

## **NORMAN'S - AA I AA - GATHERING SPEECH**

**It is just wonderful to see you all here! Thank you so very much for coming!**

First & foremost I should like to thank the Lamport Hall Preservation Trust for having us here at Lamport.

This Gathering is to celebrate two special events – the Launch of the AAIAA and the 1000<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Isham name since the Great Domesday Book. I first floated the idea of the AAIAA with Jon Sr. in Oct. 2011 and to my utter amazement he fell for it! As did later both Jon Jr. and Ed. So here we are -great!

The 1000 Years go back to the father of John de Isham, who is recorded in the Great Domesday Book of 1086 but, unfortunately, his forename is not known.

So - I am standing here with you all purely by chance, even perhaps by mistake! The Isham who was due to inherit the title was JOHN VERE, Gyles' brother, but he, sadly, was killed in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, where my uncle Euseby was gassed, dying at 34 in SA, and where both our fathers were wounded - indeed it was there at Pozieres when my Dad was badly wounded in the chest, so had he not been able to crawl to cover in a shell-hole all night until rescued after that dreadful Battle of Pozieres Ridge I would not be here today!

Then, after surviving a direct hit to his HQ in Egypt, it was our cousin GYLES who inherited from his father, Sir Vere - but he did not marry so had no family. Nor, after serving in the war as a Land Girl, did his dear sister, VIRGINIA.- After coming over from Rhodesia all of us had the pleasure of knowing them.-

Then, after his tank blew up just after D-Day and he was flung out of the turret badly wounded, it became my elder brother, IAN, who inherited the title, even though as a distant cousin - however he, also, did not marry so had no family.

So some 70 years ago, at the age of 11, I experienced two vast North Atlantic supply convoys both to & from the USA and then having lived and worked in Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Rome, Salisbury Rhodesia, Oxford, Farnham and London now, some 450 years since this Manor House was acquired by John in 1560, as the 14<sup>th</sup> Baronet since 1627, I am here, with Joan & our families, with you all.

**I find this is all rather extraordinary – do you not think so?**

My first experience of this house was when Gyles asked my father to come with me after the war when it was empty and the Italian prisoners-of-war were gone. It was, indeed, a dismal sight with bare, broken interiors, uncared for exteriors with even the balustrade at the front all smashed up. I remember being shown a couple of old barrels full of rusty, bent nails taken from the walls inside where they were bashed in by the prisoners to hold their pictures of family, girl friends and pin-ups – which, again, is all rather sad! So, after two sessions of dry-rot treatments, today, as you will see for yourselves, it can be truly said that the Hall is looking better than it ever has, indeed, even than it was when first built!

**We are so looking forward to meeting you all & hope you have a great day!**