

# ALTON DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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## Editorial

We are not simply a lecture society and have always embraced the full range of NADFAS activities which aim to raise the profile of the arts. Recently we were pleased to support the textile enthusiasts who look after the amazing collection of vestments at St Mary's church in Upper Froyle. They have invited a group of members to a Workshop, probably in October, and details will be given at our September meeting which, being the AGM will start at 7.30pm in The Forum at Alton College.

In addition, the work of the Treloar Trust in Holybourne was recognised with our sponsorship of their Arts Week last month. The Treloar association with Alton started way back in 1907 when the then Lord Mayor of the City of London, Sir William Purdie Treloar, set up a 'Cripples' Fund' as his mayoral appeal.

Art, music, drama and poetry all flourish at Treloar's and are hotly pursued both academically and for pure enjoyment. Having a physical disability seems to be little deterrent to the youngsters, who embrace the opportunities that the creative arts offer for self-expression. We were pleased to be able to play a small part in ensuring an opportunity for youngsters in this well regarded local organisation to involve themselves in the enjoyment of artistic activities.

## Special Interest Days



**Arts & Crafts in Hampshire  
with Anne Anderson  
Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
Beech Village Hall**



**Music and Manners –  
Life in 18<sup>th</sup> century England  
with Jeanne Dolmetsch  
Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2015  
Bookings to open at  
the January meeting.**

## Dates for your diary

**Waddesdon Manor - 18<sup>th</sup> September 2014  
Bookings via Vanessa MacMahon 01420 561709**

**The National Gallery  
26<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**'Rembrandt: The Late Works'  
Bookings to open at the  
September meeting.**





# Arundel Castle

The weather forecast for 4<sup>th</sup> June did not look promising, although the day got better after our coach of eager members left a wet Alton. Following our arrival and coffee, a guided tour was provided before the castle opened and enabled our guides to explain some of the family history and the main features of the collections – which were many and varied. Those who had heard the lecture earlier in the year relating to the Howard family had a head start when the rather intricate family relationships of Earls and Dukes were revealed through the family portraits.

Whilst the castle is a largely Victorian re-build as a consequence of ruination during the Civil War, the contents had been brought in from other family properties so we saw fine furniture, tapestries, clocks, weaponry as well as pictures by Van Dyck, Gainsborough, Lawrence, Reynolds, Canaletto and De László to name but a few. Personal possessions of Mary, Queen of Scots and a selection of historical, religious and heraldic items from the Duke of Norfolk's collection were also on view. They comprised a set of 16<sup>th</sup> century gold and enamel rosary beads carried by Mary, Queen of Scots at her execution in Fotheringhay Castle on 8 February 1587; a pearl necklace using River Tay pearls believed to have belonged to Mary, Queen of Scots; five gold Coronation cups (George II, George III, George V, George VI and Elizabeth II) and the splendid Earl Marshall's Ceremonial Baton.

Other pieces of note included the bed and furniture commissioned for the December 1846 visit of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert who came over from Osborne House for three days, a fascinating 14<sup>th</sup> century Italian pagent shield of painted wood featuring scenes from Roman history and an Italian micro-mosaic table of 1847 inset with the family arms.

After lunch in the efficient castle restaurant, members spread far and wide to view bedrooms, the motte constructed in 1068, and a surprising variety of gardens not to mention the Fitzalan Chapel which is located in the eastern end of a church building constructed in the castle grounds. This church is one of the very few that is divided into two worship spaces, one Catholic the other Anglican, with the western side of the church building occupied by St Nicholas church. A few hardy souls descended the hill and climbed up it again outside the castle wall to visit St Nicholas and the impressive Catholic Cathedral nearby.

A prompt departure and easy run back to Alton, with Ray at the wheel, saw us arrive a full hour before the heavens eventually opened.

**Tony Cross**

## Clocks and Watches

The Special Interest Day back in March at Beech village hall, with Colin Lattimore was a masterpiece. Starting with a session on time pieces and weight driven clocks we were introduced to early methods of telling the time, the problems of latitude for mariners in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the need for standard time to facilitate efficient railway timetables in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We learnt quite literally how clocks tick, were introduced to escapements of many types, how the Long Case Clock evolved around 1670 and how the different woods used for the case reflected changes in furniture. That they went out of fashion with the aristocracy c.1780 led to their popularity with the middle and working classes for the next 60 years. The term Grandfather Clock was the work of American songwriter Henry C Work's Music Hall song *My Grandfather's Clock* of 1876, often heard on Children's Favourites in the 1950s. A useful tip to silence any annoying striking clock was simply not to wind the striking

movement, usually the left-hand of two winders!

The session on spring driven clocks and watches was fascinating with Holbein the Younger including one in a picture of 1532. Notable watch and clockmakers mentioned included Edward East, Thomas Tompion, Charles Gretton, George Graham, Francis Rainsford and Thomas Mudge of Exeter who was watchmaker to King George III. Wrist watches became common between



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## Spring Visit to Amsterdam

Forty three eager members set off on the long coach trip to Amsterdam on our much anticipated Spring Tour to the Low Countries. After a calm crossing on one of P&O's new super ferries, we headed for Ghent for victualling etc. Here the keen ones set off to pack in one of Europe's greatest cultural treasures; van Eyck's recently restored multi-panelled altar piece *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* [1426-32]. Mystic indeed, but a great start to five days packed with artistic and cultural interest. On route to our hotel we enjoyed a canal dinner cruise of Amsterdam which neatly introduced us to the wide diversity of the city's architecture and the very wide range of its commercial and cultural life.

So, on to our Holiday Inn at IJmuiden Aan Zee described in the Rough Guide as 'this eminently missable industrial town' some 20 km West of Amsterdam. Set in one of Holland's finest industrial backdrops, this hotel had good rooms and a robust approach to fulfilling the promise - 'Dine in the Hotel'.

After an Amsterdam city tour the following day came a visit to *Our Lord in the Attic*, a 17C Catholic church hidden behind the facade of a typical canal side merchant's house. This remarkable building enabled illegal Catholic worship to continue in a period of zealous Presbyterian proscription. Day 3 took us to the Tsar Peter House in Zaandam where Peter the Great learnt enough about carpentry in seven days to modernise Russia [a work still in progress?] and build an effective navy, or perhaps not, as he moved on to Deptford before returning to Muscovy to put into practice his newly acquired skills.

Our visit to the Rijksmuseum coincided with Koenig's Day and this feast day turns the normally exuberant Amsterdam into a cycling maelstrom and see of discomfort and excess. However this was the very best day of the year to visit this world class museum in comfort. [The Alton Buckle had preceded us to feature in a Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (National Museum

of Antiquities) 'Golden Middle Ages', exhibition at Leiden Museum.]

We made our own selection from the eighty galleries in this wonderful eclectic place and we each will have our own memories. Time was available for independent exploration of the city and a favourite was the Museum Van Loon a Dutch merchant's house built in 1672 with a delightful tea garden serving very good Dutch apple cake. It probably had some good artefacts too. Also popular was the Flower Market where some members were noted examining the cannabis on offer and others loitering around the Magic Mushroom Shop. There were no reports of members being exposed to more serious moral turpitude.

On Day 4 we visited the magnificent Paleis Het Loo at Apeldoorn. This royal palace, occupied by the Dutch house of Orange-Nassau from William III to Queen Wilhelmina, offers many illustrations of our own historical ties with the Netherlands. Later the Kroller Muller Museum, a world-renowned private collection of 'modern' paintings for all tastes, confronted the philistines amongst us with a severe test of cultural credulity.

A visit to the outstandingly beautiful Keukenhof Gardens was fitted into the long return journey. This 32 ha. tulip garden is set deep amidst the tulip fields, skilfully magnifying and manipulating the virtues of the colour, range and form of these iconic Dutch flowers. A tremendous experience enjoyed in solitude as the first visitors that day. Two hours later the garden was filled with thousands of noisy tulip-huggers. Excellent planning allowing us to experience another of Holland's finest attractions in the greatest comfort.

So home, having enjoyed a most successful, well planned and executed trip and with our individual happy memories of some truly stunning Dutch artistic and cultural artefacts.

**John Butterfield**

# Forthcoming Lectures

**9th September 2014** at Alton College

**Regency Furniture**

**Janutz Slowikowski**

This is where Anthony meets Cleopatra and where we journey down the Nile and up Pompeii! An examination of the novelty, variety and intricacy of what we now call the 'Regency' style but was then known as the 'Grecian or modern style'. Greco-Roman influences are augmented by Egyptian ones to provide a stunningly original, yet curiously accurate, interpretation of the styles of classical antiquity.

**14th October 2014** at Alton College

**Pevsner in Hampshire**

**Susie Harries**

Nikolaus Pevsner CBE, FBA (1902–1983) was a German-born British scholar of the history of art and architecture. He is best known for his 46-volume series of county-by-county guides, *The Buildings of England* often simply referred to as 'Pevsner'.

Work on the series began in 1945 with the first volume being

published in 1951. Pevsner wrote 32 of the books himself and 10 with collaborators, with a further 4 of the original series written by others. *Hampshire & the IOW* appeared in 1967. Since his death, work has continued on the series, which has been extended to cover the rest of the UK, under the title Pevsner Architectural Guides (now published by Yale University Press). A revised volume on the IOW appeared in 2006, whilst *Hampshire - Winchester and the North* was published in September 2010.

**11th November 2014** at Alton College

**18th Century Worcester Porcelain**

**Anton Gabszewicz**

This concise overview discusses the products of this most prolific, innovative and highly successful factory, from the founding of the company in 1751 to 1800. Their large output was notably varied both in form and decoration; they were quick to adapt to the prevailing fashions and their products were of consistently fine quality. The influences of the Orient, Meissen and Sèvres will become apparent, the exceptionally fine moulding, potting and chinoiserie decoration of the 1750s, naturalistic flower painting of the 60s, the ground colours of the 70s and the neoclassical designs of the 80s will be examined.

## Empress of India



After the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the British East India Company, which had ruled much of India, was dissolved, and Britain's possessions and protectorates on the Indian sub-continent were formally incorporated into the British Empire. The Queen condemned atrocities on both sides and wrote of her "... feelings of horror and regret at the result of this bloody civil war" and insisted that an official proclamation announcing the transfer of power from the company to the state "should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence and religious toleration".

Victoria took the title Empress of India from 1 May 1876 but this was not proclaimed until the Delhi Durbar of 1 January 1877. It is difficult to overrate the importance of this gathering for it was looked upon by most of the ruling chiefs as the result of the Prince of Wales's visit in 1875-6, as a mark of honour to the native princes who had aided the British in their efforts to govern India. It was also seen as evidence of Her Majesty's increased interest in, and appreciation of, the vast Empire of India with its many different races and peoples.

British coins as well as those of the Empire and Commonwealth dominions included the abbreviated title *Ind. Imp.*, although in India itself the coins were inscribed 'Empress', and later 'King Emperor'. When India became independent 67 years ago on 15 August 1947 all of the coin dies had to be changed.

For non-numismatists the other words around the edge of the coin represents in abbreviated form Victoria by the Grace of God Defender of the Faith and Queen of Britain. The sculptor of the Queen's head on the coinage from 1892 was Thomas Brock (1847-1922), indicated by the initials TB. He is perhaps better known for the Imperial Memorial to Queen Victoria outside Buckingham Palace for which he was knighted in 1911.

**Tony Cross**

## Clocks and Watches (continued)

1870 and 1880, although the first had been made for Elizabeth I. Keyless winding was invented in 1834 but it did not catch on until 1890, whilst automatic winding was perfected in 1928.

After lunch and a question and answer session, Colin Lattimore spoke about member's time pieces comprising a selection of pocket watches, carriage clocks, wrist watches and a couple of photographs of long case clocks. There were hunters, half hunters, a 400 day clock in a glass dome, carriage clocks and a humble General Service Time Piece from WW2. The largest item was an impressive 'Goliath' travelling watch in a nickel silver case and particularly interesting was a Dent carriage clock c.1900 – considered the 'Rolls-Royce' of the type.

In thanking our speaker for his very interesting and educational day, Niven Baird also thanked Kit Butterfield and her team for ensuring the domestic arrangements for the SID matched the academic content and the day was considered another great success.

**Tony Cross**