the Manor of Chelsea. They needed an area where medical herbs could be grown and where apprentices to the society could be trained in their use; Sir Hans Sloane was one of those apprentices. Sloane purchased the Manor of Chelsea from Cheyenne, and granted a perpetual rent of the garden to the Apothecaries for a peppercorn rent of £5 a year. (See his statue in the montage above)

The garden is an excellent centre of learning and relaxation for all ages. The Warden Case (image bottom right in montage above) was invented in 1829 by Dr Nathaniel Ward. It was used on long sea voyages to protect plants from salt spray, rats, and climatic conditions. It was used for the movement of crops like tea, rubber, quinine, and many other plants.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and would like to thank Jessica (our guide) and Frieda for a most enjoyable day out. Comments from a Shell Travel Club member on the Chelsea Physic

visit:-

“Just wanted to say a big thank you for organising this week’s incredible outing to The Chelsea Physic Garden.

What a wonderful day we all had, it was such a beautiful, peaceful haven of historic trees and amazing plants. Our guide was very knowledgeable about all the historical facts and very invested in preserving the historic beauty of the area. Set in such a lovely corner of London. Even the weather was perfect for us all.

It was a really friendly group of horticulturalists who we had the pleasure of spending the afternoon with. Thanks once again for all the time and effort yourself and Jonathan put into organising these amazing day trips.

Already can’t wait for the next one”

Leading on from our visit to the Chelsea Physic Garden, Rob and Allison organised a fabulous mystery trip to Shropshire. We stayed at the Feathers hotel (dating from 1619) in Ludlow and were taken out each day by coach driven by Chris who always had a friendly smile and looked after us very well.

The poet Sir John Betjeman described Ludlow as “probably the loveliest town in England”. The town has nearly 500 listed buildings with examples of medieval and Tudor style half timbered houses overshadowed by Ludlow Castle dating from 1075. It played an important



border fortification along the Welsh Marches.

During our stay, Chris drove us through glorious countryside to visit Shipton Hall, an Elizabethan country house near Much Wenlock and we were greeted by Ben and Stephanie and their dogs, Tabu and Scruff. The Hall was greatly rebuilt in the Georgian style in the mid-

18th century. The picturesque St James' church adjoining the property dates back to Saxon times. There is also a medieval dovecote and Georgian outbuildings.

After thanking Ben and Stephanie for looking after us so well (delicious homemade cakes - doggy bags provided), we drove onto Much Wenlock, a historic medieval market town.

Wenlock Priory is famous as the birthplace of the modern Olympic Games. A number of us visited the ruins of the French Cluniac monastery founded in the 7th century. In 1540, it was closed down as part of Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries.

We continued our exploration of the area the following day with a visit to Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, the world's first iron-framed building opened in 1797. I couldn't imagine being an orphan no more than 10 years old working long hours in unfavourable conditions. Children, both boys and girls came from all parts of the country to work at the mill.

We then went on to visit the historic medieval town of Shrewsbury, the birthplace of Charles Darwin with over 600 listed buildings and a stunning medieval street plan. We enjoyed an excellent ploughman's lunch in the St Vincent Bistro. In the afternoon, we went on an excellent guided tour of the town walking through "Shutts" (narrow passage walkways) ending our day with a boat ride on the River Severn; the water levels were definitely low and we just hoped that we would not run aground.

The following day, we visited Stokesay Castle (a photographer's paradise) not far from Ludlow. Described as "one of the finest surviving fortified manor houses in England".

Laurence of Ludlow, a very wealthy wool merchant purchased the manor in 1281 and set about building his home which he fortified. Later, William, the Earl of Craven in 1640 built the gatehouse. Civil war broke out in 1645 and the castle was surrendered to the Parliamentary armies. On our way back to Ludlow, a ploughman's was served at The Clive Arms followed by a visit to Ludlow Distillery and sampling gin.

No holiday would be complete without a trip on the Severn Valley Railway. Another glorious day as we started our journey at Kidderminster boarding our train hauled by GWR 4930 Hagley Hall. She was built in 1929 at Swindon. During her working life, she covered most of the West Country routes. In 1963, having run 1,295,236 miles during her lifetime she was sold for scrap. Luckily, she was saved, and after restoration was welcomed back into service in 2022. We had a fabulous trip to Bridgnorth stopping along the way at delightful stations such as Bewdley and Hampton Loade.

Arriving at Bridgnorth, we spent a couple of hours exploring the town and enjoying a ride on the cliff railway designed and opened in 1892. It was water-balanced powered until 1944 and since then by electricity. On our way back to Ludlow, we stopped at Daniels Mill. Though no longer milling flour it has a very interesting history.

That evening, we gathered together for a few glasses of wine and toasted Rob and Allison's health thanking them for organising such a fabulous holiday to Shropshire. A county full of beautiful historic places to visit and glorious countryside to travel through. On the way back to London, members visited Sudeley Castle, the resting place of Queen Katherine, last wife of King Henry VIII.

Already there is talk of a future staycation trip sometime in 2027.

On 11th September 2026, Bruce will be running a French river cruise with Riviera on the Rhone travelling between Lyon and Marseille. This trip has already sold out and a 'wait' list is in operation.

Dave Lee and a number of members will be travelling by rail to Carcassonne in France in October to sample French hospitality, beautiful scenery and no doubt some excellent wines. If

you are interested in joining this trip or want further details, then please email Dave on dave.Lee38@outlook.com

The Festive Lunch which was held at the Effingham Golf Club last year on the 3rd December, 2025 was a great success and the food even better than the previous year. As a committee it has been decided to run the event again on **Wednesday 9th December, 2026**. That should give everyone an opportunity to book the date in their diary and come along to enjoy the festive occasion. It would be really appreciated if as many of you could attend this event and would ask that you put the date in your diary.

Frieda is exploring future possible day trips in London. Hopefully you might like to join us on one of the trips organised this year or look forward to exploring one in 2027.

Our next AGM will be held on **Thursday 18 March 2027** at the Tyrrells Wood Golf Club.

Rob and Allison will be running a trip to the Burgundy and Champagne regions of France in 2027. The dates are **Tuesday 18th to Wednesday 26th May 2027** which is 8 nights / 9 days. It is already fully sold out and a 'wait' list in operation.

As always, we try and give members a variety of different trips to new locations along with a programme of day trips which we hope appeal to as many of our members as possible and in return all we ask is that you show your support and join us on as many as you can.

Please remember, all current trips and future trips can be found on our website www.shelltravelclub.com which Sally updates regularly, along with photos from past trips, newsletters and much more, so please log on and check the site regularly.

The committee wish you our very best wishes for 2026 and look forward to seeing you soon.

Jonathan

Shell Travel Club Holiday Schedule 2026/2027

11th September 2026	French Rhone River Cruise Contact: Bruce Ogilvy Email: brucestc75@gmail.com	from £2873.75pp
8th October 2026	Carcassonne by Rail Contact: Dave Lee Email: home38@outlook.com	from £2399pp
9th December 2026	Festive Lunch, Effingham Golf Club Contact: Bruce Ogilvy Email: brucestc75@gmail.com	TBD
18th March 2027	STC AGM, Tyrells Wood Golf Club Contact: Bruce Ogilvy Email: brucestc75@gmail.com	TBD
18th May 2027	Burgundy & Champagne Tour Contact: Rob Jenkins Email: robert.jenkins@hotmail.co.uk	TBD