

Newsletter

Tobacco City

Sunday 22 November 2015

Simon Birch and Helen Thomas presented a fascinating pair of complementary papers on WD and HO Wills. Simon's focus was on the various buildings constructed by Bristol's (and the UK's) largest tobacco manufacturer; while Helen reported on her oral history research among former Wills workers. Simon showed how the firm, which dated from the late 18th century, was still relatively small. It operated out of three mediaeval houses in Redcliff Street until 1870 when it rebuilt its factory on the same site. Within a few years this was too small and the move to Bedminster took place in 1886. Within another few years this factory had been expanded massively and a further 14-acre site at Raleigh Road had been started.

Wills' mushroom growth was due to the huge increase in cigarette consumption, together with the firm's monopoly of the machinery for making cigarettes. Nevertheless large numbers of workers, mostly young women, were needed to perform certain key tasks, such as sorting the tobacco leaves into different qualities, and then stripping off the usable part from the tough veins. Helen explained how hard this work was, especially for new workers whose hands were not toughened.

Wills profited enormously from the popularity of the Woodbine brand, especially during the World War I, and the labour force probably reached 10,000 in the 1920s. Some tasks – the ones involving fine motor skills – were carried out exclusively by women and girls, while the men mainly worked with machinery. Women were also segregated out of management. The factory was run on hierarchical lines, with different dining facilities for workers, managers and directors.

Nevertheless Wills was seen as a good employer and people wanted to work there. The rigorous selection process ensured that a job at Wills was something of which to be proud. The firm's reputation also benefited from its provision of sports facilities at Knowle, in-house health care and works outings to the seaside.

The community of Bedminster undoubtedly benefited enormously from the presence of the various Wills factories, but eventually, in the 1970s it was decided to move to a new factory at Hartcliffe. This had unfortunate side effects for the workers who had been used to being able to pop out at lunchtime to do their shopping on East Street. The timing of the move to Hartcliffe proved to be a disaster and within fifteen years this astonishing factory had closed. Very little now remains of the many factory buildings, and only the three great bonded warehouses are a lasting reminder of the scale and importance of WD and HO Wills in Bristol.

Peter Malpass



▲ *Female workers in the 1920s*

Photos courtesy of
Bristol Record Office

▼ *An earlier photo of female workers. They appear to be packing cigarettes.*



From the Chairman

Christmas Fair

With spring in the air, and evenings so much lighter, Christmas seems a long way behind us now, but I want to open by saying how much I enjoyed seeing so many of you at our Christmas Fair at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. A big thank you to those who worked so hard to make it a success – we raised almost £800, just a touch less than last year. It was clear to see that everyone – volunteers, staff, commercial stallholders and visitors – was having a good time and there was agreement that including more ‘commercial’ stalls this year brought a bit of added ‘glitz’ and variety to the event.

M Shed Cranes

Those of you who were in town after dark at Christmas will have seen the cranes illuminated for the festive season. They were a very impressive sight, and the lighting made the cranes more visible from vantage points across the city. As well as creating a prominent local landmark, and helping to tell the story of the City Docks, the cranes are used in the day-to-day operation of M Shed as a workplace. In the autumn they lifted the solar panels onto the roof of L Shed, and more recently they helped with the reorganisation of large object storage on the ground floor of L Shed by lifting the prototype *Concorde* cockpit onto a new supporting trailer

Steam Driving Experiences

On the first weekend of March, to coincide with Mothers’ Day, M Shed is offering opportunities to drive both visiting steam locomotive *Judy*, and our own *Fairburn* steam crane. Each 40 minutes’ experience includes friendly tuition and any tips you need while you are driving, and a drink and a cake afterwards. The cost is £50 per person (£40 concessions) and the proceeds go directly to cover essential costs of maintaining the working exhibits. To book, go to the events section of the M Shed website or enquire at the shop.



▲ Crane 29 lifting the *Concorde* cockpit onto its new trailer
Photo © Chris Ecclestone

Friends Website

Our website manager, Brian Vincent, has been hard at work refreshing a couple of key pages on our website: ‘Welcome’ and ‘About Us’. If you are online, do have a look – friendsofbmga.org.uk – and remind yourself of the interesting and useful content we have there. Brian would welcome feedback, and any ideas for further improvements that do not require us to pay for a professional web-designer. His contact details are in the box at the bottom of the back page, as are those for the rest of the committee.

▼ M Shed cranes illuminated for Christmas
Photo © Simon Galloway



Archaeology Day Schools

The museum is running a short series of archaeology day schools covering Death and Burial in British Archaeology, An Introduction to Rock Art and An Introduction to Environmental Archaeology. Full details are included in our programme inserts.

Bristol Zoo Archives

Bristol Zoological Society is currently applying for a Heritage Lottery Fund to help secure their archives in a suitable environment and to share them with the public. We were invited to contribute to one of their focus groups to establish how different users would like to access and utilise their archive collection. Members of both our Executive and Programme committees volunteered to support them at a focus group held at Bristol Zoo Gardens, and found the experience interesting.

Storage Case for William Smith's 1815 Geological Map

William Smith's 1815 map is considered to be the first geological map in the world and has led to Smith being known as 'The Father of Geology'. Much of his work, which led to his linking of rock exposures across the country through the occurrence of the same types of fossils, was undertaken whilst he worked as an engineer on the Somerset Coal Canal near Bath. The museum holds one of the original maps, and asked us in the autumn to fund a custom-built storage case, to mark the map's 200th anniversary.

The case has now been completed, and the map has high-quality home, made of conservation-grade materials, that will protect it well into its next 200 years.



▲ *Senior Curator Isla Gladstone and Conservator Alicia Garcia assess Smith's 1815 geological map in its original storage space*

Storage box for Smith's map ►
Photos © BMGA



Great Western Railway Jigsaw Puzzles

Do you enjoy making jigsaw puzzles? Andy King is looking for a volunteer to assemble about 20 Great Western Railway puzzles from the 1930s. These were produced by the GWR as part of their publicity campaign and feature images by some of the best poster artists of the period. Once made, the puzzles will be photographed and then stored in one piece for visitors to see by appointment. The puzzles will need to be made on the premises at M Shed during office hours.

Contact Andy directly by email: andy.king@bristol.gov.uk or phone 0117 9031569 if you would like to know more.

Dates for your diary

Here are some events to whet your appetite for later in the year.

Wales visit

Tuesday 23 August 2016

Visit to St Fagans National History Museum at Cardiff. One of the best folk history museums in Britain, it has recently received a major grant to transform the visitor experience. This is an opportunity to test the transformation.

Dorset village

Wednesday 15 September 2016

We will be going to Athelhampton House, a remarkable house and garden just outside Dorchester. The Great Hall was built in 1485 and has connections with Thomas Hardy. Before returning to Bristol we will go to Moreton Church to see its lovely etched glass windows.

London visit

Monday 14 – Thursday 17 November 2016

Based at the Guoman Tower Hotel near St Katherine's Dock, we shall visit backstage at the Royal Albert Hall, and visit St Katherine's Dock, Spitalfields Market with its Huguenot history, the Bank of England, Greenwich, the Brunel Museum at Thames Tunnel, Southwark Cathedral and more.

Look out for application forms for these events in future newsletters.

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Service-wide Report

The predictions of severe cuts to government budgets meant that the Chancellor's Spending Review and Autumn Budget Statement, revealed on 25 November last year, was awaited anxiously by museums across the country. As it transpired, the expected cuts to Arts Council England, which could have impacted upon the funding we receive in Bristol as a Major Partner Museum, did not materialise. However, there are cuts for local authorities in the pipe-line and we wait to see how these may impact upon budgets within Bristol City Council in due course.

Staff news

There have been several changes to staff which will be detailed for the next newsletter but Friends may remember Linda Gordon who worked with us at M Shed as a Documentation Officer who will be re-joining the team as Documentation Officer from mid-February. The Arts and Festivals team are being relocated to be based within Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and we have several new students working with us, some from the University of the West of England for example.

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

The Museum shop has been refitted and new stock lines are being trialled. Please do consider visiting the shop as all sales help us in these economically-strained times.

The exhibition *death: the human experience* has proven very successful with extremely positive comments from visitors for what could be seen as a difficult subject to tackle

in a museum environment. The exhibition runs until 13 March and has been supplemented since 23 January by a separate exhibition entitled *death: is it your right to choose?* This examines the emotive topic of assisted dying in a sensitive but thought-provoking way.

Elsewhere, we have reopened the gallery we use to showcase contemporary art – *Space is a place* – from painting to performance, with a selection from our permanent collections. Similarly in our Temporary Exhibition Gallery 2 (top floor rear) the exhibition of the human form, *Figure and form: the human figure in British Modernist painting*, has been receiving appreciative comments.

The Old Master's Gallery has been closed from the beginning of the year as it is getting a make-over to match the improvements we have been making to the other art galleries over the last couple of years. It will reopen in May.



▲ **Connecting with the Dead**

Photos © Jamie Woodley

▼ **Lion Coffin**

Photos © Jamie Woodley



M Shed

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2015 opened on 28 November and this year has an extended run until 10 April 2016. As always, the quality of photographs is outstanding and this exhibition continues to be a firm favourite with the visiting public. Souvenir books and cards are again available to buy as mementos of the exhibition and as with the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery we have started making changes to improve the M Shed shop. The week leading up to the opening of this exhibition also saw the dockside transformed outside M Shed as a film crew were engaged in recreating a wartime scene. Activities such as this are not only fascinating for the public to watch (tens of extras milling around dressed as evacuees) but also produce welcome income.

Bristol Record Office

On display until 12 March 2016 is an exhibition documenting death which again uses the amazing archive collection to support the main exhibition about our attitudes to death which is on show at the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery.

From the Membership Secretary

We welcome the following members who have joined since the last newsletter and hope they will be able to participate in forthcoming events:

June Hibberd, Membership Secretary

Viv Amos	Mrs Sue Perrin
Miss Jane Baker	Mr Bob Slader
Miss Eileen Beaumont	Mrs Margaret Slader
Mr Peter Bowles	Miss Jenifer Smyth
Mrs Marion Brown	Mrs Joan Southern
Mrs Margaret Gorely	Mr Paul Wood
Mr Angus Gregson	Mr G Woodward
Mr John Perrin	

Blaise Castle House Museum

Following the consultations last year, including the early September workshop I mentioned in our last newsletter, Laura Pye and her team have made some initial decisions, balancing the needs of the museum service and its users in terms of public engagement, care of collections and income generation.

It is good to hear that Blaise will remain as a museum but the space will be slightly reduced and displays will be re-focussed and updated, looking at: house; estate; the Harford family; natural history, geology, archaeology, local history and area. The Victorian school room will remain for at least the coming year, and hire spaces on the ground floor will be increased, beginning this spring.

Some changes to displays and use of rooms are already under way and you will be able to see some of these when the house re-opens at the end of March.

A new programme of family events is planned for 2016, including a revival of the Gorum Fair.

Consultation will continue during the coming months, feeding into a plan of work to begin when the house closes for the winter at the end of December 2016. There will be new opportunities to get involved in volunteer projects, from joining the Christmas decorating committee to opening up the Dairy garden. If you would like to be added to the email distribution list to receive updates contact Catherine Littlejohns by email (catherine.littlejohns@bristol.gov.uk).

Sue Thurlow

▼ **Blaise Castle House Museum**
Photo © Neil Phillips



Bowood House

Saturday 22 October 2015

On a beautiful Autumn day we paid a visit to Bowood House and Gardens near Calne in Wiltshire. On arrival we were welcomed with coffee and homemade biscuits, some still warm from the oven. We were greeted by the house manager who gave a short overview of the history of Bowood House and the magnificent gardens designed by Capability Brown.

Bowood has been in the Lansdowne family since 1754, and was first opened to the public in 1975 to help towards the maintenance of this extensive estate. Bowood Park was once part of the forest of Chippenham and at one time there were two houses aptly named the Little House and the Big House. We learned that we were sitting in the former, as the Big House was demolished in 1955 due to a decline in the family's fortunes.

The Lansdowne family still live there away from public gaze, but their family photographs can be seen dotted around their library which contains over 5000 leather bound books. From the Little House we made our way through what is now known as the Sculpture Gallery, which was a conversion of a row of stables which linked the two houses by the present Lord Lansdowne in 1980. Lord and Lady Lansdowne were great philanthropists and wanted to do their bit to help out in World War I. We passed a row of display cabinets showing old photographs of Bowood when it was used as a Red Cross Auxiliary Hospital, and a training camp where 2,500 men camped in the park. We marvelled at the beautiful peaceful family chapel, with its imposing organ which was installed as recently as 2002.

We passed a laboratory where Dr. Joseph Priestley discovered oxygen gas: where Dr. Jan Ingenhousz later discovered the process of photosynthesis in plants; and where work was carried out on inoculation against smallpox. We climbed the stairs to the Exhibition Rooms containing clothes as worn by the first Marquess; and furniture used on board ship by the grandfather of the fourth Marchioness of Lansdowne during a campaign at sea in the Napoleonic Wars. There were treasures from India, Burma, the Victorian era, a collection of watercolours, porcelain, jewellery, and even a bronze death mask of Napoleon. There was so much to see and take in, before exploring the gardens where we found a Mausoleum, a Doric Temple, an arboretum, a stunning cascade, a pinetum, and a pleasure garden which leads down to the lake. Many thanks to Gary Gostelow for organising such an interesting day out.

Hilary Cleeve



▲ View over the landscaped park designed by Capability Brown



▲ The chapel showing the organ

◀ Bowood House showing part of the formal garden



Photos by Hilary Cleeve

Apsley House and the Wellington Arch

Wednesday 18 November 2015

18 June 2015 marked the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. So Wendy Aldridge-Morris kindly organised a trip for the Friends to have a private guided tour of Apsley House, the London home of the Duke of Wellington, and also to view the current special exhibition commemorating the battle at the nearby Wellington Arch.

Apsley House is a splendid, Grade I listed, Georgian building located at the south-east corner of Hyde Park. The house was originally built in red brick by Robert Adam between 1771 and 1778 for Lord Apsley, the then Lord Chancellor. The house was given the popular address: Number One, London, since it was the first house passed by visitors who travelled from the south (then countryside) after the toll gates at Knightsbridge. It was originally part of a contiguous line of great houses on Piccadilly, demolished to widen Park Lane. In 1807 the house was purchased by Richard Wellesley, the elder brother of Sir Arthur Wellesley, but in 1817 financial difficulties forced him to sell it to his brother, by then the Duke of Wellington, who required a London base. Wellington employed the architect Benjamin Dean Wyatt to carry out major renovations, including new wings on the west and east sides of the house. Although a few of the interior Adam features (some fireplaces and ceilings) were retained, the original red-brick exterior was entirely clad in Bath stone and a pedimented portico added. Amongst many memorable features of the house are the enormous nude statue of Napoleon, by the Italian artist Antonio Canova, which greets one on arrival in the entrance hall; the state dining room where the annual 'Waterloo Dinner' has been hosted every year since 1820 by the successive Dukes of Wellington to mark the anniversary of the battle; and the 'Waterloo Gallery', where many of the 200 paintings in the house, mostly acquired by Wellington himself, are displayed.

The Wellington Arch, across the road from Apsley House, was commissioned by King George IV in 1825, not only to commemorate Wellington's victory at Waterloo, but also, as originally conceived by the King, to be a grand entrance to Constitution Hill and hence to Buckingham Palace. The arch is crowned by a large bronze sculpture depicting the Angel of Peace descending on the four-horsed Chariot of War. The current exhibition, on the top two floors of the building (i.e. above the arch), recounts the story of the Battle of Waterloo and shows memorabilia from the battle, some of which have not been previously displayed.

Many thanks to Wendy for organising this very successful and memorable visit, not spoilt at all by the long delay to our journey in the morning due to a major road accident on the M4, nor by the inclement November weather on our arrival in London!

Brian Vincent



▲ The Wellington Arch



▲ Statue of Napoleon by Italian artist, Antonio Canova

Photos courtesy of Apsley House



▲ The Waterloo gallery at Apsley House



▼ The Piccadilly drawing room at Apsley House

Five Days in Derbyshire

Monday 12 to Friday 16 November 2015

Thank you to everyone who came to Derbyshire and helped to make it such an enjoyable visit. Also 'Thank you' to those who have written reports and taken photographs, I am sure these will remind us of what I hope was an interesting time.

Ruth Welch

Day 1

Monday 12 November 2015

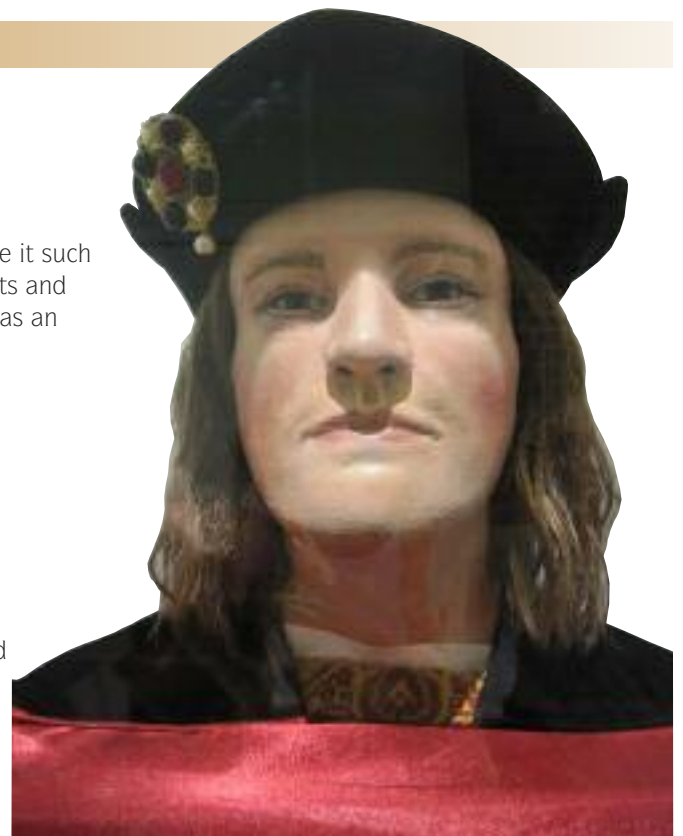
King Richard III

The King Richard III visitor centre in Leicester now houses a covered area of the car park where, in August 2012, the bones of Richard III were found in a shallow grave. Lighting indicates how the bones were situated. An informative trail gives the King's life history. It was interesting to know that he took part in a Royal Progress in July - October 1483 visiting some out of the way places such as Bridport. It also said that, following Richard's death, Henry VII through an Act of Parliament, dated his reign from the day before Bosworth (22 August 1485), making Richard III and all who fought for him guilty of treason. Richard III's Book of Hours – his personal prayer book that he almost certainly carried to Bosworth – was sent to Fotheringhay (his mother's home) following his death and is now held at Lambeth Palace.

In another room, modern signage gives details of the several vital strands of evidence which led to the dig for the grave in 2012. The boots of Philipa Langley, the originator of the *Looking for Richard Project*, are on display. I was interested in the x-ray machine with copy skeleton, giving details of all Richard's injuries. He seems to have been given a fatal blow to the back of his head by a halberd – a long, bladed polearm. We continued to Leicester Cathedral to see a modern tomb containing Richard's re-interred bones decorated with a coat of arms made from lapis lazuli and local stone. I admired the impressive embroidered funeral pall with needleworked figures. Whatever one thinks about Richard III, this is a very interesting museum and cathedral memorial.

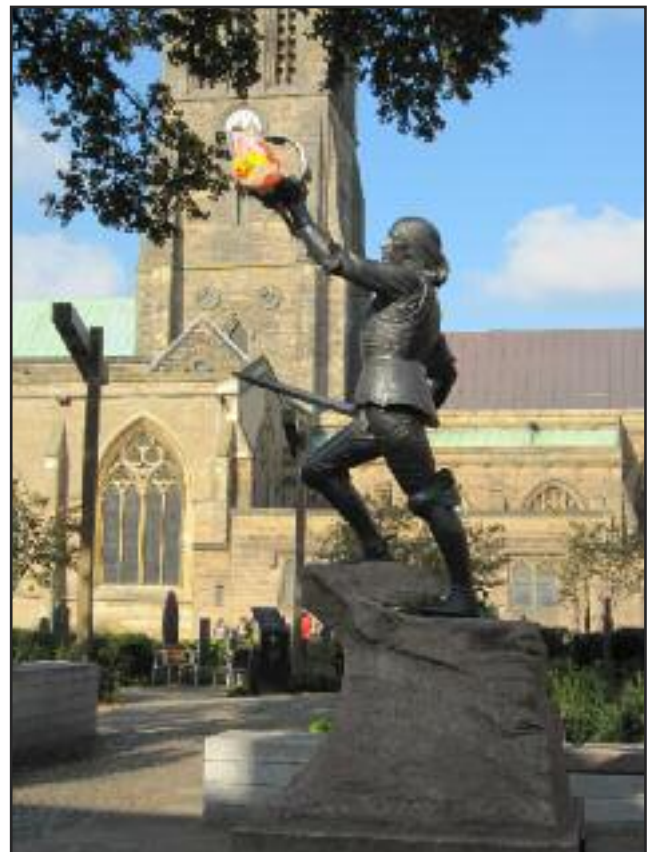
Catherine Dixon

▼ Tomb of Richard III in Leicester Cathedral



▲ Facial reconstruction of Richard III

▼ Richard III's statue outside Leicester Cathedral



Day 2

Tuesday 13 November 2015

Macclesfield

On a fine autumn day, our coach took us on a scenic ride along the Derwent valley, through the resort towns of Matlock, Bakewell, and Buxton. Then it carried us high over the Cat and Fiddle Pass, with the mills of Manchester on the horizon, to Macclesfield.

At the Silk Museum, we found ourselves immersed in the threads of human life. How mind-boggling it is to discover that the spider-like thread made by the tiny silk moth forming its cocoon should be the driving force behind such a world-wide industry. For centuries it has been traded over the world, providing livelihoods for thousands of people. Along with wool and cotton, silk was one of the few natural fibres available for cloth-making before synthetic fibres became available. As one kilo of silk is derived from 200 kilos of mulberry leaves, a lot of time and travel goes into the product!

We saw how silk was first used for the manufacture of silk buttons (buttons consisting of silk thread woven on to a wooden former). We saw how silk-weaving boomed from 1800 onwards with the invention of the Jacquard loom which provided a mechanical means of separating the warp threads in a loom through the use of punched cards – a fore-runner of the computer industry itself. We learnt how to tell our weft from our warp!

At a demonstration at Paradise Mill we realised how incredibly labour intensive silk-making is. Starting with punching out the Jacquard cards used for translating the pattern from an artist's drawing, through setting up and threading of the machines, ending with operating the noisy, dangerous machines while maintaining the threads.

Our fascination continued at the Old Sunday School, where we appreciated tales of the lives of all the working people involved. Silk-throwing (i.e. spinning), making a continuous fibre suitable for weaving was shown by a scale model of a silk-throwing mill. A monitor showed a brilliant display of Macclesfield 'Then and Now' pictures. We saw how luxury silk products played important working roles in World War II used in parachutes and in durable printed maps.

For a short time we were utterly immersed in the people of the industry, the lives they led and the designs and products they made. "A 'reel' time warp" someone said at the end!

Harry Hibberd**West Park Museum**

Following our visits to the mills in Macclesfield, we went to the delightful Museum in the Park. As was common in Victorian times, some local benefactors, determined to educate and 'morally improve' the local population, provided Macclesfield with a museum. This is a small, one-room building, filled with items supplied by such eminent local people as Maria Brocklehurst. Maria, a contemporary and friend of our own Amelia Edwards, provided some items from her own collection of Egyptian artefacts bought on her visits to Egypt.

Another collection on display is that of local artist, C.R. Tunnicliffe who was famous for illustrating Ladybird Books and Tarka the Otter, while a frieze which decorates the museum is taken from the Elgin Marbles. It is quite surprising what can be stored and displayed in one room!

Ruth Welch▲ *Flying Shuttle Power Loom*▼ *Macclesfield silk stripe handkerchiefs*► *Cast of Sety II
(Pharaoh between
1203-1200 BC)*

Day 3

Wednesday 13 November 2015

Chatsworth

It was a fine, fresh autumn day so, as soon as we arrived, we made a quick trek up through the woods to the Hunting Tower (available for holiday lets) with its splendid views over the huge Chatsworth estate. Then we went into the garden with its many famous features such as the Cascade (each rill at a different height to vary the sounds made by falling water), and the Canal Pond with the Emperor Fountain designed by Joseph Paxton and installed in 1844. Sadly, Paxton's Great Conservatory was demolished in 1920 but many other features have been added more recently by the present Duke and Duchess. They are patrons of the Arts and in the grounds were hosting a large exhibition of British sculpture from the latter half of the 20th century, including pieces by Barbara Hepworth and Anthony Gormley.

A tour of the interior of the house included 'a magnificent State Apartment intended for the reception of a royal visit from William and Mary' who had created the Dukedom for the 4th Earl for his part in bringing them to the throne. They never came. Otherwise there is so much to see that it is impossible to describe all the artwork and embellishments. The Chapel corridor was interesting for its collection of beautiful rocks and minerals including the famous Derbyshire Blue-John (bleu-jaune). There was also a group of white porcelain vases by Edmund de Waal, said to be a favourite artist of the present Duke.

After the myriad of rooms we emerged into the Orangery for some quality retail therapy. It was a lovely day (thank you Ruth) but clearly we needed several more to see everything the house and grounds had to offer!

Chris Pearce

▲ Chatsworth House

▼ A friend tries out a Thomas Heatherwick Chair



Day 4

Crich Tramway Village, Matlock

Thursday 15 October 2015

It was cloudy and bright as we travelled North beside the River Derwent then climbed eastward through autumn colours to the narrow lanes of Crich village, the home of the National Tramway Museum. The village of Crich provides an appropriate setting for the tramway, and includes the frontage of Derby Assembly Rooms, the George Stephenson Discovery and Learning Centre, a Great Exhibition Hall, a workshop for major tram renovations with a public viewing gallery and the tram depot itself. Nearby the Red Lion pub and Rita's tea room provide sustenance for hungry and thirsty visitors.

Towering above the Museum is Crich Stand - a memorial to the Sherwood Foresters - in the form of a lighthouse despite being at least ninety miles from the coast and a thousand feet above sea level. Perhaps it was considered as an aid to aerial navigation when it was built in the 1920s.

The Museum itself is on the flat floor of the limestone quarry below Crich Stand. It holds over 50 double-decker trams, mainly from British networks, but a few from elsewhere, together with about a mile of track around the hillside from the Tramway Village to Glory Mine, which has exhibits of lead mining from Roman times.

▼ Tramway Village Workshop





▲ Double-decker Leeds Tram

The collection and museum was started by volunteer enthusiasts in 1959, and has grown into a thriving tourist attraction with over 20 staff and volunteer members from many walks of life and skills, all having gone through full tramway training programmes. The museum reminds visitors that Britain had about 14,000 electric trams in the 1920s. Several cities are reintroducing single-deck articulated multi-coach tramways, but only Blackpool and Hong Kong continue the British double-decker system. Perhaps if Hong Kong Tramways Limited, the world champion with 160 double-decker trams carrying 200,000 passengers per day, eventually closes, there will be room for one of their trams at Crich. The local Cantonese people know these well-travelled relics as 'Ding Dings'.

We arrived at about 10am just as the trams were starting. We each received pre-decimal pennies to exchange for proper punched tickets for our tram rides which we greatly enjoyed. We left the museum at 12.30 but there was so much to see that most of us would have liked longer to explore this wonderful creation of the Tramway Museum Society.

Roy Taylor

Thursday 15 November 2015

Eyam

We arrived at Eyam in time for lunch and a quick retail experience at the small visitor centre complex. Then our guide arrived and we were quickly transported back to the year 1665 when the village tailor's assistant took delivery of a bundle of damp cloth from a London supplier. He draped it in front of the fire to dry, releasing plague-infested fleas, and had died of bubonic plague within a week.

The village is famous today because of the way it responded to the inexorable spread of the plague. The rector and his predecessor led the community to agree measures to keep apart from each other as much as possible; church services were held in the open air; and bodies of plague victims were buried by their families, quickly and without ceremony in their own gardens or fields. Perhaps the best-known decision was to quarantine the entire village to prevent further spread of the disease. Food and medicine were purchased from outside the village by placing money, usually soaked in vinegar, at an agreed location, where the goods were then left for collection.

As we walked round part of the village we passed small, attractive cottages with special plaques commemorating those who had died there. One, for example, listed Mary Hadfield and her family of four, and ended 'Mary alone survived but lost 13 relatives'. The proportion of those who died over the next 14 months is disputed. Some say 260 people died from a total population of 350; others say it was a third of a larger number. Either way, the suffering caused must have been overwhelming.

Our guide was able to tell us tales of the characters living in Eyam at the time: the wicked Marshall Howe, who buried the dead and then stole from their families but who reformed in the end; Emmott and Rowland, lovers divided by the quarantine and then by Emmott's death. We could have explored other landmarks, but time and the approach of a threatening black cloud led us to decide it was time to visit Eyam Hall.

Eyam Hall, a Jacobean manor house, was built just after the plague and is unusual in that it has always been owned and lived in by the same family. It feels like a family home which has been adapted to the needs of each generation. There is very little documentation of the changes, which makes the house a fascinating challenge for those trying to work out its history. Why, for example, is one small room covered in very rare tapestries which have been cut about in a very careless, unskilled fashion? No-one knows the answer, but it is fun to guess. The house is the first house that has been leased, rather than given, to the National Trust.

Our overall impression of Eyam was of a village with a rich past, which it is proud to share with visitors.

Katherine Martin



▲ Eyam Hall



▲ One of the Eyam plague cottages



▲ Lichfield Cathedral with the three Ladies of the Vale clearly visible

Day 5

Friday 16 November 2015

Lichfield

On our final day in Derbyshire we visited Lichfield Cathedral whose triple spires, visible from all directions, are known locally as 'The Ladies of the Vale'. We arrived early, and as it was a cold day we dived into the coffee shop before we met Kay our guide for a tour of this magnificent Cathedral. Our guide was extremely well-informed and her speech was very clear. We learned that the building is dedicated to Saint Chad and Saint Mary, and the three spires represent the Trinity. The original Cathedral was built on the remains of the Saxon Church of Saint Mary. It was Bishop Hedda who founded the first Cathedral in 700 which he built to house the relics of Saint Chad. This building remained until the beginning of 12th century when it was rebuilt by the Normans. Saint Chad's Gospels and a carved limestone panel known as the Lichfield Angel are the only remaining treasures from the Anglo-Saxon Cathedral. We marvelled at the beautiful architecture, the alabaster statues and the glorious stained glass windows. We learned that during the Civil War the building suffered enormous damage and endured three sieges. The central spire was brought down, and Parliamentary troops destroyed monuments and carvings. As we walked around it seemed incredible that such incidents and such destruction had occurred in such a beautiful and peaceful House of God.

Hillary Cleeve



▲ Statue of Samuel Johnson who was born in Lichfield in 1709. He died in 1784

Photos for the Derbyshire trip were taken by Judith Jones and Roy Taylor



▲ The Sleeping Children: a marble sculpture considered to be the finest work of Francis Chantr'y. The statue was commissioned by the mother of the sisters who died in 1813 and 1814



The Cathedral Close

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2015

M Shed

Friday 8 January 2016

This is the touring exhibition from the Natural History Museum, and the Friends' visit is a popular annual event. This year, Rosamund Kidman Cox gave us an insightful tour, drawing on her long-standing involvement in selection and experience on the judging panel.

The competition has grown over the years and has a strong Bristol connection through the BBC Natural History Unit. This year, there were 42,500 entries, from both professionals and amateur enthusiasts. The exhibition represents the work of 77 photographers from 24 different nationalities across the world. There are twice as many entrants from Spain this year, and more female photographers – although numbers are still very low: there are three girls in the under-14 category, so perhaps we will see this number grow in future.

The stories behind the images are often entertaining and sometimes upsetting. *Snow Hare* is by Rosamund Macfarlane – a woman in her 70s who has tried for two years, waiting patiently in the Scottish snow, to get the perfect shot of a hare in its winter pelt. Frank Abbott, a wheelchair-user who took *Cormorant Cityscape*, was so intent on making the most of the setting sun that he did not realise his chair had sunk up to its axles in mud. The elephant pictured in *Chained to Tradition* by Emily Gaithwaite has been traumatised by the fireworks of a Diwali procession. One of my favourite pictures is *Stork Art* by Francisco Mingorance, with its surprising juxtaposition of nesting storks and modern sculpture.

Many of the images show the impact of our growing population, pollution and global warming on the environment. Swirls of dirt are visible in melting snow; arctic species are attacked as competing animals move north; photographers find their subjects more difficult to locate as numbers drop. However, some are multiplying at a tremendous rate. Warmer seas and lack of fish have led to an explosion in the number of box jellyfish: they look beautiful, but you would not want to swim in the middle of them!

With such a strong link between wildlife photography and Bristol, it would be lovely to achieve a higher standard of display. The exhibits are digital prints, often too small to give their real impact, and are not backlit as in the London exhibition. The portfolio work suffers in particular, and details in dark areas of the images are often lost. The ambient lights of the exhibition gallery tend to flatten the appearance of the pictures, and the screens for stop motion and audience's choice require a darker environment. The images are displayed at a good height for the public to see, but labelling (at the right height for wheelchair users and children) leaves most people bending down to read them. The information on the labels is worth the effort, however. This exhibition brings home the beauty and fragility of the natural world, and repays more than one visit.

Many thanks to Carol Ouvry for arranging the event, and to Rosamund Kidman Cox for the tour.

Eileen Elsey

This sparky article was submitted to us a few days before Eileen suffered a serious stroke. Sadly she died after a short time in hospital. We remember her lively and humorous contributions to FBMGA activities and are sure that her many friends will want to join us in sending her family our condolences.



▲ Rosamund Macfarlane/
Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2015, Snow hare

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2015 is developed and produced by the Natural History Museum, London. You can see some of the images on the Natural History Museum website: www.nhm.ac.uk. Go to <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed/whats-on/wildlife-photographer-year-2015/> for information about booking, times and tickets.

▼ Francisco Mingorance/*Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2015, Stork art*



History of Fashion Day School

Monday 23 November, 2015

The workshop was designed to explore fashion history since 1800 and teach us how to date historic costume. Secondary aims were to find out about changing fashions and discover some of the extensive Blaise costume collection. The speakers were Helen McConnell Simpson, Curator, and Catherine Littlejohns, Senior Curator Public History at Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives.

After the usual housekeeping and welcome, we were given excellent handouts which included copies of slides and room to write our own notes next to them. The room was laid out with six types of blouses and dresses. We were shown slides of garments on which we would work in groups. We had to hazard guesses at their dates and identify what they were.

The morning session was all about the 19th century using photos demonstrating the dresses and styles of the era. We were then invited to inspect several examples of dresses to decide their style, material, and any outstanding features.

The questions we were advised to ask were:

- ✿ What is the basic shape?
- ✿ Has it been altered?
- ✿ What is it made of?
- ✿ How is it made?
- ✿ Colour and pattern?
- ✿ What detailing (fastenings, trimmings etc) is there?

We had enough time to inspect and handle the costumes, and draw our own conclusions on their age and style. Most of us had our own ideas but were not very often right!

After a break for lunch we saw slides and garments demonstrating changes in 20th century fashion from the fussy hats, corsets and dresses popular at the start of the century through the simpler styles of World War I workers, then on to 1920s garments that used new artificial materials such as rayon. We were shown slides demonstrating development through the austere utility styles of World War II to the casual, comfortable and less restricted design of clothes popular during the 1990s.

At the end of the session we split into two groups to be taken up to the Blaise costume stores and given a tour of the wardrobes. Here we saw a wonderful selection of costumes dating from the 18th century to modern times including wedding dresses.

We all expressed our disappointment that Bristol does not have enough suitable museum space to display these sumptuous and beautifully-made costumes as they were a joy to behold. After a vote of thanks the workshop ended. This was the first of a planned number of workshops and I can thoroughly recommend them to anyone with an interest in the history of costumes.

Angela Essex

Photos © BMGA



▲ The wardrobe of Victorian dresses at Blaise Museum

A Victorian Dolman c1880 ▶



Photo appeal

We rely on members for most of our newsletter articles and photos. I would like to thank all the willing contributors who have dared to stick their necks above the parapet! It may be that there are other members who take photos on their mobile phones. If that is the case, please do send any good ones to me. I will be delighted to receive them. My mobile phone number is 07917 331810.

Tim Wood

The Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton

Wednesday 4 November 2015

On a grey, overcast, morning we set out for Yeovilton in the heart of Somerset. On arrival we had coffee in the Swordfish Restaurant and were then treated to an excellent talk about the Falklands Islands (Islas Malvinas to Argentinians) given by ex-RAF pilot, Gordon. He began by explaining the islands' strategic position, moved on to a resumé of the 1982 conflict and finished by explaining the situation as it is at present.

It is some 25 years since I last visited the museum and much had changed. Four halls and galleries are crammed with aircraft, memorabilia and audio screens and some impressive simulations. In one, we 'flew' in a mock-up of a Sea King helicopter to the landing deck of an aircraft carrier. We could feel the floor vibrating, hear the pilot and were aware of the rotor blades revolving. We stood on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier with huge screens at either end of the vessel that gave such a realistic view of the aircraft landing that we had to step back out of the way or be run down!

At the Aircraft Carrier Experience we found a replica of *HMS Ark Royal*. We were guided through the ship which had mock-ups of the many aspects required to run the vessel including the all-important NAAFI. Time was running out so we finished with a quick dash through Hall 4, which housed an early *Concorde* and other delta-winged aircraft.

Without doubt we will have to make another visit in the near future to do full justice to this impressive museum. With many thanks to Wendy and David Snelson for arranging such an interesting visit.

Gary Gostelow

You can find out more at
<http://www.fleetairarm.com/>

▼ **Just a small selection of
the aircraft on display at
the Museum**

Photo © Fleet Air Arm
Museum



Presentation of a stained glass window

Tuesday 24 November 2015

Artist Dora McCormack has created a beautiful stained glass window now on display at M Shed. The window has been designed by students from Elmfield School for the Deaf to commemorate windows lost from the Weavers' Chapel at Temple Church during an air raid in 1940. The formal presentation took place 75 years to the day following its destruction by Nazi bombers.

Laura Pye, Head of Culture, Mayor George Ferguson plus teaching staff from the school and curator Kate Iles were all in attendance to present certificates to the students directly responsible for designing and making the window. The project was supported with a grant from the Friends of BMGA.

Gary Gostelow



The Textile Conservation Studio, St Werburgh's

Monday 2 November 2015

The studio was set up in 1998 at Banwell, near Weston Super Mare, but moved to St Werburgh's in 2008 under the direction of Aliston Lister, who was our guide. The move was made to obtain a suitable conservation space - a large studio with a high roof which was close to major traffic routes.

The studio is part of the UK Institute of Conservation. Alison stressed that the small team of 4 to 5 staff are conservators, not restorers. All items needing conservation are first examined and assessed. The work needed varies considerably - for example a christening shawl to be worn by a baby will receive very different treatment from a large wall hanging. Items are cleaned either by vacuuming and/or washing then repaired so they are fit for use. Most of the work is done in the unit, but the staff can and do work off site - one example being the cleaning of the Graham Sutherland altar tapestry at Coventry Cathedral.

We were shown around various interesting works in progress. Conservators can be trained via graduate/post graduate courses in textiles and the only place at present to do this is in Glasgow; but having seen the work, I believe that experience is a major factor.

Thank you to Alison for giving up her time and knowledge to show us around (also for the tea and biscuits) and patiently answering our questions. Thanks too to Carol for organising what must be the Behind the Scenes visit of the year.

Catherine Dixon

▼ *The Friends examine a privately-owned tapestry in the process of being conserved*

Photo by Catherine Dixon



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The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of the FBMGA or Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives

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