



Friends' merger finalised!

This edition packed with

- news and photos of Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives including the merger of Friends' groups, the Grayson Perry Exhibition and rehanging the Old Masters Gallery.
- reports of 5 days in Sussex, trips to Shaftesbury and the Wardour Estate, the new Bristol Aerospace Museum and many more.
- details of a host of upcoming talks, exhibitions and visits you can join

From the Chairman

Welcome to new members joining from Friends of Bristol Art Gallery

I am delighted to welcome to our organisation over 200 new friends who have joined us from the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery. We hope you will enjoy our award-winning newsletter and the opportunity to take part in many of the 50+ varied activities our Events Group organise each year, a significant proportion of which focus directly on art in its many guises.

When you come to your first few events, please let the person greeting you know that you are a new member and if you would like to meet some longer-established members do please ask them to introduce you.

If you know members of the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery who are not yet our members please encourage them to join – our special offer of membership through to December 2019 for the price of a year's subscription is still available. The more members we have the more effectively we can support Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives.



▲ The winning Newsletter

Cover photo: Contemporary Ghanaian head wrap

© Eve Andreski from the Fabric Africa exhibition in the Balcony Gallery

Welcome to our new Patron, Francis Greenacre

Francis has for the past few years been the President of FoBAG, and he has very kindly accepted our invitation to join Sir George White and Max Hebditch as one of our Patrons. Francis is a passionate advocate for the work of Bristol's museums service and I am sure our 'special relationship' will prove fruitful.

Farewell to Laura Pye

Our very best wishes go to Laura Pye who has now left her role here as Head of Culture for her dream job directing National Museums Liverpool. Since she came to Bristol in January 2015 she has done an amazing job for the museums service and for Bristol, and I am one of many hundreds, probably thousands, who are very sorry to lose her. Watch out Liverpool !

AGM

Our AGM on 25 September will for this year only be at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery rather than at M Shed, and will be followed – after refreshments and a chance to socialise – by the last of the long-running annual series of Schubart Lectures. Full details are included with this newsletter.

British Association of Friends of Museums Annual Conference

There is still time to book for this year's BAFM annual Conference on Saturday October 13th at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. The theme is 'The value of Friends organisations in a changing social and economic climate'. Full details are on the BAFM website. Newcastle is a fabulous location for a long weekend, easy to get to by train or by air, with an exciting range of museums and galleries, great architecture, a vibrant cultural life, and interesting coast and countryside on the doorstep. The conference itself always proves thought-provoking and is a great way of sharing ideas with organisations like ours from across the UK.

BAFM Newsletter Competition 2017

As you know, our Newsletter was awarded first prize nationally in the middle-sized groups section of last year's BAFM Newsletter Competition. BAFM have now published their comments on the winners and the summary of one of the judges in particular makes for pleasing reading: 'I try not to give anyone full marks, but I could not do otherwise on this one. Sixteen A4 pages with 11 of them reports of Friends activities, good use of interesting illustrations, including a dramatic front cover. The committee organises four or five trips a month. . . . Wow, what an exciting group to belong to!'

It is great to see an objective outsider's considered and very favourable view not only of our lovely newsletter but also of the activities that we offer our members.



▲ *The cake stall at the Harbour Festival* © Amber Druce



▲ *The book stall at the Harbour Festival* © Amber Druce

Harbour Festival Fun

As ever we were made to feel very welcome at L Shed for Harbour Festival and our books and cakes sale raised over £950. Many thanks to those who made it such fun as well as a fundraising success.

Supporting Young Curators

We have recently provided funds towards the financial support of three young people, at an entry level stage of their careers in the arts and museums, as curators in training – ‘Young Curators’. The museum will recruit from groups currently underrepresented amongst both our visitors and our workforce.

The Young Curators will learn from established staff about exhibition development, curating and conserving objects, selecting items from the collections for display, writing interpretation for audiences, exhibition design, exhibition marketing, and putting on an event. We will be able to see the results of their work in an exhibition of objects and art

from BMAG’s collections to compliment the exhibition of 12 Leonardo da Vinci drawings from the Royal Collection opening in February 2019.

Bristol Music: Seven decades of sound

I really enjoyed my visit a few weeks ago to the Bristol Music exhibition in M Shed. I was enthralled by the archive footage of the local music scene from the 50s onwards, and there is lots more to see and listen to if you have time. And it is a great way to share your memories with older grandchildren. It’s on until the end of September, so there’s still time to experience it yourself if you have not already.

Sue Thurlow Chairman

Meet our new Patron, Francis Greenacre

Francis was President of the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery until our two organisations merged and was Curator of Fine Art at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery from 1969 to 1997.

He is an art historian, fine art consultant, lecturer and author. He was a member of the Arts Council Exhibitions Committee, the South Bank Art Advisory Group, the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum Trust and the Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust. He is a former chairman of Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society and a former President of the Canynoges Society and of St. Stephen’s Ringers. Francis was High Sheriff of Avon in 1992/3 and has been a member of the Society of Merchant Venturers since 1995.

His interests range over many subjects and, as well as the major art exhibitions for which he may be best known, he has been responsible for exhibitions concerning natural history (The Frampton Flora, 1985), architecture and town planning (20 Ideas for Bristol, 1975), Victorian engineering (Brunel’s original designs for the Clifton Suspension Bridge, 1977) and the history of the port of Bristol (From Bristol to the Sea, 1997).



Our new Patron Francis Greenacre leading a sculpture walk ►
© Greenacre family album.

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

As announced just in time for the last newsletter, Laura Pye has now departed Bristol Culture to take up post as Director of National Museums on Merseyside. Since joining us at the start of 2015 Laura has made a great impression in the city, noted for her straight talking, passion and dedication to delivering Culture for Bristolians and for her support for the museums, galleries and archives provision. She will be a hard act to follow but recruitment for the new Head of Culture is underway and likely to be complete by the time you read this.

The Gromit Trail has been back in town over the summer and consequently BMAG and M Shed have those following the trail and photographing the Gromits pouring into the galleries. At Blaise a Gromit is placed nearby in the estate so again we have benefited from the surge of interest.

Staff News

Claudia Hildebrandt has joined us on secondment from the University of Bristol, where she is responsible for the University's geology museum. Claudia is covering as Senior Curator Natural Sciences whilst Isla Gladstone is on maternity leave.

Recruitment is going ahead for the Senior Archivist post and more staff will be recruited shortly to the Save our Sounds project at the Bristol Archives, funded through the British Library. This exciting project will help save oral recordings from across the south west at risk of deteriorating on their current platforms – digitised to make them safe and available.

M Shed

The café has been refurbished with new furniture and the heatwave in

early summer has helped drive punters to sit on Museum Square with drink in hand appreciating the 1950s dockside views and our working exhibits.

With fantastic training from Bristol Autism Support and free to borrow Little Bag of Calm, M Shed is now autism friendly.



Blaise Castle House Museum

Work continues on improvements not only to reinvigorate the displays but also to better interpret the house, landscape and estate, and to provide a better overall visitor experience. The next closed season (January to March 2019) will see the Victorian Classroom, display of children's toys and the shop all being changed. One result should be a space where we can invite visitors to help us redesign the first floor galleries over the following closed period (winter 2020). A small team of local researchers has already been consulting with residents in northwest Bristol about the proposals, with over 150 surveys carried out to date.

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery shop refit

After months of planning late June saw a refit of the shop at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. The shop is now 20% bigger, made possible by removing the stockroom. Our retail has grown 60% in the past 3 years and we had finally outgrown the 1990s design. In just under 5 days the team managed to rip out the old shop and build us a shop that is both in keeping with the building and also fit for our needs. Now the shop boasts better lighting, a dedicated jewellery section and lets us show off our own products using images from our collection.



▲ The enlarged and refitted shop



◀ New products in the shop using images from our collection

Photos by
Sue Thurlow

Dementia-friendly events and activities

This year, there will be a series of free Creative Cafés for people living with dementia and their carers. These will involve tours and the chance to get creative by working with a poet, artist or photographer. We are also developing Art Box: taking museum resources out into care homes and hospitals.

We are also working to make Bristol Museum and Art Gallery a dementia-friendly venue by giving staff and volunteers Dementia Friends training.





◀ **Leandro Bassano's The Return of the Prodigal Son**
© Bristol Culture

▼ **Samuel Jackson, Rainbow over the River Avon, c.1825, watercolour on paper**
© Bristol Culture

Art Collections

The art team is planning for the rehanging of part of the Old Masters Gallery this autumn, including bringing back on display Leandro Bassano's *The Return of the Prodigal Son* after conservation. Work is underway on the 'Leonardo A Life in Drawing' exhibition in spring 2019 and we are still continuing our HLF-funded programme for Dieric Bouts' *St Luke Drawing the Virgin and Child*.

Preparations are progressing well for a Bristol School exhibition in 2020 in Bordeaux, with which Bristol has been twinned since 1947. One of the paintings specifically requested by Bordeaux is Samuel Jackson's watercolour *Rainbow over the River Avon*.



Volunteers

In the museum year 2017/18 over 1,085 active volunteers have completed a magnificent 48,361 hours of work across all our sites. Continuing our efforts to diversify, 26% of these were BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and 6% identified as disabled. 23 placements were given to 16-25 year olds. Most importantly, 95% of all volunteers both enjoy and would recommend working with us

Community Learning

Our ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programme is still going strong. We recently had our first ESOL tour at Blaise, which ended up with participants teaching the tour leaders how to make butter.

We will soon be launching the country's first Functional Skills English programme in a museum. Using M Shed as inspiration, visiting groups will gain communication and employability skills while exploring Bristol's rich history.

Winter Lectures at Bristol University

This is the 70th anniversary year of the museum's Winter Lecture Series. Booking opens on 1 September with the talks starting on Thursday 11 October with an exploration of Egyptian mummies. The talks are free, thanks to the sponsorship of the Friends, and there is a retiring collection to help cover costs. You will find full details of the programme and how to book in the events inserts enclosed.

Five Days in West Sussex

Monday 7 May to Friday 11 May

This was the last trip arranged by Wendy Aldridge-Morris before she stepped down from the Events Group and what a brilliant one it was: the itinerary, the organisation and the beautiful weather. Thank you, Wendy, for your valued contribution to the success of our programme.

Mary Bailey

MONDAY 7 MAY

Weald and Downland Living Museum, Singleton

Our week began in lovely sunshine as we drove across the Sussex Downs to arrive at the Weald and Downland Museum at mid-day. The Museum was initiated in the 1960s and opened in 1970 to provide a secure home for a representative sample of rural historic buildings from the Weald and Downland of Kent, Sussex, Surrey and Hampshire. The collection of complete buildings, many rescued from disintegration or from destruction threatened by modern developments, stands on a 40-acre site for which the Museum pays a peppercorn rent.

The collection is constantly expanding. It is supplemented by an entrance building with shop, introductory galleries, education and community rooms and a substantial café, all in compatible modern styles. Opened in 2016-17 following grants from the Heritage Trust and other donations, the Museum offers courses, workshops and demonstrations of arts and crafts.

The site accommodates some 50 historic buildings spanning a period of about 1,000 years, including a mediaeval house, workers' cottages, shops, farmhouses, barns, a 17th century watermill, a working windmill, a Victorian smithy and a church. Some of the buildings are set in gardens, a few containing animals in pens. Several buildings have members of the museum team, staff and volunteers, in appropriate dress, to help visitors appreciate what life might have been like for the residents. The explanations of life in the individual buildings and the heat of the sun made it difficult to see more than a small part of the whole site. There is a great deal more to explore.

We particularly enjoyed the Bayleaf Tudor farmstead and its garden. The farmstead was originally located on the site of a new reservoir. It was dismantled carefully then re-erected in its original state and furnished to represent life in about 1540. Almost next door is Winkhurst Tudor kitchen (originally part of a larger late-mediaeval house) where we enjoyed a demonstration and tastings of Tudor cooking before we retreated to cool shades and entertainment, including a puppet show.

The day of our visit was a public holiday and the museum was hosting the third day of a Food Festival. This provided additional refreshment choices and interesting stalls, while we enjoyed traditional music in the background. Overall, this was an impressive museum enhanced by additional public holiday attractions and beautiful weather. It is well worth another visit - needing at least a full day to do it justice. .

Roy Taylor

TUESDAY 8 MAY

Fishbourne Roman Palace

In 1960, while excavating a new water drain across a large field, a digger driver accidentally uncovered a Roman mosaic pavement. This was revealed as the largest Roman palace complex in Europe north of the Alps. The main building was a square with colonnades on all sides and a bath-house in one corner. It is not known who constructed it or who lived there, but it is estimated to have been built within about 27 years of Claudius' invasion of Britain in AD 43. Within 200 years after its completion there was a fire and most of the building was demolished. Some of the stone may have been used to build Porchester Castle.

Little is now left of the original building, but a huge hangar-like structure has been built over the floor space to protect the hypocaust and the 50 fabulous mosaics the archaeologists discovered. Most of these have suffered damage, some possibly when the occupants altered rooms around. However the principal mosaic, in what was probably the dining room, is



▲ *Hurdy-Gurdy player*

▼ *Winkhurst Tudor Farmstead*



▼ *Detail of a mosaic at Fishbourne Roman Palace*



complete though slightly sagging in the middle. Archaeologists did try to lift the floor, straighten it out and then shore up its foundations. However the floor did not then fit so they reinstated the sag!

The central feature is a boy on a dolphin. He might be Cupid or the infant Neptune. Confusingly he has both wings and a trident. He is surrounded by sea creatures, drinking vessels, scallop shells and the most elaborate borders. The time it must have taken to make this (about 360,000 tesserae, all hand sawn and then meticulously put in place) must have been phenomenal. It is probable that specialist mosaicists were sent from Italy to do the work.

The central mosaic is in colour but several other mosaics were in black and white which would have dated them to the 1st century AD. Most of them were composed of geometric shapes but the cleverness of the designs made them look three-dimensional as though they consisted of stacked boxes or pointed roofs. There was also a pattern of linked surfaces which, in real life, would have been impossible to produce - something like the drawings of Escher. Outside there was also a small garden planted with known Roman plants with attractive boards showing what the plants were used for including cooking, dyeing, and as medicines.

Robert Walters

Chichester Cathedral

No trip to Chichester would be complete without a visit to the cathedral. Its tower and spire dominate the skyline, a feature which may have influenced the choice of Chartres as its twin.

We left the coach outside the west front beside the detached bell tower, an unusual and unprepossessing feature. Unusual because many others have been demolished and unprepossessing because, being an ugly chunk of masonry shielded behind plastic sheeting covering decomposing stonework, it does little to enhance the cathedral. The outside of the nave of the cathedral was also shrouded with scaffolding and plastic for the copper roof is being replaced by lead.

The cathedral was built in the 12th century in Romanesque (Norman) style. Its location on the open plain close to the sea was intended to impress and reinforce Norman sovereignty. Internally the initial impression is of a harmonious and uniform architectural style, but it lacks the breathtaking impact of other contemporary cathedrals such as Durham and Hereford with massive round decorated piers. Where Chichester stands out is the introduction of modern art into such an ancient building.

At the entrance is a beautiful font in granite, quarried at Polyphant on Bodmin Moor, with a polished copper bowl designed by John Skelton in 1983. Behind is a wall painting of the Baptism of Christ by Hans Freibush (1951) who was a German Jewish refugee. We were told that Bishop Bell in the 1930s encouraged modern art and was instrumental in establishing links with anti-Nazi Germans. His successors carried on this tradition and most of the modern artworks date from this period. The altar tapestry by John Piper (1966) caused much controversy when installed and mixed opinions among our group. Another large tapestry at its rear, Anglo-German (1985), although striking, was similarly not to everyone's taste. Perhaps less controversial were the Mark Chagall window (1978) based on Psalm 150; the altar piece by Graham Sutherland depicting Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene; and the aluminium pulpit and lectern.

Even without these modern works, our visit to the cathedral was worthwhile because of the two remarkable 12th century reliefs depicting Christ raising Lazarus. With so much to see it was unsurprising that the tour lasted longer than intended which left us time only for a rather hurried exploration of the rest of the city!

John Rollinson



▲ Chichester Cathedral – a modern gargoylle

▼ Tapestry in Chichester Cathedral designed by John Piper 1966. The central subject is the Holy Trinity



WEDNESDAY 9 MAY

St Mary's House in Bramber

St Mary's House was built in about 1470 as an inn for pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. The house has experienced a variety of interesting owners, including Algernon and Gwendolen Bourke, supposedly the inspiration for characters in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. St Mary's was purchased in 1984 by the present owners, Peter Thorogood and Roger Linton, who lovingly restored the house and the gardens, then opened them to visitors. They kindly took us around with the help of two volunteer guides, Janet and Jerry.



▲ St Mary's House in Bramber

Downstairs was a refectory and upstairs were dormitories. The internal staircase, built over a holy well, was added in the 16th century. Part of the building burned down in the 17th century and was never rebuilt. A top floor was added about this time, taking up space which was previously part of the dormitories.

On the first floor was The Painted Room whose dark painted panelling is one of the earliest examples of trompe l'oeil in England. It is said to have been produced for a visit from Elizabeth I, but there is no record that she ever came.

Peter explained his collection of Thomas Hood's poetry, watercolours, wood engravings and comic sketches in the Library. He is an expert on the Victorian poet and carefully outlined details of *The Progress of Cant*, a series of satirical etchings full of caricatures.

The tiny octagonal dining room, designed by Roger, contains a collection of English costume dolls and false bookshelves which act as doors opening on to the rather incongruously bright music room. Downstairs in a drawing room is the Queen Anne chair on which Princess Alexandra sat to have tea when she came to open the newly-restored King's Garden. Beyond are cases and cases of the family collections. There was scarce time to see any of the five acres of garden which Roger has beautifully restored.

As with the rather haphazard history of the house, this tour left me with a lot of surprising and random impressions.

Susan Pears

Lewes

Lewes is an Anglo Saxon town. It is hilly and we had a choice of two blue badge guides – one going up and down hills, the other on the flat, mostly in the High Street. I took the easy option, but we still started off on a hill to the original entrance to the Castle. Beyond, was a men-only team playing with 'bumpy' bowls on bumpy ground!

Our guide told us some unusual facts about Lewes. 'Lewes legs' are legs with firm calf muscles – presumably from walking up and down all the hills! The narrow passageways between buildings are called 'twittens' – our guide thought it might be a combination of 'betwixt and between'.

The town has a great many historic buildings in many different styles including half-timbered, flint and brick, Georgian stucco and mathematical tiles (glazed tiles put on in the manner of bricks – next to each other and not overlapping). Many of the warehouses by the river, including one originally owned by Russell and Bromley shoe company, have now been turned into apartments.

Among its more famous inhabitants was Thomas Paine (1737-1809,) who stayed in Lewes. He was known as the 'Father of America' after his book *The Rights of Man* inspired the American revolutionaries.

In the 17th century there were 7 breweries and 70 pubs in the town. One pub, the Red, White and Blue, has a façade of acid green mathematical tiles. Another, the White Hart, had stabling for 100 horses. The Star Inn was famous for a speech made there by Disraeli.

It was a fascinating tour and there is still much to be investigated. I hope to return to visit Lewes Castle and Anne of Cleves House, but I really will need to do some training for all the hills first!

Catherine Dixon



▲ A back street in Lewes

THURSDAY 10 MAY

Cass Sculpture Foundation

Time for a breath of fresh air and something completely different. Set up 25 years ago, the Cass Sculpture Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that commissions, exhibits and sells contemporary sculpture. Its mission is to 'provide emerging contemporary artists with exceptional opportunities'. The profit from works sold is split between the Foundation and the artist. There were no obvious guide prices given for the large works but a value of several million pounds for a Lyn Chadwick piece was mentioned during the introductory talk.

The 26-acre woodland site is in the South Downs on the edge of the Goodwood estate and provides a wonderful setting for the large-scale sculptures on display. Of the 57 there at the time of our visit, some were placed within a stand of tall straight beech trees, others among equally majestic pines. Clearings set off other pieces, but the prime locations that complemented and enhanced work were those with a long view out towards the coast. In particular Lyn Chadwick's *Diamond* (1984), a seated couple perfectly placed looking out into the hazy distance, was admired by several in our group. In a similar position, *Stairway* (2005) by Danny Lane was ideally seen with the sun glittering through the glass and steel. Chinese artists had been the focus in recent years and Song Ta's *Why do they never take colour photos?* (2016) – a large white bust of Mao placed against a background of dark foliage – was the favourite piece of one of our party. Steve Dilworth's *Claw* (2006) – dark, smooth and menacing, appealed to another.

Adding to the delights and stimulation of the sculptures were the benches and other seating. Not only providing a welcome rest and chance to contemplate a work, their style and individuality meant some were desirable artworks in their own right. It would have been good to have a memento but the shop sold small sculptures and editioned maquettes rather than postcards. Sadly all far beyond my price range, despite the option of paying by instalments.

Sue Pettit



▲ Gate by Robert Ward is a mirror sculpture reflecting its surroundings, as demonstrated by Mary Bailey

Photos for the Sussex Tour by Martin Bailey, Catherine Dixon, Susan Pears, Roy Taylor, and Brian Vincent



▲ Arundel Castle, a view looking at the Curtain Wall

Arundel

We arrived at the town of Arundel and ate lunch at a café by the river. We briefly visited the museum which provides an insight into the town's history. Arundel Castle, the historic seat of the Dukes of Norfolk, is nearby and this was where most people visited in the afternoon. The castle was founded on Christmas day 1067 by Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Arundel. He was one of William the Conqueror's loyal barons. He was gifted a third of Sussex as long as he built a castle near the mouth of the river Arun to protect the approaches to Sussex from attack.

The castle has been the family home of the Dukes of Norfolk and their ancestors for nearly 1,000 years. It is one of the longest-inhabited country houses in England.

Many original features survive – the Norman keep, gatehouse, barbican and the lower part of Bevis Tower. But between 1870 and 1890 the house was almost completely rebuilt in the Gothic style and is considered to be one of the great works of Victorian England.

Inside we viewed the armoury, the Regency Library, the Barons Hall and furniture that was especially prepared for a three-day visit made by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in December 1846. In the Barons Hall there is a painting of Charles I by Sir Anthony Van Dyck, which is the most valuable painting in a collection that includes works by Joshua Reynolds, Gainsborough and Canaletto.

After visiting the castle we were able to walk around the grounds in the spring sunshine. On the walk back to the coach we noticed that tours of Arundel were available by Tuk Tuk but, sadly, there was no more time. Our tour of Sussex was over.

Sarah Bradfield

To find out more about the amazing range of activities offered at Arundel Castle visit <https://arundelcastle.org>. Events include jousting, archery, historic battles, living history, Shakespeare plays and many more.



Brympton D'Evercy House

Tuesday 12 June 2018

After lunch in Somerton and seeing the amazing wooden roof at St Michael and All Angels, the coach took us along the tree-lined lane to Brympton D'Evercy House, which we found set in beautiful parkland with lake and arboretum. The 13th century parish church and separate Priest House (which at one time had been a museum) were the first buildings to be erected on the site. In the church are tombs with skulls and bones on display, and some well-kept effigies – one had been found in the grounds and was restored with the crossed legs of the crusader being altered so they could be shown uncrossed.

The main house, built from golden Ham Stone, was started in about 1220 and was added to over the centuries by three different families to become what has been described as the 'most beautiful house in England'. The house has magnificent Baroque apartments and one of the longest staircases in the south west. Notable carvings include swags of pea pods which are shown open – the device used by Grinling Gibbons to show that his invoice had been paid. However, most of the original contents were auctioned in 1956 with over 900 old masters sold off to pay the bills. Between 1959 and 1972 the house was a boys' school and has appeared in TV shows on many occasions. But these days it is only open to the public for a small part of the year. The rest of the time it is a corporate events centre and a luxury wedding venue with a variety of stunning settings across the estate. It would surely be a magnificent place to tie the knot.

Thanks to Wendy and David Snelson for organising this lovely day out to a very interesting part of the world with a scrumptious cream tea to round it off.

Catherine Dixon



◀ Brympton D'Evercy – the south west front of the house

▼ St Michael and All Angels Church - inside showing glorious natural oak roof



▲ St Andrews Church - detail of John Sydenham IV tomb (1626) showing a skull in the arch and behind it monumental bones

◀ Brympton D'Evercy – St Andrews Church - Figure of a Knight in Ham Hill stone 1270. This effigy was altered to uncross the legs

Photos by Judith Jones

Shaftesbury and the Wardour Estate

Thursday 3 May 2018

Our trip on this beautiful sunny day was made memorable by historian Barry Williamson, who accompanied us to Shaftesbury in Dorset and then on to the Wardour Estate nearby in Wiltshire. He informed us about the places we were visiting and about various sites we observed from the coach, including the Westbury White Horse. Barry has written a book entitled *The Arundells of Wardour* and had previously given a talk, with this title, to members at M Shed on 24 March.

Shaftesbury is the highest market town in Dorset. Its Abbey was founded in 880 by King Alfred, but it was dissolved in 1534. We spent about two hours there, having lunch and paying individual visits to places such as Gold Hill, the Gold Hill Museum, Shaftesbury Abbey Museum and Garden, and Park Walk, with its beautiful panoramic views over the Blackmoor Vale.

We then proceeded to the Wardour estate, the seat of the Arundell family for some 600 years. We visited first the New Wardour Castle, built between 1769 and 1776. It was designed by the architect James Paine, with additions by Giacomo Quarenghi, who was a principal architect of the Imperial Russian capital city, Saint Petersburg. The focus of the visit was the beautiful Roman Catholic chapel, an integral part of the Palladian-style building. The chapel had been enlarged in 1788 to the design of John Soane. The highlight for us was being given a special viewing of the Westminster Chasuble. It was originally owned by Margaret of York, sister of King Edward IV and somehow acquired by the Arundell family.

We then moved on to the Old Wardour Castle. The original manor house on the site was built in the 1390s for Lord Lovell. Thomas Arundell, 1st Baron Arundell of Wardour, acquired the property in 1544. The Arundells were Royalists during the Civil War. The old castle suffered badly during that conflict as a result of two attacks: the first in May 1643 was by a large body of Parliamentary soldiers who seized the castle from the wife of the 2nd Lord Arundell (whilst he was away on the King's business); the second in March 1644 was by the 3rd Lord Arundell, who laid siege to his own castle in order to recapture it and, in the process, blew up a large part of it.

The final visit of the day was to the nearby village of Ansty, and the local tea rooms, prior to our return journey to Bristol. Many thanks are due to Pat Walker who organised the action-packed day.

Brian Vincent

The Chapel of All Saints in New Wardour Castle ▶

Photos by Hilary Cleeve



▲ Gold Hill, made famous by the Hovis advert



▲ Some of the original Abbey walls

▼ Old Wardour Castle





▲ New Alpha Foxtrot
Concorde Hangar – 2017
© Aerospace Bristol

Aerospace Bristol

Tuesday 5 June 2018

The new Aerospace Bristol Museum at Filton is housed in two buildings. The first is a renovated World War I hangar, which displays Bristol aerospace exhibits from 1910 to the present day. The second is a new hangar completed in 2017 to house the Concorde code-named Alpha Foxtrot – the last flying Concorde – which made its last flight into Bristol in November 2003. You may have seen it in the air that day!

The old building holds displays of Bristol aircraft engineering from its inception by Sir George White, who brought electric trams to Bristol, in 1910. The manufacturers of both aircraft and engines have changed names several times since then.

We saw the whole range of 'B for Bristol' aircraft names from Boxkite via Beaufighter and Brabazon to Britannia; and engines including the Jupiter and Hercules, and the Rolls-Royce jets of the present day. There was the exhibition showing the post-war Brabazon for which the local area was cleared of inconvenient villages and the extended runway was built. We saw the Proteus gas turbine engine planned for future Brabazons and the ill-fated Princess flying boat, which was eventually used in the commercially-successful 'Whispering Giant' – the Bristol Britannia. Then on to the Bristol Bloodhound rocket missile and other military weapons.

Inside the modern hangar we saw the delta shape of Concorde with its pointed nose and knife-sharp leading edges. Its size and presence is awe-inspiring, and must be especially so for children. The dramatic exhibition showed the amazing ingenuity of the design and operation of this revolutionary plane. We climbed inside the passenger cabin and took pictures of ourselves sitting in the pilots' seats flying through the clouds.

It is all a great message to young people to inspire them and a great advertisement for the benefits of international co-operation. School groups can enjoy exciting educational visits.



▲ Bristol Type 173 Helicopter
Prototype – first registered
1948 – powered by 2 Alvis
Leonides radial piston engines

Photos by Judith Jones

However, we were also informed of the huge over-run of development cost, the limitations caused by the banning of overland travel due to its sonic boom, and the scarcity of the air-lines which wished to purchase it. A return ticket to New York cost £8,292, and flying at twice the speed of sound a passenger could go from London to New York and back in one day. But demand was limited and the big, and therefore ultimately commercially successful, market went in another direction towards larger, more comfortable, more flexible, albeit slower air travel. Airbus seems the way to go!

Many thanks to Carol for arranging such an interesting visit.

Harry Hibberd

▲ The Bristol Scout – pre-war racer with first flight 24 September 1914



◀ Expulsion from Number 8
Eden Close
© Grayson Perry

Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences

Guided tour by the curator Julia Carver, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

Friday 18 May 2018

If I had not fully appreciated Grayson Perry's talent and humour before, this would have been the clincher. But having already seen these six huge and vivid tapestries in Bath, and his show at the Arnolfini last year, I was already hooked. Today the curator Julia Carver gave us much insight and was able to point out all sorts of small details on the tapestries. They are a modern-day equivalent of the *Rake's Progress* by Hogarth (whose prints were on display, as were Hockney's own take on the *Rake's Progress*). The idea for the tapestries was developed alongside a 3-part series on Channel 4 ('All in the Best Possible Taste') on taste and class in Britain, a selected compilation of which we watched on film. The people whom Grayson met and interviewed, their tastes and ways of life, were incorporated into the tapestries. They show Tim Rakewell from working class beginnings (*The Adoration of the Cage Fighters* and *The Agony in the Car Park*) via a middle-class girlfriend at university (*The Expulsion from Number 8 Eden Close*), through middle-class software business success (*The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal*), then on to vast riches and upper-class life (*The Upper Class at Bay*), culminating in sudden death (*#Lamentation*). Each is based on a well-known mediaeval painting, for example the *Adoration of the Cage Fighters* is based on the painting *Adoration of the Shepherds* by Andrea Mantegna (1450). Each one is full of detail and quirks of class and taste, so we were often faced with our own class pretensions, to wry amusement.

On the film Grayson explained that he chose the medium of weaving because in centuries past tapestries were mainly used to depict important historical scenes, and were only seen in grand castles and palaces. He wanted to use the medium in a different way, to make it more accessible to the public. The drawings took 2 weeks to turn into compositions, it took 3 months to adapt his computer files, and to programme the looms in Flanders. Each tapestry then took only 5 hours to weave! Technological advance has transformed this ancient craft.

This profoundly moral artist has always had a fascination with the place of class and social mobility (or lack of it) in Britain. He shows that despite our best efforts to differentiate ourselves (*The Vanity of Small Differences*), we are all remarkably similar.

Sue Black



▲ Detail from *The Annunciation of the Virgin Deal*
© Grayson Perry

Farleigh Hungerford Castle

Tuesday 22 May 2018

The sun shone and birds sang as we made our way on a glorious day to The George Hotel in Norton-St-Philip for lunch. This ancient hostelry was the site of one of Judge Jefferies' 'Bloody Assizes', which nicely set the tone for our later visit to the castle. Various members of the Hungerford family (some of whose earlier ancestors had a distinct proclivity for getting rid of unwanted spouses) including Sir Thomas (steward to John of Gaunt) and Sir Walter (courtier to Henry V) built the castle between 1377 and 1449.

We were expecting a guided tour but none was forthcoming and, in the event, I experienced another first of the day by listening to an audio tour. Up to then I had fiercely avoided these, finding them immensely irritating, especially at exhibitions. On this occasion, faced mostly with an array of ruins, I felt it was time to change a habit of a lifetime. And how glad I was! Without it I would not have known how best to enjoy what was on offer. It was helpfully informative, although I did not try any of the quiz questions which interspersed the commentary.

At the main entrance, the family coat of arms was displayed above the gate depicting, amongst other things, a sickle which provided a thread throughout the tour. There were both inner and outer courts and a couple of towers the layout of which were all vividly depicted in the commentary. But for me the highlight of the afternoon was the priest's house and above all the chapel. The former had something of a museum in it, containing various stone objects of Purbeck marble as well as other items found on digs. For example, amongst a display of pewter spoons, some of whose handles were set badly awry (causing me to wonder about the eyesight of the makers and what the conditions for making them might be) was an exquisite tobacco tamper in the shape of a diminutive slightly-curved hand.

The chapel though was quite delightful. A beautiful 15th century picture of St. George slaying the dragon still in glorious colour was one of a number of surviving murals. There were several tombs and stained glass windows as well as a catalogue of all the plants found in the gardens outside and explanations of their uses. This trip had been altogether a thoroughly rewarding and enjoyable day.

Caro Bailey



▲ Farleigh Hungerford Castle

Photos by Hilary Cleeve

Impressions of our first ever Friends' Trip to Farleigh Castle

It was a delight that our maiden Friends' trip – to Farleigh Hungerford Castle – was on one of the sunniest days in May. To everyone's surprise, our party did not seem to be expected at the castle and were initially disappointed that the promised guide had not arrived. But no problem! We were quickly up-graded to individual digital audio guides. These proved ideal as everyone could wander around the castle grounds at their own pace. The castle is a very modest relic of days gone by and some of the paths needed careful navigation. The audio guide was keen to recount some of the bloodiest events of the castle's history including the wife who had her husband murdered and his body burned in the castle. She was eventually tried, sentenced to death and hanged. After some time for sunbathing and consuming the essential ice cream it was time to fight the traffic back to Bristol. It had been a thoroughly enjoyable day.

Geoff and Jean Hoults



▼ The chapel at Farleigh Hungerford



▲ Charles Wesley's statue outside The New Room

▼ In museum at New Room, slave statue made from chains



The New Room, Bristol

Monday 9 July 2018

Back in 1739 this really was a 'New Room' - and although still called that, it is the oldest Methodist Chapel in the world and John Wesley's dwelling house. We entered via the Broadmead Courtyard, passing the statue of him on horseback. Around the base it gives his dates 1703 - 1791 and 'I look upon the world as my parish'. The stable is nearby. He is estimated to have travelled 250,000 miles (the equivalent of 10 times around the world) on horseback when he was young and by coach in his old age. He preached thousands of times, often to huge crowds. About 3,000 people attended his first-ever open-air meeting at a St. Philips brickworks.

Katie Rogers told us the history of the building and of the Wesley family. It was a miracle John (aged 6) escaped being burnt to death in a terrible fire at his home, the vicarage in Epworth, Lincolnshire. His mother always told him he had been saved for a reason. He and younger brother Charles were students at Oxford and ran a 'Holy Club', where they met George Whitefield.

Whitefield had committed himself to working in America, so asked John Wesley to come to Bristol to continue his work here. At the New Room the Wesleys operated a food bank, a school, a lending library, issued 'recycled' clothing, visited the nearby Newgate Prison and opened one of the first free medical dispensaries in the country. John carried out Whitefield's promise to the miners of Kingswood that a school room plus a preaching house would be built there. The school is now in Bath.

There are no ground floor windows in the New Room but light comes from the lantern window. John only paid Window Tax for one, although there were eight in the octagonal shape. The large clock is being repaired at present, but we saw the two pulpits - the top one used by the preacher and the lower one used for leading prayers.

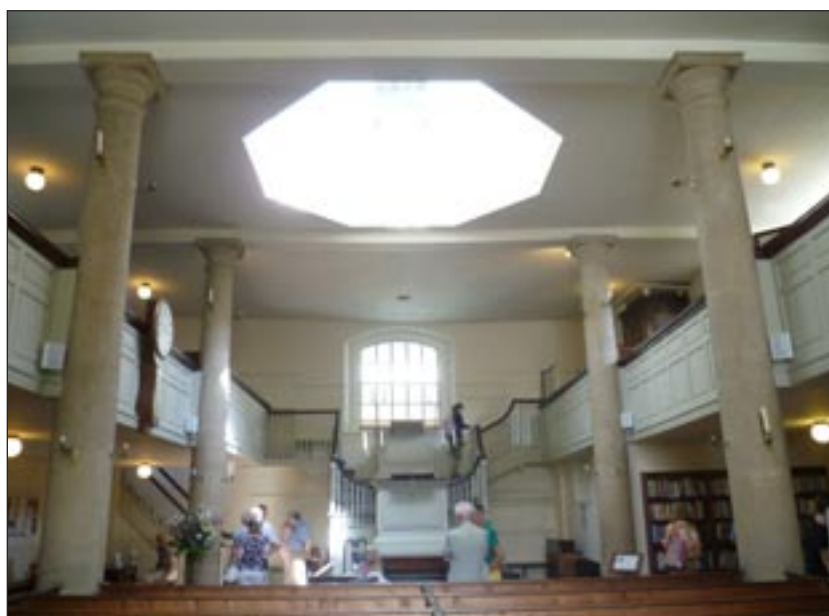
Worshippers sat on wooden benches, (but pews were added when the building was sold to the Welsh Calvinists who were there for 120 years). There would have been a lot of hymns sung - many written by Charles - and we still sing them today.

From the gallery we went to the Museum, just twelve small rooms and a larger central Common Room with hands-on displays covering the Slave Trade, 18th century education plus the spread of Methodism across both Britain and America. In the extensive (and continually growing) library are two lovely stained glass windows 'rescued' when Wesley College in Westbury-on-Trym closed.

I have been visiting the New Room for over 50 years. All the renovations which were finished just a year ago, including the atrium, cafe, and museum, make the whole story of the New Room and Methodism come to life. People come from all over the world to experience this or to join in the communion service each Friday at 1pm. Thank you Carol Ouvry for organising another lovely local experience.

Ceri Addis

◀ Interior of Charles Wesley's chapel with ceiling window



Photos by Catherine Dixon

Find out more at www.newroombristol.org.uk

Chippenham Museum

Thursday 15 March 2018

The day started well with coffee in the Yelde House, a mediaeval guild house with a tableau of figures narrating the story of the town falling on hard times when the demand for local woollen broadcloth fell after the Napoleonic wars. We quickly sensed the enthusiasm of the museum staff for Chippenham and its history.

The museum, undergoing renovation funded by an Arts Council Grant and local councils, explained the geology and archaeology of the local area, and information about locally-based industries such as Westinghouse, a railway engineering company, and the North Wiltshire Bacon Company. The story was that the pigs walked to market from farms far and wide. They were slaughtered in the town shambles before they lost any more weight. The meat was cured, then bacon and ham were distributed by road or railway.

A temporary exhibition included art, ceramics and photos. Mention was made of local artist Robin Tanner and his portrait of the artist's wife (1934), which is held in Bristol Art Gallery. The staircase window had an insert of stained glass commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the museum. It depicts the renowned railway viaduct by Brunel. Below in the courtyard was a striking World War I black memorial seat showing soldiers and red poppies. Sue Stops was delighted to see paintings by her husband, John.

Later we had an entertaining guided walk around the town centre of 'Little Bath', as Chippenham was known for its Georgian buildings made of Bath stone.

Going down what had been Gutter Lane, we were told there were originally 79 alehouses because the drinking water was polluted and the coach passengers needed accommodation. Everybody then drank ale (including children) as it had only a one or two percent alcohol content.

Finally we went to the parish church of St Andrew. King Alfred's sister married there in an earlier church in 853. The current church is large and light, typical of many based originally on the wealth of the wool trade, but it has been sensitively adapted for the modern day.

Despite rain being promised all day there was actually very little. The final treat was a long lasting rainbow showing the whole spectrum of colours including unusually a vivid violet as we travelled from Chippenham to the M4.

Marianne Pitman



▲ The Yelde House

Photos by Gundula Dorey

▼ The cruck-built back of the oldest surviving pub – the Rose and Crown



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