

Newsletter

Arrival of the Modern Mind

Ice Age Art at the British Museum

Monday 29 April 2013

Quite a show! We entered past two model bison moulded in clay to see a staggering collection of portable art. Many pieces were just a few centimetres long or high, so there were some short waits as visitors lingered in front of stunningly-worked miniature images.

The chronological exhibition covered art from 40,000 years ago to about 10,000 years ago. Inevitably what sticks in one's mind is personal, but the Swimming Reindeer, featured in the first week of the Radio 4 series *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, is a vivid memory. The beautiful miniature head of a young woman from the Brassempouy cave, southwest France, showing great skill and a fine sense of style is another.

The Lion Man, carved from mammoth ivory, told us much about the difficulties faced by archaeologists and their amazing skills of interpretation. The constituent pieces, found in the summer of 1939 in southwest Germany, were hastily stored for obvious reasons and only recognised as fitting together in the late 1960s. Further fragments found in 1989 showed it was a lion head on a human body. Its creation about 40,000 years old demanded a mind able to conceptualise and handle abstract ideas, as well as amazing skills to carve with great subtlety using flint.

Those skills were also in evidence in the beautiful flutes made from swan and vulture wing bones – at 40,000 years old the oldest known musical instruments in the world.

Other reconstructions and photographs of present day parallels such as a pouncing lioness showed just how well our ancestors knew their world and could reveal it.

This reviewer was delighted by the exhibition, but would have preferred maps with more complete keys and more made of cave paintings. Many thanks to Mary Bailey for organising the trip - flawless as ever, oh, and lovely weather!

Mike Woodcock



▲ *Tip of a mammoth tusk carved as two swimming reindeer depicted one behind the other; c. 13,000 years old, found in Montastruc, France*
© The Trustees of the British Museum



▲ *Replica carving by Wulf Hein of the 'Lion Man' sculpture discovered in the Swabian Alps, Germany. Photo by Karl-Heinz Augustin*
© Ulmer Museum



▶ *A weighted antler spear-thrower fragment, carved into the likeness of a mammoth, found in Montastruc, France.*

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From the Chairman

Harbour Festival

At the Harbour Festival on 27 and 28 July a committed band of Friends sold books, home-made cake and cold drinks to the thousands of visitors enjoying the sunshine. We were based in L Shed, next to M Shed, with the red doors rolled back and a backdrop of some of the museum's largest objects, including the Bristol lorry, the Bailey's caravan and Concorde's prototype cockpit. We raised a magnificent £1,600, and I hope you will join me in saying a huge thank-you to the volunteers who organised, baked, manned the stalls, transported books and carried out all the other essential tasks that made our 2-day event such a success. Special thanks are due to the M Shed staff and the Bristol Harbour Railway crew who did so much to help us. I do hope that all the volunteers enjoyed themselves as much as I did. This kind of event, where commitment, teamwork and friendship come together to deliver success, is a great example of what makes me so proud of our organisation.

Subscriptions

It is 9 years since we last increased our subscriptions, and in that time our costs, particularly for printing and posting our quarterly newsletter, have risen substantially. In 2004, printing and postage costs were less than half of subscription income. Since then we have upgraded to full colour (and won the BAFM Newsletter of the Year award), and we all know how much postage costs have risen, especially for large items such as our newsletter. In 2013, printing and postage costs swallowed up three quarters of subscription income. So at the AGM we will be asking you to approve an increase in subscriptions of £7 on both sole and joint membership. That will bring a single subscription to £22 and joint to £32. I hope you will come to the AGM and support your committee by voting for the resolution, so that we can continue to focus on raising money to support the museum service.

Funding Requests

The Museum leadership team are continuing to prepare for the possibility of the service becoming an independent trust. Part of that work involves reviewing all their current sources of funding, and investigating new ones. The Friends play an important part in that funding model, so I have met with the



▲ *Serious book buyers at the our Harbour Festival cake and book sale*

Photo Sue Thurlow

Rebecca Sale from the Development team to discuss our role in the bigger picture. I am pleased to report that the outcome is a largely a formalisation of the way we work currently. We have confirmed our commitment to continue raising money for the service, in the same way we do now, for the foreseeable future, but without any specific financial targets. As currently, the service may from time to time ask us for a larger amount to help with strategic projects (as they did with M Shed, and the Egypt Gallery), but we will be able to continue to meet the smaller requests for funding that are so useful to individual specialists and teams, and that help us maintain the sense of being real friends to the individuals in the Service.

Website

Brian Joseph, who has managed our website so well over the last few years, decided in April that it was time to retire. I am happy to report that Brian Vincent has already taken over as Webmaster, after a very professional handover from Brian J, and has also been co-opted to the Executive Committee. Many thanks go to Brian J for maintaining our site so effectively, and best of luck to Brian V.

Sue Thurlow Chairman

Situations Vacant

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Sue Thurlow, our Chairman – details on the back page.

Secretary: Richard Avery, our excellent Secretary, has a rapidly growing full-time job which involves him travelling much more than he used to, often at short notice. He would therefore like to hand over his role as our secretary to someone who has a little more spare time than he does, but he would be available to ensure an orderly handover, and to provide occasional advice and guidance as required.

Publicity and Marketing Officer: We still have a vacancy on the Executive Committee for a Publicity and Marketing Officer. This is an interesting role working with other committee members and the webmaster, with a fair degree of autonomy, and opportunities to introduce new ideas. Remit includes, but is not limited to, membership leaflets and promotion within museum sites.

Understanding Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Would you like to understand better how BMGA is run? We are beginning a regular series of articles explaining the staffing structure of the Service, introducing individuals, and describing briefly what they do. We start this quarter at the top, with Julie Finch and her deputies Trevor Gough and Tim Corum. See separate supplement enclosed.

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Quarterly Report

In mid-June the spectacular Delhi Durbar painting of 1903 by Roderick McKenzie was reassembled in public view in the front hall. This is a tangible reflection of the work which continues on the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum collection – Sue Giles and her World Cultures curatorial team have been working their way through the collection making sure all is catalogued and listed.

The archaeology team of Gail Boyle and Kate Iles have been working in partnership with the British Museum on the 'Romans' exhibition which opens on 21 September. In the spring Kate visited Cairo as part of an exchange scheme 'Heritage without Borders', one of the increasingly international aspects of our work.

Those who have been behind the scenes at BMAG are likely to have seen the impressively large and fearsome fossil *Pliosaurus*, a marine predator from the time of the dinosaurs. That specimen and one we have on display in the 'Sea Dragons' Gallery have recently been described as species new to science, and therefore of particular scientific importance. They have been named *Pliosaurus carpenteri* and *Pliosaurus westburyensis* respectively. *P. carpenteri* is named in honour of Simon Carpenter, a long time volunteer at the museum, who found the specimen in a quarry in Westbury, Wiltshire.

The annual Festival of Nature held in Millennium Square in June was an opportunity to engage the public in our natural history collections and also the work of the Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre. The focus for this year was the role of bees in the ecosystem. BRERC's latest book – *Dragonflies & Damselflies of the Bristol Region*, generously supported by the Friends, was launched in July.

M Shed

M Shed celebrated its 2nd birthday in June with 1.3 million visits since opening! It was longlisted for the 2013 Telegraph Friendly Museum Award, reaching the last twenty from over 140 nominations. Families' views and votes are key to reaching the longlist so it is a real testament to the family-friendliness of M Shed that we got so far.

Discussions have been taking place over the proposed improvements to Museum Square, outside the café, which will improve the visitor experience while retaining the 1950s working dockside feel. The development now taking place behind M Shed means that the temporary railway shed for the Harbour Railway will very soon need to move elsewhere.

M Shed continues to play a key role in the cultural life of the city: we hosted the launch party of the Festival of Nature, and the results of the judging of the European Green Capital 2015 were announced there, by video-link from Portugal.

Blaise Castle House Museum

Curatorial staff continue to work on the collections in store in the basement (primarily agricultural and folk history), rationalising and making better use of space.

Bristol Record Office

External maintenance work at B Bond Warehouse is on-going but the scaffolding has been removed from the entrance to BRO, making a pleasanter environment for visitors.

Kings Weston Roman Villa

A volunteer team of staff from Lloyds Bank spent a week working alongside museum staff at the Villa in June to paint and generally spruce up its appearance.

Staff news

Linda Gordon joined the staff in May as Documentation Assistant on a one year contract to work with Andy King and Catherine Littlejohns. Helen McConnell has been recruited as Collections Officer, to work with Catherine Littlejohns.

Roger Vaughan, who has worked on the geology collections and in other roles for the service since the early 1990s, retired at the end of August, and his replacement is being recruited.

Ian Greig has joined BaRAS to lead the team of field archaeologists currently based at St Nicholas Church. Mike Ponsford, who retired as Curator of the Field Archaeology section (later BaRAS) in the 1990s, has started a Monument Fellowship with BMGA, allowing him to share his long experience and knowledge of the archaeology of the city with the archaeology curatorial team.

Donnie Houser retired in July after 20 years working for Learning and Communities, and Maheema Chanrai has now joined the team as a one-year cultural heritage trainee.

Zak Mensah joined us in July as Technical Development Manager to take forward IT, digital, website and social media across the whole service. Tom Pace will be working alongside Zahid Jaffer as AV Technical Officer.

Events & exhibitions

Return from the Underworld to 12 January 2014

Balcony Gallery, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

The remains of a mosaic floor discovered at Newton St. Loe near Bath in 1837, during the construction of the Great Western Railway, will be displayed alongside previously unseen Victorian lithographic prints of mosaic floors from other SW British Roman villa sites, and material from the Marsh Archive.

Roman Empire: Power & People 21 September – 12 January 2014

Main Temporary Exhibition Gallery, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

Developed in partnership with the British Museum, this exhibition explores the power, influence and people of the Roman Empire at its greatest extent. It includes over 100

The Delhi Durbar story

A space was cleared. It took 6 men to lift the radiator. Crates went from L Shed to BMAG; moved inside by manpower and scissor lift; then were opened. On Day 1 frame and stretcher were assembled. On Day 2 the painting was unrolled and stretched into its frame. It was raised, sliding on blankets to squeeze under the balcony. The final hang took 17 people plus a photographer.



Photos © Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives

British Museum pieces: sculpture from the villas of the Emperors Tiberius and Hadrian, coins from the famous Hoxne treasure, beautiful jewellery and even near-perfectly-preserved children's clothing.

The Romans and Bristol
19 October - 12 January 2014

Temporary Exhibition Gallery 2, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

This exhibition explores the stories of people who collected and created Bristol's Roman collection from the 1820s to the present day.

Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2012 to 3 November 2013

M Shed

Coming to Bristol from the National Portrait Gallery the exhibition features outstanding portraits from some of the most talented emerging young photographers, established professionals, students and gifted amateurs. The judges selected the 60 portraits from 5,340 submissions entered by 2,353 photographers.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year plus Bristol Wildlife
30 November 2013 – 23 February 2014

M Shed

The world-renowned touring exhibition from the Natural History Museum will be shown at M Shed for the first time. There will be a complementary smaller exhibition that will focus on Bristol's wildlife, intended to inspire visitors to explore their own local wildlife habitats and actively record what they see.

Learning

Moving Forward, our first course focused on Adult Skills and Employability, resulted in 7 people achieving a City and Guilds qualification in customer service. Our 'Shine at M Shed' wellbeing project with mental health users showed how we can successfully support the '5 ways to Wellbeing' and we will use this to offer commissioned wellbeing activities in the city.

Three new school workshops have been launched: Discover: Tudor Exploration; Ships & Sailors; and Life in the Past.



We recently hosted a session for 35 teachers on best practice for teaching of Empire through museums, drawing on the British Empire and Commonwealth collections. We aim to become the regional centre for teaching and learning about the British Empire, which is a Keystage topic in the National Curriculum.

Acquisitions

We were unable to raise the £1.2million for the silver ewer and bowl pictured in the March newsletter, and the pieces will be exported to the USA. However, in attempting to raise such a large sum we have raised the profile of the service and made valuable new connections.

Successful recent acquisitions for the museum have include railway signal box apparatus with local provenance and from further afield a Sumatran Batak Medicine Container, both with funding from the Friends.

Bristol Record Office received 39 new accessions between April and June 2013, including additional records of W D & H O Wills Limited, 1889-1963, and records of the LGBT community, 1980s-2013, following our recent work with the OutStories Group.

Working Exhibits

Work continues on *Portbury*, with the current aim of having the engine in steam for August Bank Holiday weekend. The railway and cranes played a special and high profile role in the launch of the Gromit sculptures placed around the city at the beginning of July.



▲ **Mayflower was hauled out onto the slip at the Underfall Yard in June for her six-yearly scrape and paint.**

Gromits in transit outside M Shed for the national press launch ►

◀ **The first floor foyer of M Shed was a great place to display children's creativity on the theme of ballooning.**

Photos @Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives and Sue Thurlow



Life and Death

Pompeii & Herculaneum Exhibition

Tuesday 4 July 2013

Roman soldiers shivering on Hadrian's Wall must have dreamed of having a spot of leave in places like Pompeii and Herculaneum, with their gorgeous gardens, numerous drinking and eating houses, and scores of brothels.

This extraordinary British Museum exhibition about these cities, on the cusp and in the aftermath of the eruption of Vesuvius, brings home the joys of life for their people. They lived in a wealthy region, the 'Riviera of Rome', and enjoyed luxurious lives in the sunshine. They had plumbing, a surfeit of fish sauce and sautéed dormice to brighten their feasts, fruit falling from the trees and wine galore.

It was all built on slave-owning imperial power, of course. The Pompeians depended on man- and woman-power to build their mansions, install running water, harvest food and serve their every fleshly need. What the slaves could not do was save them, or themselves, from the terrible rain of volcanic ash which buried everything in late AD79. So swift was the destruction that the imprints of bodies of men, women, children and animals, were singed into pumice. It was not until the 19th century that an archaeologist created moulds of these imprints with plaster of Paris.

The results of these operations come into the Death part of this exhibition including the haunting tableau of a family, mother and father stretched out in agony, the two children frozen in their death throes. Elsewhere there is the body of a woman cast in epoxy resin; all that remains of her wealth is some simple gold jewellery.

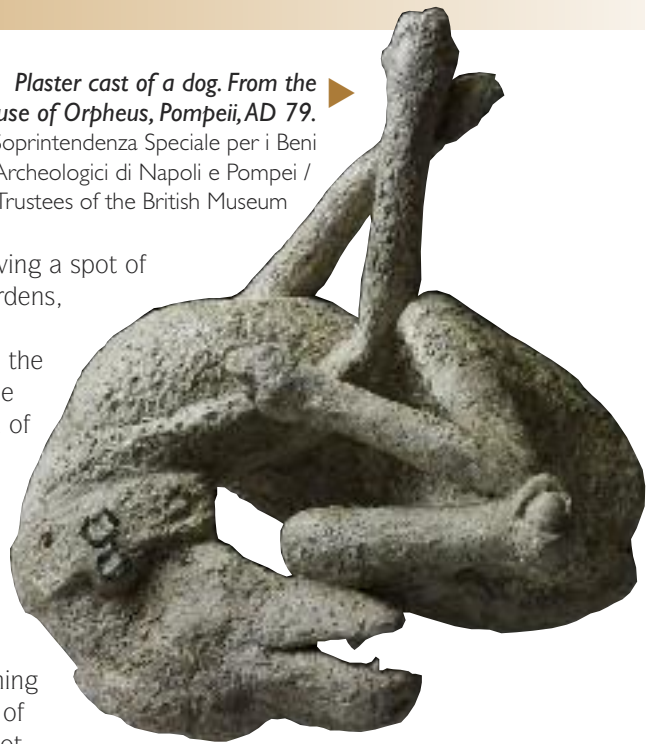
Life is vividly recreated in a series of rooms, from atrium (open court) to hortus (enclosed garden), showing cool marble halls, lively mosaics (the best are a friendly-looking guard dog and a detailed pile of seafood), beautiful frescoes of trees, flowers and birds, the carbonised remains of a tiny cradle, kitchen equipment including the pot for fattening dormice, and statuary, including one eye-catching portrayal of Pan pleasuring a goat. Despite piles of artefacts, the exhibition does not seem crowded.

One mosaic is of a skeleton, carrying the message 'Seize the Day'. The rich Romans who lived in these cities certainly knew how to do that, and in the end their doom equalled that of their slaves.

Wendy Walker

Plaster cast of a dog. From the House of Orpheus, Pompeii, AD 79.

© Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei / Trustees of the British Museum



Wall painting of the baker Terentius Neo and his wife. From the House of Terentius Neo, Pompeii, AD 50 to 79.

© Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei / Trustees of the British Museum



Carbonised wooden cradle. From the House of M.P.P. Granianus, Herculaneum, 1st century AD.

© Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei / Trustees of the British Museum

Visit to Malmesbury

Tuesday 23 April 2013



▲ *Tower House which dominates the eastern skyline of the town is a mediaeval construction, containing a high-roofed main hall where it is said Henry VIII dined after hunting in nearby Bradon Forest.*

Powell paid for gas lighting in Malmesbury Abbey and performed many charitable acts including distributing 50 tons of coal to the elderly poor each winter. A diligent and popular MP, he is most famously remembered as a balloonist. In December 1881 Powell flew his balloon, *Saladin*, with two friends to take meteorological observations. Fearful of being blown out to sea, they made a rapid descent near Chesil Beach, landing heavily. Some ballast and his two passengers were thrown out, one of them breaking his leg. Powell stayed in the basket and was last seen waving as the balloon disappeared out to sea!

In the afternoon we visited the Abbey Church to see its 15th century Bible and illuminated manuscripts. The Abbey's most important religious figure was St Aldhelm, the first Abbot in 676 and first Bishop of Sherborne in 705. He was renowned as a poet, traveller, writer, theologian and musician. In the 15th century, Malmesbury Abbey was famous for its wooden spire sheathed in lead, which soared 30ft higher than Salisbury Cathedral. Sadly this spire collapsed in a great storm in about 1500, destroying the east end of the nave and the transept. It is possible that a lightning strike turned water in the masonry into steam, so that the foundations literally exploded.

We had sufficient time to visit the Abbey Gardens, and the Athelstan Museum and Art Gallery, before our return to Bristol. Our thanks go to Shirley Hodgson for organizing this fascinating tour.

David Hogg

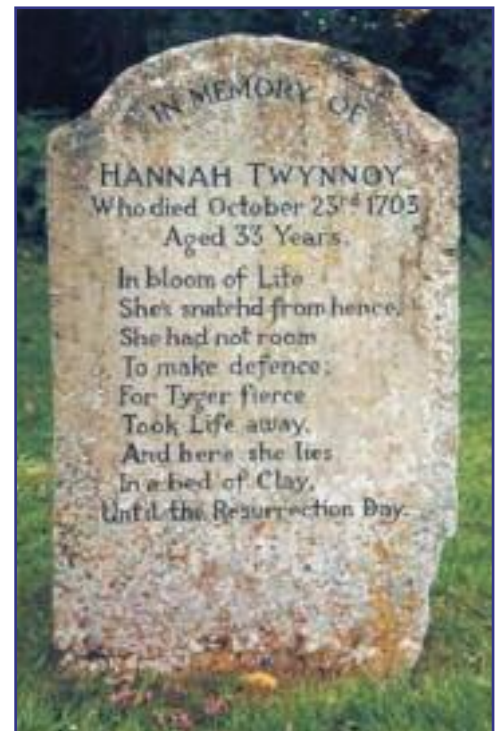


▲ *St John's Street Bridge over the River Avon, looking towards the Old Silk Mills.*

The Friends gathered at the Kings Arms Hotel for an introductory talk about this ancient and fascinating Wiltshire town. Then local guides took us to the graveyard on the south side of the Abbey Church, where we saw the intriguing tombstone of Hannah Twynnoy. She died in 1703, killed by a tiger from a travelling circus camped in the garden of the White Lion pub where she was a barmaid.

We continued past the Abbey Cross to the Tower House, noteworthy mainly because in 1834 the eccentric owner, a doctor with a passion for astronomy, built the tower that protrudes through the roof as an observatory. During World War II it was used as an observation tower to spot enemy aircraft.

Along Cross Hayes Lane past St Aldhelm's Church, we stopped at 4, Silver Street, which was decorated with a fine collection of animal horns and skins. Here we heard the story of Walter Powell MP (1842-81), the son of a very wealthy coal exporter from Newport, who presented the town with two reading rooms - one for the use of the upper classes and tradesmen, and an inner room provided for the lower classes.



▲ *The gravestone of Hannah Twynnoy. It seems that in spite of warnings from the circus master, Hanna teased the tiger which consequently mauled her to death.*

Photos by David Hogg

Friends Visit to Yorkshire

Monday 20 to Friday 24 May 2013

Thank you to those who came to Yorkshire and made the visit so enjoyable. It was busy but we managed to fit everything in. Many thanks to those who have offered to write up their view of the visit, and to Judith Lockwood Jones, who acted as our official photographer.

Bolsover Castle

Bolsover Castle was our tea stop on the first day. From the motorway it looks very imposing. Had we been there on the weekend we would have been treated to a demonstration in the Riding House, the magnificent indoor riding school. However, we could still enjoy its sumptuous painted ceiling. A visit to the Little Castle was a must with its beautiful rooms, especially the ceilings and fireplaces. Begun in 1612 by Sir Charles Cavendish as a fantasy house for leisure and lavish entertaining, the Little Castle is the most interesting part of the Castle. The Fountain Garden contains the Venus Fountain (which reminds me of the famous Manneken Pis of Brussels – but there are four boys, not one!) Add to that the attraction of a pleasant tea room, it was a good place to break our journey to Harrogate.

Ruth Welch

National Memorial Arboretum

This was the idea of Commander David Childs following his visit to Arlington Cemetery, USA as a central place for remembrance of those killed in conflict since World War II. Sir Leonard Cheshire also supported the project and, following the donation by Redland Aggregates (now Lafarge) of 82 acres of ex-quarry for a rental of £1 per year, a fund was set up and the Arboretum opened in 2001. A further 70 acres with a lake has been added since then.

A modern chapel built in 1999 with 12 Douglas fir pillars in memory of the Scottish plant collector, David Douglas, holds a 2 minute silence every day and we arrived in time to be a part of this. The candleholders in the chapel are made of silver knives, symbolic of war victims unable to eat.

We then had a fascinating tour of the large grounds and young trees, with many organisations and societies being involved and every monument having a story to tell. I found the Armed Forces Memorial with the names of all those fallen in conflict etched on white stone walls on the top of a grass mound very poignant, especially for relatives and friends. There are two black tableaux showing a soldier being stretchered off the war field and another being attended to by nurses. This is a place I would like to return to and see the change with the growth of the trees and shrubs. Thanks to Ruth Welch for this fascinating visit and the whole 5 days.

Catherine Dixon

Ripon: the Hornblower and the Cathedral

At the Town Hall the Mayor Sergeant, who accompanies the Mayor to official events, showed us some city treasures. We saw the gold mace, which is hollow and in early days was used to carry messages. The Mayoral chain, valued at £48,000, is 18 carat gold and 'out-blings' any modern jewellery.

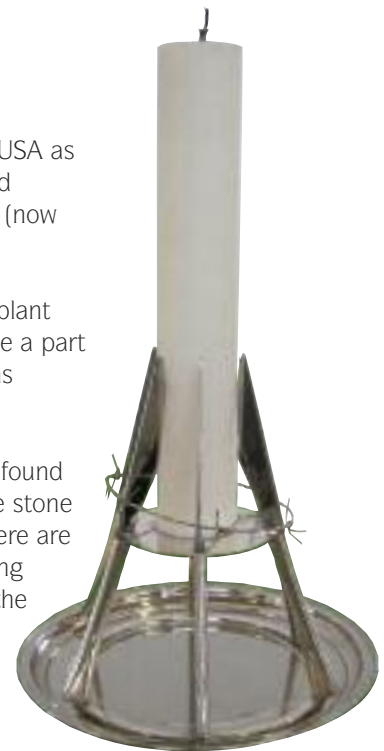
We then met the Hornblower. His horn is a token of the charter given to Ripon in 886 by Alfred the Great for its support against the Vikings. A Hornblower or Wakeman is appointed to sound curfew and patrol the city at night. Each night tourists gather to hear him and take part in this ancient custom.

St Wilfrid, a monk from Lindisfarne, became the Abbot of Ripon around 660 and the Pope's emissary at the Synod of Whitby in 664. He famously introduced the Roman calendar for the dating of Easter. He built the church in Ripon to rival churches he saw in Europe. Wilfred died in 709 and is buried near the high altar.

Ripon Cathedral is a beautiful building extended and restored over the centuries to embrace changing architectural styles from Anglo-Saxon to English Gothic. The choir stalls are finely-



▲ Part of a fountain at the Little Castle



▲ One of the candleholders in the Millennium Chapel made from silver knives

Photos by Judith Jones



FBMGA members with George Pickles, the current Hornblower of Ripon.

Detail of the Mediaeval rood screen in Ripon Cathedral



carved oak. Lewis Carroll is alleged to have been inspired to write *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by the design on one of the misericords.

Wendy Aldridge-Morris

Markenfield Hall

Blink, and you will miss the entrance. Down a mile-long drive and nestled in rolling farmland lies Markenfield Hall, a moated mediaeval house, once fortified against attack but now tranquil with ducks idling on the moat.

First settlement is mentioned in the Domesday Book. In 1310 Edward II granted a licence for the house to be crenelated. It continued to be the home of the Markenfield family until, being Catholics, they were 'bloodily ejected' after a rebellion against Elizabeth I.

For two centuries it was a tenanted farm in disrepair until saved by Fletcher Norton in the late 1700s. He took the title Baron Grantley of Markenfield and the Grantley family own and live in the house to this day.

We were treated to an in-depth history of the family in the comfortable atmosphere of the Great Hall, now converted to a library. Next to the Great Hall is the Catholic Chapel, which is a 'Peculiar' – a parish in its own right able to invite guests to officiate, including the Archbishop of York, who is a regular. We visited a bedroom and the undercroft, as the rest was private. A short walk around the moat completed this interesting visit.



▲ The north and east side of Markenfield Hall

Mirian Pearce

The Mouseman

We went to The Mouseman Visitor Centre at Kilburn, a small village in the beautiful Hambleton Hills north of York. This is the home of Robert Thompson's Craftsmen Ltd, makers of fine oak furniture and panelling since the early 1900s, and owners of the celebrated 'Mouseman' carved trademark. We stopped at the Visitor Centre in the village and, suitably refreshed, enjoyed the garden with its spectacular view of the white horse cut into the facing hillside. The great-grandson of the founder talked to us of the current range of products and explained how they were made entirely of English oak, bought locally, sawn, and stocked for natural seasoning outside to ensure its stability, durability and uniformity. A feature of their original workmanship was 'adzing', that is, using the adze tool (a sort of axe, but with a cross blade) to finish flat surfaces and to 'thickness' the raw planks to the required dimension. This technique is still used today. Every piece has a hand-carved mouse somewhere on it. Each mouse takes an hour and 13 different chisels to carve.

We viewed many actual pieces and portraits of the huge range of fixed and moveable oak furniture that the company produces, and saw its actual manufacture underway in the adjacent workshop before departing for a dreamy ride through woods and hills in sunshine to our next stop at Rievaulx Terrace.

Harry Hibberd

▼ A demonstration of carved lattice work





◀ Rievaulx Abbey in the late afternoon

▼ The Doric temple at the southeast end of Rievaulx Terrace

Rievaulx Terrace, Temples and Abbey

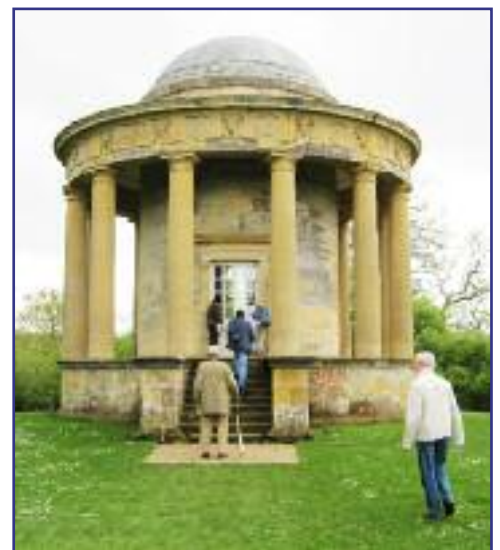
Rievaulx Terrace was created by Thomas Duncombe III in the 1750s. The grassy Terrace has beautiful views over the Rye valley and the ruin of Rievaulx Abbey, and many wild flowers including cowslips and purple orchids to enjoy. To the southeast is a domed Doric Temple. The mosaic tiled floor came from the choir of Rievaulx Abbey. Opposite stands an Ionic Temple, inspired by the Temple of Fortuna Virilis in Rome with breathtaking ceiling paintings and furnished with the original two sofas. It was intended as a banqueting house and the central table is still set as if for a meal.

Rievaulx Abbey was founded in 1132 by 12 monks from Clairvaux Abbey. The remote location was ideal for the Cistercians, whose original desire was to follow a strict life of prayer and self-sufficiency with little outside contact. But over time the monks built up profitable businesses mining lead and iron, rearing sheep and selling wool. Rievaulx Abbey became wealthy.

By the 15th century the strict observance of Saint Benedict's rule had been abandoned in favour of a more comfortable lifestyle. Monks ate meat, lived in private accommodation, and the abbot had a substantial private household. In 1538, Henry VIII dissolved the abbey, took its valuables and rendered it uninhabitable.

We were fortunate to have a charismatic guide, Brother Andrew, and the lovely sunshine and serenity of the Abbey made this a visit to remember.

Evelyn Macdonald



▼ Friends visited several museums in Ripon including the Courthouse, Police Station and Prison, and Union Workhouse. This was the daily timetable of the 150 paupers who lived in the

RIPON WORKHOUSE	
Paupers shall observe the following	
6.00	Uise, Wash, Dress, Rollcall
6.30	Prayers, Breakfast eaten in silence
7.17	Exercise in the yards
8.00	Work
11.00	Prayers
12.00	Lunch eaten in silence
12.30	Exercise in the yards
2.00	Work for the adults; school for the children
4.00	Prayers, religious instruction
4.30	Work
6.00	Supper eaten in silence
6.30	Religious service
9.00	Bed

◀ The model garden at RHS Harlow Carr





▲ Working models of Hepworth sculptures

The Hepworth Wakefield and Yorkshire Sculpture Park

The huge grey blocks of The Hepworth gallery make a solid statement, especially against a watery grey sky. The interior is impressive: light and airy with large galleries which allow plenty of room to admire the works of art on display. The guides were welcoming and knowledgeable, giving us time to wander at leisure. The first gallery was surprising: a collection of images of Victorian women contrasting the fashionable ladies painted by James Tissot with female workers in coal mines. The remaining galleries, as expected, contained post-war British sculpture and paintings, with the highlight being Barbara Hepworth's surviving working models for her bronze sculptures. The centrepiece here was the prototype for *Winged Figure*, commissioned by John Lewis for its flagship store on Oxford Street. Outside in the gallery garden was an intriguing work of art by James Pyman, taking the form of a carefully-drawn wrap covering an early 19th century Grade II-listed water-mill.



◀ One of the vibrant, colourful sculptures at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park by Yinka Shonibare MBE, the creator of the 'Ship in the Bottle' sculpture displayed on the Fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square in 2010.

Our next stop on this section of the Yorkshire Sculpture Triangle was the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, coinciding with the arrival of a rainstorm. Our guide here suggested the dry option: a tour of the exhibition of Yinka Shonibare's work called *FABRIC-ATION*. This was a colourful and thought-provoking collection of sculptures mainly made from African fabrics, highlighting important themes such as climate change, world conflict, food shortage, racial prejudice. The rain stopped just long enough to allow us a quick dash round the park itself to view the outdoor sculptures, some hiding in shrubbery, some displayed amongst trees or in formal gardens, some in unexpected places such as Antony Gormley's *One and Other* atop a tall tree trunk. The park makes a beautiful setting in which to view some truly impressive pieces of modern sculpture.

Mary Bailey

Merchant's House Marlborough

Friday 28 June 2013

Thirty four Friends visited this house in the High Street which has been owned and restored by Marlborough Town Council since 1991. It was built during 1653-1670 for a silk merchant, Thomas Bayly, following the Great Fire of 1653, which destroyed most properties on both sides of the High Street.

The house is timber framed and is a fine example of a merchant's dwelling of the period. Many of the rooms contain interesting items of furniture, pictures and pottery. Some parts of the house are still in need of refurbishment and completion is expected in six or seven years' time. At the back of the house is a reconstruction of a 17th century garden, opened in 2007.

Lunch was provided at St Peter's Church at the western end of the High Street. This fine building, now redundant as a place of worship, is run by a charitable trust as a concert hall, exhibition centre, craft market and coffee shop.

After seeing the Merchant's House, Friends were given guided tours of the High Street and Town Green areas of this interesting and attractive town. Thanks are due to Ruth Welch for organising a very enjoyable day, made all the more pleasant by fine summer weather.

Stafford Gundry

▼ Garden, Merchant's House
Photo by Eddy Welch



Thomas Ware and Co. Tannery

Monday 15 and Tuesday 16 April 2013

This 5-acre gem hidden on Coronation Road is the largest of three traditional vegetable tanneries in the UK, and probably one of the oldest industrial sites in Bristol. Our inspiring tour, led by Barry Knight (once floor sweeper - now master tanner), revealed a place of remarkable contrasts – old and new; craft and chemistry; beast and beauty.

The Victorian decor and ancient origins disguise a modern business with checklists and notice boards hinting at order and well-run processes but, although dog muck and urine are no longer used, you still don't want to fall in! This tour was informative and entertaining, and not nearly as smelly as we thought it might be. We were pleased that the income from the tours is sent to a charity to provide meals for needy children in Delhi.

Mike Bradley
Michael Pitman



◀ Hides are first packed in salt to draw out the moisture. These are some of the 350 soaking pits filled with a range of liquids (many strongly alkaline) into which hides are then dipped. These remove hair and blood, wash the hides, stop decay, and make the hides stronger, water-resistant and flexible. Proteins extracted by the process are used to make sausage skins.



◀ Half hides drying. After a succession of dippings, hides are graded, dressed, dyed, rolled, oiled, waxed and finished. Hides are carefully chosen for their different qualities. Black cattle have black hides, for instance, that cannot be dyed easily. It is not a pretty process and the workshops are uncompromisingly practical. The cobbled and cobwebby buildings are only a strip light away from their original Industrial Revolution condition.



◀ Friends examined some of the many leather products. These include shoes, saddles and bridles, cycle seats, snooker cue tips, cricket balls, police dog harnesses and even embossed floor tiles (£360 each). There is a constant search for new markets and processes, although one recent development echoes the same method used to create leather harnesses found in Tutankhamun's tomb.

Photos by Martin Bailey

Tiverton Museum and Castle Drogo

Saturday 4 May 2013

Tiverton Museum of Mid-Devon Life was the first destination on our Devon visit. This fascinating museum boasts 38,000 accredited items ranging in size from a pin to a railway engine!

The Museum has one paid member of staff, their curator. A local government grant pays for most of her salary but the Members of the Tiverton and Mid Devon Museum Trust have to raise £70,000 - £80,000 each year of the £100,000 necessary to keep the Museum open. Local projects can be done only if they are sponsored. One such is the current Memory Project, sponsored by Santander, where teams visit care homes and record memories.

After a welcome coffee (accompanied by never-ending plates of biscuits) and an introductory talk, we explored and enjoyed by ourselves. The Tivvy Bumper railway engine was popular and its whistle had its working ability checked on a regular basis. What a pity we didn't have children with us! The Heathcoat Gallery demonstrated the mechanisation of the local lace-making industry, the traditional pillow lace being shown in cases next to the huge machines that made Bobbinet lace. As ever we could have spent much longer exclaiming over artefacts many of us remembered from our childhood



▲ A display of lace in the Heathcoat Gallery



▲ Tiverton Museum has a fine display of agricultural machines and tools, including this wooden hand barrow



▲ Julius Drewe was a tea merchant who founded the Home and Colonial chain of stores

▼ A display of personal items in Castle Drogo



Our afternoon stop was Castle Drogo. The last castle to be built in England, Castle Drogo overlooks the Teign Valley. However, those of us looking forward to the usual National Trust experience were surprised to find a building site! Construction was started in 1910 and completed in 1930, but concerns were being expressed as early as 1915. Having employed Edward Lutyens as architect, it seems that owner Julius Drewe had strong opinions on what he wanted and ignored suggestions that gutters and window sills were essential, and that pitched roofs were preferable to flat ones. The Trust is now raising £11 million to repair the Castle. The figures are daunting. Roof repairs require that 2,355 granite blocks weighing 680 tonnes be removed and then replaced. All windows and pointing are to be refurbished. The brave could climb scaffolding to inspect the work. So David and Wendy, we shall require another visit to review the progress!

Ruth Welch

Photos by Margaret Thewarapperuma

Behind The Scenes St. Vincent's Works

Tuesday 14 May 2013

This visit was well-named. Hidden away in the depth of the back streets of St. Phillips is what looks like a castle, behind whose façade is an amazing piece of architecture. Built in 1892, it was the office block of John Lysaght, a well-known Bristol engineer, galvaniser and ironmaster.

The outside is an elaborate turreted limestone structure in Ruritanian castellated Gothic Revival style; but inside is a revelation. The main octagonal entrance hall, staircase and landing are covered with spectacular glazed Royal Doulton tiles. There is also a glazed domed roof surrounded by a frieze of shipping through the ages and decorated skylights also in Royal Doulton. The upper landing floor is wood block and leading off are large walnut doors with elaborately pedimented doorways. There we discovered a suite of four interconnected offices with walnut panelling and elaborate walnut doors.

Garrad Hassan and Partners, present owners, bought the building in 2000 and set about restoring it. It was quite a project as the building had been badly modernised in the 60s; left unoccupied since 1995; and a fire in the adjacent factory in 2005 did not help!

The restoration has been a great success. I worked at St. Vincent's Works for nearly 40 years and to see it restored to its former glory was just great. Congratulations to the company for this fine work. The building is open on Doors Open Day each September and I would recommend a visit. Thank you, Carol, for organising another fascinating trip.

Peter Hodgson



▲ Floor mosaic showing the City of Bristol Coat of Arms

Photos by Peter Hodgson

▼ The tiled upper landing



▼ Decorated domed skylight



Woodchester Mansion

Talk by Liz Davenport at M Shed on Saturday 11 May 2013
and visit on Tuesday 9 July 2013

Woodchester Mansion is five miles south of Stroud and fascinating for anyone interested in high-quality Gothic-revival architecture; Victorian building construction methods; how not to manage your finances; and the story of the Leigh family and their architects.

William Leigh was born in 1802 into a wealthy family. Like William Gibbs of Tyntesfield, he became interested in the Oxford Movement and converted to Roman Catholicism. He had grand plans for his estate with a new church and priory as top priorities. Leigh spent over £10,000 on religious buildings before he even started thinking about the house.

Leigh took out a large mortgage and hoped for the best! But he was a perfectionist and everything was of the highest quality, so money soon ran out. An ageing Leigh had insufficient capital and income to pay for completion. Building work ground to a halt. Leigh and his son moved to 'The Cottage' (a mere 15 bedrooms) on the estate and we are left with an unfinished Gothic masterpiece.

Liz Davenport, one of 50 volunteers working with the Woodchester Mansion Trust, told us all about it in an interesting illustrated talk. She showed slides of Victorian pine scaffolding still in place; an unplastered three-storey wall with stonework in place for the ceilings; floors which were never built; and beautiful stone grotesques, or 'hunky punks'. Her talk was fascinating and whetted our appetites for the trip in July.

The visit took place on a beautiful summer's day. We walked down a shaded woodland valley before seeing the house with Liz there to greet us. Inside, the mansion is a building site which reveals the planning and skills involved in its creation. Everything was of the highest quality, including a bath carved from a single block of solid limestone. The drawing-room was the only room which was finished – because the archbishop was coming to visit! We were fascinated watching (on infra-red TV) the horseshoe bats which now live in the house as they perched, stretched and fussed around. Woodchester Mansion is fascinating and well worth a visit.

Katherine Martin

The arch was finished using a large wooden former to hold up the stonework.

Photos by Eddy Welch

For more information see:
www.woodchestermansion.org.uk.

▼ *From the outside the house looks like a finished traditional Gothic-revival mansion, except that the putlog holes for scaffolding were never filled.*



▲ *One of the grotesques decorating the building. This one is in the shape of a dog*



Behind The Scenes

Pharaoh, King of Egypt

Tuesday 11 June 2013

This was a chance for an out-of-hours view of the British Museum touring exhibition which was centred on the Pharaohs who ruled Egypt for an astonishing 3,000 years. We were expertly guided by Sue Giles, Senior Collections Officer World Cultures.

As representatives of the gods, the Pharaoh's duty was to prevent chaos in the world by maintaining ma'at, or balance. A Pharaoh performed a dual role as high priest, carrying out the correct rituals to appease the gods, and warrior king, leading armies to ensure the security of Egypt.

Statues show Pharaohs as larger than life, demonstrating their strength and athleticism striding or regally seated with feet planted on the bodies of captives. They wore symbols of power such as the fake wig and beard, the sceptre and flail, and the double crown signifying the union of Upper and Lower Egypt. The tomb of Rameses I reminded us of our mortality and the lengths to which they went to avoid the inescapable fact of death. Transporting and erecting this extraordinary display must have been a logistical nightmare!

Alongside these effigies created by Egyptian counterparts of today's spin doctors were objects which shed light on their more human sides. There was a nit comb; tender portraits of royal children affectionately close to their tutor; small items of jewellery; and day-to-day necessities.

We are exceptionally fortunate to have this unique exhibit in our own museum. An hour was much too short to do it justice. Our thanks go to all whose devotion and herculean efforts made it possible.

Ruth Stanton

▼ *The exhibition is the largest UK loan of Egyptian artefacts ever undertaken by the museum.*

Photo © Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives



Dressmakers!

Members of FBMGA are starting a small sewing group to make a series of Roman children's costumes for the Roman Empire: Power and People exhibition and Kings Weston Roman Villa. If you are interested in joining us please contact Kate Iles: kate.iles@bristol.gov.uk, 0117 922 3459.

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**Bristol Museum &
Art Gallery,
Queen's Road,
Bristol,
BS8 1RL**

Tel: 0117 922 3571

general.museum@bristol.gov.uk
[www.bristol.gov.uk/page/
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FBMGA committee

Patrons

Sir George White Bt
Max Hebditch CBE

Chairman

Sue Thurlow
07836 693589
suethurlow@waitrose.com

Secretary

Richard Avery
01275 543069

Treasurer

Nicholas King
0117 962 3441

Membership Secretary

June Hibberd
0117 962 4872

Publicity & Marketing

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01934 832113

Members:

Keith Borissow
0117 973 8225
Colin Edwards
01275 460411
Shirley Hodgson
0117 962 4771
Gary Gostelow
0117 971 1323

Programme Committee

Chairman
Mary Bailey
0117 942 1944

FBMGA website

www.friendsofbmga.org.uk

FBMGA website manager

Brian Vincent
0117 962 1714
brianvincenthome@aol.com

Newsletter edited by Tim and Ann Wood

tim-wood@blueyonder.co.uk

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