

Editorial

It's that time of year again! No, not subscription renewals (although the sooner you return your form the happier our Membership Secretary will be) but when the matter of the AGM is considered by your Committee. Every year a few folk step down after their three years (or so) in order to allow fresh faces with fresh ideas to contribute to the life and continued success of our society.

On the basis that a willing volunteer is better than two pressed men, please do not be shy about asking existing committee members what is involved and consider standing for a position on the committee.

May we also take this opportunity to remind you of our web address:-

www.alton-dfas.hampshire.org.uk so that you might take a look. Perhaps you may care to pass it on to others to enable them to see what we do in the hope that they may want to join and take part in what we have to offer.

Diary Date

'Samplers: A Child's View of Embroidery, their History and Conservation' with Jacqueline Hyman.

19th November 2009 to be held at Mill Court, Upper Froyle.

An in-depth study of Samplers from the 1600's to the present day, their styles, designs, fabrics and threads. All the illustrations are unique as Jacqueline has had the privilege of conserving all of them. She describes their appropriate treatments as each sampler has a story to tell.



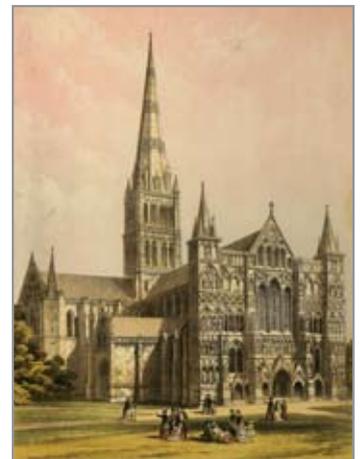
Sadly, many have been vulnerable to neglect and so advice on care and display is given, ensuring that they will survive to enable future generations to enjoy them. Participants can bring along their own samplers for advice and specialist conservation materials will be available for purchase.

Forthcoming Visits

Wiltshire

Tuesday, 9th June

We will have a guided tour of Salisbury Cathedral - probably the finest medieval building in Britain. Built from about 1220 to 1258 the Cathedral has the highest spire, and best preserved Magna Carta.



Wilton House, the ancestral home of the Pembroke family, contains one of the finest art collections in Europe, with some 230 original paintings on display, including works by Van Dyck, Rubens, Joshua Reynolds and Brueghel. The new Sculpture Gallery houses the second oldest collection of Greek and Roman statuary in England.

For further details please contact Jane Woods (01256 862469)

London - Double Delight Wednesday, 16th September

Syon House and Chiswick House are a couple of architectural gems both inside and out. We will be visiting them in this the 501st year of the anniversary of the birth of Palladio, the great Italian architect and in our perambulation around the sites associated with the Percy family.

For further details please contact Lissa Wilson (01420 543892) or Jane Woods (01256 862469)

London 1

Our trip began from Anstey Park with a potentially bad omen as we were blocked by some inconsiderate parking which delayed our start. However, time was made up during our journey to London and we were, in fact, ahead of schedule for our first stop at the Houses of Parliament

For those not having visited our seat of government for some years the increased airport-style security was a most noticeable feature. After taking advantage of the onsite cafeteria, we were divided into two groups by our guides for our allocated tour times. If the Houses of Parliament are the home of our democracy then this was not apparent, as we were strictly regimented and any attempts to deviate from the programmed itinerary brought severe reprimands from our guides! When one observed the number and size of tours being accommodated, this was indeed very understandable.

The tours were very organised and their content with the inclusion of the occasional anecdote added to the interest. We covered much ground space including all the key aspects of both houses. Watching televised proceedings of business in the house and State occasions must surely be enhanced following this visit.



Parliament Square

The afternoon visit at the Banqueting House was a more leisurely affair compared with the morning as we were all seated for a talk. Apart from the renowned Rubens ceiling, removed for the duration of WWII, it was the 400 year history of the Royal personages associated with this Inigo Jones designed building that held our interest. One felt uncomfortably close to Charles I seated in that room.

This two location trip was a specifically good combination, not only due to the proximity of the venues but also due to the links of history. In all, a very informative day out.

Martin Woods

London 2

Whilst there was some apprehension about a visit to the capital during the G20 Summit, it seems faint-hearted tourists stayed away allowing us an easy run into the West End for our first stop at The Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace for the Breugel to Rubens – Masters of Flemish painting exhibition.

This first ever show of the finest Flemish paintings in the Royal Collection was made up from 51 works created during the period 1500-1665 in the Southern (Spanish-ruled) Netherlands. It included masterpieces by Hans Memling, Van Dyck and Teniers and a wonderful group of landscapes by Jan Brueghel and Rubens depicting the blessings of harmony and fertility.

Pieter Bruegel's Massacre of the Innocents formed a powerful centrepiece to the exhibition. This deceptively beautiful scene of a Flemish village under snow is now regarded as one of the most savage satires in the history of art, so we learnt from the audio guide. I am not a great fan of these devices but for this small exhibition I was pleasantly surprised at the insights I gleaned from the specialist Curators who had the delightful task of mounting the pictures.

There was also an opportunity to see the accompanying offerings from Treasures from the Royal Collection and small huddles of members were seen in odd corners earnestly discussing individual favourites among the fabulous paintings, furniture, ceramics, arms and armour, sculpture and jewellery. What caught my eye was a most impressive pedestal and urn of the rich green mineral malachite (well, I am a geologist after all) some 2m high displayed in the centre of a gallery. Made of the best Russian malachite, it was given to George IV in 1827



The Queen's Gallery

by Tsarina Alexandra, Consort of Tsar Nicholas I, and sported wonderful gilt bronze handles with the Royal Arms on one side of the pedestal and the Imperial Russian Arms on the other.

Tony Cross

The National Gallery

Picasso, challenging the past, immediately set the tone of the exhibition with a stunning self portrait wearing an 18th century wig, painted when still a teenager. So commenced his debate with at least a dozen great artists of the past whose work he admired, inspiring him to wit, humour and inventiveness.

There were exquisitely beautiful early paintings, Child with a Dove and Girl in a Chemise so delicate and tender contrasting with the sharp face and claw like hands expressing the harsh life of The Absinthe Drinker. Manet's Luncheon on the Grass displayed some wickedly humorous experiments in both cut card and paint. The 20th century moved strongly into Las Meninas, The Infanta is allowed to keep her court dress but the child's character takes precedence, everywhere is action and business with Picasso's own plump dachshund 'Lump' replacing the courtly hound.

Of the portraits, Lee Miller's independent character gave rise to hard colours, lines and tones, no soft curves there! The ambiguities of his still life work with many phases from figurative to cubist were represented and a quick dash across many galleries, just before departure time, took in the prints inspired by such as Rembrandt, with the wonderful original



The National Gallery

alongside. Finally, prints based on the work by both Cranach the Elder and The Younger which linked so well with our morning visit to The Queens Gallery.

The exhibition was very impressive and brilliantly curated, guiding one through an enormous and varied out-put of work and ideas. I enjoyed every moment of my visit.

Pat Wilde

12,000 years of Japanese art

One of the aims of NADFAS must surely be to open our eyes to an art of which we know little. It was therefore a particular delight to be enthralled back in March by all that Anne-Marie Barrett told us about the art of Japan. Immediately our attention was captured as she began recounting how influenced Van Gogh was by the Japanese print. In the late 1880s Japanese art was very fashionable in France and considered exotic as the country had only become accessible to the West some thirty years previously.

Japan has a long artistic history, the earliest pots dating back to 10,000 BC which were found on the island of Kyushu. In the 6th Century Buddhism began to arrive from China through Korea and this transformed Japanese culture. It was fascinating to learn about both the religious and artistic importance of the wonderful statues of Buddha. No longer would these objects be figures just to be admired, but how much more interesting they became when their symbolism was explained. Anne-Marie told us how the Buddha sought enlightenment and of the importance of the eight fold path of life. This led on to illustrations of incredibly dynamic carvings of temple guardians. We were told about Nara, the first capital of Japan and of the great temple with its huge Buddha considered to be at the centre of the universe. We were shown a great variety of figures from rather stiff ones of baked clay, to a most moving depiction of a blind monk fashioned in a dry lacquer technique.

The Japanese were influenced by both Persian and Chinese art, but by the C12 Japan had developed a unique style. The capital was moved from Nara to Kyoto and many temples were

erected for which statues were needed. Artists and builders aimed to reproduce on Earth the paradise which awaited the faithful.

Zen Buddhism was brought to Japan from China in the late C12. The monks practised painting to aid their concentration and to achieve enlightenment. The circle became a symbol of this and it was even used symbolically in gravel gardens.

In the C15 and C16 there were many changes in Japanese society and men of humbler origin gained power. Huge castles were erected but the arts were still encouraged. This was a time when colour and design became lavish and we could not fail to be impressed by pictures of rich textiles and lacquer wares.

Naturally Anne-Marie progressed to the art of the print maker/ particularly Hokusai and his famous picture of the wave, so simple in design, but so memorable. Our eyes were opened to other great woodblock artists such as Sharaku who depicted actors and influenced Toulouse Lautrec. Whistler was also a devotee of Japanese art as are modern fashion designers. So here we were, having been taken full circle by Anne-Marie and all those attending had indeed been enlightened, entertained and enthused and left with a desire to learn yet more.



Gillian Baird

A Wedgwood royal commemorative mug



This mug is a relic of what is probably the most famous non-event in British history; the Coronation

of King Edward VIII. As we all know, in December 1936, less than a year after his succession, the King abdicated in order to marry Wallis Simpson. Being American, with a past containing two failed marriages, a powerful lobby saw her as unfit to share the throne. So when the date set for the Coronation arrived, May 12th 1937, the former King was in France with Wallis, whilst his brother, the Duke of York, was in Westminster Abbey being crowned King George VI.

One could be forgiven for thinking that souvenirs of Edward's planned Coronation must be very rare. Of course, after the abdication manufacture ceased and unsold material was recalled, but quite a bit had already found its way onto the mantelpieces of the nation; no one knows quite how much. The closest measure to hand, Hampshire's own collection, contains 17 souvenir items for Edward and 39 for George.

Like most manufacturers, Wedgwood simply amended the ware already in production. The design on this particular mug was created for them by Eric Ravilious, a designer and illustrator who would surely have come into his own in the post-war years, but who died whilst serving as a war artist in 1942. On the abdication, the E was changed to a G and an alternative colour band was introduced 'marina' green. For the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, recognising that the work of Ravilious seemed to belong to the 1950s as much as, or more than, the 1930s, Wedgwood re-used the design - on a pink ground. Finally, in 2002 it appeared yet again, to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

Times were sometimes hard for Wedgwood in the 30s. Sadly recent times have been harder still. Waterford Wedgwood went into administration at the beginning of 2009, and as I write it is uncertain if, 250 years after Josiah Wedgwood struck out on his own, the company has any future. Small consolation that time effectively comes to a stop for clay once it is fired, and on this mug the fireworks and the celebrations will go on forever.

Neil Hyman
Hampshire Museums

Forthcoming Lecture

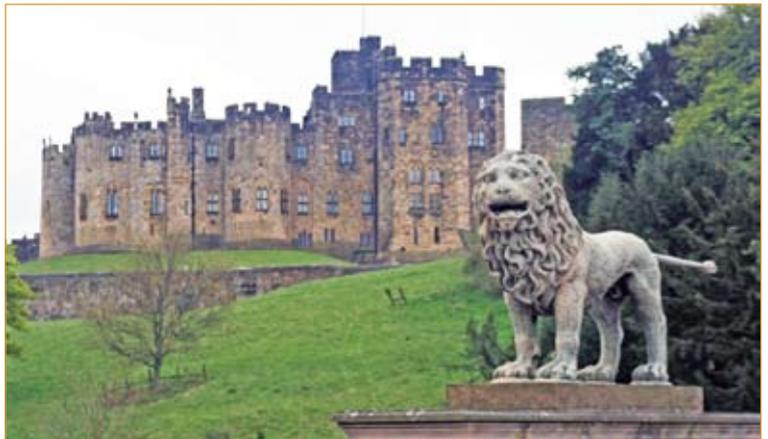
9th June

Russian Art under the Last Tsar
Dr Rosamund Bartlett

Russian culture took a long time in reaching maturity: firstly it was dominated by the Orthodox Church until the end of the 17th century, and then it was forced to adopt Western styles and techniques once secular art forms were allowed to flourish. It was only in the late 19th century that Russian cultural identity was consolidated, after the emergence of creative talents such as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Repin and Bryullov, Mussorgsky and Tchaikovsky.

Under Nicholas II, the last Tsar, the arts flourished like never before, fuelled by Russia's belated embrace of capitalism, and the knowledge that they were living on the edge of a volcano (which exploded in 1917). We will discover how Russian merchants became the new art patrons, financing Stanislavsky's Moscow Arts Theatre (which championed Chekhov's plays), and establishing priceless collections of works by Picasso, Cezanne, Matisse and the French Impressionists. It will examine how fearless young Russian artists shocked polite society with their revolutionary exhibitions of radical new work, and the role played by Diaghilev's epoch-making Ballets Russes, which followed Wagner's example in creating a synthesis of the arts. Finally it will examine how Kandinsky and Scriabin strode boldly into abstraction and atonality and how Rachmaninov steadfastly resisted the path of the new, writing brooding symphonies and concertos, whose sweeping melodies speak of his passionate attachment to his native land.

Alnwick-dotes



The impressive Percy Lion near Alnwick Castle

The long Spring Weekend away has become an established part of our programme and last month 40 brave souls journeyed to Northumberland for a 'gluttony of culture'. Based in the White Swan in Alnwick, all manner of sites were visited and due to size limitations, a more comprehensive report will appear in our next issue. As we go to press, plans are in hand for next year's excursion - watch this space for details.