

Newsletter

Illustrated Talk

Missing? Presumed emigrated!

Saturday 9 July 2016

Shirley Hodgson gave her talk at the M shed against a background of Gay Pride revelling and a steam train rumbling below the windows. However we were held mesmerised and shocked as we heard the story of how more than 100,000 children were forcefully 'emigrated' to Canada from Britain over the course of at least 70 years, mostly between about 1869 and 1916. At least 1,400 were sent from the Bristol area. These were poor children from deprived backgrounds, such as workhouses, industrial schools, reformatories, ragged schools, orphanages, children's homes, and some even offered by their parents. They were shipped from ports such as Bristol and Newport, and received in Canada at places such as Pier 21 in Halifax Nova Scotia. A postcard of Pier 21 showed wan faces of children peering through a train window. Siblings were often split up, letters not delivered, families permanently split.

Extraordinarily, one of the most prolific shippers of children was Thomas John Barnardo, from whose homes 23,000 children were sent to Canada. Most of the adults involved in this movement would declare it was in the children's best interests, but some also had pecuniary interests, such as Mark Whitwill who ran the Great Western Steamship Company whose ships took the children. Some members of the church also supported sending children away, to save them from destitution and starvation, the corruption of city life, their 'wicked' parents, and to send them so far away there was no hope of reclaiming them and bringing them back under the 'malign' influences. We were reminded that values in the Victorian era were very different to those of today.

The children's treatment in Canada was very variable. Mostly they seem to have been treated as servants in households or on farms, often they lived in outhouses, and were not treated as family. The younger ones (some even as young as 6) were taught in children's homes at first before being farmed out. Most were deprived of love and affection, and of a normal family life. A report in 1876 by Andrew Doyle was scathing about the lack of supervision of the children. One of the organising women involved (Maria Rye) had influential friends, and so his report was shelved for 20 years.

Shirley gave us poignant details about some individual children and their histories. The remarkable fact is that 11% of Canadians are descendants of these British Home children. Recently there has been renewed interest in this forgotten and shameful part of our history. The Canadian government declared 2010 to be the 'Year of the British Home Child'. Also in 2010 Prime Minister Gordon Brown issued an official apology for this child resettlement programme. Many thanks to Shirley for this revelatory talk.

Sue Black



▲ *Emigrant children eating lunch on the dockside*

Photos courtesy of
Shirley Hodgson

▼ *A Canadian school in 1900*



From the Chairman

Record- breaking year for funds raised

Thanks to our splendid volunteers, in particular the Programme Committee and their regular supporters, our activities in the year to 30 June 2016 raised a magnificent and record-breaking £25,000, all of which will be used to support Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives. I am sure that all the members would like to join me in congratulating and thanking the Programme Committee and their helpers for their dedication and creativity in organising and delivering such a varied and appealing calendar of events.

Our 2-day book, cake and drinks sale at the Harbour Festival in 2015 was a major contributor to this sum, and our sale at this year's Festival a few weeks ago again raised £1,300. It was great fun, and an opportunity to chat to fellow volunteers, members, and visitors. My thanks to Andy King and his team who made us feel very welcome in L Shed, and made sure we had everything we needed.



▲ Harbour Festival - cakes for sale

Annual General Meeting and social event

I am looking forward to our AGM evening on Tuesday 20 September at M Shed. The formal business is kept to around half an hour to leave plenty of time for the entertainment, which this year includes some long-hidden short films from the British Empire & Commonwealth collection. Do please come if you can – there will be some light refreshments available, and an opportunity to chat with members of the committee and other Friends old and new. Detailed information is included in the loose pages.

Our Treasurer

Nicholas King, our Treasurer, will be standing down at the AGM. He has done a great job keeping our accounts in good order and advising the executive committee of our financial position. I know that programme organisers in particular have really appreciated the efficiency and speed with which he supports them. Thank you, Nicholas.

Making good use of funds raised

In the past few months we have agreed funding requests from the museum for a wide variety of purposes. These include the public Winter Lectures Series; Talking Heads (a creative workshop for year 5&6 children creating puppets and using them to explore portraiture); a portrait of Comanche Chief Tachaco to add to the Native North American collection, a hands-on primary school programme on Iron Age life and crafts; and a very rare Bristol Mint silver penny from the disputed reign of Queen Matilda, 1139 – 45. If you would like to know more, have a look at our website.



▲ Harbour Festival - book sale

Photos by Sue Thurlow

Recruiting new members

One vital ingredient in our recipe for success is a thriving general membership – and that means we need a steady stream of new members joining us. So you can help with recruitment. We have enclosed a membership form with the newsletter. You know what we offer: this award-winning newsletter; invitations to around 60 varied and appealing events each year (many including cake); inside information on what is happening in the museums service; opportunities to meet people with similar interest (including museum staff); tailored information about volunteering roles with us and at the museum; and much more. If you know people who are not sure whether membership is for them, why not let them read this newsletter, then bring them along to an event and introduce them to existing members to learn how truly Friendly we are?

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 20 September 2016 - 6.30pm at M Shed

Enclosed in this newsletter you will find a formal notice of the AGM, a nomination form and a copy of our annual report. The business of the meeting will be kept to a minimum and will be followed by three interesting speakers giving us brief insights into,

- Some archive film footage from the British Empire and Commonwealth collection
- The Tachaco portrait
- Current issues in the museum service

Refreshments will be provided as usual.

Do please come along as we like to get feedback from our members and this is an opportunity for you to express your views.

Election of officers

The current officers of Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives are: Sue Thurlow, Chairman; Katherine Martin, Secretary; Nicholas King, Treasurer; and June Hibberd, Membership Secretary. Sue, Katherine and June are willing to stand again; Nicholas wishes to resign his post so a new Treasurer will need to be elected.

Election of Executive Committee members

The remaining elected members of the committee are: Clive Burlton, Colin Edwards, Gary Gostelow, Shirley Hodgson and Brian Vincent. All except Colin and Clive (who have reached the end of their terms of office and are therefore not eligible to stand) are willing to stand for election. We can fill up to eight places on the committee so additional nominations are very welcome. If you are interested, please complete the nomination form enclosed and return it to the Secretary.

Dates for your diary

Here is an event to whet your appetite for the next quarter.

Glamorgan Archives

Tuesday 7 February 2017

A visit to this extensive archive, containing over 180,000 items including papers, plans, photos, parchments, diaries and council items relevant to much of South Wales. It is situated in Cardiff and contains a vast variety of material from the area.

We will be given a full behind-the-scenes tour and also see how specialist boxes are made to house the collection. Refreshments will be provided on arrival. Allie Dillon, Senior Archivist from the Bristol Record office, will accompany us.

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

Membership Secretary's Report 2016

Figures are slightly down this year as opposed to last: 307 single (316), 302 joint (326). This is due partly to resignations and partly to 'write offs' of members who never got round to increasing their subscription when it went up at the beginning of 2014. Still, you know the saying that it is quality not quantity that counts! We will be having a membership drive again in September.

A bit of trivia for you. Most of our members live in the BS9 postcode area, followed by BS8 and BS6 although BS21 to 49 together outnumber BS9. We even have one member in Brazil.

June Hibberd, Membership Secretary

From the Membership Secretary

We offer a warm welcome to the following members who have joined the Friends recently:

June Hibberd, Membership Secretary

Ms Lucy Bailey
Ms Sally Juniper
Mrs Danny McCall

Ms Jan Morrison
Ms Sandy Pennycuik
Mrs Carol Trelawney-Ross

Mrs Pamela Williams

You will find a membership form is enclosed with this newsletter for you to encourage your friends to join the organisation. Members who join after 1 October receive fifteen months membership for the price of twelve.

June Hibberd, Membership Secretary

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

The new Mayor and Deputy Mayor continue to make clear their support for culture in the city as a key part of a healthy society, but the result of the referendum on membership of the European Union means that it is now unlikely that Bristol will bid to be European Capital of Culture 2023. The Council faces very significant targets for reductions in expenditure over the current and following three years and so your Bristol Culture team are working hard to reduce costs and increase income as part of the overall drive within the Council.

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

A new 'Welcome Desk' is being piloted in the entrance area (porte cochere) of the Museum & Art Gallery. Visitors are greeted by a member of staff who hands out a floor plan and explains to first-time visitors what there is to see inside. They will also be encouraged to make a donation if they so wish. The pilot runs until October and will be extended if successful. One of the challenges of the museum building is that it is hard to see inside and so new visitors can easily be deterred from entering; it is hoped a friendly welcome will increase foot fall. Donations go to the Bristol Museum Development Trust (BMDT), which is not a membership body and so complements the fund-raising work of our Friends' organisations.

M Shed

'The Story of Children's Television from 1946 to Today' exhibition at M Shed sees the introduction of automatic barriers for the exhibition gallery. Visitors to charged-for exhibitions, like this one, can buy a ticket on line before getting to M Shed or at the ground floor reception/ desk. A similar system will also be introduced to the temporary exhibition gallery at the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. Travelling exhibitions bought in are charged (always with one or two free days) and exhibitions developed in-house are 'pay what you think' on exit.

M Shed worked together with Churngold and CP Hire Company to put an event on for St Mungo's homeless charity. Members of St Mungo's, working with professional artists, made some large vinyl print blocks, 6 feet by 4 feet. A road roller then drove over them acting as a press. The finished products were displayed in the control room of Redcliffe Bridge for July and August, and are now to be auctioned in aid of St Mungo's.

Improvements continue at Blaise Castle House Museum

Following a public consultation, the future focus of Blaise is clear for the first time in many years: a family-friendly site that is rooted and appreciated in its local community.

In the Picture Room, the damaged wallpaper has been fixed, and we have restored a sense of balance and proportion to the room by thinning out the paintings and placing a large mirror over the fireplace. This brings the room much closer to its original design and decoration.



Road Roller acting as a printing press and the finished print revealed



The dining room has also received a sensitive makeover. The 1987 displays of Blaise history have been removed, and all of the content has been retained for future use. The old carpet is gone and the room has been repainted so the beauty of the room, with its original plaster work and casts, can be appreciated.

The hallway at Blaise has been opened up by moving the shop to the dining room.

New this year is our children's dressing up space with lots of fun pieces to try on, and we have also re-displayed some of the toy room cases. Some lovely ride-on toys, made by local firm K Toys and dating from the late 1940s, are now on display, along with many dolls and games from the mid-century onwards.

We have bigger changes planned for the upstairs galleries at the museum over the coming two years, as we refocus the displays to reflect the history of the house, family, estate and surrounding villages. There is also the option of creating a temporary exhibition space.

We have spent a lot of time planning our events programme this year,

hoping to attract new visitors with some large scale new events. The first Blaise Easter Egg hunt attracted around 1,000 visitors, and our Enchanted Garden event for Museums at Night in May was a great success, both in terms of visitor numbers and partnership working. We also hosted Bristol's Brilliant Archaeology (part of the national Festival of Archaeology), and the long anticipated return of Goram Fair, with much more to come this year.



▲ *The new mirror in the Blaise Picture Room*

Opportunity to spend summer afternoons in beautiful, historic garden. . . .

We are currently recruiting a small group of volunteers to open Blaise dairy garden this autumn. Working in pairs, the role involves simply being in the garden ready to chat with visitors. The only skills required are a love of gardens or history, and being available for one Sunday afternoon a month. We will provide training and deck chairs! If you are interested, contact Catherine Littlejohns, Senior Curator of Social History, 0117 9039816
Catherine.littlejohns@bristol.gov.uk

Bristol Record Office

Through the project 'Exploring Empire' (funded by the National Cataloguing Grants Programme), we have started to make photographs from the British Empire and Commonwealth Collection available for research. Several film collections are also now available. Catalogues have been published online at museums.bristol.gov.uk and some of these films featured in an international archive film festival at the Watershed in July.

Research project looking at Wi-Fi in museums

One of our Objects Conservators, Amelie Drewdun, has been awarded funds to take part in an international research project investigating the effect of Wi-Fi on vulnerable collections. Wi-Fi uses radio waves to transmit information, and is not considered a threat in any way to human health, but no one has studied if it impacts upon objects in close proximity to transmitters. Amelie was the only successful candidate from UK-based applicants to be awarded funding. Look out for our on-gallery experiment in the coming months!

Working Exhibits

The new workshop area in L Shed is now largely complete – it will enable work to be carried out on the rolling stock under cover. The first item to go in will be locomotive *Henbury's* chassis, to continue her overhaul. Locomotive *Portbury* has returned in good order from her year at Beamish museum and is in time to operate for Bristol Harbour Festival.

M Shed has begun a partnership with a training company to run a series of 3-month apprenticeship schemes for 12 young people who will study rail track maintenance to NVQ level. They will do classroom theory in L Shed and practical work on our railway. This in turn will help take the strain from volunteers who can get on with other projects, leaving track maintenance of the Harbour Railway to this scheme.

The carpenters continue rebuilding the cab front of electric crane No. 29 and the main window will have been refitted by the time you read this. Volunteers are making good progress with painting the outside of the cabs, taking advantage of the summer weather. It has been 25 years since any serious work has been done on the Fairbairn steam crane, and it has been taken out of service for a while to overhaul moving parts and give it a coat of paint.

Pyronaut played host to Timothy West and Prunella Scales



▲ Painting the cab of M Shed Crane 29

when they came to film for their television series touring the inland waterways by narrowboat. To ensure *Pyronaut* looked at her best on screen the deck was repainted, the brass polished, and the volunteer crew dressed in firemen's uniforms.

Exhibitions and Events

M Shed

Summer of Childhood at M Shed featuring 'The Story of Children's Television from 1946 to Today'

Until 25 September

Come face to face with your favourite characters from children's television from Mummy Woodentop and the original Tracy Island model to Blue Peter, the Wombles, Morph and Rastamouse. The exhibition was developed by the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry with Warwick University and the BBC.

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Warrior Treasures – Saxon Gold from the Staffordshire Hoard

22 October 2016 – 23 April 2017

A dazzling collection of gold ornaments studded with blood-red garnets that reveals breath-taking workmanship and sophisticated designs which have challenged our preconceptions of art in the late 600s AD.

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Adela Breton: Ancient Mexico in colour

To 14 May 2017

Artist and traveller, Adela Breton (1849-1923) worked at archaeological sites in Mexico making full-size colour copies of the wall paintings in temples and buildings in Chichén Itzá, Teotihuacan and Acancéh. On display for the first time since the 1940s, her copies in our collections are now the only full record of what was there in the early 1900s.

All photos © BMGA

4-Day Trip to Warwickshire

May 2016

Sunday 8 May

Hailes Abbey

Our first cultural stop, on a lovely sunny day, was Hailes Abbey. Its romantic ruins stand in a beautiful valley near Winchcombe, Gloucestershire. It was founded in 1246 and was much visited by pilgrims as it housed a phial of holy blood. The Abbey was dissolved on Christmas Eve, 1539. On a quiet Sunday morning, it was difficult to imagine the place as a hive of activity but originally it was a busy place with dozens of lay brothers working the farm, and increasing the size of the estate. There is a small, but compact museum containing many artefacts found in the area, including floor tiles, bosses from the ceilings and the bell used for calling to prayer. I was intrigued to hear that the monks spent 11 hours praying. Nearby is Hailes Church founded in 1135, which still has some painted walls.



▲ Part of the ruins of Hailes Abbey



▲ The façade of Ragley Hall

Ragley Hall

Ragley Hall was our next stop and whilst it was tempting to stay all the time in the well-tended gardens in the sun, I did go on a tour of the house (first floor only). It is still lived in by the Marquess of Hertford and his family, his son being the Earl of Yarmouth. All the furniture is and has been used by the family through generations and not bought in just for show. For me one of the most interesting parts was the modern mural The Temptation on the staircase, painted by Graham Rust between 1969 and 1983. Whilst being modern, the inclusion of the family and exotic animals make it fit in with its surroundings. Also in the same hallway was a glass

case holding the robe worn at two Coronations and showing 4 rows and 3 rows of studs on either side of the fur collar, signifying it was worn by the Marquess.

Thank you to Wendy Aldridge-Morris for organising such an interesting trip.

Catherine Dixon

The photos for the Warwickshire trip were taken by Catherine Dixon, Hilary Cleeve and William Hooper

Monday 9 May

Mary Arden's Farm

This Tudor farm, built for Robert Arden in about 1514, was the birthplace and childhood home of Mary Arden, who married John Shakespeare in 1557. Although William was born in the town of Stratford-on-Avon in 1564 and lived there most of his life, his visits to the family farm in the Forest of Arden provided background ideas for some of his plays, such the character of Corin in *As You Like It* and the recreation of the sheep feast in *A Winter's Tale*.

Mary Arden's farmhouse demonstrated vividly how people lived in Tudor times. Live animals provided many of the sights and smells of a Tudor farm. There was an English Longhorn cow with her calf in the barn. The cow was kept for her milk, used for butter and cheese-making, and the calf reared for beef if it was not required for breeding. There were also Berkshire pigs. Hooks in the farmhouse larder were for hanging bacon sides and earthenware pots filled brine for the hams. There was a turkey – a new introduction at the time. Geese were tended by goose-girls using canes to herd them together as they gleaned the cereal stubble. They were fattened for the Michaelmas Harvest Dinner. There was also a Dovecote and ferrets for catching rabbits which were another meat source. To ensure self-sufficiency there was meadow grassland for grazing the cattle and sheep, Orchards provided dessert and cider apples as well as plums and pears. The farmhouse garden grew soft fruit, herbs and vegetables. Costumed guides enlivened our experience performing daily tasks such as cooking, feeding the animals. They also gave demonstrations of falconry and archery. Various crafts were represented including willow basket-making and ironwork in the smithy where metal was forged and shire horses shod.

The farmhouse had a separate entrance for guests with a bedroom/dining room at one end. We progressed through the house to the far end, exploring the family dining room/kitchen, utility rooms and hallways. Upstairs the master bedroom was above the guest accommodation. Stooping we progressed straight through a series of children's rooms. There was one proper doorway with a door into the maids' room. The head maid slept behind the door acting as a doorstop to keep the boys at bay.

We left aware that life in a Tudor household and farm was very labour-intensive. But with every member of the household playing their roles, the farm was more or less self sufficient.

William Hooper

Charlecote Park

Before we even reached the house itself some of us were accosted at the gatehouse by a man who said Audrey's talk on costume was about to begin, if we were interested. Audrey turned out to be a very ladylike lady who showed us clothes from the Tudor period and spoke interestingly about how they were worn, with a little risqué joke thrown in now and then. I tried on a ruff and was told that it must always be smaller than those of my social superiors: too big and their minders would have taken the scissors to my prize ruff before I was allowed an audience. These rules about social status were enshrined in sumptuary laws which covered not only dress but food and furniture as well. Acting above your station in life could lead to a large fine.

The main function of clothes in Tudor times was keeping warm. Only the layer nearest the skin (a soft loose shirt) was ever washed. For married women this shirt came up to the neck, but the unmarried were allowed to display slightly more of their allures. We ended, inevitably, with knickers! Until recently, these were thought not to have been worn in Tudor times. However, a pair has shown up in Austria, so the history of knicker-wearing is being rewritten. Fortified by this exciting piece of information we left Audrey and the gatehouse, and carried on our tour of this magnificent house with its working kitchen, immaculate outbuildings, lovely gardens and tranquil parkland.

Katherine Martin



▲ Mary Arden's Farm



▲ The Tudor façade at Charlecote

Tuesday 10 May

Packwood House

Packwood, described by a visitor in 1934 as 'a House to dream of, a Garden to dream in' has the feel of a place that has been loved and enjoyed by many people.

The original Tudor house was built in about 1570 by the Fetherstones, yeoman farmers who owned and occupied the estate for more than 300 years. They laid out the gardens, built stables and barns, added sundials that impress visitors, and modernised the original house to Georgian standards. In 1904 the now derelict property was bought at auction by a wealthy industrialist, Alfred Ash, for his 16-year-old son Graham Baron Ash, who passed the house on his way to school and already loved it.

After the World War I, Graham sold the family business, invested wisely and set about restoring Packwood to its original Tudor splendour. He used materials and features salvaged from other historic buildings that were being demolished and filled it with antiquities purchased from other properties, many of them local, thus preserving for us all a way of life that was rapidly being lost. He also made some ambitious additions. He converted a barn into a Tudor Great Hall and connected it to the original Hall by a Long Gallery, one of my favourite spots, built in the 1930s. Having finished his restoration, he gave the house, the collections and the gardens to the National Trust in 1941 with the stipulation that wherever possible everything should be kept in place and that fresh flowers should be put in all the rooms so that the house should still seem lived in.

Most of the house is accessible and, while big enough to keep visitors busy, it is not so large that they lose the idea of how it all fits together. It is bursting with wonderful artefacts from the tea cup Queen Mary used in 1927 to the tapestries which line the walls of the Long Gallery. The original Tudor house, with its stained glass and mullioned windows, is cosy and comfortable. Bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms. Downstairs in the study, living room and dining room visitors almost feel they are guests. Graham held many parties and was a good host who loved entertaining as long as his guests 'did not stay too long and were at least half as tidy as himself'.

Inclement weather meant a hasty visit to the gardens. The kitchen garden was splendid with apple trees in blossom on espaliers and neat rows of newly-planted vegetables. The topiary garden is magnificent and well worth the stroll. There was much more beyond which I did not get to see and so Packwood definitely merits another visit.

Susan Pears



▲ A red brick Tudor garden feature

Baddesley Clinton

Baddesley Clinton is a truly magical place. There has been a manor house there since before the Norman Conquest but most of the present house was built by Henry Ferrers in the late 1500s and looks now much as it did then. Henry, a lawyer, diarist and antiquarian, was catholic and the priest holes he built became sanctuary for priests fleeing the authorities. There is a family legend telling of the local priest being murdered by one of the family for, allegedly, being over-familiar with a lady, and traces of his blood can be seen on the floor. In truth, there was a murder but it was in the previous century.

The house and estate did not prosper but remained in family hands for 12 generations, whose remains lie in the crypt of the church. In 1867, the resident squire, Marmion Ferrers, married Rebecca Dulcibella, a highly talented painter, whose work can be seen all over the house. In 1869, Rebecca's aunt, Lady Chatterton, together with her husband Edward Dering, came to live at Baddesley and the four formed 'The Quartet', dedicating themselves to painting and writing and, with the help of Edward's money, restored and refurnished the house. To add a twist, after the deaths of their respective spouses, Edward married Rebecca but eventually the money ran out and the house was sold at auction in 1940, when it was acquired by a distant relative of the Ferrers family and handed over to the National Trust in 1980.

Although I would have preferred a sunny day, the misty rain gave the house and buildings a magical quality and I am surprised no one has yet seen fit to make it the background of a film.

Brenda Thomas

▼ Entry to Baddesley Clinton is by way of the Grand Bridge across the moat



Wednesday 11 May

Compton Verney



▲ One of the wooden sculptures at Compton Verney. Note the hatter's shop sign in the background

On our last day on our way home from Stratford we drove a short way to the 18th century country house mansion at Compton Verney set in a 20 sq km estate landscaped by Capability Brown nearly 250 years ago. Our walk up to the house enabled us to savour the special talents of this artist in creating a naturalistic landscape with hillocks, meadows, lakes and plantings of over 2,000 magnificent oak and ash trees. (As a young Warwickshire lad I used to be ever told about 'the leafiest county in England').

The Gallery now houses six permanent exhibitions including a collection of British Folk Art, and a special RSC exhibition 'Painting Shakespeare' recalling our recent experience at Stratford. For some of us the folk art was especially appealing. A quotation inscribed on the wall suggested that our classical art legacy had perhaps suppressed interest in the heritage of ordinary people – 'parsons, farmers, inn-keepers, tradesmen, artisans all had their art too!' We saw huge wooden shop signs depicting shotguns, tin kettles, screwdrivers, and padlocks all whimsically fashioned to advertise the goods on sale. We saw ale-house paintings portraying the full story of unique events – poor Nell the faithful rat-hunter whose doggie death came at only 3 years and 9 months; Alf Barnett's drawings done in biro on paper scraps and old bills showing scenes in the gas works where he worked as a yardman. Also among the objects on show were two figurines portraying the boxing match between Tom

Molineaux and Tom Cribb (of Cribb's Causeway fame for you Bristolians!).

After our viewing of the galleries the Trust confirmed its special welcome to us with a splendid round-table self-service lunch over which to collect our thoughts – altogether a very satisfying visit.

Harry Hibberd

Hidcote Manor

The finale of our Stratford-upon-Avon trip was a visit to Hidcote Manor, a National Trust garden near Chipping Campden. This spectacular garden was created by an American named Lawrence Johnston after his mother purchased the Hidcote Manor estate in the early 1900s. Johnston based his ideas on his connections with the Arts and Craft Movement which were prevalent at that time. The fields that once surrounded the 17th century manor house were turned into 'rooms' so that separate areas were divided but linked by interesting vistas and a maze of box hedges within stone walls. Sadly for us our visit was in pouring rain, so the glory of the garden could not be as fully appreciated as it would have been in more clement weather. We had to negotiate the wet stone steps carefully as we made our way between the 'rooms' each dedicated to specific colours or types of plant. We saw the hornbeam, yew, the topiary, ponds and fountains in this beautiful setting. There were glass houses where some of the Friends took refuge along with the ever-welcoming tea room! Many thanks to Wendy for organising such an amazing visit – just a pity about the weather!

Hilary Cleeve

▲ An attractive walk-through summer house



Hughendon, High Wycombe

Friday 24 June 2016

Where were you on Friday 24 June – the day after the EU Referendum? Some of us were visiting Hughenden, in High Wycombe, home of Benjamin Disraeli, Prime Minister 1868 (briefly) and from 1874-1880. He was probably turning in his grave!

James Lees Milne described the actual building as 'deliciously hideous'. Yes - it is a rambling old Victorian house, well-presented by the National Trust, but for me it is the setting that is so special. The manor sits high on a hill in wonderful parkland where cows grazed on lush grass meadowland dotted with specimen trees. Three kites wheeled overhead. There were lawns and formal flower-beds at the rear and conifer trees in front of the house which are replaced when they get too big and darken the rooms in the building. A walled garden and pleasure grounds are being developed.

The house contained many portraits and memorabilia but the furnishings in the usual rooms were not too overpoweringly Victorian. In a darkened room, specially lit, we saw the gown that Disraeli wore as Chancellor of the Exchequer 1852 and it reminded us of what was going on in London. Oh, for a television set!

Benjamin Disraeli was Jewish and although he did not benefit from a public school/university education he had enough charisma and drive to become Prime Minister although Gladstone found him really too difficult to get on with. He found time to write a number of novels and created many 'quotable quotes' such as 'When I want to read a novel, I write one!' He was a 'ladies' man' (preferably well-heeled older married ladies) and it was one such friendship which enabled him to buy Hughenden. With property of such standing he was able to slot into the Parliamentary way of life of the time very easily, where he certainly livened things up.

He became a good friend of Queen Victoria, who trusted him at a time when she probably needed support. She gave him many presents, which are displayed round the house. Disraeli eventually married Mary Anne Wyndham-Lewis who made Hughenden into the home he loved.

In the basement, in what would have been the servants' quarters, World War II is now remembered. Hughenden, code-name 'Hillside', was on the Secret List and became an important base for RAF map-makers producing plans of potential bombing targets such as Peenemunde, Dresden and the battleship Tirpitz. One large room was furnished just like the sitting room of my 1940s childhood which goes to show how old I am getting! I felt quite at home.

All in all, it was a strange and momentous day when news about the Referendum gave us all something to think and talk about as we took tea in the stable yard. We had wandered round the home of a man who once served as Prime Minister of our country and we wondered what on earth he would have made of all the goings-on on that unforgettable Friday in June.

Sue Stops

Photos by
Hilary Cleeve



▲ The imposing frontage of Hughenden with arcaded porch

▼ The decoration of the sitting room owes much to Mary Anne Disraeli who sought to create a peaceful refuge for her busy husband which also reflected his status



◀ Part of the formal gardens

Tour of the Park Row Synagogue

Monday 16 May 2016

As part of our exploration of the diverse religious life of Bristol, a group of some 30 members visited the Orthodox Jewish Synagogue in Park Row. We were welcomed by Alex Sleisinger, our guide and a considerable historian of the Bristol Jewish community.

There has been a Jewish presence in Bristol since the 11th century when Spanish and French Jews visited the town for trade. A greater influx occurred in William II's reign (1087 – 1100) during a period of tolerance. King John withdrew crown patronage and sought to raise money from the community by threats and force. Throughout the 13th century, the majority of Bristol's Jews lived in a ghetto between the River Frome and St John's Gate (now Nelson Street). In 1484, there was certainly a synagogue in the crypt of the already disused church of St Giles, and a Jewish cemetery on Brandon Hill. In the anti-Jewish riots of 1275, the ghetto was burnt and the synagogue sacked and, 15 years later, the remnants of Anglo-Jewry were ruthlessly expelled. However, trade links persisted so that, by 1656, Jews were officially re-admitted.

By 1786, the earliest post-exile synagogue was opened in the ancient Weavers' Hall in Temple Street. The success of Jewish enterprises (for example, Jacobs, makers of Bristol Blue Glass) saw a growth in numbers and the opening of a new beautifully-furnished synagogue in Temple Street, built in 1842 on the site of a Quaker Meeting House and attended by members of other faiths.

The present building, dating from 1871, is built on land formally occupied by the Convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor. A City surveyor, Mr Fripp, was responsible for the overall design, and the form of the interior seems to be inspired by that of St George's on Brandon Hill. There is a choir stall (although there is no choir at present) and a separate women's gallery.

Our host explained the origins of the strands of Judaism (this synagogue belongs to the Orthodox Ashkenazi ritual), the form of the services, and the function of the Ark and the Scrolls held therein. A number of the fittings used in the Park Row Synagogue originate from the Weaver's Hall Synagogue. These include the curved doors to the Ark; scrolled ironwork surrounding the Ten Commandments; a Dutch-style Chanukah menorah (sacred candelabrum); and the brass pillar candlesticks on the Bimah (the podium from which the Torah is read).

At a time in the mid 1800s when the congregation had grown considerably, this synagogue had national influence, and contributions made by its members to Bristol civic life were considerable. Since then, numbers have fallen although recent growth of the university and financial and commercial concerns are bringing new life to the congregation.

Roger Starr



▲ Park Row Synagogue exterior

▼ Behind the Menorah lies the Aron Kodesh (Holy Ark) containing the hand-written Scrolls of the Law



▲ Alex showed us highly decorated cases containing Sifrei Torah – Scrolls of the Law

Photos by
Roger Starr

Textile Conservation – a view from private practice

Saturday 21 May 2016

Having been one of the lucky few who visited Alison Lister's studio in St Werburgh's last November (described in Newsletter 192) it was a real pleasure to hear her talk in more detail of the work which she and her three dedicated colleagues do day by day to bring back to life elderly, soiled and damaged textiles of every conceivable kind.

Assignments range from the very personal and individual, such as family samplers and teddy bears, through costumes, carpets and upholstery to curtains, pelmets and wall hangings. I shall never look at Graham Sutherland's 'Christ in Majesty' in Coventry Cathedral again without remembering that it was cleaned over several days by Alison and her team. That, and much of the conservation work in the big houses such as Longleat and Tyntesfield, has to be done in situ but as much as possible is brought to the studio where it can be hoisted, stretched, bathed, cleaned, laid out and re-stitched depending on the very careful and critical assessment of what needs to be done.

Although textiles are Alison's speciality she and her team have to have a working knowledge of all other materials as well, as so much comes in combination. The object's date and association and what it is made of, its function and where it was made all count. Each will have a history – and holes in a flag, for instance, might be kept because of the story behind them. Stumpwork involves several different materials and beading, as often does costume of all kinds, plus the hoops, buttons and braids. That the hole-ridden 1919 scout's jumper in M Shed retains its badges is equally important.

Alison was keen to stress the difference between preservation and conservation and the importance of removing as little as possible, even to keeping original stitching. Putting new backing materials behind provides stabilisation. So much depends also on where the object normally lives; how it is affected by light, the ravages of moths and mould – also age and careless handling. Sometimes the conservators themselves have to wear protection – there was arsenic in an Inuit jacket.

Nearly every job takes longer than originally estimated! A recent new venture is undertaking the interior upholstery of carriages – challenging in new terminology as well as working in the confined and cramped conditions. Every day is different and brings a new challenge. But what came across was Alison's infectious enthusiasm for her chosen career – I think many of us would wish to feel the satisfaction she and her team clearly get from seeing and feeling the superb results of their painstaking and dedicated work.

Gundula Dorey



▲ Conservation of uniforms



◀ An important patient getting stitches in his foot

Photos © Textile
Conservation



◀ *The back of the house overlooks the canal and huge lawns*

Hedges divide the garden into 'rooms' ▶



Dyffryn House and Gardens

Wednesday 4 May 2016

Our group of nearly 50 Friends was greeted by a National Trust guide. We enjoyed tea or coffee and Welsh cakes before exploring the gardens and the house, some of us joining a guided tour.

The Dyffryn Estate dates back to 640 AD when the Manor of Worlton was granted to the Bishop of Llandaff. The name was changed to the Manor of Dyffryn in the 18th century when the estate was sold to Thomas Pryce, who built the first Dyffryn House on the site in 1749. In 1891 the Estate was bought by John Cory, a wealthy coalmine-owner. Cory began construction of the present house in 1893. The following year, the well-known landscape architect, Thomas Mawson, was commissioned to design a garden to complement the new house. After John Cory died in 1910, his third son, Reginald, inherited the estate. He was a leading figure in the Royal Horticultural Society, and made several worldwide botanical expeditions. As a result, plants from many lands were first grown in the UK at Dyffryn. In 1937 Sir Cennydd Traherne leased Dyffryn House and Gardens to Glamorgan County Council on a 999-year lease. In 1995 Sir Cennydd died, and the freehold of Dyffryn House and Gardens was sold to the Vale of Glamorgan Council for £300,000. Since January 2013, the house and gardens have been in the stewardship of the National Trust, on a 50-year lease from the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

The eastern section of the Edwardian gardens contains the extensive arboretum. The central section contains Dyffryn House and its lawns. The two main lawns are the croquet lawn and the Great Lawn, which has a longitudinal canal along its centre. The western section of the gardens comprises the Garden Rooms, a series of terraced, themed gardens, including an Italian terrace, Australian and Mediterranean gardens, a physic garden, a rose garden, a reflecting pool and a Pompeian garden (which was originally inspired by Reginald Cory's trips to Italy). There is also a reinstated glasshouse, with an impressive cactus collection.

For our early summer visit, the gardens offered a great variety of colour. It was a memorable visit in beautiful weather and it will be fascinating to make a return visit in the autumn, when the many acers and the vine are in season. Undoubtedly, these gardens must rank as some of the most impressive in the UK, so we are extremely grateful to Wendy and David Snelson for organising this trip.

Brian Vincent

▼ *Inside one of the garden 'rooms'*



Photos by Hilary Cleeve

The International Birds of Prey Centre

Tuesday 7 June 2016

Early in June a full coach of Friends visited the International Birds of Prey Centre near Newent in the midst of lovely Gloucester countryside. We were given tea, coffee and biscuits on arrival, and then an introductory talk explaining what they did and how to get the best from our visit.

The Centre is the oldest dedicated centre of its type and holds the largest collection of birds of prey in the world. There are over 250 birds with some 75 species represented. They include hawks, vultures, owls, buzzards, eagles, falcons and kites from throughout the world including many of our own indigenous birds of prey. The Centre leads the world with its captive breeding programme and has reared 68 different species, as well as rescuing and saving many injured birds of prey in its dedicated bird hospital. Nearly all the resident birds were bred in captivity and not taken from the wild. The Centre is a hub for an extensive international exchange programme for birds, eggs and chicks, all of which does a huge amount to maintain populations under threat in other countries.

Visitors can view a good many birds in the well-appointed and well-kept aviaries; while other birds can be seen close up, tethered to perches on the lawns. Everything is comprehensively labelled with interesting information and visitors are free to wander around at will. Staff members are readily at hand, very friendly and willing to share their knowledge.

The really exciting thing is the live flying, where trained birds are exercised, taking to the air on the flying field in marvellous demonstrations of flying and retrieval. The handlers are expert and have detailed knowledge of the characters of their different charges. Some birds flew away until they were just specks in the sky although clearly able to see the recall bait from huge distances. Also fascinating was a small burrowing owl which disappeared into, and re-appeared from, its burrow on command! The facility with which hawks pounced on the lures was incredible to see. Without doubt, this was the highlight of our very worthwhile visit.

We were very impressed by the way the Centre was organised and the approachability, depth of knowledge and enthusiasm of the guides. The Centre has very pleasant gardens, a shop and a good café. It is a registered charity and relies on supporters and visitors to fund its conservation work.

Roger Starr



▲ Hawk and handler

Photos by Roger Starr

Taking Tea with the Stradling Collection

Wednesday 15 June 2016

The Stradling Collection is a private collection of artefacts, principally but not entirely in applied art which means, essentially, useful. The collection was made by Ken Stradling, sequentially buyer, manager and director of the Guild of Applied Arts in Park Street. The collection, started when he was 15, became a charity in 2007, and is now housed in 48 Park Row which was formerly the chocolate shop of the Princes Theatre.

We were welcomed by Julia Donnelly, the Design Centre Manager, and taken through the exhibition by Chris Yeo, the curator. The exhibition of tea-related objects was on the first floor and consisted of a wide variety of teapots, drinking vessels and a single tea caddy. There was a fine bulbous 'Brown Betty' with two spouts, presumably for a busy canteen. On loan was a large brown pot with raised flowers, typical of barge-ware, the lid of which was a miniature replica of the pot itself. It bore the inscription 'A present from a brother to a sister 1913'. Another beautifully-glazed pot had a green handle with china thorns on it, fortunately suitably spaced so that one could lift the pot without suffering the fate of Sleeping Beauty. There were other purely functional teapots in 1930s chrome and several of us could say 'We had one of those'. Some pots were purely whimsical works of art which would ill serve the pouring of tea. Sadly, in spite of the title of our visit, we did not actually take tea.



▲ One of the more fanciful teapots on display

On the higher floors we saw a collection of furniture including a Bauhaus desk by Marcel Breuer which was once put asunder and then, rather miraculously, put together again. There were also collections of glass from Whitefriars in London, Sweden and Finland and other pottery from the hands of Bernard Leach and Sam Haile. One plate, now restored, had been damaged in the jeep accident which killed Sam Haile in 1948. There was also an amusing collection of whimsical wooden pieces and, surprisingly, a single house-brick with the inscription 'You are one of many' – a kind of memento mori?

Photos by Carol Ouvry

The exhibitions are open to the public and there is a lot more to see than is mentioned here. We are grateful for the hospitality of the Stradling Collection and to Carol Ouvry for organising it.

Robert Walters

Torre Abbey

Thursday 26 May 2016

It was a beautiful warm day when we visited Torre Abbey in Devon. We enjoyed a pre-booked lunch al fresco, followed by an overview of the Abbey given by the Education Officer, Dee Martin. We learned that the Abbey was founded in 1196 as a monastery for Cistercian canons, later known as White Canons. These Canons moved from Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire to Devon when William Brewer, the Lord of the Manor of Torre, and Sheriff of nine Devon counties, gave them the land on which to build this Mediaeval Abbey. In 1539 during the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the church was demolished and all items of value taken including lead from the roofs.

The Abbey passed through various owners including, in 1598, Thomas Ridgeway. He was a young gifted lawyer from a wealthy local family. He converted parts of the former Abbey into a country house for his wife and family, dividing the refectory, adding chimneys, fireplaces and a new staircase so that the first floor could be used as a dining room. But Ridgeway became too ambitious and had to abandon the Abbey in 1610.



▲ *The mediaeval entrance gives little hint of the 122 rooms, rambling over 20 different levels, behind the door*



The Abbey's fortune changed when the Cary family moved there in 1662. They stayed until 1930 when economic difficulties forced Commander Henry Cary to sell the Abbey to Torquay Borough Council. The English Heritage Lottery Fund and The Friends of Torre Abbey have secured its future.

When we passed through the 1380 Gatehouse into the Abbey we could hear Gregorian chanting, a reminder of the life of the Canons. We climbed stairs into an area showing a time-line of the changing fortunes of this fascinating building. There were several Art Galleries displaying pictures by artists such as William Blake and Edward Burne-Jones. There was a whole room dedicated to the latter showing designs for stained glass windows. There was also provision made for exhibitions by contemporary artists including Damien Hirst. We were most taken by the stunning dining room where the Earl St. Vincent held grand naval banquets entertaining, among others, Admiral Lord Nelson. There was so much to enjoy inside and outside in the renowned formal gardens and glasshouses. Indeed it was a most pleasurable day and a big thank you must go to Gary Gostelow for organising it.

Hilary Cleeve

▲ *The Edward Burne-Jones stained glass window*

Photos by Hilary Cleeve

The Cotswold Farm

Tuesday 5 July 2016

On a lovely summer afternoon a group of Friends of Bristol Museum set out for a visit to this interesting property. The original farmhouse was quite small with a cart shed and cowshed round a small farmyard. It was built around 1700 and remained unaltered until 1900, when it was doubled in size.

In 1926 the architect Sidney Barnsley with his assistant Norman Jewson extended the house in the Arts and Crafts style for the owners, the Birchall family. In the 1930s Norman Jewson laid out the terrace and gardens, enclosed by Cotswold stone walls and yew hedges, with a fine collection of planting – shrubs, roses, herbaceous plants and bulbs, in particular snowdrops naturalised in the woods, and a special snowdrop collection of many varieties.

The long, cosy sitting room made a good starting point with a short talk on the history of the building. In the hall were good quality pieces of furniture, including a hall cabinet, and fine panelling. In the long room overlooking the terrace is a fine tapestry and a child's rocking horse evoking a happy family atmosphere.

Barnsley's fine attention to detail can be seen in the iron work on the bedroom doors above the library wing, which was his design. The bedrooms are spacious with good views and the servants' quarters even have attached bathrooms. A charming feature at the top of the back stairs is a series of 3 miniatures. The library door was made from 2 trees from Barnsley's garden. Jewson designed some intriguing wall sconces and most of the decorative plasterwork.

Originally the electricity was provided by a Ruston and Hornsby engine until mains electricity arrived in 1951. The staff in 1930 consisted of 4 men undertaking various duties, living in cottages provided rent- and rate-free.

Designs were produced for the whole garden in 1920, but no work was undertaken due to the Depression. However a legacy in 1936 made it possible for the work to go ahead and 300 cubic yards of stone was dug from the quarry in 1937. The extended garden is on three levels as planned by Jewson in 1938. The lower part became a shrubbery in 1956.

Margaret Thewarapperuma



▲ The back of the farm with its tranquil courtyard

Photos by Hilary Cleeve and Margaret Thewarapperuma

▼ Part of the terraced gardens



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