

The Wildlife Photographer of the Year is back!

This edition packed with

- news and photos of Bristol's museums, galleries and archives including Rebuilding Olivia the orang-utan and an exhibition of rare films and photographs depicting the British Empire and Commonwealth
- reports of trips to Copenhagen, the Easton Islami Darasgah, Llantwit Major, St Donat's Castle, the Vyne, Whittington Court, Henley, the Museum of Electricity and many more
- news of upcoming events, talks and visits you can join

**December 2017
Issue 199**

From the Chairman

National first prize for our newsletter

I am delighted to report that BAFM, the British Association of Friends of Museums, have awarded our wonderful newsletter First Prize in the 500–1,000 Members category in their 2017 awards. At their annual conference in September we were presented with a framed certificate and a cheque for £250.

Bristol was well represented at the conference, held this year at the London Transport Museum, by 5 of our members and 2 from the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery. The highlight for me was a session of four particularly interesting short illustrated talks from Friends groups across the country who, finding themselves in challenging situations, gave a very practical slant on a variety of issues.

Why does Bristol Museums Galleries & Archives have two Friends groups?

Since the Friends of Bristol Museums Galleries & Archives was set up as the MAGPIES 40 years ago the museums service has had two Friends groups: ourselves and the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery. Many of you are members of both. Back in 1977 there were sound reasons for establishing the MAGPIES to complement FoBAG, but the rationale for combining forces has strengthened in recent years and the committees of both groups have started to discuss the possibility of merging. If we can agree how to do that – and there is a long list of issues we would have to resolve – there will then be formal processes to obtain the approval of both sets of members at General meetings, and to satisfy the requirements of the Charities Commission. Watch this space.

Annual General Meeting

It was good to chat to some of you at the AGM in September. This year, in addition to normal business, the committee asked members to agree some changes – all in accordance with Charities Commission guidelines – to simplify our constitution, and help with the smooth-running of the committee. I am pleased to say that formal part of the business – along with the informal part – went very smoothly.

We were delighted to welcome Laura Pye, Head of Culture, who after the formal business gave us a view of where the museums service is now and what lies ahead. We also had 3 other interesting short presentations before we moved on to the drinks and nibbles.

Cover photo: The power of the matriarch © David Lloyd – Wildlife Photographer of the Year



▲ Our chairman Sue Thurlow with Lucy Bailey, Friends of Bristol Art Gallery committee member, at the BAFM conference
© Toby Pinn, FoBAG

Winter Lectures

The museum's monthly Winter Lectures for this season are now well under way, and it is always good to see Friends there alongside the members of the public who benefit from our ongoing sponsorship of the series. Many of you will already know that the venue has changed to the more accessible and state-of-the-art lecture theatre at the Priory Road Complex of Bristol University. As this lecture theatre is also considerably bigger, the need to manage bookings is less critical. For this reason, the museum has agreed that the small number of members who find it difficult to book online can now simply turn up on the evening of the lecture, without booking in advance – but if you are able to easily make the booking, please continue to do so as it helps the museum to track numbers attending.

Sue Thurlow Chairman

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Service-wide developments

This is a time of change in Bristol City Council as the Mayor is introducing a new structure for the senior management. Quite what this restructure at the top of the Council means for the Culture Team remains to be seen but currently we do not expect major changes. However, the changes at the top are partly driven by the Council's need to make savings and we already are aware of savings that the Culture team needs to make from next April as a consequence of both Council and Arts Council England reductions in funding already announced.

The Culture team continue to provide an excellent service to the public and value for money has been demonstrated by benchmarking against other services across the country. The Skeletons exhibition at M Shed and the Pliosaurus! exhibition at BMAG have both received excellent reviews by the Arts Council England experts who visit museums to test the quality of the offer that ACE are investing in.

The new Art Gallery Guide is proving an instant hit and the single bestselling item in the BMAC shop. Have you got yours yet?

Staff news

In the Collections Team, Helen Brown will be retiring from her post of Curator, Applied Art, at the end of December. Helen shared the post with Karin Walton, who retired herself earlier this year. Helen has most recently curated the 'Radical Clay' exhibition.

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

The pop-up shop which was introduced over the summer in the Front Hall of the Museum & Art Gallery has been successful, and you will see it reappear at peak times.

Save Our Sounds

In January, Bristol Archives will become one of ten national sound preservation centres for a major British Library project, 'Save Our Sounds'. Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other donors, this work will save rare and unique recordings at risk of being lost forever. At Bristol Archives, project staff will spend three years digitising 5,000 recordings from across the South West. The project has the support of Mayor Marvin Rees and the Bristol City Council cabinet.

Insect Festival 2017

In September almost 2,000 people came to Bristol Museum and Art Gallery for the first Insect Festival ever held in Bristol. The event was organised jointly with the Royal Entomological Society to let people of all ages explore how fascinating and important insects truly are. The Natural History department has 450,000 insects within its



▲ *Things were really jumping at the Insect Festival!*
© Isla Gladstone

collection; These are studied, loaned out and enquired about more than anything else in the collection.

There were lots of fun activities and demonstrations throughout the day – from bug hunts outdoors to a behind the scenes tour of the museum. On the evening before Dr Tim Cockerill revealed the secrets of the flea circus – fleas pulling chariots, riding tricycles and even fighting duels with perfectly crafted miniature swords.

Roman Dog find

Friends may have seen in the press reports of a bronze Roman 'licking dog' sculpture unearthed with other artefacts in a Gloucestershire field. Bristol Culture employs a Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) as part of the British Museum funded national Portable Antiquities Scheme. Kurt Adams, Glos & Avon FLO was therefore the person to whom the find was reported and who has appeared on tv and in the press to describe its significance. Kurt works half the week in Gloucestershire and half the week in Bristol; in this instance the find occurred outside Bristol Museums' collecting area so, when the dust settles, it is likely that the dog will find a home in a Gloucestershire museum rather than in Bristol.

Rebuilding Olivia the Orang-utan

Thank you to FBMGA for a grant of £1,000 to support the re-articulation of a young female orang-utan skeleton in front of a live audience. The event took place in July at M Shed, as part of 'Skeleton Spectacular'.

Past repairs were causing damage to this wonderful skeleton, known as Olivia. Ben Garrod, TV presenter and evolutionary scientist, used his skills to re-articulate the skeleton in a more natural pose.



Throughout the day Ben talked to his audience in a fun and engaging way about the form and functions of skeletons, the differences and similarities between the human ape skeleton and that of an orang-utan, about orang-utans themselves and the art of skeletal articulation.

Making Olivia more robust has made her accessible for study by researchers and for use in student workshops that we run regularly with the local Universities.

With so many questions on the day Ben did not finish the full articulation and will be adding the finishing touches in November just prior to the first student workshop.

Exhibitions & Events

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Empire through the Lens

Until 31 August 2018 (Free – donations welcome)

A selection from Bristol Archives' extraordinary collection of photographs and films showing both public and private aspects of life in the British Empire and Commonwealth.

Pliosaurus! Dive into the Jurassic Deep

Until 7 January 2018 (Pay What You Think)

150 million years ago, where Bristol is now, there was a Jurassic ocean teeming with life. The biggest creature of all was the awesome predator, the pliosaur... Discovered in Westbury, Wiltshire in 1994, our internationally significant specimen *Pliosaurus carpenteri* is the world's only example of a new species of pliosaur and is on public display for the first time.



Aimed at 3-11 year olds, this exhibition offers a range of activities to investigate how this special creature lived and died.

M Shed

M Shed, Life Gallery (Window on Bristol) Brave Poor Things

Until 15 April 2018 (Free - donations welcome)

M Shed's exhibition tells the story of The Guild of the Brave Poor Things, founded in 1894, its members and its headquarters. This pioneering building, which still stands today in Old Market, is thought to be the UK's first purpose-built for disabled people in 1913. The Guild provided a social space and a hub for crafts and apprenticeships for disabled children and adults. The Guild's 100-year lifespan saw huge changes in social attitudes towards disability. But how far have we really come – and how much further is there to go?

M Shed Temporary Exhibitions Gallery Wildlife Photographer of the Year, 2017

Until 8 April 2018

The renowned wildlife photography competition from the Natural History Museum is back with 100 spectacular images. From frozen wastelands and peculiar species, to tropical paradises and fascinating animal behaviour; this year's selection is a call to action – a plea to band together and protect our fragile planet.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year is the most prestigious photography event of its kind, providing a global platform



This series of four photographs shows Ben Garrod and some young helpers getting Olivia into a more natural pose

Photos © Rhian Rowson

that showcases the natural world's most astonishing and challenging sights. Now in its 53rd year, the competition receives almost 50,000 entries from 92 countries.

A change to ticketing this year includes a voluntary £1 donation to Bristol Museums Development Trust: £6 adult, £5 concession, under 16s free. Standard entry is £5 adult, £4 concession.

Events:

Christmas at Red Lodge

2 December 2017 (11am - 3pm) (Free- donations welcome)

Music, food, craft activities

A very Victorian Christmas at Blaise

9 December 2017 (11am - 3pm) (Pay What you Think)

Carols, storytelling, craft activities and dressing up!

Dates for your diary

Here are two events to whet your appetite for next year.

Worcestershire Churches

Tuesday 10 April 2018

Steven Blake will be taking us to Pershore Abbey, Little Malvern Priory and Bredon Church to give us another fascinating insight into these places of worship.

Shaftesbury and Old Wardour Castle

Thursday 3 May 2018

Visit Shaftesbury museum and abbey gardens and then on to Old Wardour Castle for a guided tour by Barry Williamson. This will follow Barry's talk on Saturday 24 March about the Arundell family of Wardour

The application forms for these events will be with the next newsletter.

From the Membership Secretary

We offer a warm welcome to the following members who have joined the Friends since the last newsletter.

Mrs Isabella Balfry
Mr Robert Burrows
Mr Steve Chapman
Mrs Valerie Chowen
Mr Simon Frame
Mrs Jane Hole-Jones
Mr Alan Kennedy
Ms Jan Packer

Ms Shirley Packer
Mr Charles Parker
Mr Andrew Rea
Dr Cheryl Silverberg
Mr Nick Silverberg
Mrs Eileen Stonebridge
Miss Amelia Walton

Existing members who pay by cheque and need to renew their membership for January can do this any time from now onwards on the form enclosed.

Thanks.

June Hibberd, Membership Secretary

Copenhagen

Monday 24 - Monday 31 July 2017

Copenhagen has for many an indelible association with Hans Christian Andersen, along with its reputation for successful traffic management (encouraging the use of bicycles) and Noma, voted the best restaurant in the world for several years.

We were not disappointed: there were definitely lots of bicycles (we had to take care to keep out of the cycle lanes adjacent to the pedestrian zones) and many references to Andersen, including the Little Mermaid statue. Noma remained untested but we enjoyed Nordic cuisine in the dining-room of the Hotel Tivoli, a short walk from the famous Tivoli gardens. The breakfasts in particular were highly appreciated by our group.

Our guide for the week, Marielle, proved to be very knowledgeable with excellent English, providing the background to all the sights we visited and giving us an insight into Danish history and its economy. Initially slightly daunted by the size of the group (42 in all) she relaxed on realising that we were all well behaved and responsible visitors.

Copenhagen itself is smaller than expected but nonetheless impressive in the way the old docks area has been transformed into offices, hotels, apartment blocks and restaurants with pleasant walkways alongside the waterfront. Further afield, we became familiar with the rolling landscape – the highest hill in Denmark is 130m – and the proximity of Sweden. In a week we could absorb only a fraction of Danish culture but at least we were able to experience some of the highlights.

Mary Bailey



▲ *Nyhavn built by King Christian V is lined with brightly-coloured 17th and early 18th century townhouses, bars and restaurants overlooking the water*



▲ *Made in 1913 to celebrate the fairy tale by 'you know who', she is only 1.25 m tall but weighs a startling 175 kilos!*

Tuesday – Around Copenhagen

Copenhagen has been nominated the best city by several organizations for liveability, sustainability and cleanliness (it seemed that three-quarters of the population travelled by bicycle). Our guide confidently informed us that Danes are the happiest people in the world.

Our morning tour of the city was by coach. We started, as every tourist does, by paying our respects to the Little Mermaid, who sat, slight on her pebble, in view of several massive tourist ships. Copenhagen is a city of waterfronts and striking buildings in a variety of fascinating architectural styles. Perhaps the most impressive group is the Amalienborg which consists of four gracious palaces set around a large octagonal 'square'. Each palace is guarded by one solitary guardsman in a bearskin hat who saunters up and down cradling his rifle. But he can roar at little girls who walk on the wrong part of the pavement, as we heard! Across the harbour is the new opera house said to be so sited as to provide a fine view from the current Queen Margarethe's bedroom.

Our afternoon tour was by boat along both very wide channels, and very narrow ones where we doubted the boat would get round the corners. We ducked when the boat passed under some very low bridges. We were addressed in both Danish and English by a veritable daughter of Brünnhilde and, when it rained, we were issued with resplendent orange plastic ponchos.

While in parts there were echoes of Amsterdam, in others there were ultra-modern buildings with names such as 'The Blocks' (all blocks of glass) and 'The Black Diamond' (polished black granite cladding and irregular angles) housing the new library. A large building in the background with a tall chimney we were told was a very modern, super-efficient incinerator though it continually put out smoke into the atmosphere.

And what of the celebrated Tivoli Garden? We did not go in but, above its high wall, we could see fake rocks and some exotic fairground rides around which people hurtled at frightening speeds.

Robert Walters



▲ The runes read 'Thorger Toke's son raised this stone in memory of Mule, his brother, a very good thane'



▲ Tapestry of Queen Margrethe and her husband Prince Henrik



▲ The royal thrones

Wednesday morning – The National Museum

On Wednesday we went to the vast National Museum which is built within four courtyards. There was far too much to see in one visit so I am mentioning only my personal highlights. The ground floor covered Danish Prehistory and contained an incredible Bronze Age Sun Chariot. This artefact was created to represent the people's idea of how the sun moved across the sky. The sun is pulled along by a horse which had a special status in ancient society. We read that at one time this artefact was used as a child's toy until an expert discovered exactly what it represented.

The museum had an amazing collection of Viking artefacts including an interesting display of giant rune stones and replicas of the famous Golden Horns of Gallehus which were decorated with runes. There was a mummified woman found in a peat bog and an intriguing fossil of a 'mermaid' on display.

I was especially interested in the exhibits of toys through the ages. Toys were not sold in Danish markets until the 1660s. Originally wooden toys made in Germany were brought to Denmark and re-sold by traders from Nuremberg. In the late 1700s selected shops were granted permits to sell 'Nuremberg Goods'. Until 1858 hardware stores were the sole purveyors of toys, which were purchased only for special occasions – rather different from toys nowadays. After the toys we moved into an area of doll's houses which lit up as we passed. These were not made to play with. They were strictly educational, built to show girls what a real home should look like so that they learned how they would manage their own households. These big and detailed doll's houses were very expensive so time with them was rationed; often they were off limits to the child as they belonged to the parents. Perhaps that explains why they were so well-preserved!



Hilary Cleeve

Wednesday afternoon – The Royal Apartments

Christianborg Castle houses not only the Parliament and Law Courts, but also Royal Apartments which are used for important state occasions such as receptions and banquets. These Royal Apartments, used only 40 days in a year, are fiercely protected. We all had to put blue plastic bags over our shoes before stepping inside and climbing the Queen's staircase.

The first reception room was lined with pink marble from Norway and carved stone friezes; the strong colours combined with gold fittings were almost overpowering. Tucked away in a small alcove lined with glass cases were pieces from a porcelain dinner service delicately painted with specimens taken from a botanical encyclopaedia, an exquisite treasure known as the Flora Danica.

Huge gold and crystal chandeliers hung from the decorated ceilings; they must be an impressive sight when lit for grand occasions. I was attracted to a more subdued room which was lined with books which were part of a collection started by King Fredrick V and continued by the present queen. There are over 90,000 volumes and apparently anyone may borrow one. Plasterwork faces of famous people on the ceiling included, not surprisingly, Hans Christian Andersen.

The walls in the state banqueting hall were alive with the glorious colours of a Gobelin tapestry. This was woven for Queen Margrethe's 50th birthday although it was not finished until she turned 60. It is an amazing chronicle of 1,100 years of history, showing the struggles and achievements of the Danes.

We finished our tour in the throne room, used by the queen to receive royal visitors and important ambassadors. It was oval decorated in delicate greens, with silk tapestries and a carpet designed by the queen to match the room. Her talents for design are well known to the people of Denmark. We returned by way of the King's staircase back to the grey stone palace entrance.

Shirley Hodgson

Thursday morning – Roskilde Cathedral

As we drove around Roskilde – confused by the roadworks – we could see the cathedral's twin towers on the hill-top. Roskilde was once the main city of Denmark. The cathedral, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has been the burial place for the Danish royal family since the 1400s.

Entering the cathedral via the south door – only royalty enter the huge west King's Door – we could see that both sides of that door were intricately engraved. Made from polished and patinated bronze it was installed only in 2010 – replacing the entrance of King Christian IV (curiously the only monarch about whom Danish children must be taught).

We listened on headsets ('You must have channel 3!') as Marielle talked about the cathedral. It started as a small wooden chapel built by Harold Bluetooth in about 988. The present cathedral was started in about 1157 and took 123 years to finish. Although built from red bricks, inside it is a very lofty, light building with white-painted walls. We watched an amazing clock from the 1400s. On the hour, St George killed a dragon, which let out a frightful wail, and bells rang the time. Other notable features of the cathedral were the bronze font dating back to 1602 and in the canon's chancel, an amazing golden altarpiece made in Antwerp about 450 years ago with a cat shown on the lower left-hand section.

We went into many chapels containing tombs. The Chapel of the Magi had highly decorated ceilings and walls, and contained several massive and ornate sepulchres. On the central pillar we could see markings in red showing the height and names of royal visitors to the cathedral – the tallest being Christian I – after whom the chapel is also named. In St Birgitta's Chapel we saw a model of the double glass sarcophagus which will be used for Queen Margrethe II and Prince Henrik, who will be buried together, united in death even though, it seems from recent newspapers, they do not get on at all well in life!



▲ The red bricks are painted over and highly decorated



▲ Royal sepulchres

Ceri Addis



▲ A smith demonstrates Viking iron working

▼ A reconstructed Viking ship



Thursday afternoon – Viking Ship Museum at Roskilde

In 1070, five Viking ships were scuttled in Roskilde Fjord to block the main channel and protect Roskilde from an enemy attack. The Ship Museum houses the remains and reconstructions of those recovered vessels. Detailed examination has taught experts much about Viking ship building and sailing. Displays explain these techniques and show details of territories raided and the Viking trading empire, which included large parts of England when Cnut was king.

For me, the star attractions lay outside the main building as Roskilde is a 'living' museum. Floating in the harbour is a collection of over 40 reproduction Viking ships. In the working shipyard there are continuous demonstrations of traditional Viking shipbuilding. Logs are split using wedges and planking is shaped by eye using the broad or side axe – there is not a saw to be seen!

The delight of this working museum is to watch not only the splitting of planking but also the smelting of bog iron and forging of nails, as well as techniques Vikings used for scribing out the exact shapes required. Viking vessels were not built around shaped frames mounted on a keel but the hull sheer is formed by bending bottom planks between stem and stern, with framing following later. This made vessels lighter, so they were more easily portaged across land. Viking ships were all carvel-built, fastened together with iron nails and trenails (wooden pegs).

Vessels were steered using a stern board mounted to starboard (hence this name) rather than a rudder and carried a square sail on a huge pole mast. Apart from rowing, handling the sailing gear required considerable manpower – Vikings had no sheaved (wheeled) blocks to help.

This is a place full of delight for those interested in maritime history. Tours are led by enthusiastic guides and there is an excellent shop. Visitors can dress up in Viking gear, use Viking tools and even go on a voyage in a Viking boat, rowing round the bay. It was a most rewarding visit which needed more time to do it justice. I for one will return.

Roger Starr

Friday morning – **Kronborg Castle**

Shakespeare used Kronborg Castle in Helsingør as his setting for Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, and seems to have based the character loosely on a Danish prince called Amleth. So it seemed totally appropriate on our arrival at the castle to be met by a troupe of actors. They performed scenes from Hamlet (in English) around the castle at various times during our tour, which added greatly to the ambience. I wondered if 'To be or not to be' was a question Amleth ever actually asked in Helsingør Castle!

The original fortress was sited here because of its strategic position controlling the narrow entrance to the Baltic Sea. Between 1574 and 1585 King Frederick II developed the fortress into one of the finest Renaissance castles in Northern Europe.

Cannons threatened any ships entering Øresund, so that captains were obliged to pay the king's profitable 'Sound Taxes'. These provided him with adequate funds to develop the castle.

As a direct consequence of his rivalry with the king of Sweden, in 1581 Frederick II ordered an expensive suite of 43 woven tapestries to adorn the ballroom at Kronborg. Of the original 43, only 15 survive, and 7 of these are at Kronborg. A few people from our group managed to see them before we left.

In 1658 Kronborg was besieged and captured by the Swedes, who took many of its valuable art treasures as war booty. The rooms are 'dressed' throughout the castle to give an idea of what it once may have looked like. Today, Kronborg Castle is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Sarah Bradfield



▲ *Actors in the main courtyard of Kronborg Castle*



▲ *There was a labyrinth of cellars and store rooms under the castle*

Friday afternoon – **Louisiana Museum of Modern Art**

This was the highlight of my trip to Copenhagen. 'Eclectic' describes it perfectly; a clever mix of art, paintings, sculpture, noise, design and architecture set in beautiful woodlands and landscaped gardens adorned with sculptures, including Henry Moore's 'Reclining Figure No.5', with a backdrop of views across the Sound (Øresund) to Sweden. The new brightly-lit galleries linked by glass corridors formed a horseshoe stretching from the original house. We were struck here as in other establishments by the fact that the Danes unobtrusively welcome and encourage children.

The Louisiana was the creation of Knud W Jensen. It opened in 1958 and is named after the three wives, all named Louise, of Alexander Brun who built and named the original country house at the heart of the gallery in 1855. Our curator guide was brilliant at showing us the highlights. I particularly enjoyed the Giacometti Collection and the splash of colour from a monumental work by David Hockney, *A Closer Grand Canyon*.

The temporary exhibitions draw in many visitors in line with Jensen's so called Sauna Principle combining popular 'hot' exhibitions with less easily accessible 'cold' ones. I was goggle eyed by the forceful nature of the 'erotica' of Marina Abramovic, the iconic Serbian 'grandmother of performance art'. Few of us dared to pass between the two naked people in the doorway as backpacks might have caused serious injuries to sensitive parts!

This is a fantastic art gallery – well designed, comfortable, with a good café and shop and so well worth visiting. I would recommend it to anyone.

Liz Mackenzie

▼ **Two Piece Reclining Figure No. 5, 1963-4 by Henry Moore**



▲ **A Closer Grand Canyon, 1998 by David Hockney**

Bust of Annette, 1962 by Alberto Giacometti ▶



Saturday morning – Carlsberg Glyptotek

On the opposite corner to the colourful Tivoli Gardens fun fair, sits an imposing baroque building – the Carlsberg Glyptotek. J.C. Jacobsen founded the Carlsberg brewery in Copenhagen in 1847. His son Carl, an avid art lover and collector, bequeathed his entire collection to the Danish people in 1888 and built the magnificent Glyptotek to house it. Included are a stunning collection of French Impressionist art; sculpture and art from the Danish 'Golden Age' (the early 19th century); 2000-year-old Egyptian mummies; and a vast collection of Greek and Roman antiquities.

The original building (1897), and its adjacent matching structure (1906), were joined by a beautiful curving glass roof to create the Winter Garden, filled with palms and exotic flowering plants. A modern addition to the building, built in 1996, blends in beautifully, with its sweeping white marble staircases.

We started our tour beside the centrepiece of the Winter Garden, a stunning white marble fountain created in the 1920s. Having been shown a magnificent Roman mosaic floor, and heard the fraught family history of the Jacobsen family, we were left to feast for several hours on the delights contained in the building, as well as sit in the coffee shop amongst the palms. My favourites were the early Gauguins and Van Goghs; some of the early 19th century Golden Age Dutch paintings; the magnificent collection of Impressionist paintings; and of course the beautiful building itself.



▲ Kai Nielsen's sculpture
Water Mother

Sue Black



▶ Roman mosaic
floor within
a Roman
courtyard



◀ Snake Chair
by Poul
Henningsen



Saturday afternoon – The Design Museum

That afternoon a few of us who had unwisely decided to walk to the Design Museum battled through heavy rain to get there, and (naming no names) some got lost in the process! But we were rewarded with a wonderful collection of the most important Danish designs of the 20th century. Foremost of these was the Danish chair, with a display of 110 different types by mostly Danish designers. They were displayed in glass alcoves like works of art. Marielle, our incredibly knowledgeable guide, pointed out some of the most iconic examples. My favourite was the 'Snake' chair, by Poul Henningsen in the 1920s, a simple shiny metal spiral with two attached pads of red plastic, which looked both beautiful and comfortable! The 'Ant' chair (Arne Jacobsen, 1952) was also appealing as it was pleasing to look at and, being stackable, practical too.

The museum has a large porcelain collection, with around 3,000 works representing the development of European ceramic culture from the period 1700 to 1880. But the final area I was glad to have time to see was the flamboyant and beautiful work of the fashion designer Erik Mortensen (1926-1998) whose favourite colour was black. But his 'little black dresses' were gorgeous creations and anything but demure!

Sue Black

◀ Table lamp, 1935 by Poul Henningsen



▲ Volunteer demonstrating dyeing and spinning

▼ Thatched farmhouse



Sunday morning – Open Air Museum (Frilandsmuseet)

The Frilandsmuseet, which lies just twenty minutes' drive to the north of Copenhagen, is one of the largest and oldest open air museums in the world. It covers 86 landscaped acres and contains more than 70 buildings including farms, two windmills and a water mill, manors, small holdings and workers' cottages from the period 1650 – 1940. Most of the buildings, except the larger windmill which is on its original site, were moved from their original locations within Denmark and rebuilt with gardens. The park is landscaped to give visitors an impression of rural life in the past. Almost all of the buildings contain artefacts showing how local life was lived in the corresponding era and costumed volunteers act out life as it was then.

The fields and gardens grow crops, herbs, fruit, and flowers of their time. Together, the buildings illustrate different construction techniques used in the past. For example most of the early inland buildings were straw thatched, while fishermen's cottages were thatched with seaweed.

In idyllic fashion, pigs, cows and horses roam the open fields, and an open cart pulled by heavy dray horses provides site tours. Several houses and workshops are typical of the way that the poor child Hans Christian Andersen (born in 1805) lived before he moved to Copenhagen at the age of 14, and show how he gained inspiration for his children's stories. Today, for the amusement of young visitors and their parents, these stories are brought to life by actors. We saw the birth of the Ugly Duckling, how he was despised by his siblings, and how he turned into a magical swan with his true parents!

It was altogether a very entertaining and informative visit, giving interesting insights into Danish life in the past.

Harry Hibberd

Sunday afternoon – Rosenborg Castle

We were divided into two groups for our conducted tour. Casper, our smiling guide, led us through a series of dark, highly-decorated rooms. The ceilings boasted intricate plasterwork and both walls and ceilings were covered with paintings. The pared-back Danish design we had admired in the Design Museum obviously came later.

The castle was built in the early 1600s, originally as a summer home for King Christian IV. Christian lived life to the full, fathering seven children with his first wife, twelve with his second and a further five with various mistresses. He also had a legendary capacity for drink. In 1644, during a battle with the Swedes, he was flung to the deck of his ship when a cannon exploded near him but, despite being blinded in one eye, he regained his feet and urged his men onward. Never one to miss a chance of self-promotion he ordered that the bloodied clothing he was wearing should be preserved. It is now displayed in the bedchamber in which he finally died in 1648.

Christian's son Frederick III made himself supremely popular when, in 1658, the Swedes attacked Copenhagen and despite advice to flee he famously declared, 'I will die in my nest'. On a less elevated note we were shown a trick chair which pinned the occupant to its seat, soaked him in the trouser region and let out a fart noise when he was finally released. Boys will be boys!

The Great Hall on the second floor was quite stunning – running the entire length of the castle it was a complete contrast to the small, dark rooms on the ground floor. It was light and sparsely-furnished, if you can say such a thing about a space containing two thrones and 12 tapestries.

Finally we were taken to the basement where the Crown Jewels were housed. Dire warnings were issued concerning the production of loud noises, including sneezing, which could apparently result in lock-down for up to an hour – no one sneezed.

Lesley Pugsley



▲ Ornate marble fireplace in a downstairs room

▼ Crowns in the Crown Jewels collection



Photos for the Copenhagen trip were taken by Mary and Martin Bailey, Sue and Andy Black, Hilary Cleeve, Roger Starr, Ann Wood and Judith Young. Many thanks! We cannot remember ever having such a good selection.

Bradford on Avon

Wednesday 23 August 2017

For some unknown reason I had never been to Bradford-on-Avon before and had looked forward to visiting the popular town set at the southern end of the glorious Cotswolds. And what a revelation! The thriving town with roots in the woollen trade had honey-coloured limestone houses of all ages which seemed to tumble down the hillsides to the beautiful river and canal in the valley. The roofs and attics blended together in a juxtaposition of shapes and sizes.

The bridge over the river held a unique tourist attraction, opened specially for us. A night in the 'lock-up' would not have been pleasant. The cell contained a metal bed on which it would have been impossible to sleep and shackles would have made it very difficult to use the primitive loo with its environmentally-unfriendly long drop to the river below.

A visit to the museum followed. This carefully-sited new building above a busy library was full of local interest with an absolutely wonderful Christopher Chemist Shop. It was good to discover that the volunteer 'chemist' once worked at Bristol City Museum in the geology department, which, by chance, had loaned some of the fossils on display.

A short walk by the river (lucky people saw a kingfisher) took us to the Saxon Church of St. Lawrence. This simple 12th century building, strong, tall and narrow with small windows seemed to be guarded by two flying angels high on the wall. The whole building was tranquil, lit by candles. A lady sat with a lap-top, playing reflective music to set the scene,

The visit ended in the best possible way with a cream tea in what was probably one of the oldest buildings in the town. The Bridge Café did us proud and served tea in tea-pots which did not drip! I shall return.

Oh! And Moulton bikes come from Bradford-on-Avon.

Sue Stops

Easton Islami Darasgah

Tuesday July 2017

Bristol is known today as a vibrant, culturally rich and modern city. One of the key aspects of this happy state of affairs is the diversity of its population. The local Muslim community started to form in the 1960s when men from the Indian sub continent, followed by their families, came to work in local businesses. Since then many have followed including, latterly, refugees from political and economic chaos in troubled North Africa.

The heart of Muslim communities anywhere is the local mosque. We received a warm welcome to the Green Bank Masjid mosque with a presentation by Abdul Tariq, who is doing a great job in developing mutual understanding in his role of 'external community liaison'. The history of Islam in the UK is fascinating and not without controversy. Many academics dispute the assertion that King Offa (757-796 AD) was a Muslim convert; however most agree that the first mosque in the UK was the Abdullah Quillam Mosque in Kensington (1889).

Abdul Tariq went on to speak about the Muslim faith. We were taken through the seven articles of faith, one of which – the concept of 'pre-destination' – prompted a wide ranging and stimulating discussion. Similarly the five pillars of Islam – Faith, Charity, Prayer, Fasting and Pilgrimage – generated a lot of interest and a very lively Q and A session afterwards.

The visit was topped off by a tour of the sumptuously-carpeted mosque. The building has been turned into a useful series of comfortable spaces. Larger rooms are reserved for prayer while other rooms are used for activities or private meetings. We were encouraged to look wherever we pleased and questions were welcomed. At the end of the tour there was a further opportunity to engage with representatives from the mosque over a non-alcoholic drink and a bite to eat. So what was the overall impression? For me, the opportunity to have a friendly conversation with fellow Bristolians who have a different outlook on life was very helpful. Also, seeing inside a place that is obviously more accessible than I had hitherto thought, was interesting. Full marks to the community leaders in Easton for hosting such an open and interesting visit. As Abdul Tariq said when he first greeted us; 'the key to living together successfully is good communication'. On this point, I could not agree more.

Phil Curme



▲ The famous Bradford-on-Avon Lockup on the bridge.

Photo by Hilary Cleeve



▲ The Easton Islami Darasgah. Originally a place of Christian worship known as 'the Lego Church' because of its striking exterior brickwork, it was funded by the Wills family and constructed in 1901.

Photo by Martin Bailey



▲ *St Illtud's Church*

Llantwit Major and St Donat's Castle

Thursday 22 June 2017

This was the day to get acquainted with two saints: Illtud and Donat. Illtud was a Celtic Saint, who in 500 set up a school and monastery in what came to be known as Llantwit Major. 'Llan' meant enclosure, of which there is now no trace. The 'twit' part of the name means Illtud! There is no Llantwit Minor. Illtud's school became nationally famous, and is now regarded as the University of the Celtic Saints.

We visited St Illtud's Church, which is one long building joining up different ecclesiastical structures that have existed over the centuries. We went into it in about the middle, which was where they served tea and biscuits – how fortuitous! To our right was the East Church, built in the 13th century with some lovely wall paintings. The West Church was Norman and contained the Galilee Chapel brilliantly restored in 2013 to make an appropriate home to display some very important early Celtic crosses, as well as church offices on a mezzanine floor which echoed the time when the upper floor of the Galilee chapel had been used as a chantry.

▼ *Celtic crosses in St Illtud's Church*



Llantwit Major itself had some fascinating buildings, as well as four pubs on the village square. Lunchtime saw the village peopled by Friends clutching orange maps trying to visit the old school, the town hall, the dovecote and the gatehouse before it was time to get on the coach to go to St Donat's Castle.

The cult of St Donat, an Italian protector of seafarers, was introduced to the Vale of Glamorgan by the Normans in the 11th century. They built a new church, then a motte and bailey. That was replaced by a massive stone concentric castle in the 14th century. In the 1920s the castle was owned by the American newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst. It is now Atlantic College, the first of sixteen United World Colleges which typically house 200 to 300 students from 85 different countries to study for the International Baccalaureate. The castle is a storybook castle, no ruins in sight, and with glorious grounds sloping down to the sea. We rounded the day off with a cream tea worthy of William Randolph. Many thanks to Sue Stops for organising a really interesting day.

Katherine Martin

◀ *Gatehouse of St Donat's Castle*



Photos Hilary Cleeve



The elaborate ceiling in the dining room with a detail of one of the ceiling bosses

The Vyne

Tuesday 8 August 2017

Despite inclement weather and the exterior of the house being covered in plastic sheeting, an intrepid group of Friends had an enjoyable visit to the Vyne. The house is only a fragment of the former Tudor palace which was erected in the early 16th century by William Sandys, Henry VIII's Lord Chamberlain. Henry visited the palace three times, at great expense to Sandys, who was keen to retain the King's favour, despite his own strong allegiance to Rome.

In 1653, after the Civil War (in which the Sandys family supported the Royalist cause), the house was sold to Chaloner Chute, Speaker of the House of Commons. He commissioned John Webb (a pupil of Inigo Jones) to add the classical portico, the first of its kind at an English country house.

Chute's great-grandson, John Chute, inherited the Vyne in 1754. He commissioned the large memorial tomb to Chaloner Chute which is located next to the Tudor chapel, with its outstanding stained-glass windows. John Chute, a close friend of Horace Walpole of Strawberry Hill, made the Grand Tour in the 1740s and returned with mementoes from Italy, many of which are on display in the house.

William Wiggett Chute took up residence in 1842. He updated many of the services and had a new library installed on the first floor. William's grandson, Sir Charles Chute sold the house, its contents and the estate to the National Trust in 1956.

Although visitors can visit only the ground floor rooms of the house, the Friends were allowed to take a fascinating rooftop tour to view the restoration of the extensive Tudor roof being undertaken by the National Trust, at a cost of £5.4m which involves replacing 71,000 tiles and insulating the building.

Many thanks to Wendy Aldridge-Morris for making all the arrangements for this excellent trip.

Brian Vincent



▲ **The outside of The Vyne**
Photo Brian Vincent

▼ **Fine craftsmen repairing the roof**
Photo Carol Ouvry



Home Movies from the Archives

Saturday 24 June 2017

On a warm afternoon, accompanied by the puffing of *Portbury* trundling back and forth beneath the window, we sat fascinated by home movies from all parts of the world, preserved by Jayne Pucknell from Bristol Archives, for the enjoyment of future generations.

We learnt about their acquisition (many films came from the now closed British Empire and Commonwealth Museum), care, organisation, and plans for their future use. There are thousands of films and over 500,000 photographs in the archive but only two archivists who digitise the films for safer storage and easier access. The films are digitised by filming directly from the originals. The equipment used looks ancient but does the job!

While Jane talked we watched the films. Highlights included Tanganyika, from the 1950s, showing Governor Edward Twining (of tea company fame) in his plumed hat and decorated uniform; the bright red engine of the Dar es Salaam fire brigade; huge piles of lemons in the open market; West African Igbo dancers dressed up as white soldiers and administration staff in the early 1900s; tea picking in India in the 1930s and 40s; the Mysore festival with wonderfully-decorated elephants and camels; film from 1930s Rawalpindi, showing a visit to the Taj Mahal, and two Handley biplanes (the Concordes of their day: two of these biplanes were stationed in Whitchurch during the war).

Plans are afoot to make the archives more accessible to the public, and more financially viable. Eventually footage should be available online. The archives are based in B Bond warehouse, accessed through the Create Centre. On 30 September an exhibition of archive films and photographs opened at BMAG. It lasts until 31 August 2018 and should be a fascinating browse for all the Friends! You can sample this exhibition online via the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery website.

Jane's dedication, and her obvious delight in the films, their creators and their life histories, made the talk especially interesting.

Sue Black



▲ **Tea production in India, 1940s**
(Layard collection)
Photos © Bristol Archives



◀ *Whittington Court from the north showing the 1650 wing to the left of the front door and the three gables above and to the right of the front door which were not original to the house*



▲ *A Knights' Tomb - a life size effigy in local stone. The Knight who is in armour, with his legs crossed in the conventional manner has been identified as Richard de Crupes, a Lord of the Manor of Whittington*

Whittington Court

Wednesday 6 September 2017

Our introductory talk was held in the library by a local parishioner, who seemed very much at home on the sofa. He gave details of the history of this Elizabethan house with its Jacobean extension built of Cotswold stone. The footprint is asymmetrical, possibly because of subsidence caused by the ground on one side being very wet and boggy.

We know that Elizabeth I dined there on her Royal Progress in 1592. The house has a complicated history involving several court battles as it passed through sisters who had no heirs to a local gentleman, a Mr Morris, whose son changed his name to Lawrence and married well in order to gain a dowry to pay off his debts! The house was an estate farmhouse in the 20th century and American officers were billeted there during the war.

We were then free to wander around the house with its carved oak Jacobean staircase with a gate at the top of the first flight of stairs. There are collections of old glass and ceramics, but I was interested in the bowls of shells, stones, agates and Egyptian artefacts. The house is a collector's paradise. In the roof, Jenny Stringer the present owner, runs her block-printed fabric business, with examples of her work – some of which was bought by one of our group.

We were allowed into the garden, drinking tea from the best china. Then it was on to the tythe barn which was nearly full of chopped wood. Close by was a pond and a church with tombs of knights with crossed legs, although there is doubt whether they actually fought in the crusades. On our way back to the coach, we passed an outbuilding containing old printing presses which were still in use.

Whittington Court was a fascinating and friendly place to visit, so thank you to Pat Walker for arranging this trip and for arranging the lovely sunny weather.

Catherine Dixon

▶ *The Whittington Press in the Gardener's Cottage, displaying one of a variety of printing presses.*



Photos by Judith Jones

Henley Visit

Wednesday 12 July 2017

The River and Rowing Museum at Henley is in a well-designed modern building surrounded by willows and fronting on to the River Thames. We parked next to Mr McGregor's garden, complete with potting shed and Peter Rabbit (but in a cage). Inside, the museum is full of interest: one gallery has an impressive collection of beautiful varnished rowing boats of all types and ages; another deals with the river Thames and its wildlife. There is a gallery devoted to the work of John Piper, which provoked discussion about abstract art. My favourite display was a beautiful, immersive exhibition on the Wind in the Willows, the characters true to the E H Shepard illustrations. There was such a lot to see we had difficulty tearing ourselves away for our boat trip.

As we set off, the sky had changed from grey to blue, the sun was shining, the grass was a lush green and I was on the lookout for Ratty and Mole having a picnic. We passed Henley, and then up the Royal Regatta Reach as far as Temple Island, the start and finish point for boat races. The regatta had just finished for this year and the complex of grandstands, temporary bars, restaurants and offices was being dismantled. As we went further downstream we passed grand houses including the Henley Business School, a house which had previously belonged to W H Smith. If the opulence was too overpowering there were also hundreds of ducks of all sorts; the commentary told us that the Canada geese have to be rounded up while the regatta is on.

When we disembarked there was time to sit by the river in the sun. Many thanks to Gary and Hilary for organising such an enjoyable day, including the weather.

Katherine Martin

A display of sleek, streamlined racing boats ▶

Photos by Katherine Martin and Hilary Cleeve



▲ *Ratty and Mole enjoy a short snooze after a most agreeable picnic*



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