

ALTON DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



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Editorial

Firstly, a reminder that our December meeting is at Alton Maltings and starts at the slightly earlier time of 7.30pm. Following the lecture [details on the back page] you are invited to our traditional Christmas Party when we anticipate there will be lively conversation over mulled wine, mince pies and other seasonal nibbles. Non-alcoholic drinks will also be available and if you have particular dietary needs please inform the Secretary well in advance (Laura Rose - roseelmcott@aol.com). If you would like to invite a guest please contact the Secretary also. There will be a fee of £10.

Membership still continues to concern your committee - and many others across the country. It was formerly thought that evening societies were less popular than those which met during the day because it was considered that people still working would be unable to attend daytime meetings and this has led to some local societies being composed purely of retirees. In the past, we had members who came to our monthly lectures straight from the railway station, but currently we seem to have 'matured' as a society and do not seem to attract those still working.

We have a regular turnover of members as some leave the area or decide not to renew for a variety of reasons, but luckily we continue to attract new folk for it appears we are as friendly as some, but more friendly than others. We do not have a cap on membership caused by the size of our meeting venues, which limit many other societies who meet in smaller venues. It is a truth universally acknowledged, that if we all encouraged one friend to take up membership, we would double our number. BUT how do we reach this vitally important 'younger' audience?

Answers on a postcard please!

ADFAS Anniversary Party

You may care to pencil 4th July 2018 into your diary when we will meet at Bury Court to celebrate our 20th Anniversary as well as the Golden Jubilee of the formation of NADFAS, recently re-named as The Arts Society. Further details of the event to follow and will include an application form for tickets, although you may like to know that Simon Wallfisch, who is known as The Singing Cellist will perform.



Dates for your Diary

Wednesday 21st February 2018
London

A visit to the Royal Academy to view the Charles I exhibition [see Page 3 for more details]. Bookings will be taken from our January meeting.

4th to 9th April 2018 - Normandy

We depart on Wednesday, 4th April in the evening and take the night ferry to Ouistreham with cabins.

This will allow the whole of the Thursday for visits rather than travel. We will be based in a hotel in Lisieux and visits will include Bayeux in the north to Giverney in the south and take in Rouen, Caen and Honfleur. The detailed visits to chateaux and gardens are being finalised. We return on the afternoon ferry on Monday 9th April.

Special Interest Day

Thursday 22nd March 2018
Beech Village Hall
Fraudulence, Trickery and Deception
"Looking into Paintings"
Frank Woodgate

Degas once said that "A painting requires as much fraudulence, trickery and deception as the perpetration of a crime" and, while this may be a slight exaggeration, it has a ring of truth. Our day will appeal to those who are especially interested in fine art and we will discover how artists can manipulate colour, form, composition and subject-matter; we will also see how artists engage our emotions or provoke a response.

Bookings via Paulette Murray at lecture meetings or by
e-mail: paulette_murray@aol.co.uk

If bookings for visits or SIDs are cancelled a refund will only be made if the day is full and there is a replacement from the waiting list.



Dorset Daytrip

Responses to our visit to Dorset varied from 'Two great houses with so much to look at' through to 'A very good day out – Kingston Lacey was a lovely house full of lovely things but badly presented by the NT. Darkness (blinds) everywhere – poor guides who only had a small torch to show pictures. Could have done without the LGBT display and flag. Athelhampton House was charming'.

It seems the installation celebrating the contribution of William Banks to Kingston Lacey, who was forced to flee England to avoid prosecution and a possible death penalty for same-sex acts, was not widely appreciated. The NT was keen to explain that Banks was exiled in Europe, from where he sent back a vast collection of art to develop the house. In collaboration with the University of Leicester, the exhibition

explored Banks' experiences against the wider history of the persecution of LGBT lives.

There can be few people who have not realised that 2017 marks 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in England, as the anniversary has been marked by documentaries on radio and television. However, ADFAS visits to historic houses are based on their architecture and decorative interiors; does information announcing that the former owner was gay make any difference to our appreciation of their exquisite taste?

From our own experience, as well as comments in the national press back in the summer, it seems the NT may perhaps have made an error of judgement.



New Members & Church Records event

Everyone likes a good party and ADFAS members are no exception. On a pleasant summer evening in early September new members enjoyed the delights of Lissa & Peter Wilson's garden. Also present were members of our Church Recording group who under the leadership of Rosie Sirl, completed their work at St Nicholas church in West Worldham earlier in the year. NADFAS Chairman Niven Baird presented a bound copy of the Record to Tom Brock, who as Church Warden has the privilege of living adjacent to the church.

Other copies of the research are deposited with the Diocesan Records Office which holds the diocesan archive, Church Care, the Victoria & Albert Museum Art Library and Historic England Archives. St Nicholas at West Worldham thus becomes the latest church to be added to the long list of nearly 2000 churches recorded by NADFAS since Church Recording began back in 1973.



A Not to be Missed exhibition opportunity

Artworks acquired by Charles I which were later sold off by Oliver Cromwell's republican government are to return to the UK for a once-in-a-lifetime exhibition of one of the most stupendous art collections ever created. The Charles I exhibition, a collaboration between the Royal Academy of Arts (RA) and the Royal Collection Trust, will reunite spectacular works by artists such as Titian, Van Dyck, Rubens and Holbein, some of which are coming to Britain for the first time in nearly 400 years.

The exhibition will start the RA's 250th anniversary year in January 2018. Charles I is considered to be the most important collector of art of any monarch in British history. He bought the best old paintings and commissioned the best contemporary artists, notably Anthony van Dyck. However the English Civil War and the King's execution in 1649 led to almost all the collection – an estimated 1,500 paintings and 500 sculptures – being sold by Cromwell and scattered throughout Europe.

The Restoration, under Charles II, saw a significant part of it reassembled, but many works were gone for good, including around 40 of the greatest works in the royal collections of France and Spain. Those works now reside in the Louvre and the Prado and it was to these institutions that staff from the RA went with wish-lists, aware they were asking for the stars.

The Louvre is lending three paintings, including two Titians which are often overlooked by visitors because they hang in the same room as the Mona Lisa. It is also lending a painting described as “arguably the most moving portrait Van Dyck painted of Charles I, and one of his greatest portraits”.

The Prado meanwhile is lending five works including a Titian portrait of Charles V with his dog. There are five works from the National Gallery in London, including a major Van Dyck equestrian portrait, Charles I on Horseback. That will be hung alongside the other big equestrian portrait Charles I on Horseback with M de St Antoine, which hangs in Buckingham Palace – the first time anyone will see them hanging together. The bulk of the loans, around 90 works, are being lent by the Royal Collection.

As the RA concentrates on Charles I, the Royal Collection will present an exhibition on his son Charles II, which will include more than 220 paintings, miniatures, drawings, prints, books, pieces of furniture, sculptures, ceramics, tapestries and silver from the Royal Collection. A third partner will be the BBC, which is planning a four-part BBC 4 series, presented by Andrew Graham-Dixon, on the Royal Collection and a BBC 2 documentary on the Charles I show, presented by Brenda Emmanus.

Exhibition Dates

Charles I: King and Collector is at the RA between 27th January - 15th April 2018

Charles II: Art and Power is at the Queen's Gallery from 8th December - 13th May 2018



Forthcoming Lectures

12th December - Alton Maltings (starts at 7.30pm)
Stocking Fillers from Fabergé
Clare Phillips

Although the Russian jeweller Carl Fabergé is best known for his magnificent Imperial Easter Eggs, these represent only one aspect of his firm's great creativity. This lecture examines the exquisite jewellery, vivid enamelled boxes and trinkets, intricate hard-stone figures and naturalistic flower studies that were the mainstay of his success, and which delighted his customers throughout Europe. The lecture will be a visual feast, in which we escape into the most privileged realms of Edwardian Christmas shopping.

9th January - Happy and Glorious - a thousand years of English Coronations **Barbara Askew**

The crowning of the sovereign is an ancient ceremony rich in religious significance, historical associations and pageantry. This lecture will examine the evolution of the coronation ceremony from Saxon times to that of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. It examines the different stages from the Recognition through to the Homage and explains the significance of the different items of the Coronation Regalia. Finally, the lecture gives an account of the ill omens and memorable mishaps which have occurred at coronations throughout the centuries, and ends with the coronation of Her Majesty the Queen, the first to be genuinely witnessed by the people through the medium of television.

13th February - The Golden Section - divine proportion in Art and Architecture **Alexandra Epps**

For thousands of years the mystery of the Golden Section has inspired thinkers from all disciplines - artists and architects, mathematicians and musicians. We will discover the secrets of its sacred geometry and beauty within creations from the classical to contemporary.



13th March - Bringing back the Needle - the story of an obelisk **Clive Barham-Carter**

Cleopatra's Needle in London is one of three similar named Egyptian obelisks and is located on the Victoria Embankment, close to Embankment underground station. It was presented to the United Kingdom in 1819 by the ruler of Egypt in commemoration of the victories of Lord Nelson at the Battle of the Nile and Sir Ralph Abercrombie at the Battle of Alexandria in 1801. This lecture will outline the full story concerning this Egyptian sculpture which eventually reached London 1877.

10th April - 'Cassandr  Style' from Kharkov to Hercule Poirot **Charles Harris**

Adolphe Jean-Marie Mouron, known as A.M. Cassandr , was a style guru in an age full of style – the Art Deco. Highly influential, his work was at the polished centre of Modernism. His designs were a playground of sweeping curves, bold zig-zags and sumptuous streamlining. He also became a typeface designer when it was obvious that existing typefaces were not stylish enough for his illustrations! Cassandr  will always be loved for his stunning high-fashion posters promoting luxury liners, railways, avant-garde bars, and sultry cigarettes in the days before the austerities of the Second World War.

The Art of Revolution

There were many precursors for the 1917 revolutions in Russia, which began in February and continued until October. Failed tsarist economic policies that caused food shortages, general disenchantment with the tsarist autocracy, a burgeoning and increasingly radical and revolutionary proletariat and intellectual class, proliferation of revolutionary journals and newspapers that advocated violent regime overthrow, hyper-inflation, and murderous peasant uprisings in the countryside were among the major precursors of the first phase.

The revolution of 1917 shows what happens when state leadership is out of touch with the masses it is supposed to govern; it also serves as a case study and warning for revolutionaries, because as the old saying goes, 'Be careful what you wish for.'

Renowned artists including Kandinsky, Malevich, Chagall and Rodchenko were among those who lived through the fateful events of 1917, which ended centuries of tsarist rule and shook Russian society to its foundations.

Amidst the tumult, the arts thrived as debates swirled over what form a new 'people's' art should take. But the optimism was not to last for by the end of 1932, Stalin's brutal suppression had curtailed creative freedom.

