



UNIONE TICINESE
FONDATA A LONDRA NEL 1874
SEZIONE AUTONOMA DELLA PRO TICINO

DITCHLEY PARK
SPECIAL OUTING
Tuesday 26th September 2017, 2PM



It is unusual for the Unione Ticinese to organize an event on a weekday. But this is the only way in which members will have the chance to visit a house that is exceptionally important both for Ticinese and for British history.

Ditchley Park was designed by one of Britain's greatest architects, James Gibbs (who also designed St Martin's-in-the Fields), in 1722, but its dignified but restrained internal spaces are transformed and brought to life by its magnificent plasterwork figures and decorations. These are the work of four Ticinese craftsmen from villages around Lake Lugano: Giuseppe Artari, his younger brother Adalberto and their cousin Francesco Serena of Arogno and Francesco Vassalli of Riva San Vitale (where the Vassalli home near the 'Strada degli Inglesi' is still to be seen). Their figures and designs were copied from classical sculpture and prints of contemporary Roman, Venetian and Bolognese paintings – but with a lot added from their own imaginations!

The house is one of the earliest and most striking examples of the cultural contribution of the Swiss, and particularly of the Italian Swiss, to the cultural life of Great Britain.

The owner of the original house, Sir Henry Lee, commissioned one of the greatest portraits of Elizabeth I, shown standing on a map of England and Wales with her toe pointing at Ditchley, to commemorate her visit in 1592. However the house achieved its greatest fame between 1940 and 1942 when Winston Churchill repeatedly spent long weekends there, relatively secure from German bombs. Since the late 1950s it has been the home of the Ditchley Foundation, which fosters international relations, and particularly Anglo-American relations through conferences and the chance for leaders to meet confidentially in comfortable surroundings.

The House is only open on weekday afternoons and we have secured the opportunity for a guided tour, followed by tea and biscuits, on Tuesday 26 September at 2 pm. There will be a charge of £20 per person and - exceptionally for our activities – all participants will have to inform Peter Barber of their intention to attend by 10 September.

Members of the wider Swiss community and non-Swiss friends will be most welcome to join us on a first-come, first-served basis. Peter can be contacted at peter_barber@mac.com or at 16 Tivoli Road, London N8 8RE. Payment should be made by cheque (made out to ‘Unione Ticinese’) or by bank transfer. In the latter case, however, it is essential that Peter Barber be notified separately of the intention to attend.

The full address is Ditchley Park, Enstone, Chipping Norton, OX7 4ER. It lies a little to the west of the A44 on the road between Woodstock and Chipping Norton. The closest railway station is Charlbury (about 75 minutes from Paddington), which is about a 10 minute drive away. Taxis should be booked in advance.