

## K&D U3A EXPLORING HERALDRY GROUP

### *Belton House & Church, September 2013*

Opening our third year, the group were surprised (putting it mildly) at the apparent torture-chamber of quiz-questions they encountered at this National Trust venue for the visit which opened our new 2013-14 year of study. The tasks and their format may have taken on the appearance of being something of a Holy Inquisition. **HOWEVER**, overcoming their puzzlement and occasional indignation, members between them did - also surprisingly for some, and often nervously – answer very satisfactorily the Leader's questions about this lovely setting for coats of arms embellishing stone, wood, glass, crockery, and plate.



**Belton Church, with Superb Armorial South Window**

Perhaps appropriately, the usual starting point for the individual members' trials was the Church of St Peter and St Paul, of the Parish of Belton, not itself National Trust, but entered via the impressive gardens and grounds of the House, home of the Earls of Brownlow, whose ancestors had lived next to this church for over four centuries. Eventual solutions were found to the group's difficulties over monuments here, especially caused by the complexity and confusions of the Pury-Cust-Cockayne-Brownlow relationships, as partly evidenced in the two monuments below (to the left in the photo):



**Group members face the music before the two Brownlow monuments**

A strange feature in this pair of monuments is that those of the bereaved family who later commemorated the life and recorded the death of “Old Sir John” did not include his dear mum in the heraldry, but only his wife (unlike their remembrance of his father, Sir Richard Brownlow, honoured in the tablet beside him) – what a story might be there and might have characterised relationships in the House itself! -



**Belton House National Trust Property**

As the group moved on into the House, activities built up to help throw off further the languor that the members had fallen into over the summer-break, and further moments of testing were experienced and overcome. One of the very first tasks in the House involved the ordeal of climbing the stairs to find, not a spot to rest the feet in, but ...



### ... the Trial by Not-So-Comfy Chair

This ordeal-by-teazle was tackled well, but things got harder, especially as, in mid-flow, a false fire-alarm sounded, necessitating undignified speedy access, witnessed by the Leader, who was at this time outside sunning himself in the courtyard as a self-donated reward for having spent valuable summer holiday time preparing the tasks for initially ungrateful candidates. At one stage, indeed, an especially frustrated member suggested that the wife of this same hard-done-by Leader should question her devotion to him, but later relented that harsh judgment and has now, pacified, become again a stalwart of the group.

**BUT** the trials were not in the Church and House only! As a purgation of body and soul, at lunchtime, mid-way through the ordeal-by-heraldry, no sandwiches remained in the cafeteria, and the queue (and tame explanations of the kitchen-wenches and trough-clearers) caused one member to cry, "This is **disgusting!**" The souls (and pride) of all, though, are now preserved, and there are great signs of that resolution gratifyingly shown in super involvement and enjoyment in our meetings and presentations, over the new study-year, by an encouraging number of volunteers for our programme of activities.

**BUT, REMEMBER IN FUTURE, in the words of that famous Philosopher, Monty Python,**

**" No-one expects the Spanish Inquisition ! "**

*Vic Taylor (Leader),*

*unwittingly mentored by Tomás de Torquemada, 1<sup>st</sup> Grand Inquisitor*