

ALTON DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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SPRING 2014



Editorial

It's that time of year again! Enclosed you will find a renewal form for your subscription for the coming year and the Treasurer would be most grateful if you can return it ASAP. We are always looking to increase our membership and in this connection we welcome guests to our monthly lectures as many consider joining afterwards. Why not encourage one of your friends to come along and see what we have on offer?

Would you be interested in joining the committee of our successful, enthusiastic and active society? As you are aware we generally lose a couple of committee members at our AGM as they have served their 3-year term. Interested? An interest in the arts, a sense of humour and the ability to work in a team are the only requirements whilst the satisfaction of doing something practical for the society will be your reward. Please have a word with the Chairman at one of our meetings.

Special Interest Day

**Arts & Crafts in Hampshire
Thursday 13th November 2014
Beech Village Hall**

Dr Anne Anderson makes a welcome return to help us discover the role of William Morris in leading a revolt against mass produced, poorly designed and badly made objects in the mid-19th century and

his part in elevating everyday objects to works of art is well known. She aims to begin with William Morris and trace the development of the Arts and Crafts movement in Hampshire, occasionally straying over the border into Surrey. There will be familiar names and places as well as a few off the beaten track!

**Bookings via Kit Butterfield
01420 88356**

If a booking is cancelled, a refund will only be made if the event is full and there is a replacement from a waiting list.



Dates for your diary

Wednesday 4th June 2014

Arundel Castle

There are nearly 1,000 years of history at this great castle, situated in magnificent grounds overlooking the River Arun in West Sussex and built at the end of the 11th century by Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Arundel. However, the building we see today owes much to Henry, 15th Duke of Norfolk (1847-1917) and the restoration project was completed in 1900.



Thursday 18th September 2014

Waddesdon Manor

The house was built in the style of a French château between 1874 and 1889 for Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898). It

is set in formal gardens and an English landscape park and was built on a hilltop overlooking the village. The last member of the Rothschild family to own Waddesdon was James de Rothschild and he bequeathed the house and its contents to the National Trust in 1957.

Bookings via Vanessa MacMahon (01420 561709).

Bookings can only be accepted upon full payment for the visit. If a booking is cancelled a refund can only be made if the visit is full and there is a replacement from a waiting list.



Sites in the City



We had a bright autumn day for our visit to the city of London and following a welcome cup of coffee in the crypt cafe, were ready for our conducted tour of St Paul's cathedral at 11am. Two guides took us around the inside of the building which, having recently been cleaned looked

resplendent and very different from previous visits.

The history of the site was described to us as well as details relating to prominent monuments around the nave. The Alfred Stevens monument to Wellington, featured in Newsletter 24, was a favourite and I hadn't registered the American Memorial Chapel behind the High Altar before. Eventually we reached the crypt and, in addition to the tomb of Sir Christopher Wren, were a host of artists including Reynolds, Turner, Millais and Leighton as well as notables such as Blake, Fleming, Parry and Sullivan. Wellington had a prominent position but the pride of place beneath the dome had been given to Nelson. Churchill had opted for Bladon in Oxfordshire as his last resting place in 1965 but our tour ended at memorial gates erected in his memory in 2004. Many opted for lunch in the crypt cafe before embarking on the short walk down Cheapside to Threadneedle Street to our afternoon venue.

Officially opened by HM The Queen in November 1988, the Bank of England Museum traces the history of the Bank from its foundation in 1694 to its role today as the nation's central bank.

The displays cover a wide variety of topics and there seemed to be particular interest in pictures showing the changing architecture of the building (following one of our recent lectures on the work of Sir John Soane), bank notes – especially the 'old red ten bob note' and a bar of gold weighing 28 lbs. that could be lifted - albeit inside a protective box as it was worth around £236,000. A lecture on the Bank and its history brought the visit to a close.



The London rush hour traffic was skilfully negotiated by Ray, but he was defeated by queues around Guildford which delayed our arrival in Alton. However, we had an excellent day out and Vanessa deserves our thanks for the faultless organisation, a necessary skill of Committee members!

Niven Baird

Alton College Scholars



Our Alton College Scholars for Excellence in Art 2013 are pictured with Niven Baird, ADFAS Chairman, at the presentation evening.

From left to right: Kirsten Adams - Fine Art, Emma Wilson - Textiles, Laura Hearn - Fine Art.

A few thoughts on the visit to Hampton Court

A most interesting visit; beautiful buildings including the contrast between the Tudor and Williamite palaces; my eyes were opened to the fantastic tapestries; a brilliant guided tour; excellent guides with a fund of 'unofficial stories' and 'corrections' to historical myths; I shall be back when the Georgian rooms are open; an additional delight to see the glorious Andrea Mantegna paintings of the *Triumphs of Caesar*; a pity the visit coincided with half term; what an interesting day; a well-planned and informative visit; too many unruly children; interested to see the helpful stewards dressed in 'Tudor' costume; beautiful Chapel – the highlight of the visit; it will be good to come back in late spring or summer to enjoy the gardens.



Taking up a couple of the points above, there was an interesting piece in the *Daily Telegraph* recently on the topic of Children in Museums – try this link for further information:- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/museums/10647170/Children-in-museums-have-your-say.html>



The Romanovs



A 'tour de force' was the phrase mentioned in the vote of thanks to Douglas Skeggs following the study day in Beech Village Hall last November. An enthusiastic audience seemed spellbound as this engaging lecturer led us on a three hundred year journey that ended on 17 July 1917 in a house in Yekaterinburg, fourth city of Russia.

Three well-crafted presentations gave us a story that was unlike any history lesson we may have recalled from school. Starting with Czar Feodor III who took over in 1661, we were introduced to the personalities who featured in the history of this nation. Royal marriages, disputed lines of succession, disgruntled half siblings, aspiring wives, plus territorial disputes, wars with neighbouring states and expansionist ambitions all featured and provided a fascinating insight into how the largest country in the world developed.

The role of Peter the Great (1682-1725) in dragging Russia out of the Middle Ages into the 18th century figured, and we were presented with information showing him to be both cultured and a drunken tyrant – at the same time! We learned why he chose to build a new capital city in St Petersburg – when he already had a perfectly good one in Moscow. That his wife Catherine had little ability to rule and that her successor Peter II died on the morning of his wedding caused much confusion. Their daughter Elizabeth created the great city of St Petersburg that we see today, her nephew, Peter, married Sophie who converted to the Russian Orthodox Church (and changed her name to Catherine) but she indulged in extramarital affairs and forced her weak husband to abdicate and became Catherine the Great. The best quote of the day was “the love letters of Catherine and Grigory Potemkin makes *50 Shades of Grey* look like Enid Blyton”! Along the way were included naval development, the war of the Spanish



Catherine the Great's crown.

Succession, the fall and rise of Poland - not to mention the battle of the three Emperors at Austerlitz and the Congress of Vienna.

The final session was titled *Nickolas and Alexandra* and we were taken back a hundred years to discover the 'back story' of this couple - including the treatment of the Russian peoples by their leaders which led to the murders in July 1917, an iconic moment of 20th century history. There were many other associated topics including the revolutions in Europe in 1848, the Crimean War, the assassination of Alexander II, the influence of Queen Victoria on Princess Alix of Hesse who married Czar Nicholas II shortly after the death of his father, that their son suffered with haemophilia, the role of the Kaiser, the 1904-5 war with Japan, the 'original' Bloody Sunday of January 1905, the subsequent revolution, the influence and death of Rasputin and the conduct of Russia in the Great War. Who ever said history was boring!

If the academic content of the day were not enough then the contribution of Kit Butterfield and her team in providing refreshments and a splendid lunch, once again, ensured that the day will be talked about for a long time.

Tony Cross

Forthcoming Lectures

11th March 2014

Lost on the *Titanic*: The Story of the Great Omar Binding - Dominic Riley

We will learn of the making of the fabulous Great Omar - the most fabulous, elaborate and opulent binding ever created. It was embellished with over one thousand jewels, five thousand leather on-lays and a hundred square feet of gold leaf, which took a team of craftsmen over two and a half years to make. It went down with on the *Titanic* in 1912.

8th April 2014

**Turner and Beauty
Eric Shanes**

Britain's greatest painter, J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), was always concerned to create beauty in his art. But precisely what kind of beauty? In this lecture, Eric Shanes – who is writing the longest and what will probably be the most authoritative biography of Turner to date – investigates what the artist meant by beauty, and how this translated into his images.

13th May 2014

**Norman Rockwell
John Ericson**

Norman Rockwell (1894 –1978) was a 20th century American painter and illustrator. His works enjoy a broad popular appeal in the United States for their reflection of American culture and he is most famous for the cover illustrations of everyday life scenarios he created for *The Saturday Evening Post* magazine for more than four decades.

10th June 2014

**Opera: The Melting Pot of Culture
Sarah Lenton**

In this lecture we will be introduced to the cross-currents between opera and its cultural milieu grand gesture, classical plots, court manners, enormous costumes and nationalism. From Monteverdi's *Orfeo* in 1608, performed in the beautiful palazzo of the Duke of Ferrara, more performances evolved complete with flourishes and bravura gestures typical of the aristocracy of the day. In the 17th century, practically every major Italian city had an opera house. By the end of the 18th century, which brought revolution and war, opera houses were no longer the exclusive entertainment of the nobility. Not to be missed!

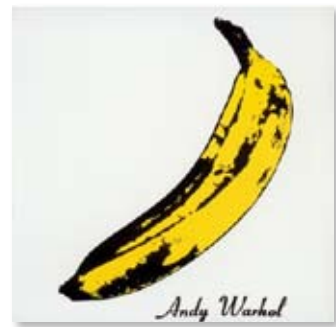
Cover Story

The popularity of downloaded music threatens one of the greatest areas of public art of the late 20th century - the record sleeve. Around a hundred years ago, 78 rpm records replaced the phonograph cylinder as the medium for recorded sound. They were usually sold in brown paper or cardboard sleeves that were sometimes printed to show the producer or retailer's name. Generally the sleeves had a circular cut out allowing the record label to be seen.

The German record company Odeon pioneered the 'album' in 1909 when it released the *Nutcracker Suite* by Tchaikovsky on four double-sided discs in a specially designed package. However Columbia Records is credited with inventing the concept of album covers and cover art in 1938. Other record companies followed and by the late 1940s albums for all the major companies featured their own colourful paper covers. In time the cover became an important part of the culture of music and album covers became renowned as a marketing tool and an expression of artistic intent. The talents of many photographers and illustrators, including Andy Warhol have been used to produce numerous memorable LP and CD covers.

So why this interest here? Well, 50 years ago in April 1964 Decca released *The Rolling Stones* – the first album from the eponymous group. The following July *A Hard Day's Night*, the third album by the Beatles was released. Perhaps you have copies in your loft?

Gatefold covers (a folded double cover) and inserts, often with lyric sheets, made the album cover a desirable artefact in its own right. A notable example was Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon* released in 1973 (above) which had a gatefold, lyrics and



although it lacked the title on the outer sleeve, contained poster and sticker inserts. The move to the smaller CD format rather lost such impact.

Some record covers have used paintings by historic artists - an example being Coldplay's 2008 release *Viva La Vida*, featuring Delacroix's painting *Liberty Leading the People*, which hangs in The Louvre. Why not impress your grandchildren by asking if they have a copy?