



FRIENDS
OF **BRISTOL**
MUSEUMS
GALLERIES &
ARCHIVES

Newsletter



**Cara Romero's
stunning photos
acquired for World
Cultures Collection**

This edition packed with

- news and photos of Bristol's museums, galleries and archives including Ai Weiwei's Ton of Tea!
- reports of trips to Greenwich, Spitalfields, a Hindu Temple, the Royal Observatory, the Royal Mint, the Create Centre, Horizon House and many more
- news of upcoming talks and visits you can join

**March 2017
Issue 194**

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

A Ton of Tea

In September we shifted the monumental *A Ton of Tea*, by the internationally renowned Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, from the exhibition gallery where it had been on display in the Art from Elsewhere show to our permanent gallery. Our Edwardian building's floor loading meant that we needed to spread the load of this one ton iconic sculpture as we carefully moved it to its new home. We are very grateful to



▲ *Ai Weiwei's Ton of Tea is a metre square cube of Chinese tea – made from dried, compressed tea leaves from a blend drunk all over China by ordinary citizens.*

© Bristol Culture/Bristol MGA

Cara Romero Photographs

Bristol Museum has a small but very interesting collection of Native North American material, mostly dating to about 1900. The acquisition of a series of three photographs by Cara Romero, a native North American artist of Chemehuevi descent, helps to bring the collection up to date. The photos are each almost a metre across, and have been acquired with the support of the Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives and the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery. Cara is an award winning photographer as well as a prominent cultural activist for indigenous rights.

The photographs, which were acquired from Rainmaker Gallery and are entitled 'Water Memories', explore her concerns with exploitation of the environment and the cultural identity of 'the native'. They underline the relationship between people, land and the essential quality of water. These images are strikingly beautiful and offer a new direction in Native North American art in the use of new media as well as new ways of representing indigenous peoples.

Sue Giles, Senior Curator World Cultures

Front cover photograph Oil Boom from the collection by Cara Romero © Cara Romero

the Friends for funding the structural survey of all three floors that allowed us to do that safely, and to understand better the capacity of our building.

Ai Weiwei is a vital figure in both the art world and the human rights arena. *Tea* develops the ideas originating in the 1970s of using humble materials but takes it still further with the organic, shifting, aromatic substance that is also symbolic of our ideas about China. For the campaigning Ai, tea has come to symbolise the people of China; in his life and in his art he is a campaigner for people.

Alongside *Tea*, two other striking additions can be seen in the gallery over the next year. We have been loaned *Winged Form I* by Barbara Hepworth, the sculpture she made prior to her commission for the John Lewis building in Oxford Street; it is a powerful match for Ai's *Tea*, made in the year of his birth, 1957. Also on loan is one of Damien Hirst's colourful Spin paintings, *Beautiful Hours*.

Impact of City Council budget cuts on the Museums service

Leading up to, and shortly after, the Christmas New Year period, Bristol City Council undertook public consultation as to how to make the £92million of savings required of it over the coming four financial years 2017–2022. Saving such a large sum of money requires major changes to how the council operates and affects all aspects of its work. Included in the proposals were closing Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and M Shed for an additional two days each week in order to make savings of approximately £200,000.

Following the consultation, the council has published the recommendations as to how to make the budgets balance for the coming period which will be tabled for approval at Full Council on 21 February. These include making the saving of £200,000 not by closing the two museums for 2 more days a week, but instead by efficiencies to be sourced mainly from the Collections & Archives team of Bristol Culture. In addition, Bristol Culture is tasked with raising an additional £236,000 of new income during the four year period. Both the efficiency savings and the additional income targets are phased over the period to reduce their immediate impact.

I am positive that these targets can be achieved without significantly impacting upon the existing projected work programme and public delivery, and that Bristol Culture will continue to punch above its weight as a leading service provider in the country. As always, the support of our Friends' groups through challenging financial conditions nationally is most appreciated and valued.

Laura Pye, Head of Culture



◀ *Beautiful Hours, a spin painting by Damien Hirst*
© Bristol Culture/Bristol MGA



Winged Form I by Barbara Hepworth
© Bristol Culture/Bristol MGA ▶

Workshops

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Keeping a sketchbook journal

Tuesday 21 March, 1.30pm – 4.30pm

£25. Book in advance

Keeping an illustrated journal

25 April; 2, 9, 16, 23 May; 6, 13 June, 2pm – 4pm

£52 for seven week course. Book in advance

M Shed

Archaeology day school: The architecture of death

Saturday 11 March, 10.30am – 4pm

£35 adult / £30 concession. Led by Dr. George Nash from the University of Bristol. Age 16+

Bristol Archives

Introduction to house history

Saturday 1 April, 2pm – 4pm

£15 adult / £12 concession. Book in advance. Age 16+.

Exhibitions & Events

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Warrior Treasures

To 23 April 2017

The collection of gold, silver and semi-precious gems from Anglo-Saxon weaponry is part of the Staffordshire Hoard, considered one of the most significant Anglo-Saxon finds. It

almost certainly represents the spoils of war, fought in an ancient kingdom during the 7th century AD.

£5 adult/£4 concession/under 16s free. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult

Booty, baddies and beasties

Thursday 23 March, 7.30pm – 10pm

A monstrous and mysterious evening adventure of theatrical performance, immersive film, dark sounds, and blood curdling storytelling as we slice into the epic poem of Beowulf. Developed with Desperate Men Theatre Co. Age 18+.

£15 adult/£12 concession. Book in advance

Adela Breton: Ancient Mexico in Colour

Temporary Exhibition, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery To 14 May 2017

Adela Breton was one of those remarkable Victorian women who chose to travel rather than stay at home. Through inheritance she was financially independent, and came to devote her life to Mexican archaeology.

We do not know why she chose to visit Mexico in 1892, but she spent months travelling the country with her guide Pablo Solorio, and fell in love with the country. She said that her first interest was geology and ancient sites, but that she gradually became more involved with archaeology. At first



▲ *Lower strip of four - copying the south west panel in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars at Chichén Itzá, 2880 x 833mm. The strip shows the Toltec / Itzá officers' camp near a village they have attacked. Beneath that, running around the whole chamber, is a view of the watery underworld. Ea8171d*
© Bristol Culture/Bristol MGA



▲ *Full-size copy of a priest pouring a libation from 'Beyond door in antechamber. 9?' in a house in Teopancaxco, Teotihuacán. Adela also drew a small sketch of this figure (on display), with a plan of the building on the back showing where the remains of wall paintings (each numbered) were positioned. Ea8362*
© Bristol Culture/Bristol MGA

she was considered an 'unsatisfactory old soul' but moved to become a respected member of the Americanist circle, consulted by the very man who called her ability into question.

Like most Victorian young ladies she was taught accomplishments such as watercolour painting. She used her artistic skills to create her own role in Mexican archaeology, as a copyist of wall paintings at the ruins.

She was not the only person copying wall paintings, but she was the only one who copied them fully, at full size and in accurate colour. She and her work are so important because the originals have slowly gone over the years, and her paintings are the best and most accurate record of what was there. Academics today can rebuild Mexican and Mayan culture through interpretation of the images she preserved. If she had married some eligible young man in Bath, or been a mediocre artist, or had not had that financial independence, then that part of ancient culture would have been lost to us.

M Shed

Wildlife Photographer of the Year

To 5 March 2017

Last chance to see the 2016 world renowned photography competition from the Natural History Museum

Adult: £5/£4 concession/Under 16s free. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

Skeletons – our buried bones

Saturday 8 April – Sunday 3 September

12 human skeletons from Bristol and London, each with a unique story to tell. A young man, buried without ceremony in South Gloucestershire 3,500 years ago; a Roman couple found in a single stone coffin; and a child from a Victorian burial ground. They reflect society's rich and varied past and the changing face of the places we live and work in today.

Pay what you think

Digging up human stories: recent archaeology in the South West

Thursday 27 April

A one-day symposium for anyone with an interest in the human stories beneath our feet. Learn about recent finds and new research from the experts involved.

10.30am – 4.30pm. £15/£12 concession. Book in advance

An introduction to human remains

Saturday 6 May

Learn how to age and sex skeletal remains; how to recognise evidence of disease and trauma; and discover what human remains can reveal about individual life histories and past populations. Age 16+

10.30am – 4pm. £35 adult / £30 concession. Book in advance

Bristol Archives

City Hall: home of democracy in Bristol

Until Friday 26 May

An exhibition featuring photographs, documents and film charting the history of City Hall and the role of Bristol's civic centres in democracy in the city.

No admission fee – donations welcome

From the Chairman

Council Consultation on Budget Cuts

As you know from our last newsletter, and extensive coverage in the local media, Bristol City Council recently carried out a consultation exercise on the huge budget cuts that they need to make over the next 3 years. The consultation closed in January, and my efforts as Chairman in the last quarter of 2016 were focussed largely on encouraging members and others to make their views known. The online process was far from easy to follow, so thanks are due to the many of you who persevered through the multiple steps involved and did respond to the survey.

Once the consultation period closed, the council did modify their proposals for the museums, and many other proposed cuts. It seems likely as I write that the revised proposals will be approved by Full Council in late February.

Laura Pye, Head of Culture, has outlined the proposals for the Museums' budgets in a separate article on page 2 of the Newsletter and how they will impact on both costs and revenue. At difficult times like this, the staff need our support and Friendship even more than usual. In a purely practical sense, if you can use the cafés, visit the paying exhibitions, buy items from the shops – and encourage your friends and family to do the same – it will all help the service meet the very stretching new revenue targets.

Christmas Fair

I would like to say a big thank-you to everyone who contributed to making the Christmas Fair such a success, raising £900. We were competing with many other events across the city, but the combination of commercial stalls with our own selling cakes, preserves and jigsaws is clearly a winning formula. For me, our fair is the point at which I begin to feel a bit more festive, and I could see that everyone – volunteers, staff, commercial stallholders and visitors – was having a good time.

One of the new features this year was the sale of our own Christmas cards, which proved very popular. That was extra special for me, as they showed an oil painting of Christmas Steps in the snow painted by my dear late father, who passed away almost a year ago now. He was a member, and would have loved to think of his painting helping raise funds and awareness for the Friends. If you missed the cards this year – or if you'd like to buy more – we still have some left and will be selling them on trips and at talks in the autumn.



▲ *The Christmas Fair* © Sue Thurlow

British Association of Friends of Museums

The BAFM National Annual Conference this year will be on Saturday 30 September at the London Transport Museum in Covent Garden, on the theme 'Museums, Members and Friends: A harmonious relationship?' There will be optional trips arranged for the Sunday for those who choose to stay on another day. This is a return visit to the venue, and I remember the particularly warm and enthusiastic welcome we received 6 years ago, so am very much looking forward to it. If you are interested, keep an eye on the BAFM website for further details.

Sue Thurlow Chairman

From the Membership Secretary

Membership is on a steady increase again and we offer a warm welcome to the following new members who have joined the Friends recently:

Miss Ruth Corner	Ms Heather Peters
Mr Colin Cumbleton	Mrs Mary Rood
Mr Charles Franklin	Ms Frances Russell
Mrs Judith Franklin	Dr Guy Saunders
Miss Denise Goodere	Mrs Sally Scott
Mr David Gould	Mrs Brenda Searle
Mrs Ruth Gould	Mr Oliver Spaether
Ms Trish Kemp	Mr John Stevens, M.A.
Mr Robert King	Dr Jill Sullivan
Mr Frank Martin	Ms Catherine Tailby
Mrs Jean Martin	Mrs Rosemary Thomas
Mrs Jane Matthews	Ms Trish White

June Hibberd, Membership Secretary

Four Days in London

November 2016

An Overview

Day 1: November in Neasden! Well, not many holidays start here, but we were going somewhere really special. Our visit to Neasden Hindu Temple proved to be a memorable experience with kindly, courteous guides explaining their faith and the building of the temple.

Day 2: Spitalfields is a fascinating area and our two excellent Blue Badge guides traced the history of the waves of immigrants who arrived in London and settled here. In the afternoon we went to Buckingham Palace to view the 'Portrait of the Artist' exhibition in the Queen's Gallery.

Day 3: We travelled to Greenwich on a perfect, calm and sunny autumn day. We were early visitors to the newly re-opened Queen's House. We wandered around this magnificent building and viewed the splendidly-arranged new

art exhibition and especially the Armada portrait of Queen Elizabeth I recently acquired for the nation for over £9,000,000. Everyone then went off to explore some of the many sights of Greenwich including Greenwich Park and the National Maritime Museum.

Day 4: In Rotherhithe we visited the Brunel Museum. Later we visited Southwark Cathedral and some went off to see sights such as the Old Operating Theatre and the George Inn while others simply wandered around Borough Market admiring the huge varieties of food on display.

Thank you to everyone who made the trip so enjoyable. Thank you especially to Judith who took and organised so many photos, and for everyone else who took photos or wrote a report for the Newsletter.

Wendy Aldridge-Morris

Monday 14 November

Neasden Temple (Shri Swaminarayan Mandir)

Having divested ourselves of shoes and bags (including camera cases), we were taken into the temple (Mandir) before it closed for a service. The present building is the first traditional Mandir in Europe and is very environmentally-friendly. It was opened in 1995 following 2½ years in the making. Almost 2,500 tonnes of Bulgarian limestone and Italian Carrara marble were shipped to India, hand-carved and then shipped to London for assembling by volunteers.

Entering through the Grand Haveli Foyer, we found richly-carved teak columns and oak panels depicting a profusion of geometric patterns, stylised animal heads and flower garlands. We then visited the Inner Sanctum of the Mandir. Silence helped to register the fantastic carvings in marble and ornate shrines housing murtis (sacred images) of the Deities.

Following an Indian lunch in a separate building on the opposite side of the road and visiting the food shop (where every spice seemed available), we returned to have a guided tour and saw the Haveli Prayer Hall. This can seat 2,500 worshippers. Our guide made me feel happy and serene and was clear about his Hindu faith (the word Hindu originally described those who lived around the River Indus). Hindus are vegetarians, do not drink alcohol and have fasting days. However, they do appreciate certain Western customs.

We then visited an exhibition, which showed the Hindus believed they were the first to have religious texts, language (Sanskrit), education (including the world's first university), mathematics, geometry, astronomy and plastic surgery. The Temple is fascinating, especially the hand-carved marble. It is free to visit and a London landmark. Thanks to Wendy Aldridge-Morris for organising this and the whole London visit.

Catherine Dixon



▲ Neasden Hindu Temple



◀ Statues of gods known as Murtis are revered as expressing the Divine Spirit

Photos for the London trip were taken by Judith Jones, Hilary Cleeve, William Hooper, Catherine Dixon, Carol Ouvry and Martin Bailey



▲ *Artillery Passage – scene of Jack the Ripper's final murder*

▼ *Surviving shopfront off Brick Lane, Spitalfields*



Tuesday 15 November

Spitalfields

Typical of many areas to the east of a major city, Spitalfields has a dubious reputation. Thanks to two excellent Blue Badge guides, Mark and Martin, we learned that as early as Roman times there were slum dwellings there. They fascinated us with the complex economic and social history of St Mary's Spital Friary which, from the 1190s, gave succour to the homeless, ill, pregnant and old.

Following the dissolution of the monasteries there was a major influx of Huguenot Protestants escaping persecution in Catholic France. They flourished in Spitalfields as silk weavers and traders, establishing rows of terraced houses such as Fournier Street and shops such as Verde and Co which have been restored to recall the Huguenot times.

The Huguenots were replaced in the mid-1700s by Irish weavers building on the area's reputation for fabrics. The district suffered poverty, many gin houses were established and prostitutes frequented the streets. The Church of England fought back by building churches in the depressed areas. Nicholas Hawksmoor's Christ Church, consecrated in 1729, is an example of this evangelism, as was the later establishment of Toynbee Hall, from which evangelists and carers in the community worked. William Beveridge worked there and Clement Attlee was President. After his disgrace in the 1970s John Profumo atoned for his notoriety by serving there. In the 1880s, the Irish were succeeded by an influx of Jews escaping the pogroms in Russia. Some 200,000 Jews fled Russia for the UK with many settling in run-down Spitalfields. They created over 100 synagogues but only one remains today.

The cultural mix continued into the 1970s with large numbers of Bangladeshi immigrants taking over areas such as Brick Lane which has become known as the 'Curry Mile'. When the large fruit and vegetable market moved to Leyton, traders took over the space creating an exciting market full of stalls and coffee shops.

The neighbourhood has always had interesting residents – the hairdresser 'Jack the Clipper' reminds us of Jack the Ripper's dismembering his victims in the area; Ike Solomon (a local 'fence' and the model for Fagin) lived in Bell Lane; Tracy Emin and Gilbert and George have studios there.

David McGregor

The Queen's Gallery

We were there to view a new exhibition 'Portrait of the Artist' which contains over 300 objects including paintings, drawings, prints and photographs from the 15th to the 21st century. This is the first exhibition to focus on images from artists within the Royal Collection. It includes self-portraits of world-renowned artists including Rembrandt, Freud and Hockney. It also features images of artists by friends, relatives and pupils including a likeness of Leonardo de Vinci by his pupil, Francesco Melzi.

Images of artists increasingly appeared from the 15th Century onwards. Artists saw self-portraits as a way to demonstrate their accomplishments and assert their status as intellectuals. Many people wanted to own images of those artists deemed to be exceptional and inspirational – a forerunner of modern day celebrity.

After viewing the exhibition an alternative venue was found for refreshments as there was no offer forthcoming of tea/coffee and cakes at the Palace!

Sarah Bradfield



▲ *Cristofano Allori 1527–1621, Judith with the head of Holofernes 1613*

'Portrait of the Artist' Exhibition at The Queens's Gallery – A Personal Perspective

▼ **Willi Soukop 1907–1995,**
A sculptor in his studio
1976

This was a fascinating if, at times, rather overwhelming exhibition of how artists, their friends and pupils see themselves through paintings, drawings, prints, photographs and decorative arts. Extensive and illuminating, it takes the viewer from the 15th century to the present day.

Here is the sculptor Bernini at the age of 80 looking, as the Times describes him, 'straight out of Dickens'; the most reliable surviving likeness of Leonardo da Vinci; the lovely double portrait of Joos van Cleve and his wife; a self-portrait of Rembrandt in 1642, and a small likeness of an ageing Rubens.

In 1638, Charles I acquired Artemisia Gentileschi's portrayal of herself made while she was working in England and which, we are told, hung in his private breakfast room. This is, arguably, the highlight of the Exhibition. Moving on we see Edith Vigee le Brun at her easel, brush in hand, painting herself. Landseer, meanwhile, is seated drawing while his two dogs look on. Lucian Freud stares forbiddingly out at the viewer; while David Hockney merely looks glum. Another beautiful exhibit is the Sèvres tea set decorated with portraits of all the great artists including Michelangelo, Raphael and Poussin.

One newspaper commented that, 'Artists are slippery beasts'. Perhaps so, but this Exhibition is a significant tribute to their genius

Brenda Thomas



Wednesday 16 November

The Queen's House

This Palladian building, designed by Inigo Jones who had been inspired by a grand tour of Italy, is an architectural masterpiece that brought Classical style for the first time to England. It was commissioned by Anne of Denmark, wife of King James I in 1616. Unfortunately she died before it was completed in 1638 so it was first enjoyed by Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, and from that time passed on from Queen to Queen up to the 19th century. Each Queen brought to it the finest art of the time.

The house now has 22 rooms, each with its own theme, containing 450 historical and contemporary works of art. Of special interest was the Great Hall ceiling, Turner prize winner Richard Wright's elegant response to the geometric beauty of the Queen's House painted with gold leaf in 2016. A noted example of fine art in the King's Presence Chamber was Orazio Gentileschi's painting of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife. In the Queen's Presence Chamber celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the Queens House and on permanent display for the first time, was the Armada Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I.

It was a special pleasure to linger in the Orangery admiring the view over Greenwich Park as many a Queen had done before.

William Hooper



◀ **The Armada portrait of Queen Elizabeth I**

The Tulip Staircase in The Queen's House ▶



Detail of the Tulip Staircase spindles ▶





▲ *The National Maritime Museum Greenwich*

Greenwich Observatory

It's worth the climb up the hill to the Observatory just to see the view over the Thames to Canary Wharf and beyond. Once there you can stand astride the Greenwich Meridian, see a range of telescopes developed by various Astronomers Royal, explore Flamsteed House and plenty more.

The Observatory was commissioned by Charles II in 1675 and played a major role in the history of astronomy and navigation. The main building is named after John Flamsteed, whom he appointed the first Astronomer Royal, and houses a museum of astronomical and navigational instruments. Here you will find a good explanation of the importance of accurate timekeeping in solving 'the longitude problem', knowing with sufficient accuracy how far east or west a ship has sailed from its home port. There is a wonderful display showing the development of more and more accurate clocks, including Harrison's H4, my favourite. It is a beautiful watch to look at and was so accurate that it was out by just 5 seconds in 6 weeks. It took Harrison about 4 years to develop and was completed in 1759. But it took another 13 years and the intervention of George III for it to be agreed to award him the £20,000 Longitude Prize, by which time he was too old to enjoy it!

Susan Pears

▼ *Nelson's ship in a bottle, by Yinka Seringapatam 1981 India. Relocated from the fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square*



The Fan Museum, Greenwich

This exquisite museum, which was founded in 1991, is housed in two adjoining Grade II listed townhouses, built in 1721, complete with an orangery overlooking a secret Japanese garden. It contains over 4,000 fans based on the vast collection assembled by Helene Alexander the current director. The permanent exhibition shows the history of fans and how they are made and used.

The earliest exhibit is a unique, fragile, folding fan dating from c1590, with a silk mount and ivory sticks and is in almost perfect condition. Richly embroidered fans are typical of the Elizabethan period and one example can be seen in the Ditchley portrait of Elizabeth I where the fan is connected to her waist by a ribbon. The craft of fan-making flourished in England as a result of the influx of skilled Huguenot craftsmen.

Fixed fans were much used in North America to advertise banks, shops and even funeral parlours. This type of use caught on in Britain and there are many of these fans on display advertising liveries, buildings and popular scenes including one showing views of Clifton produced by J. Newman in 1870. Amongst the highlights of the museum are two fans designed by Walter Sickert and Paul Gauguin.

▼ *Two exotic fans from the museum collection*



Wendy Aldridge-Morris

See more at <https://www.thefanmuseum.org.uk/>



▲ The Cutty Sark

Cutty Sark

Towards the end of our London excursion we visited Greenwich primarily to visit the Queen's House and from there we could choose what we wanted to visit. Some of us chose to visit the *Cutty Sark* which is now a Grade I listed Historic Ship. This tea-trading ship, built on the Clyde in 1869, was one of the last of its kind. At one time this clipper was the fastest of its type but later steam ships were faster and could take shorter routes to and from China. This ship then carried bales of wool from Australia and general cargo such as the packed-up piano and other musical instruments on display. In 1872 her mixed cargo contained baking powder, cocoa, brandy, sherry, wine, hops, malt, seeds, drugs, mercury and other chemicals, oils and paints, timber, spades, nails, paper, matches, books machinery and other miscellaneous items for export.

When the ship returned to Britain with a light wool cargo, she would carry 200 tons of chrome or nickel as ballast.

The *Cutty Sark* went through several incarnations when her Australian days were over and in later years was used as a cadet training ship.

Now her adventures have come to an end and she is in a dry dock as a permanent display enthralling visitors who come to learn the history of this magnificent ship.

Hilary Cleeve



A collection of ships' figureheads ►

Emma Hamilton: Seduction and Celebrity

After visiting the Queen's House in Greenwich, and viewing the Armada portrait which has recently been acquired for the nation, I went to the Maritime Museum to view the exhibition about Emma Hamilton. Largely remembered as the mistress of Admiral Horatio Nelson, Emma was an extraordinary woman in her own right. Over 200 objects, paintings and letters portrayed her spectacular career from rags to riches and back again.



Born into poverty in 1765, Emma became a muse for famous artists including George Romney and Sir Joshua Reynolds. She became an influential ambassador's wife when she married Sir William Hamilton; and then a European cultural icon whilst living in Naples.

Emma met Nelson in 1798 when the Royal Navy fleet returned to Naples after the Battle of the Nile. They became lovers until Nelson's death during the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Emma was left inconsolable and in debt. Without protectors Emma was arrested and imprisoned. On her release she fled to Calais where she died in 1815. She was buried in Calais in the graveyard of the Eglise de St Pierre. Her grave has since disappeared and a memorial now stands in the Parc Richelieu nearby.

Sarah Bradfield

Thursday 17 November

Brunel Museum

Our coach took us along the Old Kent Road. We parked near the *Mayflower* pub at the sites of the *Mayflower* sailing in 1620 and the construction adit for the Brunel tunnel where work started in 1825. This tunnel, a truly remarkable enterprise, was undertaken by Marc Brunel and formed part of the education and training of his son Isambard who, aged 20, was employed as resident engineer for the works.

The original concept was to form a way for horses and carts to cross under the river Thames between Wapping (North) and Rotherhithe (South). At that time the upper reaches of the Thames were overwhelmed by fleets of sailing vessels wanting to use the myriads of docks lining both sides of the river. It was said that the quickest way for foot passengers to cross the river was to stride across from boat to boat! The elder Brunel conceived the idea that a tunnel wide enough to allow two lanes of horse-drawn traffic to flow simultaneously would facilitate collection and distribution of ships' cargoes, and provide a huge source of revenue to finance its construction.



But no tunnel of this width had ever been constructed beneath a river before. There were two basic problems: firstly, how to sink two large diameter vertical shafts – one on either side of the river – through the muddy, porous and treacherous banks and secondly, how to drive a horizontal tunnel connecting the two shafts underneath the river itself.

The techniques used were ingenious then, and are still used today, albeit with more mechanisation and stronger materials. The tunnel was opened in 1843 but the road access (twin tunnels spiralling from the surface down to the floor of the tunnel) was never completed, and the tunnel eventually realised its greatest amount of revenue from sightseers, like ourselves, paying to visit it! Eventually the tunnel was re-engineered to take electric underground trains.

We entered at ground level and went down a staircase. We were able to hear and feel the rumble of the tube trains beneath us.

The smooth walls of the shaft carry a projection screen and an information display. Our guide Tim, a locally-based actor in period dress, gave us a fascinating slide show and explanatory talk of its history and workings.

Harry Hibberd

◀ *The engine house outside the entrance to the Grand Entrance Hall*

Southwark Cathedral

After our visit to the Brunel Museum some of our party disappeared to visit the Tate and others to Borough Market to purchase food from every part of the globe. A few visited the Old Operating Theatre Museum at Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals (after climbing up a very narrow and very steep spiral staircase). This unique, atmospheric museum is hidden in the timbered Herb Garret of St. Thomas's Church. Described as ancient in 1215, this hospital run by Augustinian monks and nuns was dedicated to St. Thomas à Becket. It was not a place for the faint-hearted!

We found it by accident when looking for The George Inn – built in 1677 and the only remaining galleried inn in London. It was like stepping back in time when we walked through the large gateway that would have been used by horses and carriages. Charles Dickens visited The George, which is mentioned in *Little Dorrit*.

There was just time to have a look at the ruins of the Palace of the Bishop of Winchester, and Sir Francis Drake's *Golden Hinde*, before joining up with the rest of the Friends at Southwark Cathedral. It is the oldest cathedral building in London with a church on this site since 606 AD and archaeological evidence shows there was Roman Pagan worship here well before that.

We entered via Lancelot's Link – a new corridor – opened by Nelson Mandela in 2001. A Pilgrim's Staff is used as door handles into the Cathedral.

We entered the Nave. My first impression – after the height – was of the blue windows behind the altar and beautiful stained glass everywhere. Edwin Shakespeare is buried here and a reclining statue of his brother, William, has been worn colourless where people have touched his knee or his hand (which carries a bunch of rosemary for remembrance). A stained glass window depicts many characters from his plays.

This is a very beautiful Cathedral and we really needed a lot longer to be able to take everything in. However, it was time for our marathon drive back to Bristol. After the obvious crawl across London – every light seemed to go red – we hit a rainstorm of biblical proportions. To crown it all, an accident on the M4 forced us through pitch-dark, narrow country lanes and villages in Wiltshire until we reached Bristol safely. We were lucky to have such a wonderful driver. Wendy, thank you so much for organising such a wonderfully interesting and jam-packed 4 days. If anyone is reading this and planning a visit to Southwark, do find time to visit the Cathedral. It is very beautiful.

Ceri Addis



▲ *Southwark Cathedral showing the outside of the four chapels*



▲ *Roof boss from the collapsed ceiling of Priory Church Southwark Cathedral showing the devil swallowing Judas Iscariot*

Royal Mint Llantrisant and Llandaff, Cardiff

Tuesday 1 November 2016

Having crossed the Severn through a mist at very low tide, we arrived at the Royal Mint in brilliant sunshine. Security cameras were evident in the car park and the building had an ominous wire fence but inside the staff gave us an ebullient Welsh welcome as we passed through security (scissor-carriers beware) and walked between raised flowerbeds to an enclosed exhibition and viewing area.

Our bubbly Welsh guide explained that the Mint had first opened its doors to visitors only a few months before. We learned the extent and intricacies of the coin-making process and exclaimed in astonishment on learning of the billions of coins made annually. The machines first cut coin-shaped blanks from rolls of metal whose metallic components vary depending on the value and nationality of the coins being made. Next the inscription is inscribed on the circumference, the bevelling added and then the front and back patterns punched simultaneously. The massive bins where the finished coins were poured were taken away by forklift trucks for inspection and packing. Coins for collectors were polished further and checked for imperfections.

The Mint has a large museum containing many exhibits tracing the history from the early beginnings of town mints and the mint in the Tower of London in the 1200s where coins were struck by hand. By 1800, the Mint had moved to a large building on Tower Hill which housed steam-powered stamping machines. After 150 years there the Mint was redeployed in 1966, at the instigation of Jim Callaghan, the Chancellor of the



▲ Penny Lane Mini covered in old pennies in the entrance hall to The Royal Mint



▲ Elizabeth I silver shilling



▲ The Royal Mint Seal engraved by John Croker, c 1709



Exchequer and MP for Cardiff, to South Wales, where pits were closing and there were few new jobs.

There are too many interesting exhibits to describe here but most notable was the Mint's work producing coinage for at least 50 other countries, whose coins were shown alongside their flags. It was clear that coins of different shapes could be produced including the new pound coin with twelve sides and a bi-metal core, which will be released in the UK in 2017. The museum had interactive games for children, which the adults loved too.

Moving to Llandaff, we looked at the cathedral set near the river Taff down a steep slope from the atmospheric town green with ruins of the bell tower and Bishops Castle. Most people know about Jacob Epstein's Christ in Majesty dominating the nave but may not realise that it is placed on a circular organ pipe case decorated with small gilded statues from the Victorian choir stalls. There are also works by and links with Rossetti, Burne-Jones and William Morris.

When we were there the organ was being played and the cathedral had the feel of a well-used and loved building. Finally some of us sampled a Welsh tea in Jasper's tearooms named after Jasper Tudor, the donor of the 15th century cathedral tower.

Marianne Pitman

▲ Jacob Epstein's Christ in Majesty in Llandaff Cathedral

Photos by Ann Wood

Warrior Treasures

Friday 25 November 2016

In 2009 Terry Herbert, a metal detectorist exploring a farmer's field near Lichfield, Staffordshire, unearthed something that looked gold and ancient. There followed an archaeological dig which unearthed the 'Staffordshire Hoard', the largest and most exciting collection of Anglo-Saxon weapons and other artefacts ever found. Altogether there were 4000 pieces, worth £3.258 million, although they would all have fitted into a carrier bag!

Bristol Museum has displayed some of these fragments of immensely artistic artefacts to splendid advantage in a dark and brooding atmosphere, accentuated by sounds of hooting owls, yelping foxes, the rumbling of wooden carts and the tramp of many 'Anglo-Saxon' feet. There were short films to demonstrate the detailed work that has gone into the cleaning of, and research into, the items.

The find has been dated to 650 to 675 AD, though some items are even older. This era, 1,300 years ago, was a time of tremendous upheaval, with the kingdom of Mercia, where the hoard was found, at its largest and most aggressive. By this time King Penda of Mercia had already killed 5 other Anglo-Saxon kings in his bid to make Mercia the most powerful kingdom in Britain. In addition, Christianity began its progress into Britain, with consequent mingling of pagan and Christian beliefs. It is thought that the hoard had probably been buried after a battle, and that the items had been wrenched from their proper places on heads and swords and clothing, perhaps to keep as booty, or as ransom, or to bestow on loyal followers. Swords, highly decorated, were of great significance to an Anglo-Saxon warrior, representing ties to his lord, his family, his manhood, his funeral rites, and most of all in battle (of which there were many).

Gail Boyle, the senior curator of archaeology at Bristol Museum, gave us a clear and informative introductory talk, pointing out the amazing intricacy of the gold filigree work, the ornate representations of animals, the cloisonné work, with many beautiful garnets (probably from the Czech Republic or northern India), set into the gold and silver. There were items from swords, from seaxes (a Saxon knife), from helmets, from processional crosses. They were suspended in glass cases, and lit up individually, while the dark surrounding threw them into relief. With the aid of magnifying glasses we were able to confirm the staggeringly detailed work on the often very tiny pieces. I asked myself, how did the artists manage to make such exquisitely detailed work without any such aids? It appears that 'The Dark Ages' is somewhat of a misnomer when we view these amazing 7th century works of art.

Thank you very much Carol Ouvry for arranging this visit.

Sue Black



▲ Gold and garnet fitting with two animals/birds



▲ Gold seax hilt with zoomorphic interlace worked in garnets, single animals in panels



▲ Stylised seahorse with filigree decoration



▼ Gold and garnet sword pyramid with figures of birds



Photos ©
Birmingham
Museum Trust

Selsey and the Museum in the Park in Stroud

Tuesday 8 November 2016

The visit to Selsey and Stroud was a delight! We travelled through glorious Cotswold countryside where autumnal colours everywhere complemented the honey-coloured cottages often pictured on calendars.

All Saints, Selsey, is a very special place with its saddle-back tower tempting visitors to pay a call. The walk through the churchyard past red-berried yew trees leads to the last of the Cotswold Wool Churches, built on land paid for by mill owner and Member of Parliament Samuel Stephens Marling. George Frederick Bodley was the architect chosen to design the Church built from local limestone quarried on Selsey Common with weatherstone from another famous common at Minchinhampton. Bodley was friends with the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood in the 1850s and contributed towards the setting up of Morris & Co. The resulting artistic and intellectual influence on Selsey is stunning especially with the windows created by William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, and other talented artists.

The fabulous windows all round the Church follow the same ideals of John Ruskin and tell Biblical stories in a simple way with characters wearing mediaeval clothes. There was a fantastic Rose Window. We were invited to 'take a pew' where we were served with coffee and delicious home-made cakes before we had guided talks inside and outside the Church. Catering for visitors helps to pay the high costs of running such an important church, where the local congregation is small but enthusiastic to share their treasure.

After lunch in the local pub we travelled to Stroud to the Museum in the Park where, with Lottery grants, it has been possible to put a modern building with generous galleries next to a large established manor house. We saw a fine exhibition of prints before exploring the many small rooms in the main building. It was like taking a journey through a series of 'Cabinets of Curiosities', where every room had well-displayed treasures dedicated to a special theme. I particularly noticed the first lawnmower invented and made in Stroud and an early chainsaw which looked decidedly mediaeval. There was a fine Adam and Eve Bristol Delft plate and the weathercock from St Mary's Church, Painswick, which is the inspiration for the Museum's logo. I must just mention the very first adjustable spanner - one of the more important inventions of all time!

I find it hard to condense all the interesting things we saw on this visit and thank Ruth for organising it.

PS The last time I wrote for the Newsletter was the day after the nation voted for Brexit. This time it was the day the USA voted for Mr. Trump. Maybe I shouldn't write again!

Sue Stops



▲ Friends gather in All Saints Church, Selsey

Photo by Hilary Cleeve



▲ A collection of kitchen utensils

Photo © Museum in the Park



◀ The Manor House at The Museum in the Park

Photo © Museum in the Park

Horizon House

Wednesday 21 September 2016

As a leading sustainable building, Horizon House (one of two national head offices for the Environment Agency) is a far cry from the offices where, back in the 1950s, I endeavoured to read my inadequate shorthand in order to produce a satisfactory letter. For a start, they try as hard as possible to avoid using any paper at all!

We enjoyed the welcome and guided tour round this attractive, environmentally-sustainable building in Deanery Road. It is warm, quiet, light and airy and the sky can be seen all around through thermostatically-controlled windows. People work quietly at computers or laptops in the open plan spaces on balconies – sometimes meeting up at tables where they can discuss work or in partitioned areas for more serious consultations.

We walked on re-cycled carpet past beautifully-designed recycling bins. We saw the attractive café and also the 'tea stations' for quick brews. The black mugs were decorated with white letters stating 'Solar-powered building. Tea-powered staff'.

We visited the top floor with its stunning views and the roof garden planted with wildflower beds (rather 'over' now but obviously lovely earlier in the year). In the basement we marvelled at the immaculate plant room with its huge tank of water from the roof which gets recycled to supply the loos. The heating is controlled from this room, some of which is dependent on heat extracted from the earth deep beneath the building.

Transport and getting to and from work has been well-considered. There were a few parking spaces for cars, but the many people who travel on bikes have secure parking in the basement where there are showers and drying rooms.

This fascinating visit to such a well-designed and good-looking sustainable building where they 'practise what they preach' was inspiring. The only unfriendly thing I saw were spikes on the outside balcony designed to keep pigeons and gulls at bay! Thanks to Carol Ouvry for organizing the trip.

Sue Stops

Find out more at
<http://bristolopeningdoors.org/horizon-house/#>



▲ *The green glass canopies and entrance were designed by Kate Maestri. They create a flow of colour round the building and are a visual link with the stained glass of Bristol Cathedral opposite.*

Photo by Mary Bailey

A date for your diary

Here is advanced news of an exciting trip that will take place towards the end of the year.

The Vyne, near Basingstoke

Tuesday 8 August 2017

This is a visit with a difference: a rooftop tour (accessible by lift) of this NT Tudor mansion to view the restoration project, plus ground-floor rooms containing collections of furniture and objects and a display on the history of the property.

The application form for this event will be with the next newsletter.

The Create Centre

Wednesday 20 July 2016

The Create Centre is housed close to the Cumberland Basin in one of three bonded warehouses built for the tobacco industry by the City Council in the first decade of the 20th century. Still owned by the Council, it is now a hub for sustainability. Its name is derived from its purpose: Community Recycling Education and Training.

Phil Tomlinson, Centre Officer, gave us an extremely informative talk on the history of the buildings and the philosophy of the Centre. The 30 organizations housed there are all involved in sustainability, providing consultancy and support to professionals and to the general public. The upper floors are used for storage by libraries, Bristol Museums, Bristol Archives and as a bicycle store.

After debating what is meant by 'sustainability', and the central importance of conservation in this, we separated into two groups to visit the Ecohome and the Life Skills Centre. In the Ecohome we saw and discussed all the sustainable construction techniques it showcases to the building industry.

We were lucky to see the Life Skills Centre as not only is this not normally open to the public, but it was scheduled to undergo a complete makeover, starting the next day, to increase the capacity due to the huge increase in demand for its education services.

This centre gives true-to-life experience of hazards encountered in everyday life, many very alarming. We estimated how far it takes for a car to stop even at slow speeds. The dangers of going onto railway tracks were demonstrated. Going under the barrier triggered the extremely realistic sound of an approaching train and, although we were aware that this was simulated, many of us had our hearts in our mouths! The result of a house fire was also graphically shown. As well as alerting visitors to common dangers, and dire warnings of what might happen, the centre teaches strategies to avoid or deal with everyday problems. This is a fantastic facility offering Life Skills training to all Bristol's primary pupils.

Carol Ouvry



▲ The Create Centre and the Ecohome

Photo by Carol Ouvry

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