

ALTON DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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Editorial

One of the delights of an ADFAS evening is the chance to chat to others before the lecture begins. That there is a glass of wine, or non-alcoholic cordial, to accompany this activity is a bonus. Being an evening society this is comparatively normal social activity but do pity those societies who meet during the day when anything other than a cup of tea or coffee would be considered inappropriate. I mention this as it is that time of year when the Treasurer seeks membership renewals and any group that offers ten glasses of wine and the same number of top class lectures would seem to be worth our subscription.

Guests are always welcome and we have found that once they have seen what ADFAS offers, they are quite prepared to join. Whilst we may not be in the same class as the Follies Bergere, we are a very friendly decorative and fine art society providing opportunities for members to be involved with the full range of NADFAS activities.

Dates for your diary



3rd June - Apsley House, the Wellington Arch & the Imperial War Museum

Vanessa MacMahon will be taking bookings at the April meeting and such bookings can only be accepted on full payment for the visit.



8th September - Longford Castle and Salisbury Cathedral

Vanessa MacMahon will be taking bookings at the May meeting and such bookings can only be accepted on full payment for the visit.



November (date tbc) – Portsmouth Naval Dockyard including the exciting new £27 million Mary Rose Museum - The 'wooden walls' of England

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

Special Interest Day



Thursday, 5 November Beech Village Hall

Barbara Peacock will explain the interior decorations and furnishings of the Georgian Country House.

Booking opens at the September meeting. If a booking is cancelled a refund can only be made if the event is full and there is a replacement from the waiting list.

Arts and Crafts in Hampshire



Dr Anne Anderson

Anne Anderson's Special Interest Day (SID) in Beech Village Hall back in November was very popular, with some members attending a SID for the first time. With two sessions in the morning and another in the afternoon there was a wealth of interlinked material relating to arts and

crafts and its place in the art movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

We learned about William Morris, his upbringing, his artistic ideology and his associates, before branching out into samples of their work in Hampshire. This was followed by details of others working in the county up to the time of the Great War. It was somewhat surprising to discover that both Petersfield and the New Forest were regarded as arts and crafts 'hotspots' with numerous instances of a wide range of work by a number of prominent designers still existing.

What began as an attempt by Morris to save society through art seems to have become an alternative lifestyle choice by those educated and affluent enough to be able to make such a choice. Interestingly those associated with the arts and crafts seem to have been actively involved with politics and, particularly, the appearance of Socialism.

Amongst the topics outlined were 'stained' glass, the main producers of church glass in the later Victorian period and details of the best example of Morris' work in the county - the New Jerusalem window of 1862 in St Michael and All Angels church, Lyndhurst. Examples of arts and crafts buildings in the county included Avon Tyrrell, Westover Hall, Marsh Court and from just over the country boundary in Surrey, Noney Grange at Shackleford and The Watts Gallery in Compton.

We ended the day with examples of the work of George Hayward Sumner who although born in Old Alresford, worked in London before retiring to the New Forest where he researched into the archaeology and folk history of the New Forest.

The day was brought to a close by Niven Baird who thanked Anne for a fascinating insight into an often overlooked period of design history which appealed to those who practised 'simple living and high thinking'.

These SIDs are well known for the quality of the subjects and with the provision of a two course lunch thanks to Kit Butterfield and her team of helpers, once again, it resulted in a very enjoyable day in good company.

Tony Cross



Rembrandt - The Late Works

Our visit to the National Gallery in late November was considerably enhanced by Lecturer James Heard who spoke to us with a deep knowledge and love of his subject. Rembrandt's later years were turbulent and marked with controversy, but his self-portraits in particular produced work that as well as being deeply moving and strikingly modern was subdued, thoughtful and aching honest.

We learnt that having already suffered the early loss of his wife and three of their children, this stage of the artist's life were burdened with bankruptcy, acrimonious legal proceedings with a former lover, and the loss of his common-law wife and only remaining son. However, far from diminishing as he aged, Rembrandt's creativity gathered new energy.

From the 1650s until his death in 1669, Rembrandt pursued an artistic style that was expressive and radical. His bold manipulation of printing and painting techniques and progressive interpretations of traditional subjects inspired generations of artists, earning him a reputation as the greatest master of the Dutch Golden Age.

Through famous masterpieces and rare drawings and prints, the artist examined themes that preoccupied him such as self-scrutiny, experimentation, light, observation of everyday life as

well as expressions of intimacy, contemplation and conflict.

The classic art theory of the day held that only beauty and perfection were worthy of the artist's notice. However for Rembrandt, a hanged woman, a scruffy landscape or an exotic beast were equally deserving of his scrutiny.

Those of us who visited the Rijksmuseum in the Spring, found ourselves standing in front of old friends. Especially memorable among them was *The Jewish Bride* a most poignant depiction of the intimate embrace of a loving couple.

John Harrap



Young Artists

As announced at the November lecture meeting, two paintings by students at Alton College which ADFAS submitted for consideration, were selected for the exhibition of the Royal Society of British Artists annual show at the Mall Galleries in London last month. Ella Bartron (left) and Flo Saralis were the lucky pair, the only ones selected from Hampshire and only 23 pieces were chosen from hundreds of works created by young artists nominated by NADFAS societies all over the UK. ADFAS helped the skilled pair by framing their works and arranging for them to be delivered to London in advance of the hanging.

In January the girls were contacted by NADFAS House to inform them that there was an additional opportunity for showing their work at the RBA Rising Stars exhibition at Lloyds Register Gallery at 71, Fenchurch Street, London for a month before the RBA show itself. Not surprisingly both students opted to include their pictures.



Just a thought

I enjoy receiving mail from friends and relatives – not e-mail but proper pen on paper communications that drop through the letter box. Now call me old fashioned (as my children often do), but there is something about a personal, considered, hand-written letter that can be re-read and kept. Whoever prints an e-mail/text message/tweet to put in one's treasured 'memory box'?

I also send postcards to the children, who all now live away from home (just to show that I do manage 'to get out' occasionally) as well as to friends as a means of keeping in touch. So where in a decorative and fine art context is this leading? I generally purchase cards from the venues ADFAS visits. However, at *Late Rembrandt* I was incensed to see that the National Gallery was charging £1 for their 'special exhibition postcards'. At the British Museum for the *Germany: memories of a nation* exhibition they were 70p with a special rate of 5 for £3; whilst at the *Late Turner: Painting Set Free* show in Tate Britain they were 75p. Now the thought of spending 15/- on a card is bad enough, but add the price of a postage stamp and one can understand why e-mails are so popular! That I wrote to the Royal Academy some years ago when they raised the price of their postcards to 50p is perhaps evidence of my 'prolonged interest' in the matter.

Those members with an i-Phone or i-Pad may be interested in the 'Touchnote' app which enables a photograph taken on



the device to be uploaded to a site where it can be made into a postcard (or greetings card), one's words of wisdom are added and despatched to a recipient anywhere in the world for a modest fee. My wife is a committed fan, although one of my brothers (a little older than me) was recently somewhat perplexed to receive such a personalised card with a Guernsey postmark (from where these items are created and despatched) when he knew we were on a very different island many miles away!

Such personalised postcards may be a cost-effective way forward for my generation who are wed to the postcard concept; my children simply use the facilities on their i-Phones to send images and unintelligible abbreviated words without using a middle man (the Postie), although for my benefit they add the odd post on Facebook that includes images of what they've been doing.

Anon

TE Lawrence



Since his death following a motor cycle accident in Dorset in May 1935, eighty years ago next month, the extraordinary career of T E Lawrence has continued to fascinate historians, writers, military strategists and the general public. Known throughout the world as Lawrence of Arabia, he remains one of the most famous and enigmatic figures of the twentieth century.

Born in Tremadog, North Wales on 16 August 1888, his parents eventually moved to Oxford and Lawrence did well at school pursuing a wide range of interests including archaeology. In 1907 he entered Jesus College, Oxford to read History and he chose to write a thesis on the influence of the Crusades on European military architecture. In the summer of 1909 he undertook an extensive walking tour in the Holy Land, sketching and taking photographs of over thirty castles. This helped him to gain a First Class Honours degree and afterwards he joined an archaeological dig at Carchemish in Syria. He worked there from 1911-14 and as well as becoming fluent in Arabic, Lawrence developed a deep sympathy for the Arabs who had lived for centuries under Turkish rule.

After the outbreak of the Great War he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and returned to the Middle East as part of an intelligence department in Cairo to assist in the war against Turkey, which had allied with Germany.

His exploits in the desert are well known and after the fall of Damascus in October 1918, Lawrence left for London and then

the Paris Peace Conferences to lobby for Arab independence. However, before the conference had started, the British and French had agreed on the future of Turkey's Arab territories and Lawrence was disillusioned by his failure to bring the Arabs self-rule.

In 1921, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill appointed Lawrence as an adviser, but he resigned the following year and joined the RAF in an attempt to find anonymity. During the 1920s and early 1930s, he served both in the RAF and the Tank Corps under assumed names, but press intrusion continued to dog him. A private edition of his book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* was printed in 1926, but a public edition was not released until after his death.

As a youngster with an active interest in history I recall seeing the 1962 film with Peter O'Toole as Lawrence in the Odeon Leicester Square and even bought the London Philharmonic Orchestra LP soundtrack by Maurice Jarre. Living in Dorset, I visited a number of sites associated with Lawrence including his burial place at Moreton and St Martin's church, Wareham - the location of a marble effigy of him by Eric Kennington.

A modern walking trail may be of interest to those who wish to visit the area to discover more (<http://www.dorsetforyou.com/396517>).

Tony Cross

Forthcoming Lectures

12th May 2015 at Alton Maltings

Everything you always wanted to know about Magna Carta but were afraid to ask (including the arty bits)

Dr Caroline Shenton

2015 marks the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, one of the most famous constitutional documents of all time. To celebrate this occasion, archivist and historian Dr Caroline Shenton will explain what Magna Carta is, how it was made, its historical importance, describe artworks inspired by Magna Carta and take us on a brief slide tour of the locations where the four original copies are held. By the end of the lecture you will be able impress your friends and family with your new-found knowledge of why the nation is celebrating this very special birthday this year!

9th June 2015 at Alton Maltings

Art and the Napoleonic Wars - the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo (18 June 1815)

Dr Lois Oliver

This lecture complements a major exhibition to be held at the Royal Academy in the autumn of 2015. The decisive victory over Napoleon brought to an end a series of wars that had convulsed Europe. Most people of the time experienced these conflicts not on the battlefield but through art. We will learn of the contrasting views presented by British and French artists and will also consider the insatiable public appetite for rather less elevated art forms ranging from ladies' fans illustrated with the latest military news, to full re-enactments of naval battles layed out on real water at Sadler's Wells Theatre.