

# ALTON DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Alton  
Decorative  
& Fine Arts  
Society

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## Editorial

Our December meeting is very popular as a 'seasonal' lecture - *Father Frost and Old New Year* by Rosamund Bartlett - is followed by what has become a tradition - mulled wine and rather tasty nibbles - which signifies the start of the Christmas season and enables members to socialise. The Committee hope you will join them on Tuesday, 11 December at Alton Maltings when the lecture will start slightly earlier at 7.30pm.

We will not be issuing a separate invitation this year, so if you would like to bring a guest please inform Laura Rose (address on the new programme card enclosed with your Newsletter) and send her a cheque (payable to ADFAS) for £7



## Dates For Your Diary...

**5 December 2012**

**The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford  
coupled with a lecture on Egyptology**

Booking via Vanessa MacMahon (01420 - 561709)

**26 February 2013**

**Lincoln's Inn & John Soane Museum**



Lincoln's Inn is one of four Inns of Court in London to which barristers of England and Wales belong and where they are called to the Bar. The nearby museum, described as both fascinating

and quirky, was formerly the home of the neo-classical architect Sir John Soane and it holds many drawings and models of his projects and his extensive collection of paintings, drawings and antiquities.

Bookings via Vanessa MacMahon (01420 - 561709)

**7 March 2013**

**A Special Interest Day  
- at Beech Village Hall**

with popular jewellery expert  
John Benjamin talking about

Jewellery - the life and works of Harry  
Murphy and the Intimate Jewels of Ellen Terry

Booking via Kit Butterworth (01420 88356)



**18-22 April 2013  
Long Weekend  
visit to Norfolk  
- to be based  
in Norwich.**

Details to follow.



# The Most Noble Metal

We arrived at The Goldsmiths' Hall a few minutes before 11am after an uneventful journey (despite the many Olympic lanes) and spent the next two hours exploring 3 floors of 4,500 years of the most amazing objects from all over Britain assembled for the most comprehensive and ambitious exhibition ever staged there. We saw the most beautiful gold including The Irish Lunula, a gold necklace some 4000 years old, The Bowes Cup - one of only eight two-handled cups in gold surviving from the reign of Charles II, the exquisite Nelson snuff box of 1795 and many coins of the Realm, items of jewellery, chalices, goblets, epaulets and Olympic Medals (although not this year's). The publicity described the exhibition as engaging, educational, thought provoking and awe-inspiring and we felt it really was a dazzling display which was well worth visiting although slightly marred by poor labelling.

Members spent the rest of the day in a variety of ways - some visited City churches; others St Paul's Cathedral; a cohort went over the Millennium Bridge to Tate Modern and many were tempted into the Museum of London.

Yet again our journey home went very smoothly and we got back to Alton only a few minutes late.

**Lissa Wilson**



## Have you seen...

Our Heritage Volunteers at The Wakes are amongst those who have seen the re-designed Lawrence Oates Gallery which outlines Oates' early life, his distinguished service in the Boer War and the story of the Terra Nova Expedition of 1910-12.

Captain Oates (1880-1912) was chosen to be part of Captain Robert Scott's team to undertake the epic journey of discovery to the South Pole in 1910. The ill-fated expedition turned into a race for the pole when the explorers learnt of the presence of the Norwegian team led by Amundsen. Scott's team suffered inadequate food supplies, severe weather conditions and failing health so Oates sacrificed his life in the hope of saving his comrades, leaving the tent in a terrible blizzard on 16 March with the famous last words "I am just going outside and may be some time." His body

was never found although those of Scott and his companions, who probably died towards the end of March, were discovered in November 1912.



News of the demise of the Polar team reached Britain in February 1913 and a memorial service was held in St Paul's Cathedral. A campaign was launched to raise a memorial fund to continue with the scientific work Scott had been actively involved with and the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge was founded.

Gillian McCallum would be pleased to hear from members who would like to assist at The Wakes when activities resume in the spring.

## Our Alton College Scholars for 2012 -13

Selection took place in the Summer and the recipients of our three bursaries are outlined below.

**Chloe Goode** obtained excellent exam results last term and she is interested in taking a degree in Fashion Design and has completed two work experience placements - one with Surgery PR (a company that builds fashion brands) and Sugar Magazine. She is currently organising work experience with Stella MacCartney. The panel found her to be passionate about her work and very committed.

**Argiel Del Mundo** is interested in pursuing a career in graphic design, illustration or photography. His exam results from last term were excellent. The interview panel found his work, particularly photography, to be excellent and that he spoke well and with passion about his studies and plans for the future.

Although **Sophie Bellchambers** was unable to attend interview, the panel admired the boldness and confidence of her designs and felt that her work spoke for itself. Sophie is keen to study further at University and her passion is textiles. She is very committed to working within the design world. She has also been very proactive and organised a number of work experience placements, including one with the fashion designer Sophie Cranston.



# A Double Bill in London

A chilly but bright September morning saw a full coach of eager members embark on a day to southeast London to visit two very different sites. After a remarkable trouble-free drive using the A3 and M25 we marvelled at the clear view of the central London skyline from Eltham Palace. It was one of those buildings one really ought to see. Essentially the surviving Great Hall of a medieval royal palace, it was restored as a condition of allowing a 1930's building to be 'grafted' onto it. Now run by English Heritage, the inside was interesting, but as it lacked the original furniture I felt it didn't make for a coherent story although the entrance hall had replica carpet and chairs to provide a flavour of the original concept. A short hop to Hall Place for lunch did not allow time to explore that site which looked of interest, then onto Danson House – a sister property nearby, also maintained by the Bexley Heritage Trust.

Completed in 1766 from profits of the East India Company and the sugar trade, Danson House was designed by Robert Taylor (who was also responsible for the Bank of England) in the Palladian style – without a portico but with bays added on three sides. Restored by English Heritage in partnership with the Bexley Heritage Trust and opened by HM The Queen in 2005, it was a visual reminder of how these houses looked when new.



The surrounding parkland was mainly laid down to grass although there was a pleasant garden opposite the front of the house. The tea room was a welcome diversion before the return home and with easy access to the A20 and the M25, Ray was able to miss the worst of the traffic and get us home before the expected time. Niven breathed a sigh of relief at the end of his first 'solo' trip, but he had been trained well and we look forward to many more successful visits in the future.

**Vanessa MacMahon**



# A Pillar of Society

John Wornham Penfold (3 December 1828 – 5 July 1909) was a surveyor and architect born in nearby Haslemere 175 years ago next month, where he was also laid to rest. The house in which he once lived, 'Penfolds', is still to be found near the town centre.

During his career Penfold was made President of the Architectural Association School of Architecture (1859–1860) and an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects, becoming a Fellow in 1881. He was a founding member of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and its Honorary Secretary from 1868 to 1904.

However, he is better known as the architect of a famous hexagonal pillar box. The Penfold Pillar Box named after him was introduced in 1866, painted a dark green which was the standard colour until 1874 when they were changed to red to increase visibility. The Penfold box was topped with an acanthus bud and was made in three sizes, with five distinct variations. The classic shape lasted for 13 years and there are about 100 surviving all over the UK – some of which we have passed on our visits.

In Penfold's memory a fully functioning replica box, sometimes used by present day conservation architects, and painted in green was erected under a 200 year-old chestnut tree in the High Street, Haslemere in April 1993. Why not look out for it when next in that area?

As an aside, you may recall a popular cartoon series Danger Mouse, which was screened on TV from 1981 to 1992. DM's trusty 'sidekick' was a timid, bespectacled hamster named Penfold, since the duo's secret hideout was in a post box in Baker Street, London. However, Danger Mouse and Penfold's hideout was not actually a Penfold box but a later cylindrical design – remember you read it here first!

**Tony Cross**



## Forthcoming Lectures

**11 December at Alton Maltings Centre**  
**Father Frost and Old New Year**

**Dr Rosamund Bartlett**

This lecture explores the rich tradition of religious and folk customs associated with the Christmas period in Russia and shows how they are reflected in the Russian arts. It will also discuss the secular Christmas celebrations introduced into Russia by Peter the Great, how they were transformed by Stalin during Soviet times and what Christmas means to Russians today.

**8 January at Alton Maltings Centre**  
**Wonder Workers and the Art of Illusion - the History of Magic through Art and Pictures**

**Bertie Pearce**

From the beginning of time the fascination with magic and the impossible has been widespread. In Egypt sorcerer Priests used scientific principles to create illusions for the edification of worship and to hold power over people. In Tudor times magicians were known as 'Joungleurs' lest they be sentenced to death for 'witchcraft and conjuration'. With the emergence of the Music Hall, magic gained a new respectability and audiences flocked to watch the extraordinary feats of The Great Illusionists. Be prepared to be amazed and bewitched.

**12 February at Alton College**  
**Sir John Soane and Sir John Nash: Two Great Regency Rivals**

**Tim Bruce-Dick**

The work of these two contemporary English architects is explored in this lecture. Sir John Soane, RA (1753 –1837) specialised in the Neo-Classical style. The son of a bricklayer he rose to the top of his profession, becoming professor of architecture at the Royal Academy. John Nash (1752 –1835) was responsible for much of the layout of Regency London under the patronage of George IV, first as Prince Regent then King. He was also a pioneer in the use of the Picturesque in the design of buildings and their layout.

**12 March at Alton College**  
**The Ship Burial at Sutton Hoo**

**Imogen Corrigan**

The extraordinary rich hoard found at Sutton Hoo dates to the early 7th century and tells us a great deal about the wealth of the country at that time, about interaction with other cultures as well as status within Anglo-Saxon society. The lectures uses images of the treasures found as well as Old English poetry to discuss Kingship and Power in Anglo-Saxon England.

**9th April at Alton College**  
**Three Romantics - Chopin, Delacroix and George Sand**

**Elizabeth Rumbelow**

The separate but intertwined lives of three leading exponents of the Romantic Movement will be explored here as well as their individual art. The paintings of Delacroix have a brilliance of colour with highly dramatic effects; the music of Chopin has a phenomenal range; whilst George Sands had an amazing output of novels, plays and other writings. This is a tale of three Romantics, two of whom were geniuses and one an extraordinary woman