

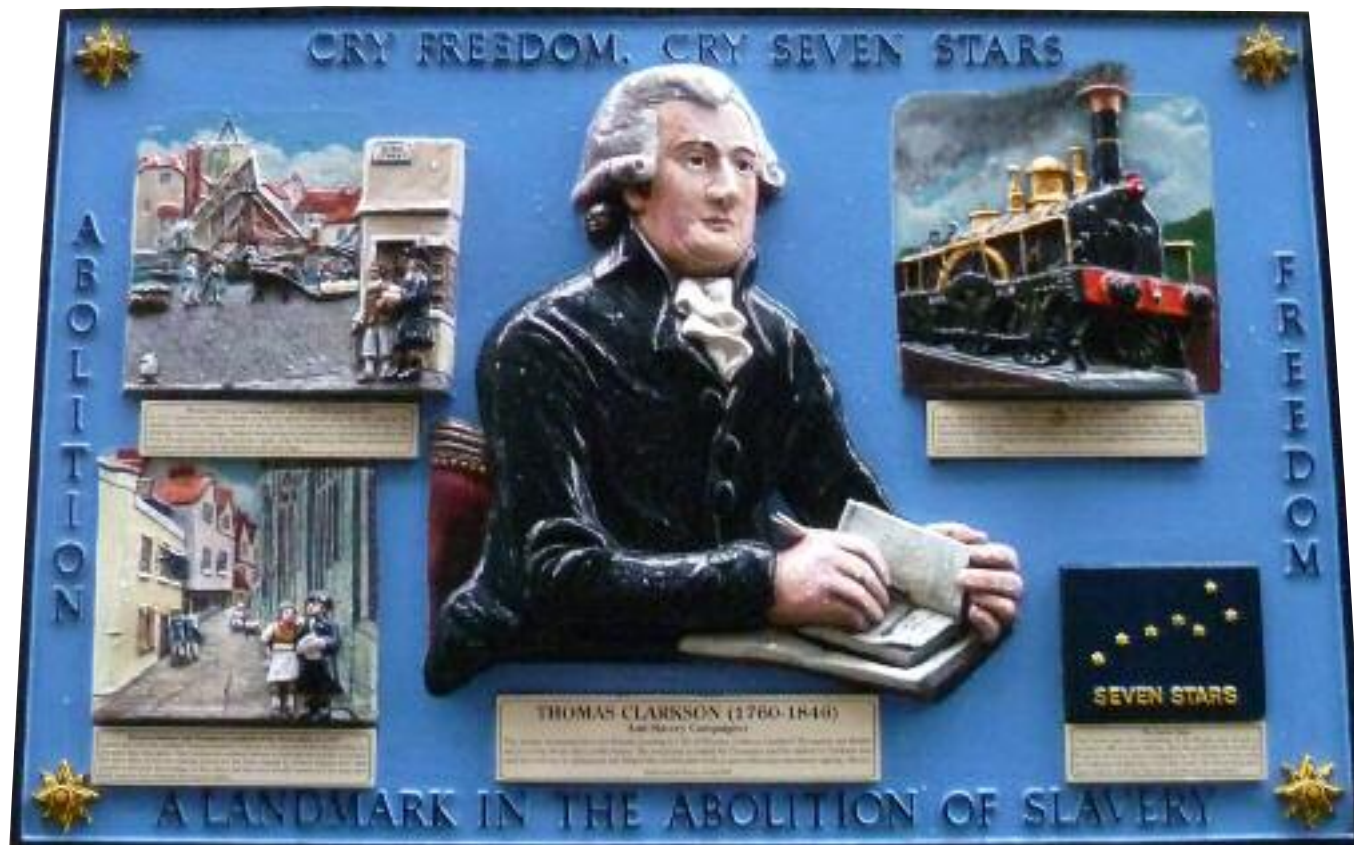
Issue 185
June 2014

**FRIENDS
OF BRISTOL
MUSEUMS
GALLERIES &
ARCHIVES**

Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives,
registered charity no. 276777

www.friendsofbmga.org.uk

Newsletter



Seven Stars public house, Thomas Lane

Wednesday 12 February 2014

The parish of Redcliffe once contained over 200 coaching inns and alehouses. By the mid-1700s there were 20 inns and taverns in St Thomas Street and Thomas Lane alone. The Seven Stars is now one of only 9 left. Opened in the early 1600s this pub started life as a hotel with rooms and a garden. Through time it has become smaller and, although bombed in the war, is now one of the very few original buildings left in the area. The inn was sold in 2000 to an investment company and reopened in 2006 as a free house. It is now one of Bristol's most characterful pubs.

The Seven Stars is famous (and has magnificent blue plaque to prove it) for its strong association with Thomas Clarkson, the campaigner for the abolition of slavery. He visited the Seven Stars in 1787 and with its landlord, William Thompson, visited other pubs disguised as a miner to research the condition of transported slaves from the merchants and sea captains who frequented them. The Seven Stars is still an excellent hostelry and has many awards from CAMRA for its real ales. Some of us stayed behind to sample them.

Catherine Dixon

▲ The plaque outside the pub celebrates the proud association of the Seven Stars with the abolition of slavery. Thomas Clarkson was a founder of the anti-slavery movement. He made a point of thanking William Thompson, the landlord of the Seven Stars, for providing vital information about the operation of the Bristol slave trade.

Photo by Catherine Dixon

From the Chairman

The Programme Committee has put together another set of enticing events and outings for the next few months, and I know that many of you will already have studied the calendar and sent off your booking forms long before you get round to reading the rest of the newsletter. For me, one of the most appealing events is a repeat of last year's very successful fundraiser on both days of the Harbour Festival, selling second-hand books, cakes and cold drinks. With our location in L Shed (the 'other' end of M Shed) we will again be in the heart of one of the city's flagship events. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

The new Museum Square, just outside M Shed café, opened just in time for the good weather we had at Easter and will add to visitors' enjoyment of Princes Wharf over the summer. It is intentionally uncluttered, so that M Shed can make best use of it for events, and features full-length bench seating overlooking the square and the harbour, and floodlighting to enable evening events to be held there. To add a little interest for the children, the paving includes a large-scale simplified map of the waterways from Avonmouth inland to the floating harbour to replace the popular, but temporary, mini running track.

Another new arrival at M Shed for Easter was a 'Driver for a Fiver' offer on Bristol Harbour Railway. Visitors were able to fulfil their childhood dreams of driving a steam engine over a short piece of track parallel to the main running line.

Portbury, looking very smart after her major overhaul last year, provided the driving experience, while *Henbury* ran the usual passenger service. Having both locomotives in steam also added interest for visitors on the quayside. There are plans to repeat the offer on some other steaming weekends over the summer.

Easter weekend provided something new at the Museum



▲ The new Museum Square at the Western end of M Shed.
Photo by Sue Thurlow

& Art Gallery too, as a new work entitled *Mobile Lovers*, reputedly by Banksy, was placed on temporary display for safe keeping in the Front Hall whilst its future is discussed. The piece had been discovered on a wall in Clement Street (close to Cabot Circus) before staff from the nearby Broad Plain Youth Club removed the work and took it into the Club. The intense media interest in the story has also drawn attention to the financial situation of Broad Plain Youth Club, which works with young people in the centre of the city. At the request of the Mayor, a collection box for the youth club was placed close to the work. Perhaps by the time you read this the story will have unfolded further.

Those of you who have visited any of the museum sites recently will have seen our lovely new membership leaflet. With a bright orange front cover it makes a real impact even from a distance, and it stands out clearly from other leaflets.



◀ 'Driver for a Fiver' offered visitors the chance to drive *Portbury* on Easter weekend.
Photo by Dave Croft



◀ *The arrival of Banksy's Mobile Lovers at the Museum & Art Gallery generated excitement a lot of free publicity. We go to press just as Banksy has given permission (via a handwritten note) for the work to be auctioned for the benefit of the Bristol's Broad Plain Youth Club. Perhaps the artist is somewhere in this crowd!*

Photos © Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

year, on the last weekend of September, will be in Swansea. Because of our group membership, any of our members is entitled to take part. It is a great opportunity each year to meet members of Friends groups from around the country to share ideas and to be given an insight into their city by the local hosts. The BAFM South West regional conference is in Plymouth on Monday 16 June and again you are all very welcome to attend.

Sue Thurlow

My thanks go to Shirley Hodgson and Ann Wood, and to all who expressed a view on the many alternative designs we considered. I hope members will agree with me that it looks great and hopefully will attract potential new members to pick it up.

I have mentioned before that, as well as being chairman of the Friends, I am also a volunteer with the museum as an individual. One of the projects I have worked with recently has been the refresh of one of the major displays in the People Gallery on the first floor of M Shed. Around the walls of the gallery are portraits of individuals and groups who have made Bristol what it is. In collaboration with a number of communities around the city, 40 new names were chosen to refresh that display, and many of the labels have been written by members of the public. I have been involved throughout, and when the opportunity came to make nominations I put forward the late Dorothy Brown, who saved many of Bristol's historic buildings from the bulldozer in the 60s and 70s, and Professor Jean Golding, who founded, and for many years ran, the internationally renowned Children of the 90s study. Dorothy was, of course, a member of the Friends for many years and often asked questions at our AGM, and I met Jean when she gave a talk in the museum's Winter Lecture series, which the Friends sponsor. I recommend you to visit the gallery to see the refreshed display – the choice of people is varied in almost every way you can imagine, with famous faces such as Plimsoll displayed alongside portraits of local heroes largely unrecognised outside their own communities.

Before I close, I should mention that the British Association of Friends of Museums national conference this

Dates for your diary

Here are some forthcoming trips to whet your appetite for later this year.

Rembrandt Talk by Jan Cox

Saturday 11 October 2014

Jan will give us another of his excellent talks. This time the subject will be Rembrandt and his paintings which will help prepare us for our visit to the upcoming Rembrandt exhibition at the National Gallery.

Hinkley Point Power Station

Thursday 16 October 2014

We will be given a talk and conducted tour of the Power Station. Please note that security will be tight and some form of identity will have to be shown.

Hotwells Howlers

Saturday 8 November 2014

Songs and ditties related to World War I performed by this group of Bristol-based folk singers who specialise in material from the Bristol area. The concert is followed by tea and cakes.

Application forms for these events will be with the next newsletter.

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Quarterly Report

Service-wide developments

From April 2014, and as part of the Bristol City Council restructure, Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives now sit within the Place Directorate. The Head of the service is also responsible for the Culture team, which includes the Film Office, Festivals and Arts Development. This move brings together parts of the council in a way that will encourage the development of closer cultural programming across the city. The new Strategic Director for Place, Barra Mac Ruairi, joined BCC in April from Bradford City Council, where he was Strategic Director for Regeneration. His previous role included championing the successful bid to keep the National Media Museum in Bradford.

By the time you read this the new BMGA website should be launched, giving virtual visitors the same high quality offer as physical visitors to our sites, and is eagerly anticipated.

A 20-page What's On Guide has been produced covering events from May – August across the whole Service. It covers everything from tours, walks and workshops to family events and exhibitions.

We submitted our Arts Council England Major Partnership Museums bid in March to secure core funding for the period 2015-18. We will learn the outcome of our application by July.

Staff news

There have been contract extensions for Vivienne Bennett (Interim Head of Museums, Galleries and Archives) to the end of June 2014 and for Helen McConnell (Collections Office, Public History) to March 2015.

At the start of April, we welcomed two new Interns, Hauke Moxon-Riedlin to the Development team and Rowan Sanderson to Public Programmes, both for a term of six months.

The voluntary severance programme means that many familiar faces have left or will be leaving shortly. These include Richard Burley (Archives Manager), Mark Knights (Archives Film Officer), Anne Bradley (Archivist), Carolyn Lamb (Conservation), Helen Edwards (Retail Development Manager), Hala Osman (Performance and Evaluation Manager), Carol Holt (Management Accountant), Helen Hewitt (Media & PR Officer), Trevor Gough (Deputy Head, Commercial and Customer Services), David Lippiatt (Building Manager, Museums), Martin Kelly (Duty Manager, Museums) and Simon Kelly.

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Family activities remain popular, with BMAG welcoming over 1,500 people during April's Spring to Life discovery day with the Natural History team giving expert advice on identifying local bees and wasps and making 'thumblebees' for the children.



▲ Visitors to the Spring to Life discovery day enjoying their thumblebees.



BBC4 Presenter Ben Garrod with our Aye Aye skeleton

Other highlights include our Natural History team working with presenter Ben Garrod on the 6-part series, Secret of Bones on BBC4, which starred our Aye Aye skeleton.

M Shed

Wildlife Photographer of the Year was a huge success, attracting over 30,000 paying visitors, double the target.

Refreshment of gallery content in M Shed continues with a 1943 wedding dress, along with a photo of the wedding day, replacing the 19th century dress in the Life Gallery. A new display of items from the recent Occupy camp on College Green has been installed in the People Gallery.

In the People Gallery, the Chinese New Year lion costume has been replaced with a 'Jack of the Green' costume, and new portraits of people who have made Bristol what it is were unveiled in May.

Red Lodge & Georgian House

The houses are now on summer opening hours :

- Until end of June, and September & October: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 10.30am to 4pm
- July – August: Tuesday to Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 10.30am to 4pm

Blaise

At Blaise Castle House Museum, a new children's trail and further information on our kitchen gallery have been developed by one of the students from UWE who undertake placements with us each year. We have also launched an innovative project, Bristol At Home, using social media to collect photos of how Bristolians live now.



▲ *Jean Nickless at her wedding in 1943, wearing the dress now on display in M Shed*

Exhibitions & related events

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Turner: Watercolours from the West to 6 July 2014

Eight watercolours by JMW Turner from collections in the west of England, featuring the recently acquired watercolour 'The Mouth of the Avon', a view from cliffs below Clifton. The exhibition is free.

Jeremy Deller: English Magic to Sunday 21 September 2014

Jeremy Deller represented the UK with 'English Magic' at the 2013 Venice Biennale, the world's most prestigious contemporary art event. Now the exhibition is in Bristol and includes new installations and commissions made in direct response to the museum's own collections. The exhibition is free.

Tea with Jeremy Deller

Wednesday 11 June, 7pm

Meet Jeremy Deller and find out more about the ideas behind English Magic. To book, call the Museum Shop on 0117 922 3650. £7/£5 concessions. Includes tea.

Bowie Night

Thursday 19 June, 7pm to 10pm

Celebrate David Bowie's music and the links to Jeremy Deller's work. To book, call the Museum Shop on 0117 922 3650. £10/£7 concessions. Over 18s only.

Melodians Steel Orchestra entertaining guests at the opening for English Magic ►

Photos © Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

English Magic exhibition tour

Saturday 19 July, noon

Led by Emma Gifford-Mead, Curator of the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2013. Free. No need to book.

M Shed

Wallace and Gromit from the drawing board

24 May - 7 September 2014

The exhibition will explore the world which lies behind the Wallace & Gromit characters, their Bristol-based creators Aardman Animations, and the award-winning films in which they star. £5.95 Adults, £3.95 Child, £4.95 Concessions, £14.95 Family. Free entry on Wednesdays 18 June, 16 July & 20 August

Bristol Record Office

Revealing Stories

Tuesday 10 June - Saturday 4 October 2014

This ground-breaking exhibition, produced by OutStories Bristol, reveals the hidden histories of Bristol's lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans communities. Entrance free.

Revealing Stories: meet OutStories Bristol

Thursday 10 July, 6pm

Members of OutStories Bristol will talk about the making of their exhibition and discuss the stories, archives and people featured in the display. Free event.

Book launch: 'Lost City'

Saturday 5 July, 1.30pm to 3.30pm

Local author (and Friends Committee Member) Clive Burlton has explored the history of Bristol's 'White City', built for the International Exhibition of 1914 and taken over as barracks for soldiers of the First World War. Free event.

Awards

In February 2014, M Shed was announced winner of 'Large Visitor Attraction of the Year' at the Bristol Tourism & Hospitality awards 2013

The British Science Association's Best Engineering Education Project Award 2014 went to the 'Lifting Aspirations and Accessing Engineering' project at M Shed run jointly with Hugh Thomas.



The Church of St. Thomas the Martyr

Wednesday 12 February 2014

The church of St. Thomas the Martyr lies tucked away in the heart of Bristol's business quarter. A doughty group of us found it well worthwhile braving the tempest raging outside in order to gain the calm, bright interior of this classical 18th century church.

We were given a very interesting talk which combined the history of the building with the personal reminiscences of our guide, who had sung in the choir for many years. We were told of a mediaeval church paid for by the wool trade which was knocked down in the 18th century to make way for a grand new edifice paid for by the sugar trade. Curiously, plans appear to already have been drawn up prior to any decision to demolish the old church. Some parts of the earlier church remain such as the 15th century tower and a small statue of St. Thomas Becket which was defaced in the Reformation because he was a Roman Catholic martyr. The church was re-dedicated to St. Thomas the Apostle.

The interior contains some excellent wood-carving such as the Flemish oak altarpiece, made by William Killigrew, which is the best reredos to have survived in Bristol. Beneath a multi-coloured Victorian tiled floor lies the original mediaeval floor and below that an inaccessible crypt where many of the city's worthies were buried. Although the church was closed in 1979, it is now used by a Romanian Orthodox group and the 8 bells are rung regularly.

Mirian Pearce



▲ Altar panel in St Thomas the Martyr Church

Photo by Judith Jones

Beckford Silk and Batsford Arboretum

Thursday 13 March 2014

Beckford Silk specialises in designing, hand-printing, dyeing and sewing high-end silk fabrics. This family business was set up by James Gardner in 1975 in a shed at the bottom of his garden. A large order from the National Trust for silk ties and scarves in 1978 proved to be a turning point in the company's success.

Chinese silk is imported and then screen-printed with various designs for organisations such as the Royal Academy and Tate Liverpool, and for special events such as the Klimt Exhibition and the Morgan Car anniversary. Only six businesses in the UK can offer this service.

We visited the steam room where the colour is fixed and saw the 100-year old drying machine. We were intrigued by the silk library that contained 2000 colours. We all chose to exit through the shop!

We arrived at Batsford Arboretum for lunch in beautiful warm sunshine. Batsford Arboretum was inherited by Lord Redesdale (grandfather of the Mitford sisters), who planted many Chinese/Japanese varieties that he had enjoyed whilst working abroad for the Foreign Office. In 1919 the estate was sold to Sir Gilbert Wills, who continued to add to the plant stock. During World War II the Arboretum was neglected. In 1984 the Batsford Foundation was set up to secure its future. The Arboretum is now home to one of the finest botanical collections in the country.

The 56-acre south-facing grounds were covered in daffodils with occasional groups of Hellebores. Streams and Oriental sculptures sited amongst the greenery produced a tranquil ambience. The local church was also interesting to see with family burial plaques and a row of covered pews at its rear. I will certainly try and visit again in summer and autumn to see the acers. Thanks to David Snelson for a lovely day out.

Catherine Dixon



▲ James Gardner, the founder, with an ironing machine

Photo by Catherine Dixon

Learn more at
<http://www.beckfordsilk.co.uk/> and
<http://www.batsarb.co.uk/>

Museums: luxury or necessity?

A personal view by Ray Barnett
(Collections Manager, Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives)

Saturday 22 March 2014

Ray told us that the oldest known museum, in Ur (modern day Iraq), dates from 2,500 years ago. Excavations in the 1920s found artefacts there dating back a further 1,500 years, labelled with clay cylinders describing them in three languages.

So what defines a museum? According to the Museums Association, 'museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.' Holding collections is the essential ingredient.

Ray treated us to an entertaining and well-illustrated canter through the diverse aspects of running a museum, including display, acquisition, storage, conservation, pest-control, documentation, learning provision, loans (both in and out), research, technology, emergency planning, health and safety, security, ethics and legality, restitution and spoliation, the use of volunteers, and funding.

Charging is the current hot topic – increasingly the museum needs to charge to supplement its income, for example for recent BBC filming in the Natural History stores. But is charging for public access sustainable? Museums over the last 20 years have been striving to make themselves more attractive and relevant to groups in society who may not have thought of using them. The challenge is to provide public access while ensuring financial viability.

In this fascinating and entertaining talk Ray left us to draw our own conclusions as to whether museums are a luxury or a necessity or a bit of both. It left me feeling that I understood a little better the huge complexity involved in running the service, and that the support given by the Friends is even more important than I had realised. Many thanks to Ray for such a stimulating talk, and to Mary Bailey for organising it.

Sue Thurlow



▲ Amelie Drewden using the X-ray Fluorescence Analysis (XFA) machine to analyse possible pesticide residues on biological specimens

Photos by Ray Barnett



◀ Andy King and Simon Fenn, overseen by Alice Rymill, setting up M Shed in May 2011 the month before opening. Should curatorial training be provided by Pickfords?

▶ David Lippiatt overseeing the removal of paintings from the Blaise Picture Room following a water leak caused by heavy rain



Where does the Museums Service go from here?

Running costs of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives are currently around £7m a year. Bristol City Council contributes £3.6m, the Arts Council England £1.6m, with the remainder generated from income sources, sponsorship, grants and commercial operations. None of this funding is guaranteed into the future. Arts Council funding is awarded in 3-year tranches in a competitive process which requires Bristol to bid against other museums. Recent City Council cuts have meant that museum funding is scrutinised closely against other public service funding which raises hot passions and perhaps unfair comparisons as to the relative values of different provision. In the recent round of Council budget cuts BMGA has been affected though not as badly as some predicted. Generating income is now a high priority and difficult choices have to be made between work on collections which has cultural value and purely money-raising activities.

What do you think?

Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

Wednesday 9 February 2014

The *Mary Rose* Museum

The Friends made an early start for the visit to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and the new *Mary Rose* Museum. Crouched behind the *Victory* was a dark building shaped like an oyster with the *Mary Rose* the 'pearl' at the centre. At present the ship is still being conserved and is behind glass. After conservation finishes, in 2017, she will be seen on open display.

In the late afternoon of 19 July 1545, 225 French ships were in the Solent intent on invading England. Henry VIII was encamped on Southsea Common watching the action. While the two fleets were becalmed, four French galleys broke away and rowed towards the English ships. The *Mary Rose* changed direction to face the attack, foundered and sank very quickly in full view of the king. It is still not clear why. There were 500 men aboard but it is estimated that only 35 survived.

In the mid 1960s a small group of enthusiasts led by military historian Alexander McKee, started 'Project Solent Ships' to search for wrecks of sailing ships buried in the sandy seabed. In 1967 Margaret Rule, an archaeologist, joined the team. She had to learn how to dive! Once the *Mary Rose* was located it became clear that a huge amount of money would be needed to raise and conserve this magnificent ship. In 1979 the *Mary Rose* Trust was formally inaugurated to raise the cash. HRH Prince of Wales agreed to be President; he had already dived on the site in 1975 and was fascinated with the project.



▲ The new *Mary Rose* Museum building
© Gareth Gardner

▼ Men of the Upper Decks Gallery
© Hufton + Crow



Soon interesting objects were found and brought to the surface to be assessed and conserved. Now as one walks around the different levels of the ship these remains, are displayed in glass cases and described in fascinating detail. Many tools from the carpenters shop have been recovered. As the ship was built entirely from wood, the carpenters were the ships engineers of their era. Some of the crew were found near their posts – the cook in the galley for instance. From the skeletons and their malformations, the team were able to deduce who were the archers and who were the gunners. Some of the skulls have been reconstructed using forensic skills used on crime victims. These fascinating displays brought the crew vividly to life.

The *Mary Rose* Trust holds a lease on the part of the sea bed where she sank, so more interesting information may be found. What a great visit and thanks to Keith Borissow for organising it so well.

Valerie Chowen

Photos by kind permission of the
Mary Rose Museum

▼ **HMS Warrior and her sister ship HMS Black Prince were the first armour-plated, iron-hulled warships. They were powered by steam and sail, and protected by wrought iron armour plate 4.5 inches thick over 18 inches of teak. They were both obsolete within 10 years as new mastless, wholly steam-powered warships were introduced.**

Photo by Catherine Dixon

HMS Warrior

After visiting the *Mary Rose*, I went to see *HMS Warrior*. When built in 1860 to counter developments in French naval shipbuilding, she was the largest, fastest and most powerful warship in the world. After 22 years service her hull was used for a number of undignified roles from depot ship and floating workshop to an oil jetty at Milford Haven (my husband remembers fishing for eels next to it in the River Cleddau, as it was in deep water). Saved in 1979, she was towed to Hartlepool for an £8m restoration. I enjoyed seeing the row of crew's washing machines – clothes were agitated with soap in revolving drums and squeezed dry in mangles. It was also good to see the steam engines in operation. Thanks to Keith Borissow for a lovely day out.

Catherine Dixon



From the Membership Secretary

We welcome the following who have joined the Friends recently:

Miss Jenny Brookes
Ms Anthea Bruges
Ms Judy Edwards
Mr Mike Edwards

Mr Lindsay Evans Robertson
Mr V Hales
Mr Rob Harding
Mr Peter Malpass

Mrs Mina Malpass
Mr Dougal Matthews
Ms Miranda McCabe
Mrs Sheila Nash

Ms Sue Otty

June Hibberd Membership Secretary

The Cheapside Hoard

Tuesday 15 April 2015

In 1912, workmen demolishing 17th century houses in Cheapside broke through a cellar wall and uncovered the largest cache of Elizabethan and Jacobean jewellery in the world. The hoard has been dated and must have been hidden after 1640 and before the Great Fire of 1666. No one knows who hid the jewels, why they were hidden, or why they were not retrieved later.

The workmen took the jewels to the shop of 'Stony Jack' Lawrence, a pawnbroker, collector of antiquities and occasional employee of the Guildhall and London museums. Lawrence, recognizing the importance of the discovery, was keen that the jewels should go to the new London Museum which had not yet opened to the public. The Trustees of the new museum instructed Lawrence to buy out the navvies who had found it. For several years after this the Museum of London's ownership of the hoard was challenged by other London museums – the British Museum, The Victoria and Albert Museum and the Guildhall Museum. In the end it was decided that some pieces should be given to the other museums but that the greatest part of the treasure should be held by the Museum of London. The current exhibition there marks the hundredth anniversary of the original public display.

The exhibition sets the scene of London's jewellery trade in the 17th century. Paintings and drawings showed State processions along Cheapside and views of London. In those days Cheapside contained a high proportion of the city's goldsmiths; so part of the street became known as Goldsmiths' Row. There was a mock-up of a 17th century jewellery workshop, and examples of shop signs along with 17th century portraits of wealthy goldsmiths and their wives wearing intricate costumes and costly jewels.

The remainder of the exhibition consisted of cabinets showing the gems and jewellery. The necklaces were particularly finely made – delicately-worked gold chains inset with pearls and gems and enamel designs of knots, stars, scrolls and flowers. These were very popular in the 17th century, worn in cascading loops down to the waist, as seen in many of the paintings on show. The gems and enamels seemed undamaged but the pearls had become worn and dusty, and looked more like small plaster balls.

Precious stones, such as rubies, diamonds, sapphires, and emeralds and semi-precious gems came from the furthest corners of the globe illustrating the world-wide trade of the 17th century. The hoard was probably the stock in trade of a working goldsmith and thus gives us a unique insight into the types of jewels and gemstones available in London in the mid-17th century. The extraordinarily fine workmanship and detail of most of the jewels was astonishing.

It was a dazzling and fascinating sight and well worth the hours we spent in the coach getting there and back home again. We are grateful to Wendy Aldridge-Morris for organizing the trip so efficiently and for the opportunity to see this unique treasure in all its glory.

Sue Chambers

▶ A gold salamander brooch set with emeralds had been chosen by the Museum as the symbol of the exhibition. The salamander was believed to emerge unscathed by fire and it therefore personifies the hoard, which survived intact the Fire of London and the next 250 years before it was rediscovered.

© Museum of London



▶ This spectacular watch is encased in a South American emerald, the case and lid are probably made from the same stone cut in Spain or Portugal. The watch was probably made and set into the stone in Geneva.

© Museum of London



▶ The cabinets displayed pendants, rings, brooches, bracelets, earrings, fan and knife handles, cameos and intaglios, hatpins and scent bottles. One of the finest of these is shown here.

© Museum of London

The Fashion World of Jean Paul Gaultier

Tuesday 15 April 2014

This aptly-named exhibition at the Barbican explores the mind of JPG, revealing how he has turned his fascination with the differences in societies, identity, sexuality and beauty into his own fantastical universe and reinvented perceived ideas about fashion.

The exhibition is very well-lit, colourful and starts in an intriguing and amusing way by using mannequins who move their faces and talk in French and English. This is followed by a parade of mannequins on a revolving stage.

In 1990 JPG designed the famous conical bras and basques for Madonna, which are displayed, plus many outfits for film and theatre. Most of his designs are theatrical, some outrageous, some preposterous, others quite alarming. Female clothes adopt masculine features – sailor-stripes, hussar-jackets – or they adopt mermaid-tails or wings. Male models wear skirts, corsets and dresses with trains. Materials range from straw to silk, leather to lace, metal to velvet often used together in surprising ways. Although some disliked or were outraged by the designs, all agreed that the skills used to make them by hand and the beautiful details and needlework were exquisite.

Wendy Aldridge-Morris

As an untrained teenager, passionate about sketching designs, JPG started working with Cardin in Paris. He opened his own design house in 1999, at the age of 24, with French fashion houses investing \$15 million. He was made Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur in 2001.



▲ A wedding dress

Photos by Wendy Aldridge-Morris

▼ A straw corset



▼ A selection of tartan outfits



University of Bristol library – special collection

Thursday 20 March 2014

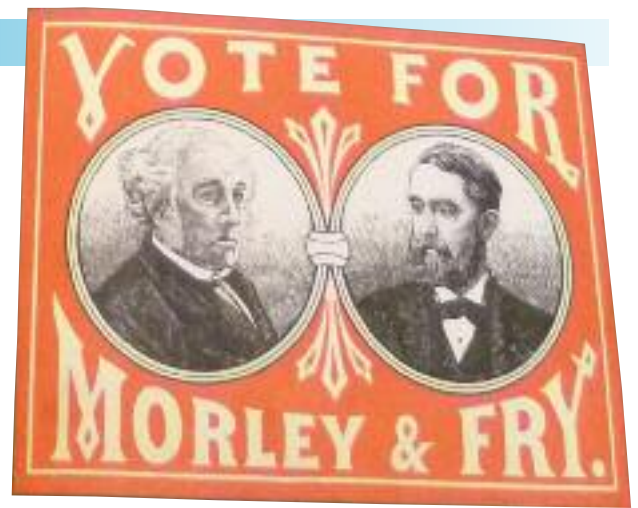
The library was started in 1923, although books had been held by the University since its inception in 1876. Librarian, Michael Richardson, had put out some examples. These included books from the Exley family (the first large collection of books bequeathed to the University); a mathematics book of 1899 from St Petersburg; a Hannah More book of 1774 with handwritten inscription by Hannah More to one of her patronesses, Mrs Stonhouse, published in Bristol and donated by Monica Wills (one of many volumes from the Wills family); the Fry family's donation of *Iberian Flora* by Linnaeus.

There were many medical books from hospitals in the area, including a volume of 1664 on the brain with inscriptions by previous owners of the book. There were three books owned by Bristol-born poet, Robert Southey, one on Republicanism with an inscription by John Lilburne, a leading Leveller.

Hannah Lowery then showed us some of the many manuscripts including a workbook by Cecil Powell, who gained a Nobel Prize for his work in physics. Included were photos of Cecil and the balloon he used to take photos of the earth. There were many documents and books from the Pinney family, who had owned the Georgian House and estates abroad. There were archives of the history of Goldney Hall.

Thanks to Michael Richardson and Hannah Lowery and their team for hosting the visit and preparing the books for us to see. Also thanks to Carol Ouvry for organising such a fascinating behind-the-scenes event.

Catherine Dixon



▲ The National Liberal Club donated 17,000 books to the library and we saw two albums of old election flyers and cuttings.



▲ In the reading room my favourite was the 1880 Painted Herbarium containing 1443 plates by Miss F E Cundall from the library of J White, author of *Flora of Bristol and District*. The colours were still fresh and detailed.

◀ One book contained detailed drawings of large estates including Badminton and Chatsworth, shown here.



Photos by Catherine Dixon

Avebury

Friday 28 March 2014

Avebury is steeped in history dating back to Neolithic times. The Roman Road from London to Bath passed nearby; Anglo Saxon walls and windows in St James' Church date to about AD 1000. In mediaeval times a small Priory was built. This building marked the beginning of Avebury Manor which over the years passed from royal retainers to tenant farmers and landowners. Each occupant made changes, remodelling rooms and adding extensions.

In 1941, the house was acquired by the National Trust but there were no funds to restore it. Happily, in 2010, the BBC wanted a house to renovate for a programme 'The Manor Reborn' and Avebury Manor was selected. Each room was decorated in a different historical period. Inexpensive and replaceable antiques created an environment where visitors can sit in the chairs, lie on the beds, play billiards and try out the equipment in the 1912 kitchen.

After visiting the church and the Keiller Museum we began our tour of the Avebury Stones. Standing on a raised bank we could see some of an outer circle of 90 stones and an inner circle of 40 stones, all enclosed by a deep henge or ditch. That the stones are visible now is due to people such as John Aubrey (1626-97) who was astonished when he first found them in dense forest whilst hunting. Among the visitors he encouraged to visit was William Stukeley (1687-1765) who drew and recorded the stones. His copious notes were vital as many stones had already been broken up for building work.

Twentieth century archaeologists, Harold St George Gray and Alexander Keiller, began detailed excavation, and re-erected fallen and buried stones. Keiller's museum shows his detailed records and drawings which made it possible to set up the stones as they are now.

Thank you, Ruth Welch, for a fascinating day in this mysterious place.

Wendy Aldridge-Morris

Learn more at <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/avebury/>



▲ Avebury Manor

▼ St James' church and dovecot

Photos by Wendy Aldridge-Morris



▼ There are about 1000 stone circles in Britain. Avebury is the largest. Many theories exist as to why the circles were built here. Some large stones appear to act as portals to avenues; one is the largest upright stone in Britain weighing 100 tons. Other horizontal stones may have been used as stages for ceremonies.



Stourbridge

The Red House Glass Cone and Broadfield Glass Museum

Friday 24 January 2014

Most of the group who visited the Red House Glass Cone at Stourbridge will have been familiar with the wonderful glass displayed in the City Museum in Bristol, much of it produced at a time when the industry contributed greatly to the wealth of the city. The glass workers then were among the highest paid in any industry as the job was so demanding. The same applied to the workers at the Red House Glass Cone at Stourbridge, built in the 1870s, which we visited on a very damp day

We were awed by the height of the million-brick bottle kiln that provided the work place for the highly skilled labour force. We were intrigued by the glass blower and warmed at the sight of the 'glory hole' kilns where he heated up the glass to the required temperature for blowing in small modern kilns not designed for mass production. He demonstrated his art to the point where the glass was incredibly thin, then shattered. In the 19th century groups of four men would work from a 'chair' each man with his own specific job to do in an area which became almost too hot to work in.

The friendly and informative guides explained that the land round Stourbridge produced clay for the hand-built pots which could withstand the high temperatures needed to melt the constituents of glass. Glass reached the correct molten state at 1200°C, at which temperature it could be gathered and worked at the end of a blowing iron. The furnaces burned night and day.

After lunch we visited Broadfield House Glass Museum to see a huge collection of glass objects – some useful, some decorative, some desirable and some – well, let's call them 'souvenirs'. There were examples from several centuries all displaying great craftsmanship. Modern pieces were displayed among more traditional items. This visit complemented the earlier visit to the Glass Cone but just scratched the surface of a fascinating industry and many thanks to Ruth and Eddy Welch for arranging such a good day out.

Sue Stops



▲ Red House Glass Cone

Photos by kind permission of Broadfield House Glass Museum

▼ The public entrance to Broadfield House Glass Museum



▼ Glass on display





▲ **Floodlit feeding at Slimbridge**
Photo © Barry Batchelor

Swan Supper

Slimbridge World Wildlife Trust

Tuesday 14 January 2014

On a gloomy, wet winter afternoon we set off to Slimbridge for a Swan Supper. It sounded special and a little bit different. On arrival Warden James took us to the Peng Observatory where we were given a very

welcome glass of mulled wine. Then the magic began! The observatory was in darkness, but through the massive windows was the most amazing sight – a floodlit lake full of swans, geese, ducks and other wild birds, all swimming around or patiently waiting on the verges to be fed.

James gave us an introductory talk about the birds and how Slimbridge welcomed the Bewick's Swans back every winter after their long flight from Russia. This year, because of the warm winter, the number of swans which had migrated as far as the UK was lower than usual, but even so the sight of these magnificent birds was impressive. Alongside the Bewick's Swans were two local Mute Swans who seemed to think that the lake belonged to them. We were fascinated watching them annoying the Bewick's and trying to make them go away.

The warden then went outside and whistled his personal call in order to prepare the birds for his arrival. If he had not done this the wild birds would have been frightened away and the lake instantly deserted. With a wheelbarrow full of grain James started the feed, all the time giving us a running commentary of what he was doing and why. At 7.15pm the lights switched off automatically and the feed was over. We then made our way to the Water's Edge Restaurant to enjoy a delicious three-course meal until it was time to return to the real world of rain and cold to return home. A very enjoyable and memorable evening was had by all.

Valerie Andrews

The Morgan Car Factory

Thursday 10 April 2014

After the winter we have just endured, stepping out into a sunny April morning for our visit to the Morgan car factory gladdened the heart. It seemed to have had the same effect on makers of expensive soft-top English sports cars. We received a cheerful welcome at the factory, near Malvern, the oldest family-owned motor manufacturer in the UK. There was a sense of English eccentricity about the place. Our guides delivered a potted history of the company and then led us in three groups around the factory.

Founder Henry Morgan was an employee of the GWR. He bought his first car in 1902 at the age of 21. In 1904, he co-founded a garage in Malvern. In 1909, he designed and built a light three-wheeled car for his own use, beginning production a year later. Henry Morgan continued to run the company until he died at age 77 in 1959.

Morgan started producing three-wheeled 'runabouts' then made four-wheelers in 1936. Nowadays, in an industry dominated by globalised mass-production, Morgan stands out as a low-volume producer of fun cars whose raison d'être is enjoyment of the journey.

It was fascinating to see how Morgan combine aspects of modern technology which they buy in with craft skills of metalworking, carpentry, trimming and painting. Nearly all the cars we saw in production were bespoke, each one carrying a folder containing details of the specification and finishes required by the customer. About 70% were going overseas. My wife was particularly taken by a factory special with exotic paint detailing, skull-shaped headlights and wing mirrors in the shape of bony hands!

Bob Smyth

▼ **A collection of aluminium-bodied Morgan Aero Supersports. Powered by 4.8 litre V8 BMW engines, they cost between £100,000 and £126,000 depending on the model.**

Photo by Hilary Cleeve



The Ken Stradling Collection

Wednesday 23 April 2014

Ken Stradling has been a major influence on the Bristol design scene since 1948 when he started work as the assistant manager at the Bristol Guild of Applied Art. Now in his 90s, Mr Stradling is as enthusiastic as ever, with a lifetime's knowledge and experience to inform his judgements and commentary on the many exhibits.

Some of the most important and rare exhibits are pieces of furniture designed by the Bauhaus architect, Marcel Breuer, for Crofton Gane. Some Friends may remember the Bristol furniture company PE Gane whose factories were destroyed during the blitz, but whose shop in Park Street operated until 1954. The firm was originally inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement but Crofton Gane was closely involved with the rise of Modernism in Britain. He supported and encouraged modern designers by commissioning their work, providing a showcase for it and, through charitable scholarships, enabling them to travel and study abroad. My husband was one who benefitted and this led to Mr Gane proudly showing us round his unique house in Westbury Park, a great honour for two young people.

The collector's favourites are the glass pieces – especially bright colourful glass in the Venetian style although more often made in Scandinavia with Swedish work represented by Orrefors, Kosta and Skruf; Finnish by Nuutajarvis and Littalla; Danish by Homlegaard and Norwegian by Hadeland. There is a good selection of English Whitefriar's from as early as the late 1940s.

Mr. Stradling's ceramic purchases were much influenced by his wife, Betty. She was a student at Corsham College of Art in its glory days and came into contact with young ceramicists breaking away from the Bernard Leach tradition to practise rough, handbuilt sculptures emphasising the naked unglazed clay. Many of these potters had major exhibitions at the Guild and formed associations which lasted for years providing opportunities for Bristolians to 'learn to look' which, in Ken Stradling's philosophy, can be as creative an act as making. The acquisition and the present disposition of this fine collection have been guided by this philosophy, and the desire to share and teach both now and in the future.

Our thanks to Carol and Mr. Stradling for an educational and, at times, nostalgic reminder of the influences which formed the preferences of many of our members.

Ruth Stanton



▲ On our visit to the collection, a recently established charity set up as an archive and resource for those interested in good design, we were privileged to be welcomed and shown around by the collector himself.

Photo by Glyn Stanton

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**Next issue: copy deadline
20 July 2014 for early
September publication**