

Dates for your new 2009 diary

Wednesday, 7th January

Afternoon visit to The Courtauld Gallery in London to view the exhibition of Turner watercolours with our President, Dr. Joanna Selborne. Travel to London under your own steam, but exhibition booking via **Lissa Wilson 01420 543892** or **Jane Woods 01256 862469**

Sunday, 18th January

Private View of the biennial WH Allen exhibition, entitled **Farnham – an artist's view** at the Allen Gallery; 12 noon - 2pm with drinks and canapés. Tickets £5 available at lecture meetings (or through **Tony Cross** on **01420 85906**)



View of Crooksbury Hill, Farnham

Tuesday, 24th February

Visit to the Palace of Westminster and the Banqueting House in Whitehall by coach from Alton. Booking via **Lissa Wilson 01420 543892** or **Jane Woods 01256 862469**



The Banqueting House in Whitehall

Visit to Northumberland

One of our popular weekends, arranged on our behalf by Trueman's Coaches, will be based in the White Swan hotel in Alnwick between Thursday, 16th April and Monday, 20th April. Visiting places such as Belton House (on the way up), Alnwick Castle, Lindisfarne, Wallington, Cragston and Harewood House (on the way back). Booking forms via **Lissa Wilson 01420 543892** or **Jane Woods 01256 862469**



Alnwick Castle

From Our own Correspondent - Home Counties

Back in September, a party of some thirty members embarked on a visit to Sandham Memorial Chapel and Basildon Park. The day was both very interesting and hugely enjoyable, helped by the fact that we were treated to some glorious early autumn weather.

On the outside Sandham Memorial Chapel is a small, undistinguished brick-built building but on the inside it is quite a different kettle of fish. We split into two groups of 15-20 people with the second group initially enjoying coffee and biscuits at the Caernarvon Arms, an interesting public house in its own right with a display in the main rooms of some interesting and amusing original cartoons. A hostelry to consider for a meal on a different occasion. We then reversed places.

The internal walls of the chapel itself were fully taken up with oil paintings by Stanley Spencer who had trained at the Slade School of Fine Art before the First World War. The nineteen paintings depicted the life and suffering of the ordinary soldier during the War. Reflecting Spencer's army service, the paintings show the humdrum and occasionally hard life that squaddies in the Army Medical Corps endured. Thus we see wounded servicemen arriving at the Beaufort War Hospital, scrubbing floors, washing, sorting laundry, undergoing kit inspections and the like. He also painted a number of pictures showing his experiences at the operational war theatre of Macedonia. The culmination of the display is the great painting on the East wall showing the resurrection of soldiers in Salonika with corpses emerging from their graves in front of Christ, throwing away their grave crosses and finally meeting old acquaintances in the foreground. Spencer's style is very much sui generis, almost primitive, but it shows a debt to Gauguin. Perhaps, because the pictures were inspired by memory, omitted fine detail of faces and occupied the Chapel walls entirely, the overall impression was stunning.

We arrived at Basildon Park House, near Pangbourne in time for lunch.

One half of the party us went to the restaurant straight away while the other half were given a lecture on the history of the house. In the course of lunch we were disturbed by the fire alarm which went off inexplicably three times. Our Vice Chairman, a man of hearty appetite got to the front of the

queue three times only to have to troop outside to the assembly point un-fed! The lecturer with the others was equally confounded.

When the group I was in finished lunch we swapped places and, in turn, was treated to a most interesting lecture on the house. It was built at the time of the American War of Independence for a very wealthy nabob, Sir Francis Sykes. It was designed by John Carr of York to a Palladian villa style in honey-coloured Bath Stone. Alas Sir Francis died a few years after completion. In 1838 Sykes's grandson sold the house to the Liberal MP, James Morrison, who arranged for J P Papworth to embellish and re-decorate some of the interior. From 1910 to 1952 the house was unoccupied and its furniture and many of its fittings, including several doors to the main state rooms were dispersed. In both World Wars it was requisitioned for service use, including by the Americans. It was in a dilapidated state when Lord and Lady Iliffe bought the property and subsequently restored it combing the country for appropriate furniture and fittings to their taste. They donated it to the National Trust in 1978, along with its contents, parkland and an endowment.

One of the delights of the house, apart from its wonderful position, is that it retains the stamp of the Iliffes rather than feeling like a museum. It is well known for housing Graham Sutherland's sketches for the tapestries for the re-built Coventry cathedral and for its shell room which is decorated with the exotic sea shells left by a previous owner. I was particularly taken with the large octagonal drawing room with octagonal, matching carpet which I understand was made for the house in the nineteenth century and had to be retrieved by the Iliffes from elsewhere.

A grand day out and I shall visit both again in the near future.

Martin Nonhebel



Basildon Park

Heritage Volunteers

St. Mary's church, Upper Froyle, owns some very beautiful 17th and 18th Century French and Italian silk vestments, collected by the last Lord of the Manor. They were used regularly in the past, and were in need of repair and conservation. Three of our members are helping with the work. This is overseen by a conservator and NADFAS also organise workshops from time to time. The vestments are on display when the village gardens are open – usually the last weekend in May – well worth a visit.

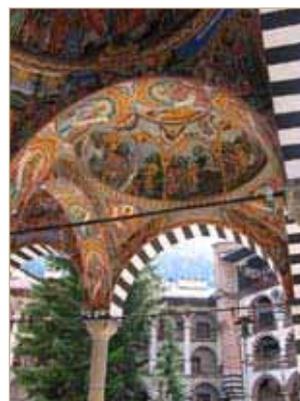
Chawton House Library is an ongoing project, but this year they only needed volunteer stewards for the 4 Open Days. These were well attended by visitors and the free Heritage Open Day in September attracted over 750 people. Stewarding is very rewarding, not only for learning about the history of the

Elizabethan house, its contents and grounds but in meeting the many visitors, many of whom have a good knowledge of the Austen family and are amused to learn about Lucy Locket, her Mr Pocket and Kitty Fisher (amongst other more erudite matters)!

We have a small dedicated band of volunteers who really do enjoy their stewarding days and I must say thank you to you all for your help and commitment. I know Chawton House Library couldn't do without you. Next year is the Bicentenary of Jane Austen's arrival in Chawton and, I suspect, many more volunteers will be needed – do join us.

Rosie Sirl

From Our own Correspondent - Bulgaria



Far left (then clockwise):
Boyana church, a national treasure of Bulgaria
Alexander Nevski Memorial Church, Sofia, commemorates the liberation of 1878
11th century Bachkovo Monastery in the Rhodope Mountains
Rila Monastery – a world Heritage site
Plovdiv, pedestrianised new town with locals

At Heathrow the ADFAS party boarded the BA flight, buckled up, and waited and waited for 2½ hours before take off. When breakfast was served most of the group enjoyed a glass or two of wine, so setting the scene for a very happy trip to Bulgaria.

All our creature comforts were catered for with excellent hotel accommodation and three course lunches and dinners featuring seasonal and traditional foods.

Our guide, John Osborne, captivated us with his knowledge of Bulgarian political history and art; thankfully there was no examination at the end of the trip!

His enthusiasm was unstoppable as we toured the monasteries of Bachkova and Rila and we were amazed by the rich colours and detail of the murals, frescos and antiquities surviving the turmoil of so many centuries. We gasped when the local guide hauled open a wooden trap door in the floor of the Bachkova ossuary to reveal ancient bones of monks, long dead. Rila is the largest and most renowned monastery in Bulgaria and it was declared a World cultural heritage site in 1983. Founded in the 10th century it was once home to 200 monks, although I think there are now seven monks welcoming thousands of visitors and pilgrims each year.

We watched with interest a wedding in an Orthodox Church and enjoyed wine tasting and dinner one evening at a newly built winery. Stalls in the Sunday flea market offered memorabilia of Stalin and Hitler and we were moved by the haunting singing in the Alexander Nevski Cathedral in Sofia. Highlights included the stunning gold and silver Thracian treasures, 5th to 1st century BC, at the Sofia National History Museum and a visit to the tiny church of Boyana, also a monument on the UNESCO Heritage list.

Our coach trips from Plovdiv, where we spent our first two nights, and from Sofia took us through farming country, wooded valleys and mountains so reminiscent of Austria and Norway. There was little evidence of mechanised farming and the working horse and cart represented a way of life unchanged for generations.

Having an abundance of timber, the traditional houses are built from wood with decorative paintings inside and out, and our visit to Koprivshitsa, a conservation village in the mountains, gave us the opportunity to enjoy the atmosphere of the little community and study the buildings.

Plovdiv, which is divided into old and new towns, contains significant Roman and Ottoman sites. The lower new town has a pedestrianised shopping street which has been built over Roman remains which are exposed at several places and form focal points. The excavated Stadium, once used for chariot races and gladiatorial contests could seat 30,000 spectators. In the upper old town, the Roman Amphitheatre over looks the community and is still used for opera and classical concerts and is capable of seating 4000.

The new builds in the cities reflect imaginative designs but alongside can be seen crumbling blocks of flats and houses which makes a depressing sight. It seems that the older generation of Bulgarians are finding it difficult to adjust to life without the structure of the communist regime and it will take many years for the country to realize its potential.

Sincere thanks to Sally Wykeham, John Osborne, and Ivelin, the Sofia agent, who ensured the Autumn sunshine and the local arrangements were perfect.

Brian Daniels

'Hurry me Home to Blighty'

Ernest William Light modelled this figure, titling it *Blighty* on the base, in 1918. It is by far his best work for the Doulton company, or for Wedgwood, who reproduced some of his bird and animal models at about the same time. He later became master in charge of Stoke School of Art - some would say predictably given the rather academic nature of his work in general. However, this time the artist touched on real, immediate themes of anxiety and loss that defied the academic approach, and he seems to have been uniquely inspired.



'Blighty' has an odd ring to our ears. It originated in the days of the Raj - Hindustani for 'foreign'; it was applied to things brought by the British from home, and by extension to the mother country itself. If used now it's for comic effect, aping the character of some retired, and probably gout-stricken Colonel. But in 1918, even when Florrie Forde sang *Take Me Home to Dear Old Blighty*, it was without irony. Instead it expressed a sincere patriotism that seems to exist far less, or is less often admitted to, today.

The figure is identified as an infantryman in the South Staffordshire Regiment by his cap badge and other kit, all of which Light rendered with respectful accuracy. By 1918, like other First World War forces, the South Staffs had suffered huge numbers of casualties. At the battle of Loos alone, in 1915, they lost 448 men. Among the wounded were 130 incapacitated by chlorine gas, in use for the first time by their own side, which failed to carry into enemy lines on an unpredictable wind. All in all it is hard to imagine more of a contrast with Doulton's normal output of 'crinoline ladies'.

Although the First World War effectively ended on 11th November 1918, exactly 90 years ago, at the time when Light started work on this figure there would have been no imminent prospect of troops returning. Nor has the soldier received 'a Blighty one', a wound just serious enough to send him back to the UK. So presumably the title simply reflects a longing for home and a clue to the direction of his gaze.

Neil Hyman, Hampshire Museums

Forthcoming Lectures

9th December 2008

King's College, Cambridge: Architecture and Music (with music)

Elizabeth Gordon

King's College Chapel in Cambridge is a breathtaking experience - not only for its magnificent fan-vaulting, the finest in the world, for its carving (both in wood and in stone), and its dazzling array of stained glass windows, but above all, perhaps, for the world-famous Choir. It was King Henry VI who founded the College in 1441, and who established that there should be a fine choir in the Chapel to sing daily services during term-time. It is especially for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols that the Choir is most famous, reaching TV and radio audiences worldwide on Christmas Eve every year.

12th January 2009

Medieval Monasticism: Word, Spirit and Culture

The Rt Rev Dom Aidan Bellenger

Monks seek God in community and their 'golden age' was the Middle Ages. The lecture will look at the men themselves, their orders and way of life as reflected in existing buildings, works of art and artifacts. The illustrations are taken mainly from English and French examples. The three principal monastic orders: Benedictines, Carthusians and Cistercians are given prominence.

Dominic Aidan Bellenger is a Benedictine monk and Abbot of Downside and a Historian. Recent books include *Medieval Worlds* (2003) and *The Mitre and the Crown* (2005).

10th February

The Percy family of Alnwick, Syon and Petworth

William Forrester

The Percys are one of England's most complex and fascinating families, who trace their lineage back to the Emperor Charlemagne. They were tremendously powerful in the Middle Ages, holding the Northern frontier and even acting as Kingmaker during the Richard II - Henry IV period. Under the Tudors, whilst other families rose, they were systematically weakened as "overmighty subjects". They recovered in great style under the Stuarts, only to fall foul of the new King at the time of the Gunpowder Plot. The story then becomes less dramatic but no less interesting - involving fabulously wealthy heiresses, the amassing of one of the greatest art collections and the refurbishment and redecoration of their houses by luminaries like Robert Adam.

The story continues up to the present when Alnwick's gardens are becoming one of the wonders of the North.