

Newsletter

Return of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year

This edition packed with

- news and photos of Bristol's museums, galleries and archives including the arrival of the new Head of Culture and stunning exhibitions of Japanese prints
- reports of trips to Selly Manor, Middleport Pottery and the Albert Road Recycling Centre, plus residential trips to Glyndebourne and Belfast with a packed programme of visits including the Titanic Experience and the Giant's Causeway
- news of upcoming events, talks and visits you can join

From the Chairman

Welcome to Jon Finch, Head of Culture

Jon Finch has now started work in his new role as Bristol's Head of Culture, replacing Laura Pye. I am sure you'll join me in wishing him every success.

AGM

It was great to see so many of you at our AGM at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery in September. It was the best attendance I can remember since I joined the committee in 2007 – well over 80 members. I particularly enjoyed chatting to some of our newer members joining from Friends of Bristol Art Gallery (FoBAG).

Hans Schubart

Immediately following the AGM was the Schubart Lecture, the last in FoBAG's annual series. As an introduction to the lecture our patron Francis Greenacre delivered a brief and heartfelt appreciation of Hans Schubart CBE, who was curator of art here in Bristol from 1946 to 1953, when he became Director of Bristol Art Gallery. Born in Hong Kong in

1903, Schubart was educated in Berlin & Vienna, and worked at the Philadelphia Art Museum in the United States before returning to the UK in 1931.

Very much a European, he transformed the Bristol Art Gallery from a minor provincial gallery into a major collection of European art, buying continental paintings in the 1950s and 60s as brilliantly as the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery were acquiring the work of contemporary British artists in those same years. And here he also set up the very first conservation studio in any regional museum in Britain. Schubart retired in 1968, sadly dying within the same year.

Arnold Wilson, his successor, raised funds for the annual Hans Schubart Memorial lecture and early speakers included Nikolaus Pevsner and Sir Kenneth Clark, (Lord Clark). When those funds were finally exhausted, the Friends of the Art Gallery took over. This year, fifty years since Hans Schubart's death, we held the last lecture to celebrate his vast and crucial contribution to the stature of this institution.

British Association of Friends of Museums Annual Conference

The BAFM annual Conference in October was hosted by the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle on the theme of the value of Friends organisations in a changing social and economic



Cover photo: Volunteers demonstrating cargo handling 1950s-style for Docks Heritage Weekend

© Ibolya Feher

▲ *Hans Schubart CBE with his staff in Bristol Art Gallery's conservation studio, c. 1967*

© Bristol Culture

climate. We were represented by 6 delegates, over 10% of the total present. There were plenty of interesting and thought-provoking speakers and opportunities to talk about current issues with the other delegates. And those of us with a few extra days up there were able to explore the lovely city and surroundings under our own steam.

National first prize for the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery Bulletin

I am delighted to report that BAFM, the British Association of Friends of Museums, awarded the 200th edition of the FoBAG Bulletin First Prize in the 251-750 members category in their 2018 awards. At their annual conference Muriel Harrison, representing FoBAG, was presented with a framed certificate and a cheque for £250.



▲ *The award-winning edition of the Bulletin*
© FoBAG

Frank Evry

I was sad to hear of the death of Frank Evry, so soon after his retirement earlier this year. In recent years it was Frank who drove the FoBAG coach on their many holidays and outings, and those who went on those trips have many happy memories of his driving skill, his courtesy towards other drivers, and his care for his passengers. As Maurice Bell said in the Bulletin when Frank retired, 'Frank has been so much more than a driver; he has been a real friend to us all'.



▲ *The late Frank Evry*
© FoBAG



▲ *Clown eggs from Clowns: the Eggs-hibition*
© Bristol Culture

Clowns: the Eggs-hibition

Since childhood I've been a bit uncomfortable with clowns, so was not sure how much I would enjoy Clowns: the Eggs-hibition. I am glad to say I found it fascinating, particularly the clown faces painted on ceramic eggs as a way of recording each individual's defining characteristics. And any scary clowns are really very well behaved, so I had nothing to worry about.

Winter lectures

Good news! The museum has decided that from 2019 there is no longer any need to book in advance for the Winter Lectures. This has become possible because the larger state-of-the-art lecture theatre holds 500, twice as many as the previous venue, meaning there should be plenty of room for everyone who wants to come.

Sue Thurlow Chairman

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Our new Head of Culture – Jon Finch

Jon Finch took up his position as Head of Culture on 12 November 2018 fresh from leading a redevelopment programme of the Harris Museum, Preston. Jon has wide experience working in museums, also for the Museums, Libraries Archives Council (MLA) and for a cultural consultant company in the private sector.



The Historic Houses

Plans are being drawn up in preparation for introducing charging to the Red Lodge and Georgian House from next April.

Following the success of Art Shed at M Shed, we have opened a new Art for Mental Health course at Blaise Castle House Museum. It is already attracting referrals from across north Bristol.

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Taking inspiration from other large museums such as Cardiff we are trialling an object handling table in the front hall, where volunteers will engage visitors as they enter and signpost them to exhibits around the museum. The objects include hand axes, fossils and shells from the natural history collection. If you would like to volunteer please let us know.

Success in numbers

Visitor numbers are up at the main museum sites, due to a lively exhibition and events programme and, of course, the Gromit Trail around the city. Retail sales are also up by 22% against the target (so up about 30% on 2017) across the service and the refurbishment of the shop at the Museum & Art Gallery, pictured in the last Newsletter, has increased the size and range of goods on offer there – do please use us for Christmas presents!

Staff news

We are very sorry to have to report that Barry Monelle, known to many as Baz, died unexpectedly in early October. Barry had worked for over 20 years in the museums service and some may remember him manning the galleries at the Industrial Museum before the creation of M Shed. As well as front of house duties Barry used skills from his earlier career to work in our finance office. His somewhat acerbic sense of humour and his love of Bristol Rovers will be much missed.

Catherine Littlejohns (Senior Curator Historic Houses) will be taking maternity leave from Christmas; maternity cover is

currently being recruited. Max Parkin has left Bristol Archives to train as an archivist and Nicola Hole has taken over his role as Archives Assistant. Four new members of staff have been appointed to work at Bristol Archives on the Save Our Sounds project funded through the British Library. As the SW Regional Hub for the project we will coordinate a programme of work saving oral history and other sound archives which have been identified as at potential risk of loss due to deterioration of old technology.

Exhibitions and Events

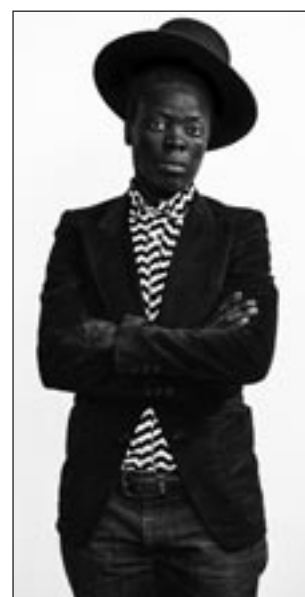
Docks Heritage Weekend in September was its usual success story with lots of activity on the dockside and on the water. Bristol Music: Seven Decades of Sound, which ran over the summer, was a great success with around 34,000 visitors. It managed to take many people back in time as well as introduce people to new music. We are especially pleased with the great review in Museums Journal's September issue.

Now on at M Shed is the return of our busiest ticketed exhibition – Wildlife Photographer of the Year. The prize-winning images are both amazing and thought provoking as they challenge us to think about the impact we have on our planet. It runs until 24 February.

At Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, we have the first of three exhibitions dedicated to the Masters of Japanese Prints. The first is a display of Hokusai and Hiroshige landscapes and it is already a massive hit with our visitors. At the other end of the scale is an exhibition you need to see to believe – Clowns: the Eggs-hibition. Developed as part of Circus 250 celebrations we have worked with London Clown Gallery-Museum and Clowns International to display part of the unique Clown Egg Registry alongside costume, props and activities for children. The exhibition aims to unveil the personal, hilarious and often bizarre stories of the people behind the colourful makeup. Both exhibitions run until 6 January.

Acquisitions for the art collections

Starting with seed funding from FoBAG we recently secured funding from the Arts Council England V&A Purchase Grant Fund and from the Art Fund to acquire three photographs by South African activist photographer Zanele Muholi, along with a set of six prints, including screenprints and etchings, by internationally renowned black artists from the UK and USA.



▲ Photograph by Zanele Muholi
© Bristol Culture

Volunteers, Erin and Zoe, digitising specimens from the Bristol Dinosaur collection
© Bristol Culture



The photographs are striking self-portraits that make reference to historic, ethnographic portrayals of African men and women; to African studio photography of the 1950s and 60s, with their dandyish sensibility; and also to the recent history of South Africa, including apartheid. They are strong statements about identity in contemporary South Africa and bring a feminist sensibility to portrait photography.

Recently the Contemporary Art Society gifted the museum a painting by the British Guyanese artist Aubrey Williams, now on display in Gallery V, and the six prints we have now been able to purchase will further develop the diversity of black art in the collection.

Natural Science Collections

The Natural Sciences Team has been working with volunteers and interns over the summer on historically-important specimens. Deborah Hutchinson invited six students into the geology store to assist with the digitisation of the Bristol Dinosaur collection which contains over 200 fossil bones of *Thecodontosaurus*. *Project Theco* resulted in over 1030 specimen and label photos being added to the museum database. First found in 1834, *Thecodontosaurus* was the fourth dinosaur ever named and is currently only known from the Bristol area.

Cataloguing the British Empire & Commonwealth Collection

Frances Davies and Sue Giles have so far looked at 3,638 objects in this collection, as part of the audit to check that objects match the database information. With so many people working to pack up the collection at Temple Meads, they are finding objects they have never seen before, confirming that although the BEC collection is very mixed in quality, it does contain some fascinating, important and/or

beautiful objects. For example, a bit of the copper sheathing – quite possibly supplied by the Bristol Brass & Copper Company – from the hull of HMS *Bounty*.

On the other side of the new BECC office at the Bristol Archives, Nicky Sugar and Jayne Pucknell are still working through the thousands of photographs in the collection. These have recently been used in an exhibition about Commonwealth soldiers here at Bristol Archives, whilst the films were used in an installation at the vestibules at City Hall (visited by Jeremy Corbyn on a recent visit to Bristol). Being in one office makes linking between the parts of the BEC collection easier: in the objects collection is a knitted striped polo jumper from a Kenya Police officer, and in the photographic collection is a photograph of the Kenya Police team all wearing knitted striped jumpers, with our donor proudly wearing his.



Knitted polo jumper belonging to a member of the Kenya Police, bought from W H Gore, Colonial Agents, London. The shirt has seen much use and has been darned and repaired
© Bristol Culture

Visit to Belfast

After its troubled recent past Belfast now appears to be an expanding vibrant city with lots of new developments: hotels, shopping areas, office buildings, restaurants and an attractive waterfront. We spent a most enjoyable and informative week, thanks to Gary Gostelow's excellent organisation, exploring the city and its environs, our programme only slightly curtailed by Storm Ali.

FRIDAY 14 SEPTEMBER

City tour and Stormont

After a leisurely breakfast we were joined by our tour guide Barbara. This effervescent and patriotic 'Ulsterperson' kept us entertained and informed for the whole week. Our first outing was a coach tour of Belfast starting with an appreciation of the remarkable architecture of the city centre. The real timeline of the town started in 1600 when the north was 'planted' with Scots and English workers following their masters, who had been granted land from the English Crown. This deliberate policy of making the area English resulted in the building of many large houses.

The Act of Union with England of 1801 formally joined Ireland to the rest of the UK. Irish linen workers from the rural flax fields moved into the city to the new linen mills and into houses provided by the wealthy mill owners. This industrialization grew the city rapidly with substantial Victorian civic buildings such as the palatial City Hall, Albert Memorial, oriental style Opera House and other Scottish Baronial style buildings.

In 1920, partition required the greater independence of the north from the south to be recognised with a government building. Arthur Thorneycroft was commissioned to design a suitable grand building in the Stormont Estate and, despite cutbacks from London, the building in Portland stone was opened as the Parliament in 1928. Our privileged tour of the interior included the entrance hall with wonderfully vivid pictures of McGuinness and Paisley bringing to life the remarkable Good Friday Agreement, after which, our guide Mike assured us, they became the best of friends. We sat in the Assembly Chamber in seats once occupied by well-known characters from Ulster history.

After lunch our tour brought to life the 30 years of 'Troubles' by taking us down



▲ Belfast City Hall opened in 1906



▲ The Friends pose for an historic photo at Stormont



An image from the Peace Wall, 'Scars of Belfast', ►



◀ Seal sculpture on Donegall Quay

the Falls Road and up the Shankill Road, which were centres of the disturbances. Overlooked by the Divis Flats where the British army occupied the top two floors, this small area of Belfast was steeped in violence. The 'wall', a 6-metre high concrete and mesh fence that separates the two communities, is now a 'peace wall', whose graffiti tells the story of the 'Troubles' and is now a major tourist attraction.

Completing the day, we took a boat trip up the River Lagan and past the Titanic Quarter. The skyline is dominated by the Harland and Wolff giant cranes (Samson and Goliath) which now service the repair of many vessels and are right beside the £97m *Titanic* Experience building, the World War I cruiser *HMS Caroline*, and *SS Nomadic* a tender for *Titanic* itself. Despite the wind and rain, this tour whetted our appetite for the next full day's visit to the area.

David McGregor

▼ The *Titanic* Museum



SATURDAY 15 SEPTEMBER

Titanic* and *HMS Caroline

On Saturday we went to the *Titanic* Quarter. The impressive new exhibition building is designed in the form of the prows of four ships joined together, and decorated outside to give the impression of threatening icebergs. Inside there are nine separate sections covering the history of the working city in 1911, through all aspects of the *Titanic*'s story from her inception to her laying on the seabed.

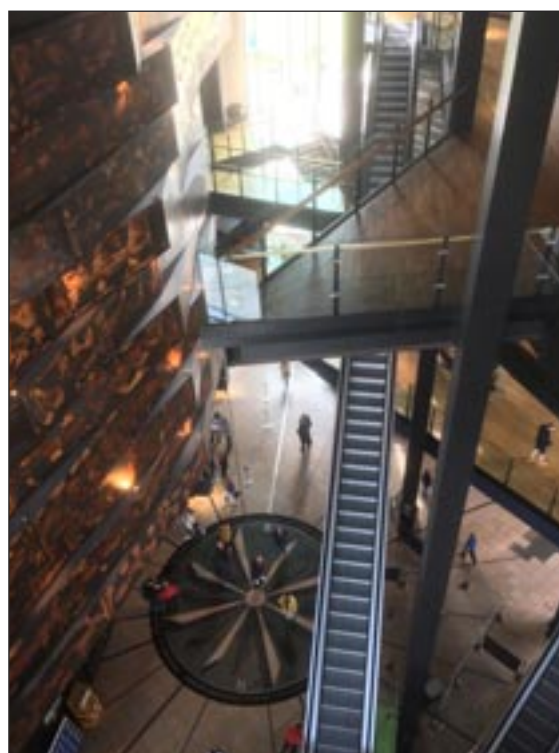
Outside, the area on which the ship was actually constructed is now flattened but has four rows of 20m high posts to give an impression of the colossal Arrol Gantry that originally towered over two slipways. This gantry facilitated the simultaneous construction of the *Titanic* and her sister ship the *Olympic*, which was launched shortly before her. The two near-identical ships took about 26 months to build using 300 steel frames and 2000 hull plates 25mm thick, each weighing up to 3 tons. Each item was first drawn, then fabricated, lifted separately and riveted into position. About 3 million rivets were used, each individually made, heated and hammered into place. For me the highlight of the exhibition was the Shipyard section where we entered a unique suspended fairground ride that carried us round and up and down amidst scenery and lights that gave the impression of actually being amidst the scenes and noise of all this steelwork under construction.

We think of the enormous tragedy that was the *Titanic* sinking – the horrific loss of life – but also consider the lives of the workers who built her and the months of effort that went into her construction – all lost in the ocean in a few hours.

The *Titanic*'s tender ship the *Nomadic*, the only remaining White Star liner, is moored adjacent to the exhibition. We also visited the old Harland & Wolff drawing office, which now houses memorabilia, a hotel, and a very pleasant tea-room. Afterwards we visited the adjacent *HMS Caroline*, a light cruiser built in Birkenhead in 1914 and now the only ship surviving from the notorious Battle of Jutland. Besides the display of the ship's quarters there was also a film showing the battle. Altogether this was a deeply impressive visit to an area which forms an excellent focal point for the current development of Belfast city centre.

Harry Hibberd

▼ View from the top floor to the foyer in the *Titanic* Museum



SUNDAY 16 SEPTEMBER

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum

It was a short run to the museum on a lovely autumn morning. The transport section was entered from above giving a stunning view of the extensive collection on display. The smell wafting up was evocative of a past era. The main attraction was the Maeve No. 800, the most powerful locomotive to be built and run in Ireland. There were also some eccentric rail buses and a Bristol-built Peckett loco No 2 which ran at BAC Larne and is the only Peckett to appear on a postage stamp

The ground floor housed the road transport collection from the earliest bikes and horse-drawn delivery vehicles to the De Lorean car. A Mark 1 Cortina brought comments as it was surrounded by 1950/60 household equipment which we all remembered rather too well.

One area contained a *Titanic* exhibition which explained the design and building of the vessel herself with histories and memorabilia. Outside was the coastal schooner *Result* built in 1893. This was of particular interest to one of our group as an uncle had sailed as her Captain.

It was a short ride to the Folk Museum with its old buildings and dwellings set in the landscape to illustrate farming and local industries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A small town called Ballycutra has been set up with all the usual features including a pub (closed) and tea room (open). We were just in time for lunch.

Trevor Mussett

Ulster Museum

We strolled through the Botanical Gardens past a statue of Lord Kelvin and some elegant Victorian glass houses towards the museum. The gardens were buzzing with families enjoying a sunny Sunday afternoon at the Autumn Fair. The museum, built in 1921, has a traditional exterior but inside is a surprisingly bright modern glass and steel atrium with five floors of galleries.

Most visitors work their way down: from art and ceramics at the top to science and natural history, the origins of humans, early Irish history, to the modern day. With so much to see in a short time I took the advice of a young curator who sent me to her four favourite things.

At the top, Modigliani's *Female Nude*, on loan from the Courtauld Gallery, has a calming effect amongst a collection of portraits which includes two lovely pencil sketches by Rossetti of Elizabeth Siddall. One floor further down lies Takabuti – dating from about 660BC, she is the first Egyptian mummy to be brought to Ireland. Partially unwrapped she lies serenely in her open sarcophagus.

A hoard of gold jewellery rescued from the Girona, one of the Armada fleet which sank off the Irish coast, is displayed further on. Amongst this collection is the Salamander, a fabulous gold pendant studded with rubies, said to be a lucky charm which held power over fire.

Finally, on the ground floor I tried to better understand recent Irish history from photographs, news items and artefacts in the Troubles exhibition. I was moved by Irene MacWilliam's Peace Quilt which contains 3,061 pieces of bright red fabric, donated by members of the public, each representing an individual killed in the period between 1969 and 1994.

There was still so much more to see and the Discovery Rooms to be investigated that I could do with another visit.

Sue Pears



▲ A carpenter making wooden mouldings for furniture at the Folk Museum



▼ The Transport Museum

▼ Painting by Elizabeth Magill at the Ulster Museum





◀ The spectacular ruins of Downhill Demesne

MONDAY 17 SEPTEMBER

Hezlett House and Downhill Demesne

We set off through a very Loyalist area where Union and Ulster flags flew from lamp-posts and houses. Passing through the nearby Antrim Hills, where wind turbines have replaced the old flax and corn mills, we arrived at Hezlett House. Built in 1691 as a rectory, this long thatched house was bought 70 years later by Isaac Hezlett a cloth worker in Coleraine, as a dairy. The house is held up on wooden timbers (crucks and trusses) which made it easy to alter the shape of rooms or add more.

Hezlett employed one maid and 20 dairy workers who lived there. An impressive dresser with china on display, and a collection of stock pots and pans which could be placed over the fire grate were notable. Potatoes cooked in the ashes of the fire overnight. There were 'shuffle chairs' in the kitchen on which the lads would sit – some shuffling forward to be nearer the heat while others shuffled back to cool off. Some 15 workers slept in a long room upstairs. We walked through the other rooms and a dining room, where a tiny window in the inside wall let the mother look into the baby's room with its metal cot (and potty).

This being Ireland, we climbed uphill to visit the ruins of nearby Downhill! This was a magnificent family home until the 1930s but during World War II it was a billet for RAF personnel. After being sold, the huge place fell into disrepair until 1980, when the National Trust acquired it. We walked through the grass-covered Grand Hall and Library out towards the Mussenden Temple – a classical rotunda based on the Temple of Tivoli just outside Rome – which stood right on the cliff edge. This can seat 100 and provides a spectacular, if windy, venue for concerts and weddings (only last week a bride's veil was blown out to sea!) A railway tunnel was immediately below the Temple and trains emerged by the lovely Benone Beach. A place of beautiful views but incredible wind.

The ruins looked like a castle cresting the hilltop as we staggered back up the slope. Then it was over the haha to the walled garden with its many types of apples, and through the Lions' Gate to board our coach.

Ceri Addis



▲ The vertiginous view over the cliff edge at Downhill

Photos for the Belfast trip were taken by Martin Bailey, Elly Chapman, Stephen Chapman, Elizabeth Kerr, Trevor Mussett

The Giant's Causeway

The Causeway is about 60 million years old, but the current visitor centre dates from 2012, and is very elegant and energy-efficient. The theme of hexagonal shapes is enthusiastically adopted in the shop, where the usual tourist souvenirs nearly all have six sides. Even the road outside is paved with hexagons.

Information on how the causeway formed, volcanic lava cooling into solid basalt which splits into hexagonal shapes, starting at the surface and growing downwards as cooling continues, is clearly explained, as well as the legend of a feud between giants Finn McCool (Irish, who built the causeway) and Benandonner (Scots, who eventually destroyed it) for the more romantically-minded.

A guide was specially provided for us on the bus to point out curious features, and walkers had an audio guide (which did not keep up with me as I strode downhill with the wind behind me). The Giant's Boot, Wishing Chair, Camel, Giant's Granny and the Organ required varying amounts of imagination to distinguish. Once at the bottom I stepped carefully on the tops of the columns until I heard a warden's voice warning me not to proceed further if I wanted to stay dry. So I turned round and, fighting against the strongly-gusting wind, climbed inland until a hail from another warden who was probably a little more sensible than I was, put paid to my explorations.

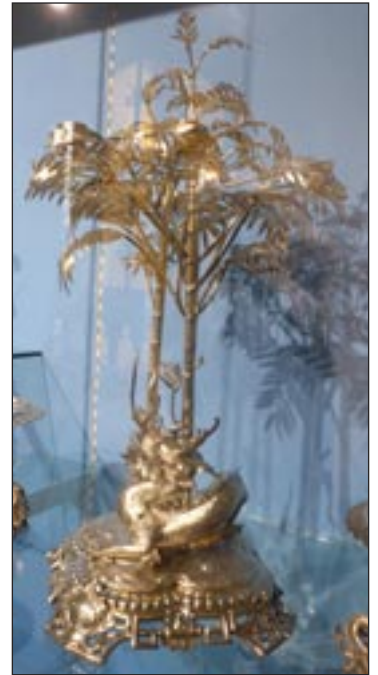


▲ The Giant's Causeway

Ian Kerr



◀ The Lanyon Building at Queen's University



▲ One of a pair of silver candelabras in the Hart Collection presented to Sir Robert Hart in 1890 for services in China

TUESDAY 18 SEPTEMBER

Queen's University, Belfast

Founded by Queen Victoria in 1845, Queen's University has many famous alumni: Seamus Heaney, Mary McAleese, David Trimble, Liam Neeson and Arlene Foster to name but a few.

The magnificent main building was designed in 1849 by Sir Charles Lanyon, who was also responsible for designing other Belfast landmarks such as Belfast Castle, Crumlin Road Gaol and the Customs House. Since then, the University estate has grown to more than 300 buildings - many of them listed - to accommodate 25,000 students. The splendour of the neo-gothic façade was sadly shrouded in plastic as extensive restoration is in progress. However, we were able to view much of the original architecture from the quadrangle at the rear, with imposing cloisters on three sides.

The former library, built in 1868 and now a post-graduate centre, was impressive, as was the view from the top floor of the modern law faculty building. We were also impressed by the size and scope of the gift shop, which stocked many high-quality attractive items alongside the usual sweatshirts bearing the university logo - more of a tourist destination than a magnet for students.

We were shown the silver collection displayed in the Naughton Gallery - an assembly of items acquired by or donated to Queen's over the years, ranging from ceremonial objects such as a gold mace to an ornate set of 1888 table silver in chinoiserie style donated by the family of Sir Robert Hart, a former student. The gallery is also used for public exhibitions, the current one being Hero Worship by Brooklyn-based artist Sean O'Connor: a series of paintings referencing Greco-Roman style but focusing on the athletic male body in an amusing and thought-provoking way - quite a contrast to the neo-gothic architecture of the building.

Mary Bailey

Hillsborough Castle

Hillsborough is an attractive small town with a large church and fort in addition to the neo-classical mansion built by Wills Hill in the late 18th century to form part of a Georgian market square in the centre of the town. Hillsborough Castle, as it is known, is now the official home of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and a royal residence. The Queen and members of the Royal Family stay at Hillsborough when visiting Northern Ireland. Hillsborough has also played an important role in the peace process in Northern Ireland since the 1980s. A major £16 million project, organised by Historic Royal Palaces, is under way to restore the house and grounds to their



▲ A herald's tabard on display in the Throne Room at Hillsborough



▲ *The Throne Room at Hillsborough*

former glory and to create a car park, education centre, shop and café – all to facilitate an increase in visitor numbers.

On entering the building, our excellent guide pointed out the Irish deer antlers above the front door – a traditional welcome for guests. We were shown round the ornate ground floor state rooms hung with paintings from the Royal Collection: the grand Throne Room, the State Drawing Room, the State Dining Room, Red Room and Stair Hall. The latter, sited by a side entrance, was designed so that servants could transport all the luggage straight upstairs to the bedrooms. Despite the grand surroundings, the rooms had the air of being lived in, with personal photographs of the Royal Family dotted around. During the peace process, all three parties were assigned different rooms for conferring, then came together for discussion. The agreement was signed in the Red Room.

We dodged the rain and wandered round the extensive grounds, some formal and some parkland. Official receptions can be held outside, as well as wedding receptions. It would certainly make a lovely setting for any special occasion.

Mary Bailey

WEDNESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER

Downpatrick

What a wild, windy day we had for our visit to Downpatrick! The coach was buffeted and the driver had to navigate around broken branches and other debris along the way. On arrival, we were pleased to take refuge in the St. Patrick Centre for our first visit of the morning. We were warmly greeted by Dr Tim Campbell, the director of the centre, who took us on a tour travelling back in time to cover the life and times of the saint. We explored the legacy of Patrick covering his boyhood in Roman Britain, his capture by Irish pirates and later his becoming patron saint of Ireland. The whole story was recalled using the saint's own words. Along the way we saw beautiful artwork and metalwork produced in those early Christian times. This was a most interesting Museum and gave us a good background to Downpatrick.

From the Museum we made our way to Down Cathedral, the Cathedral church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. It stands high on a hill overlooking the town, on the site of a Benedictine Monastery built in 1183. Saint Patrick's remains are said to be buried in the adjoining graveyard underneath an inscribed stone of Mourne granite.

We were greeted by a guide who gave us an overview of the building and pointed out items of interest such as the 11th century granite font, which was once discovered being used as a watering trough and later installed in the Cathedral. We learned that the original building had been rebuilt several times due to being destroyed by fire and once by an earthquake. The 15th century chancel is the oldest part still remaining and everything adjoining is from around 1818 with a tower at the west end added in 1826.

At lunchtime we made our way to Strangford and the Cuan Inn where lunch had been ordered in advance. Normally we would have caught the ferry from Strangford Loch but, sadly, because of the extreme weather conditions, our visit to Mount Stewart had to be cancelled. So after lunch we boarded the coach and made our way back to Belfast.

Hilary Cleeve

*St Patrick's
tombstone* ►



► *A wall painting depicting
the story of St Patrick*

Glyndebourne: FoBAG's final visit

Thursday 11 October to Saturday 13 October 2018

Thursday

Polesden Lacey was a treat to begin our visit to Sussex. The house tells the story of Maggie Greville, the illegitimate daughter of William McEwan and one of the greatest society hostesses of the early 20th century. One room tells the interesting story of this famous brewer, a benevolent, very successful man, who amassed a wonderful collection of paintings, particularly Dutch masters. He paid for Maggie's education, encouraging her to build on his impressive start. In another room we learnt how wounded officers found refuge at Polesden Lacey, when it was set up as a convalescent hospital in World War I. There was so much to see, learn and appreciate here.



▲ Friends of the Art Gallery at Glyndebourne
Photo by Maurice Bell

Friday

Firle Place was a delight, full of light and interesting stories about suitable marriages. The house has been developed through the ages, preserving some old features as things changed. It has been home to the Gage family for 500 years; they still live there happily, as can be imagined on such a beautiful estate. The house contains attractive individual pieces of furniture, rare porcelain and interesting family portraits, as well as beautiful chandeliers which light up the main halls.

Our 'evening' began in mid-afternoon with the drive to Glyndebourne, the main purpose of our trip. We seemed to be about equally divided between those who knew the place and those on our first visit. There was little division in our universal appreciation of the delicious buffet meal and a very special performance. *La Traviata* is such a devastatingly sad story, which was performed with great feeling. As the director noted, the human side to the story is of particular importance. Violetta behaves in such a dignified manner when faced by the demands of Alfredo's father, that she wins him to her side. Dying alone rather than in the arms of Alfredo simply added to the tragedy, set to beautiful music.

Saturday

We began our final day, good friends as always with the Friends, heading for Chartwell, Churchill's haven of peace. House and gardens are full of attractive features. These begin with the unusual wooden surround to the front door. We were very soon introduced to Churchill's paintings with his *Winter Sunshine*, Chartwell displayed in the sitting room. Paintings continued to please with Isadore Opsomer's *Port of Antwerp*, Claude Monet's *Charing Cross Bridge* and so many more.

The drawing room was flooded with light, but perhaps more attractive was the dining room. Here the Churchills created an extravagantly-designed room, once again full of light, with furniture and windows up to the minute in the 1920s. The gardens and views were so special to the Churchills and we can see why they loved the setting so much.

There is much more to say about our last residential visit with FoBAG. This can serve only as an aide memoire for us all. Finally we must thank all members of the group for making another FoBAG trip so enjoyable, telling our stories, helping one another along, and enjoying a shared experience together. As always, special thanks go to Margaret, Maurice and Monica, our very special '3Ms'.

Angie Biggs



▲ A secluded corner of Firle Park
Photo by Angie Biggs

Selly Manor and St Nicholas Place

Tuesday 2 October 2018

Our first tour, with our excellent guide, Gillian, was of a small part of the huge Bournville estate. This consisted of 8,000 properties housing 25,000 residents, as well as schools, places of worship of many denominations, parks, shops, community centres and an impressive carillon of 46 bells on top of one of the junior schools.

The estate was created by the Cadbury brothers, Richard and George, when they moved their factory from inner Birmingham. The Cadburys wanted to create an estate of houses, some to rent, some to buy, with no discernible differences between the two categories. In 1901, George Cadbury gave the estate to the Bournville Village Trust. Founded to administer the village, the Trust has 12 members, including some of the Cadbury family. No more than a quarter of the land allotted to a house can be built on, garages are allowed but must have sloping roofs and no block paving is allowed in front of the property. No alcohol is sold on the estate, except to members of the Cadbury Club and residents of the Old Farm Hotel. Today the Trust remains an independent charitable and housing organisation.

Our next guide, Daniel, took us round Selly Manor. This building, built between the 1470s and 1650, was moved here from Selly Oak, a mile away. Originally a yeoman's house, it slowly deteriorated, becoming uninhabited by the 1890s. George Cadbury bought it in 1907, arranging for it to be painstakingly dismantled and reconstructed in Bournville. It opened as a museum in 1917.

A short drive took us to St Nicholas' Place in King's Norton and the sandwich lunch laid out for us. Then our group was taken on a guided tour by another brilliant guide called Pat. This area, originally called Nortoune, was a mediaeval royal hunting ground. The Queen's room in the main building is named for Henrietta Maria, Charles I's wife, who stayed here when trying to canvass help for her husband. It was part of the dower lands given to her on her marriage. The market place in front of the building was triangular – this was a popular shape to represent the Trinity. The Tudor Wool Merchant's house is timber framed with lath and plaster walls, built in a square with a central courtyard. At one time it was the Saracen's Head Inn.

Nearby is the Old Grammar School, which won the television programme 'Restoration' in 2004. Oddly the first floor of the building, built 1342–1460, is older than the ground floor which is mid-17th century. An unresolved mystery. We did not go into the church but were told of one famous incumbent – the Rev Wilbert Awdry, famous for Thomas the Tank Engine. As he was a conscientious objector no parish wanted him, until King's Norton offered him the living. Legend has it that he took his young son, Christopher, to watch trains at the local station and that was the origin of his famous stories.

This was a brilliant day, packed with activity. Many thanks to Pat Walker for arranging the day, Gary Gostelow for looking after us all on the trip and Brian who was a great driver.

Patricia Gregory



▲ *The Tudor Merchant's House*

Photo by Hilary Cleeve

▼ *Friends standing in front of Selly Manor*

Photo by Pat Gregory



Albert Road Recycling Centre

Friday 28 September 2018

How many Friends' excursions start with members sacrificing their shoes for safety boots (or boot, singular, as one unfortunate person found on opening their box!), donning a tasteful fluorescent vest and being briefed on the use of ear defenders? Clearly, the draw of touring Bristol Waste's Albert Road site overcame these inconveniences as extra visits are already on the cards, even though the friendly and knowledgeable community officers are yet to offer this fascinating insight on a routine basis. I think we can be very proud as an organisation that our interests are so diverse and current, and we are definitely in debt to Carol Ouvry for arranging this opportunity.

With the words 'please don't accidentally lean on any buttons!' ringing in our ears, our two small groups set off into the noise and bustle of the busy site. My first surprise was the absence of unpleasant smells and, by the end, my head was reeling with facts gained and preconceptions challenged. Many of these stories related to our local community; for example, we learned that discarded bicycles were reconditioned at Horfield Prison before being passed on to those in need. A rich vein of social history was also exposed, through the tales of one employee who started work in 1972 when dustmen, as they were then known, hung grimly onto the back of their trucks as the driver sped round corners trying to dislodge them!

Our visit did not coincide with 'rush hour' but, from strategic vantage points, we still appreciated the efficiency of the site in action. The sheer scale of what is collected each day really hit home as we watched the trucks unload their ingenious jigsaw of compartments while progressing from bay to bay, reminding me of the toy towns in children's cartoons. I particularly liked hearing how much was processed within the UK, contrary to negative newspaper headlines about waste shipped abroad and ending up in landfill, or worse, and the genuine value our leftovers have for the council. Far from being an unwelcome burden, retrieving this material is an important source of revenue, although I would never have guessed collecting cardboard on a rainy day was preferable, but it makes perfect sense having discovered this makes it easier to compress so more can be fitted on the truck each trip. I certainly have greater sympathy for the teams we see out and about on our streets now I know they are responsible for virtually the only sorting done, as the impact their precision has on the marketability of the material collected was immediately obvious.

We even found unexpected works of art to wonder at, from the abstract designs formed in the bales of compressed cans or steel to the humorous mural reminding teams to collect WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment).

I left very much more informed and with new zeal for carefully filling my brown, green and black boxes each week, although this was also a true example of cross pollination, as our guide was equally interested in the activities of the Friends. Could we have a new recruit waiting in the wings?

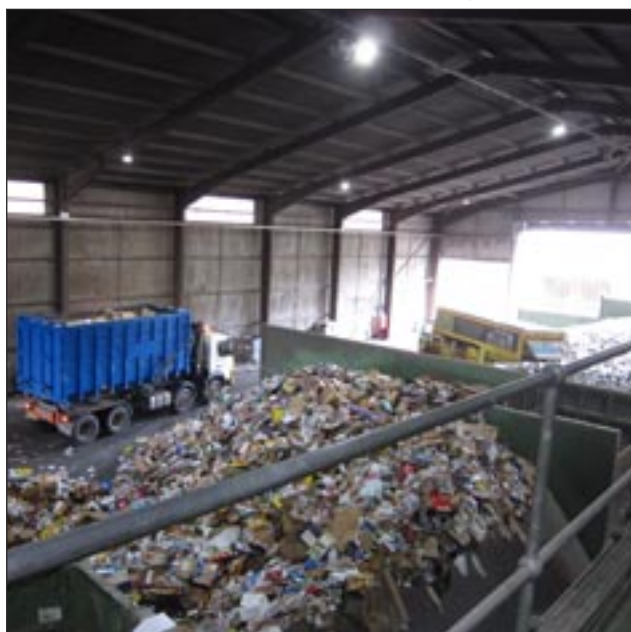
Keira Stobie



▲ A message to the team to remind them to collect the WEEE – Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment can be collected from the kerbside if it fits into a carrier bag

Photos by
Hilary Cleeve

▼ Inside the sheds showing piles of cardboard and plastic



▲ Our guide Lydia standing in front of bales of aluminium – the most valuable recyclable



Middleport Pottery and the 'Weeping Window'

Tuesday 14 August 2018



▲ *Weeping window or should it be called the weeping kiln?*



▲ *The 'tower' at work*

Middleport Pottery in Stoke on Trent is a fascinating historic and still-working site. It was purpose built adjacent to the Trent and Mersey Canal for William Leigh and Frederick Rathbone Burgess (forming Burleigh Pottery) in 1889 and is a Grade 2 listed building. In 2011 the site was about to close down, but was saved by the UK Historic Building Preservation Trust set up by Prince Charles. £9m was raised - £2m for the purchase of the site and £7m for its repair (roofing, electrics and plumbing). It was good to see some history of the company in refurbished, yet original-looking offices.

In its heyday the pottery employed 1,900 workers; now this is down to 80. It originally had 7 bottle kilns, but four were taken down in the 1940s and two in the 1960s. The last bottle oven was fired in 1956. This has been decommissioned and was where the 'Weeping Window' of poppies had been installed. Originally exhibited at the Tower of London where 880,246 ceramic poppies (representing all those killed in World War I) were on display, the installation has been split up and is now on tour. The Middleport installation consists of 5,500 poppies, half of them made in Middleport and half in Derby potteries. They flow out of the top of the bottle kiln, cascading down one side and out over the ground. It was a really amazing sight (especially to me as I had not seen them at the Tower of London).

We were taken on a tour of the working factory, where we saw the modern kilns which can 'cook' 1,000 pieces of pottery in 14 hours instead of 7 days. We also saw various ways of decorating ceramics including transfer printing. Middleport is the only factory in the world to do this. It can take four years' training to learn how to put a pattern on ceramics. We met a 'tower' (pronounced 'toer'), a lady who used a machine to smooth off rough edges of plates. Some of the pottery, including Poole pottery which is made here, was destined for well-known retailers.

I enjoyed seeing the various studios of individual potters working and producing some beautiful items. I am now ready for Christmas with a (small) ceramic Christmas tree, which can be lit with a tea-light. The delicious tea was just the icing on the cake!

Thanks to Wendy Aldridge-Morris for organising the trip and to Gary Gostelow for being leader on the day.

Catherine Dixon



◀ *Poppies in the making*

Photos by
Catherine Dixon

Mapperton House and Garden

Thursday 26 July 2018

When we arrived at noon, we were given a map of the buildings and gardens, and tickets for one of three tours of the house. There was plenty of time to visit the Sawmill café for a tasty lunch. I was on the last tour so I visited All Saints church first. This was mentioned in 1291 as the chapel of nearby Netherbury Hall. The artefacts, several stained-glass windows and other statues were memorials to the people who had lived in the Hall.

As I had time and weather was getting hot, I sat under a tree watching swifts and swallows swooping about. The house looked magnificent and a member of the ground staff stopped to talk to me. He had worked at Mapperton for 30 years. He said he loved his work and the family were so caring about their staff. The present owners, Earl and Countess of Sandwich, do not live in the house but their son and his children do. I also talked to the head gardener, who was nearby, discussing the problem of the local streams drying up and how he had introduced plants more suited to arid conditions.

My tour of the house started in the staircase hall directed by our excellent and amusing guide. The house immediately gave an impression of the personalities who had lived here. Paintings of past owners hung on the walls. One of John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich is attributed to Zoffany. The 4th Earl was famous as the inventor of the sandwich. The 'Insatiable Earl', who did not always want to stop what he was doing (gambling with friends or signing official papers), asked for his roast beef to be placed between two slices of bread so he could eat it whenever he wanted.

John Montagu was First Lord of the Admiralty and a patron of James Cook, so many of the paintings were of ships. The furniture was a mixture of English and French, bought cheaply after the French revolution. I was captivated by the library which contained fantastic books, including copies of Captain Cook's journals and Samuel Pepys' diaries.

Upstairs there were well-used bedrooms, all with four poster beds. Some houses we visit, although interesting, do not have a family feel. In this one I almost expected to see children playing.

The windows looked down on the extensive and intriguing gardens, which are listed as the most beautiful and extensive in the south west. At the back were a croquet lawn, a parterre, an Italianate garden with grottoes and stone ornaments, fountains, an orangery, fish ponds and an arboretum planted in 1955. By this time the heat had become very intense so I did not climb down the steps to explore the distant corners but instead enjoyed the wonderful views. This visit was one which I shall remember with great pleasure. Thank you Gary Gostelow for arranging it.

Val Chownen



▲ Mapperton House

▼ The gardens at Mapperton House



Photos by Hilary Cleeve

Find out more at mapperton.com

**FRIENDS
OF BRISTOL
MUSEUMS
GALLERIES &
ARCHIVES**

**Bristol Museum &
Art Gallery,
Queen's Road,
Bristol,
BS8 1RL**

Tel: 0117 922 3571

**bristol museums@bristol.gov.uk
www.bristol museums.org.uk**

FBMGA committee

Patrons

Sir George White Bt
Max Hebditch CBE
Francis Greenacre

Chairman

Sue Thurlow
07836 693589
suethurlow@waitrose.com

Secretary

Katherine Martin
0117 929 2350

Treasurer

Robert Walters
0117 9682639

Membership Secretary

June Hibberd
0117 962 4872

FBMGA website manager

Brian Vincent
0117 962 1714
brianvincenthome@aol.com

Members:

Clive Burlton
01934 832113
Roni Edwards
0117 949 4843
Gary Gostelow
0117 971 1323
Muriel Harrison
0117 962 9983
Shirley Hodgson
0117 962 4771
Carol Lear
0117 942 3610
Toby Pinn
01934 830111

Events Group Chairman

Mary Bailey
0117 942 1944

FBMGA website

www.friendsofbmga.org.uk

Newsletter edited by

Tim and Ann Wood
tim-wood@blueyonder.co.uk
0791 7331 810

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

**Next issue: copy deadline
18th January 2019 for
early March publication**