

ALTON DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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Editorial

Our December meeting comprises what promises to be a very popular seasonal lecture by Dr Annie Gray entitled Mrs Beeton's Christmas (starting at the slightly earlier time of 7.30pm) followed by our traditional party with tasty nibbles and mulled wine which signifies the start of the festive season.

We have enclosed a separate invitation so please RSVP if you are able to attend. Should you wish to bring a guest please inform our Secretary, Laura Rose and send her a cheque for £10 payable to ADFAS – her address is on the new Programme Card.



New Members Evening

New members and Committee members met for drinks and nibbles at the home of Lissa and Peter Wilson back in September. Niven Baird, re-elected as Chairman a few days earlier, welcomed the 'new intake' of members, introduced them to the Committee and, during discussion, encouraged them to engage in the full range of ADFAS activities undertaken by the society.

Dates for your new diary

Special Interest Day

Thursday 17th March 2016

Daniel Snowman

The Gilded Stage: A Social and Cultural History of Opera

Beech Village Hall will provide the venue for this richly illustrated history of an art form that incorporates all the others. From the birth of opera in Renaissance Italy we move to Louis XIV's Versailles, Handel's London, Mozart's Vienna, Verdi's Italy and Wagner's Germany, Gilded Age America and the worldwide spread of opera in the 20th century. During the course of this magnificent Grand Tour of the mind, we will consider patronage of the arts, the changing nature of audiences, theatrical architecture and stage design and the impact of new technologies such as electric lighting, recording, photography and film.

Bookings from the January meeting via Paulette Murray (01420 85195). 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.



Visit to London

March 2016 - date to be confirmed

A tour of the Houses of Parliament coupled with a visit to Tate Britain enabling an opportunity to view Artist and Empire exhibition as well as the Frank Auerbach show.

Bookings from the January meeting via John Harrap (01420 520399). If a booking is cancelled, a refund will only be made if the visit is full and there is a replacement from a waiting list.

14 - 18th April 2016

The Cities of Chester & Liverpool

The annual long weekend visit heads to the northwest next Spring with an active programme of cultural visits over the four days. Full details of the excursion, based in Chester, with Truemans Coaches are available at our lecture meetings.

The Celts at the British Museum

- what is Celtic Art?

2,500 years ago, the people of northern Europe expressed their shared beliefs through similar abstract art styles. Objects decorated with sinuous organic forms and fantastic animals were used for feasting, religious ceremonies, adornment and warfare. They were both stunning works of art and powerful ways to convey a shared identity.

Celtic art continued in Roman Britain, transforming and taking on new influences. Items were made using typically Roman forms but decorated with characteristic Celtic motifs. Beyond the frontier, communities in northern Scotland were affected by the conquest in a very different way. They created new types of objects once they found themselves the neighbours of a powerful empire, including distinctive jewellery which emphasised their difference from the Romans.

The Celtic art style was 'reinvented' in early medieval Christian monasteries in Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The distinctive languages, art and objects used by these communities set them apart from the Anglo-Saxons to the southeast, and also from the rest of Europe. Rare manuscripts and striking stone crosses show how the older Celtic curves were combined with Anglo-Saxon designs, creating a fusion that was altogether new and different.



As the Industrial Revolution changed life throughout Britain, people became increasingly fascinated with the Celtic past and traditional crafts. By Queen Victoria's death in 1901, a creative Celtic revival was underway. Ancient Celtic art styles were 'rediscovered' and Celtic Revival art became particularly important in Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

The Celts exhibition at the British Museum continues until 31st January 2016

Visit to Longford Castle

Longford Castle near Salisbury in Wiltshire hosts a very limited number of groups each year so our September trip was a rare opportunity to visit the home of the Earl of Radnor. The castle is partly Elizabethan and partly Victorian and set in an extensive estate. Since the eighteenth century it has contained one of the greatest collections of paintings ever formed in the country many of which are on display in the castle. Longford has a special relationship with the National Gallery and some of the more exceptional paintings are on loan to the Gallery where they are felt to be safer and where they may be enjoyed by a wider public.

Within the castle rooms among elegant furniture, sculptures and tapestries are displayed very important paintings including those by Reynolds, Gainsborough, van Dyke, Rubens and Frans Hals together with more recent artists such as Augustus John, William Nicholson and Ivon Hitchens. There was a delightful 'homely' feel to the castle and our two guides were excellent. After a brief visit to the garden bordering a peaceful River Avon we travelled to Salisbury Cathedral for lunch in the refectory. The great tomb of Sir Thomas & Lady Gorges, who built Longford Castle, is to be found in the cathedral retro choir and was visited by many of our members. The day was blessed with good weather and everyone considered the visit to be a great success.

Mike & Jen Charles



All at Sea ◉ an Interesting Example of Maritime Art

You may recall a short piece relating to the use of art on record sleeves in a back issue of the ADFAS Newsletter. Earlier in the year I noticed an article which related to Sir Peter Blake (b. 1932), a leading figure in the development of British pop art, and a project in which he was involved in Liverpool. What is the connection?

Blake's most well-known work is considered by some to be the album cover for Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, the eighth Beatles LP released in 1967 – a mere 48 years ago. The Liverpool project was a co-operation between the First World War Centenary Art Commissions and Tate Liverpool in which they commissioned Blake to undertake an art work.

In partnership with Merseytravel and National Museums Liverpool, Sir Peter's design, entitled Everybody Razzle Dazzle, covered the Mersey Ferry Snowdrop with a distinctive pattern in monochrome and colour, transforming the vessel into a moving artwork. The subject of a BBC4 art programme back in the summer, the original idea came from WWI when artists worked to help protect ships from U boat activity by painting them with a confusing series of shapes.

Unlike other forms of camouflage, 'dazzle' camouflage works not by concealing the object but by baffling the eye, making it difficult to estimate a potential target's range, speed and direction.

Painted in monochrome and colour, each ship's dazzle pattern was unique in order to avoid making classes of ships instantly recognisable to enemy U-boats and aircraft.

Eighteen months ago Jo Walton lectured on the art of the Great War in which she mentioned dazzle camouflage, the introduction of which is generally credited to the artist Norman Wilkinson, who incorporated ideas derived from Vorticism and Cubism. However its effectiveness on ships was rather uncertain. Be that as it may, if you find yourselves in Liverpool a trip on the Mersey ferry seems a must. Now if this reminds you of a record title simply Google Gerry and the Pacemakers, click 'Ferry Cross the Mersey' then 'play' and for 2 minutes and 42 seconds be transported back to a song from your youth!

Tony Cross



Rising Star

Last year we took part with some success in a scheme where societies are invited to submit photographs of art work by students at schools and colleges in their locality for selection to go on exhibition in London. This summer 55 NADFAS Societies submitted some 348 images of original student work giving a real challenge for the Royal Society of British Artists Council members to pick a number of pieces which combined the highest levels of skill, expression and draughtsmanship. Alton DFAS was amongst those fortunate to be included in the 17 societies whose submitted work was chosen for exhibition.

Alton College student Martha Dobson's Portrait of a Gentleman will be included in the 22 works to be shown at Lloyds Register Gallery in the City of London from 11 February -11 March. They will then transfer to the RBA's annual exhibition at the Mall Galleries from 17 March to 2 April where the work will

be displayed alongside that of professional artists.

Your committee feels this collaborative venture encourages a closer working relationship between societies, which tend to consist of mature folk interested in the arts, and those of a younger generation with similar interests. That we meet in Alton College and provide bursaries for promising art students is part of this ethos.



Forthcoming Lectures

8th December 2015 at 7.30pm in Alton Maltings
Mrs Beeton's Christmas - Dr Annie Gray

This Christmas-themed lecture looks at the mid-Victorian Christmas through the gaze of Isabella Beeton. Her *Book of Household Management* (1861) contains a number of Christmas recipes, without going into depth on what the festival actually meant. This reflects the mid-Victorian turmoil over Christmas: was it an excuse for drunken revelry, better off banned or at least forgotten? Or could it be an occasion to celebrate family, friends and to think of those less fortunate than the middle classes to whom Mrs Beeton addressed her writings?

12th January 2016 at Alton College
Imperial Purple to Denim Blue - Dr Susan Kay-Williams

Today textiles for clothing or decoration are taken for granted, but it was not always so. This lecture unpacks the history of how cloth and yarn were coloured and how the different colours represented power, achievement and desire. Using a variety of illustrations it sheds a forgotten light on how important textiles have been in European history, but more than this, the history of textiles is not just a matter of fashion but is also a story of politics, money, war, trade, laws, the church, agriculture, exploration, science and even serendipity.

9th February at Alton College
Wilfred Owen - Poetry, Art and Music of WW1 - Denis Moriarty

The Great War cast its long shadow over the whole of the 20th century and changed history and society forever. This lecture aims to set Owen's brief life in context, draws on his poetry, the work of war artists and the familiar but compelling photographic

images of the conflict to illustrate Owen's message 'All a poet can do today is war'. From the catastrophe and this sombre reflection must spring an eternal and optimistic determination that human endeavour must strive to avoid such calamities again.

8th March at Alton College
The World of Playing Cards - Yasha Beresiner

Surprisingly the design of today's playing cards date back to 1377. The English deck is of French origin and the Company of Makers of Playing Cards was founded in 1628 to protect English makers from French imports. Cards were used as a medium of communication, propaganda or education with, for example the cards depicting Marlborough's Victories in 1707, were illustrated by Francis Barlow. Modern cards follow in these old traditions with some wonderful contemporary collectors' decks.

12th April at Alton College
Those Crazy Years - Life and Art in Paris during the Jazz Age
Linda Collins

After WW1, there was rejoicing in Paris, but there was also an uneasy feeling that the peace may not be everlasting. It seems the people of the French capital decided to throw caution to the winds and simply enjoy the peace whilst it lasted.

The lecture will consider Paris at that time – the eccentric personalities and the visiting American jazz musicians, along with the five major artistic movements of the era.

Discovery of the boy child



Howard Carter was born on 9 May 1874 in London where his father, Samuel Carter, was a successful artist. It seems Howard was a sickly child and was sent to live with relatives in Norfolk. The British occupied Egypt in 1882 which resulted in an increased interest in Egyptology. Through his father's connections, Howard Carter

found a job working for an archaeologist who needed an artist to draw finds. Howard headed to Egypt in 1891 where he worked on many excavations and earned praise for using innovative and modern methods on their finds.

In 1907 he was engaged by Lord Carnarvon of Highclere Castle in Hampshire, who was fascinated by Egypt. With Carnarvon's backing, Carter led the excavation of Egyptian nobles' tombs and in 1914 Carnarvon received a license to dig at the site where it was believed the tomb of King Tutankhamun lay. Carnarvon gave the task to Howard Carter, who is on the left of the photograph of them both above.

The Great War interrupted the project but after it had recommenced, his team found a flight of steps that led down to a sealed door and a secret chamber. On 6 November, 1922, some 93 years ago last Friday, Carter and Lord Carnarvon entered the tomb, where they found an immense collection of gold and treasure. On 16 February, 1923 Carter opened the innermost chamber and found the sarcophagus of the boy King.



The tomb was by far the most intact and well-preserved of all of those excavated. The volume of artefacts and treasures found in the tomb meant that Howard Carter remained in Egypt, working on the site until the excavation was completed in 1932. He returned to London and spent his later years working as a collector for various museums. He also toured the United States giving lectures about Egypt and following his death in March 1939, was buried in Putney Vale cemetery in west London.

Tony Cross