

Ancestral Voices led by Sarah Doig and Tony Scheuregger

We were pleased to welcome at our April meeting Ancestral Voices led by Sarah Doig and Tony Scheuregger who gave us a very lively and authentic presentation on Queen Elizabeth I's Royal Progress through East Anglia. Employing the use of Tudor paintings, engravings, original source accounts and quotations, Sarah and Tony took us through the eleven week 'progress', bringing it to life still further by playing contemporary music on period instruments such as lutes and viols. Elizabeth commenced her journey from Greenwich Palace on 11 TH July 1578, the dual objective of such a mammoth trip being to parade the sheer splendour and majesty of her court and at the same time, route out various Catholic supporters for either punishment or conversion to Protestantism. Endless months of preparation, 1000 horses, hundreds of attendants, vast sums of money and the accommodation of such numbers in 25 different areas – palaces, halls, castles, stately homes, manor houses, farms and inns - must have been a logistical nightmare! Some landowners, lucky enough (or unfortunate enough!), to have been chosen as hosts undoubtedly viewed the financial implications with a degree of trepidation, but felt they were under virtual compulsion.

Conducting state business 'on the move', from Essex the Queen entered Suffolk and Long Melford where she was received by Sir William Cordell and given a gold chalice. Feasting continued at Bury St. Edmunds and on arrival in Norwich, then the second most populated city, she was met with more pomp and ceremony and lavishly entertained at the Bishop's palace; from here she indulged in deer hunting, a favourite pursuit. However, burial records for the time show a substantial rise in deaths indicating that plague was rife, possibly brought by the entourage from London. This could explain why Elizabeth's return trip was via a more tortuous route. In conclusion the tour was judged to be a great success; some Catholics conformed, some did not and were imprisoned, whilst others remained the same – to these the pragmatic Queen turned a blind eye when it suited her diplomacy!