

Editorial



Enclosed you will find a renewal form that includes a note from the Chairman explaining the need to raise the subscription. That NADFAS takes around a third in affiliation fees rather

reduces the sum your Committee has available to use in providing lectures and promoting the full range of NADFAS activities that we enjoy. A larger membership would help spread the costs and, unlike most NADFAS societies, we are always pleased to welcome guests to our monthly lectures because

we have large venues and they often 'convert' to members as a consequence.

Your Committee is also aware of the need to provide good value for members and ten lectures, each with a pre-lecture drink, seems a pretty good deal for what we all pay.

The increase is equivalent to the cost of a second class stamp for each of our ten lectures – although the fact that most of us have seen the cost of sending a 2nd class letter increase from 4^d (when the 2 tier post was introduced in 1968) to the present level is rather disturbing!

For your diary

Tuesday, 4 June 2013



Marble Hill House, a slightly earlier Palladian villa (1724-29) built for Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk, the mistress of King George II.

Bookings via Vanessa MacMahon (01420 561709)

A double-bill to south west London to visit two contrasting locations - Strawberry Hill House one of England's most eccentric gothic houses (1749-76) and its associations with Horace Walpole and

The Romanovs – Tyrants and Martyrs of Imperial Russia
Thursday, 21 November
at Beech Village Hall



Douglas Skeggs makes a welcome return to Alton DFAS for what promises to be an interesting day. We will discover the course of this hard, determined, often brutal dynasty which ruled Russia for over 300 years from Peter the Great – the founder of St Petersburg, through to his eccentric daughter Elizabeth to Catherine the Great – the most powerful of all the Empresses of Russia who had no real claim to the throne. Then to the tragic figure of Nicholas II, the last Tsar and one of the most poignant figures in history whose death in a cellar in July 1918 ended the reign of this turbulent and ill-fated family

Bookings via Kit Butterfield 01420 88356

WANTED

Committee members for ADFAS - team players with GSOH; no previous experience required as full training will be provided; name badge provided (vol).

At the AGM every year we lose a couple of committee members who have served their 3 year term and an influx of new blood ensures the 'gene pool' of ideas is continually refreshed. Do you know someone who may be interested? Perhaps you'd like to be more involved? Please have a word with the Chairman at one of our meetings.

European Porcelain



We are fortunate to have a first class selection of lecturers at our monthly meetings to introduce us to a wide variety of fine and decorative art subjects. However there is something about the opportunity to spend a day in the company someone who knows their subject and can put it across in an educational, entertaining and

interesting way. Those lucky to be at the Study Day in Beech last November came away with a more rounded knowledge of an aspect of European Ceramics and, perhaps not surprisingly, were left wanting more!

Anton Gabszewicz, a former Director of European Ceramics at Christies and expert on the Antiques Roadshow, gave a fascinating account of the origins of porcelain manufacture by covering the different terms used and mentioning the main European factories that were producing a variety of wares in the 17th- 19th centuries. We were then treated to an expose of the cut-throat trade prevalent at that time with a comparison of material produced from the Chelsea and Bow manufactories and were encouraged to judge for ourselves which place produced a number of similar, but different, pieces.

The afternoon was devoted to an examination of a collection of different ceramic materials found on the Thames foreshore and our new-found skills were put to the test. A selection



of ceramics brought by members enabled Anton's skill as a diplomat to shine through and more humble pieces were treated with the same dignity as those originating from makers such as Meissen and Sévres.

If all that were not enough, the 'domestic' arrangements for the day were greatly appreciated by those present with Kit Butterfield (not Butterworth as her name was mistakenly depicted in the last Newsletter) and her team serving coffee on arrival and a lunch that was worthy of a decent restaurant! By popular demand Anton Gabszewicz will be making a return visit to Alton in 2014 to fill in a gap in our ceramic knowledge to lecture us on Worcester Porcelain. Come early that evening to be sure of a seat!

Oxford Blues



It was a somewhat depleted band who met at Anstey Park for our visit to Oxford's Ashmolean Museum back in December. A combination of early Christmas events and unfortunate illness prevented some of our usual cohort from joining us, but despite a flurry of snow as we set off, we had a comfortable journey –

thanks, Ray – to the doorstep of the Museum. From there we were taken to the Lecture Theatre for a welcome cup of tea and coffee and then a most interesting introduction to the Museum and in particular the Egyptian Galleries. Part of the original 17th century collection of man-made and natural specimens from every corner



of the known world came from John Tradescant and his son (now better known as gardeners) which was open to the public (for a fee) in their house at Lambeth, widely known as "The Ark". This was passed to Elias Ashmole, a celebrated collector of curiosities and manuscripts, who in turn presented it to the University of Oxford with the stipulation that it be housed in a custom-built museum. Over the centuries the collection grew with the acquisition of countless treasures, in particular from Egypt while Sir Arthur Evans was the director. In recent times, the museum has had a complete rebuild by the

A local Young Arts Project

Whilst we are proud of our Art Scholarships at Alton College, the committee felt it was appropriate to generate a little more involvement of ADFAS in our local secondary schools. Approaches were made and a project has been put together with the Art Department of Amery Hill School.

They have been successful in bidding for a one-off school budget for the Summer Term to offer a wide-ranging programme of art activities to promote art both within and outside the school. These include Continuing Professional Development sessions for local primary school staff to include basic drawing skills, graffiti art, how to make a clay pot and silk painting; two exhibitions will be arranged to include the GCSE Art exhibition and a Primary Liaison / Lower School exhibition; and visiting artists will be running sessions devoted to 3-D work, Fine Art, Photography and Glass; finally there will be art competitions for pupils and staff.

We particularly liked the involvement of Primary Schools that feed into Amery Hill School and have awarded them £300 to help with art materials. We also helped compile



applications to the Hampshire and IOW area of NADFAS and the Patricia Fay Memorial Fund administered at NADFAS House in London in order for support for buying additional equipment from the former, and the provision of more visiting artist days from the latter.

The area committee has granted £300 which will provide two computer screens and photo-editing software and a decision on the application to the HQ fund is awaited.

Soane Rangers and other stories

Following the absorbing February lecture on Sir John Soane, a keen band of members were very pleased to be able to visit his house and museum to see exactly what had been so ably described. The trip to London at the end of February was combined with a tour of Lincoln's Inn, which was equally well received.

Sir John Soane, one of England's greatest architects, bought 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1792 and spent the rest of his life rebuilding it and the two adjacent houses, partly as a home for himself and his family, and partly to house his growing collection of treasures and antiquities. Recent renovations have restored the whole to something as it was in his time, giving a unique view of early 19th century London. The front of the house was used mainly for entertaining, and Soane's ingenious use of mirrors expands the relatively small spaces of the dining room and library. Behind everything turns into a jumble of rooms and anterooms, all filled with antique marble fragments, architectural details and even the sarcophagus of King Seti I, one of the most important Egyptian antiquities ever discovered (purchased by Soane after the British Museum refused the price of £2,000). But the jewel in the crown of the museum is the Picture Room – a tiny space for 100 pictures all ingeniously displayed, some behind hinged screens. The room includes the whole of Hogarth's incomparable *A Rake's Progress*, his political sequence *An Election* as well as the outstanding Canaletto The

Riva degli Schiavoni. Just seeing these would have made the day worthwhile.

In addition, we had the pleasure of a tour around Lincoln's Inn, the largest of the four historic Inns of Court. Our guide, Martin Dudgeon, was not only excellent but also 'one of us' in that he lived for many years in Holybourne and claimed to be an early member of Alton DFAS. He explained the history of the Inn from its early origins in the 13th century, and then showed us the barrel-vaulted chapel where John Donne, once Treasurer of the Benchers (the administrative body of Lincoln's Inn), preached. We also saw the Old Hall, with its immaculately polished floor, lovely Inigo Jones screen and huge Hogarth painting of *Paul before Felix*, and also the New Hall, now the place where all barristers who are members of the Inn are required to 'dine' 12 times a year. The hall contains, among others, the coats of arms of the 16 members of the Inn who have been Prime Minister (most recently Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair), and two paintings by G W Watts – an enormous fresco entitled *Justice, A Hemicycle of Lawgivers*, and a portrait of his friend Lord Selborne, ancestor of our current President's husband. It was declared that there was a pronounced likeness. There was nothing left to do but return to Alton and, with Ray at the wheel, we had a speedy and comfortable return home.

Vanessa MacMahon

Elizabeth Frink



Anyone venturing up Winchester High Street towards the Westgate may have noticed a sculpture of a man on a horse sited in a raised bed under some trees on the left, which screen the access to the County Court. This bronze is titled *Horse and Rider* (1975) and was made by Elizabeth Frink who died 20 years ago on 18 April 1993, near Blandford Forum in Dorset.

Born in Suffolk in 1930, she studied at the Guildford and Chelsea Schools of Art. Awarded a CBE in 1969, she became a RA 1977, and in 1982 became a Dame of the British Empire. She was chosen by many UK

universities for the award of an Honorary Degree.

Her obituary in the *Independent* mentioned that she was a woman of great courage, integrity and style who gambled continuously against the odds, both in her work - against stylistic fashion or any kind of comfortable or ingratiating image - and in her life. She achieved the extraordinary distinction of becoming, without any compromise, a genuinely popular sculptor whose work is admired by a broad public in Britain and abroad. Her dogs and horses have their own authenticity, but the images of a single naked male figure, standing, walking or running, say something about endurance, vulnerability and essential human nature that haunts the memory.

Whilst her sculptures are the collections of many museum and galleries we have seen examples on our visits including *Walking Madonna* in The Close, Salisbury and *War Horse* at Chatsworth. There are many other pieces of her work in public places including Paternoster Square in London, Worthing, Bury St Edmunds, Dorchester in Dorset and her final work located in Liverpool Anglican Cathedral.

A little nearer to home, next time you are in Basingstoke why not call into All Saints' Church in Southern Road where there is an example of her 1983 *Head of Christ*.

Tony Cross

Oxford Blues continued

architect Rick Mather, and it was fascinating to hear how this was managed – particularly when they had to work around priceless objects which could not be moved.

After the talk, we were free to explore the museum, studying whatever caught our imagination and interest: we visited the Egyptian rooms to see the fine collection of mummies, the Greek and Minoan pottery, Roman statues painted as they would have been displayed in Ancient times, fabrics from Mughal India, a stunning collection of European ceramics (of especial interest to those who attended the November Special Interest Day), British silver and the outstanding collection of British and European Art. With the stunning redesign, featuring the 'cascading staircase' and the full height atrium it was impossible not to find something to enjoy at every turn.

There were other highlights to the museum: two were the temporary exhibitions which were unexpectedly enjoyable: one celebrated the life and work of Edward Lear, whose nonsense poems we are familiar with but whose watercolours of animals and birds as well as sketches of his travels were a revelation and a joy; and the other was an amazing display of virtuoso needlework from the Meiji period (late 19th /early 20th century) Japan – ornamental textiles of peacocks, wild animals, landscapes and country people – all shining in gold and vibrant colours.

Finally, there was the jewel in the Ashmolean's crown – the restaurant on the top floor which affords views over the city as well as providing fine food and drink. Thus refreshed we climbed back on the coach and were driven smoothly back to Alton.

Vanessa MacMahon

Forthcoming Lectures

14th May – Alton Maltings Centre

The National Gallery, London: a selection of paintings and the stories behind them

Linda Collins

The National Gallery in Trafalgar Square houses one of the greatest collections of Western European painting in the world. These pictures belong to the public and entrance to see them is free. The collection contains over 2,300 works, including many famous pictures such as van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*, Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus*, Turner's *Fighting Temeraire* and Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*.

All major traditions of Western European painting are represented from the artists of late medieval and Renaissance Italy to the French Impressionists. Our lecturer makes a welcome return to Alton and will outline the stories that accompany some of pictures in the building that opened in 1838.

11th June – Alton Maltings Centre

Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill

John Iddon

Son of the first Prime Minister, author, art connoisseur and collector of art, great letter writer, gossip and wit – Horace Walpole had a distinguished and colourful life but is perhaps best known as the creator of his little gothic 'castle' by the Thames at Twickenham – Strawberry Hill. The lecture will explore why he chose gothic in an age of neo-classicism, the influences that went into the house and the fascinating life he lived there.