

Newsletter

Squirting water for the Queen's Jubilee

Sunday 3 June 2012

Back in November 2011, we were asked whether it would be possible to bring the Museum's fireboat *Pyronaut* to London for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant.

Early on we discounted ideas of taking *Pyronaut* by water – she is not a seaboat and, even if she could have navigated the entire Kennett and Avon Canal (doubtful), it would have taken three weeks on a boat with no crew's quarters, weather protection or toilet. Going by road was a straightforward option, albeit with the added complication of wide load restrictions on Bank Holidays.

The biggest headache was finding a suitable launch site near London to get *Pyronaut* back in the water. In the end we had to go to Gravesend, four hours travel by water out of London. All of this was going to cost a fair bit, so the next job was to find a sponsor. Serendipity found DAC Beachcroft, who generously underwrote all the costs.

Things did not go entirely according to plan, but we managed to get *Pyronaut* to London in time. With seven guests from our sponsors aboard and in the company of several more modern fireboats from around the UK, we processed from Hammersmith Bridge to Tower Bridge, firing jets of water whenever we could. We waved at Her Majesty (she waved back) and at the *Matthew*, Bristol's other representative.

We got very wet indeed from a combination of rain and river water but it was a great event despite the weather. My team of six volunteers who made it all possible will remember it for the rest of their lives.

Andy King



▲ *Pyronaut 'sailing' on the motorway*

Photos by Steve Poole,
Robert Skuse and Neil Burlton

▼ *Soaking wet but very happy!*



◀ *Full steam ahead!*



From the Chairman

June saw the end of our financial year and in the annual report you will see that we have raised a magnificent £20,000 in the year, none of which would have been possible without the support of our members – so thank you all.

Urban Sport Exhibition at M Shed

I have found the Bristol Urban Sport exhibition, which you just have time to see before it closes on 9 September, particularly fascinating. It contains objects, film and images of creative sports that have taken place in the city in the last 200 years.

In support of the exhibition, M Shed square is hosting a range of 'interactive' exhibits. This includes a skateboard ramp in the shape of the Suspension Bridge made by a group of young enthusiasts working with Ben Meller. Over 10 weeks, they used skills acquired at City of Bristol College to plan, design and build the ramp to be safe and exciting to use. The square also features a mini running track (bringing out the competitive spirit in young families) and a table tennis table, which is part of Bristol's 'Ping' events. These activities have been available to all even when the museum is closed, and it has been lovely to see them being used enthusiastically on sunny evenings. They have been very popular, and attracted a good number of teenagers into the exhibition.

Know Your Place

I was prompted by events organized by the Bristol Record Office to explore their 'Know Your Place' internet site, and to discover what a fabulous resource it is for local history research and just for exploring the history of a Bristol from a different angle. If you do not have the internet at home, you can access it by visiting the Record Office, where help will be at hand if you need it to get started. 'Know Your Place' allows you to explore 10 different maps dating from 1750 to 2012, and zoom in to a very detailed level to compare them. In addition there are symbols at locations on the maps which link to rich additional resources, such as the Braikenridge Collection of topographical paintings from the early 19th century, and more recent photo archives. It is by far the best site of its type in the country, and includes the ability for individuals, including any of us, to share material of their own by adding it to the site.

Treasure – 16th century dress pin

We have agreed to provide £200 so the museum can acquire a silver gilt dress pin, found in Tytherington near Thornbury. It is a very beautiful example, described by the valuer as the nicest he has seen since the Treasure Act began. The spherical pin head is gilded and decorated with applied filigree and granulated ornament, and the shaft would have measured just over 5 cm before it was bent out of shape.

It will go on display in a balcony case at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery along with other recent treasure purchases made with our support.



▲ *Teenagers in action at the Bristol Urban Sport Exhibition*

Photo by Sue Thurlow

Worlds Cultures Collection – Ghana

Museum apprentice Naif Pierre recently visited her home in Ghana, which gave the museum the opportunity to acquire some items to reflect life in that country today. Collecting in World Cultures aims to contrast and compare our historic collections from around the globe against life in those countries now. Naif bought from local traders, many of the purchases reflecting that where possible Ghanaians re-use rather than recycle. For example, the objects include a wallet made from used orange juice sachets, sandals soled with pieces of used tyre, and kerosene lamps made from custard powder tins. We funded Naif to the extent of just £47 for the 15 items she bought, and her parents very kindly supplemented the collection by donating some significant traditional textiles.

Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

As part of the development planning described in the Museum Report, Tim Corum invited a few of our executive committee to discuss the potential in those parts of the building not often seen. Mary Bailey, Gary Gostelow and I joined Tim and representatives from the Friends of Bristol Art Gallery to tour the hidden reaches of the site. This extends over a number of separate buildings which have been integrated over the years in a piecemeal fashion and which present a real challenge for maintenance, let alone development. It was only when we visited the roof that we could fully appreciate the geography of the site. It was a fascinating visit, and a great opportunity for a 3-way discussion with Tim and FoBAG. Coincidentally it gave us the opportunity to see the progress on the lift from the unusual vantage point of the roof.



◀ *The Post-Mediaeval silver-gilt dress pin from Tytherington, acquired by the FBMGA for the Museum.*

Photo © Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives



◀ On the roof of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery with the framework for the new lift in the background. From the left: Gary Gostelow, Joanna Brown (FoBAG), Muriel Harrison (FoBAG), Tony Kitt (FoBAG), Mary Bailey and Sue Thurlow.

Photo by Tim Corum

BAfM South West Region Annual Conference

Thursday 18 October 10.15 am – 4.15 pm

Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter

Hosted by Friends of Exeter Museums and Art Gallery this year's regional meeting, on the theme of 'New Directions', promises to be an interesting one. RAMM re-opened to wide acclaim in December last year and recently won the national Art Fund Prize, for which M Shed was longlisted.

The morning sessions will look back at the museum's history and Victorian heritage. Camilla Hampshire, the Museum's Manager, will then talk about the innovative ways in which the collections were redisplayed in 2011. This will be followed by visits to some of the new displays that illustrate Camilla's theme. After lunch in one of the temporary exhibition galleries there will be a choice of local visits, including an extended tour of the museum.

The cost for the day is just £17.50 including coffee on arrival, lunch and afternoon tea. All members are welcome. For more details and to book for this event, contact Lawrie Thorne, BAFM SW Regional Co-ordinator, on 01752 568421 or at lawrie_thorne@hotmail.com. For more information about RAMM, go to rammuseum.org.uk.

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 25 September 2012 - 6.30pm at M Shed

Enclosed in this newsletter you will find a formal notice of the AGM, a nomination form and a copy of our annual report. Please note that the meeting will take place at M Shed, not at Queen's Road, and we shall keep the business of the meeting to a minimum. We look forward to receiving a report from Julie Finch, Head of Museums & Archives, after which Kate Iles, Collections Officer – British Archaeology, will show us some of the items of treasure found recently and for which we granted the funds for purchase. Refreshments will be provided as usual. Do please come along as we like to get feedback from our members and this is an opportunity for you to express your views.

Election of officers

The current officers of Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives are willing to stand again: Sue Thurlow, Chairman; Nicholas King, Treasurer; Richard Avery, Secretary; and June Hibberd, Membership Secretary.

Election of Executive Committee members

The remaining elected members of the committee are: Keith Borissow, Clive Burlton, Colin Edwards and Shirley Hodgson, all of whom are willing to stand again. Roger Zair has already stood down, so we have four possible vacancies and nominations for these are welcome. If you are interested, please complete the nomination form enclosed and return it to Richard Avery, our Hon. Secretary.

From the Membership Secretary

A piece of trivia for you this month - although we have 636 records on our database we have only 517 surnames! We welcome the following members who have joined since the last newsletter:

June Hibberd, Membership Secretary

Mr Michael Bevan

Ms Eileen Elsey

Mrs Judy Green

Mrs Julie Lang

Ms Nicky Biggs

Mr R Emanuel

Mr Roger Harper

Mrs Christine Mearns

Mr Roland Clarke

Mrs P Emanuel

Mr Tim Hills

Ms Gillian Newton

Mr Henry Dix

Ms Marguerite Fletcher

Mrs Susannah Hills

Mr George Silverthorne

Mrs Gill Dix

Dr Paula Gardiner

Ms Gillian Hudson

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Quarterly Report

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Tim Corum, Deputy Head of the service, is leading an internal team developing a way forward for Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. There has been extensive consultation with staff and the internal team is now meeting with key stakeholders, including representatives of both Friends groups, to understand wider expectations and opportunities. The resulting concept document will summarise the core vision for Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, and form the basis for both future programming decisions as well as major capital funding applications.

Unfortunately the lift project has been delayed by unexpected structural challenges, and is now due for completion later this year.

M Shed

For the first year of operations the visitor figures at M Shed have reached 700,000 against an anticipated target of 250,000, a fantastic achievement. Although a very different museum from the Industrial Museum it has replaced, M Shed has successfully appealed to its target audience of the family visit. Work continues to add more to the displays and to change and refresh elements so that there is more to see each time you visit.

Pyronaut took her place with pride in the flotilla of ships commemorating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee on 3 June. The steam engine *Portbury* is still undergoing major maintenance off site and so the Bristol Harbour Railway is operating just with *Henbury* this season.

The Learning team are running a series of 'Ingenious'

▼ Ingenious Event at M Shed: learning about and having fun with hydraulics.

Photo © Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives



events at M Shed in support of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programme funded by the Royal Academy of Engineers. The May and July events consisted of a range of workshops in the M Shed studios and a market stall style environment running through the galleries to link exhibits to live engineers. Schools signed up for 2½-hour sessions and on the Saturday the public could access the stalls with the engineers and participate in a variety of workshops that ran throughout the day. There will be another 'Ingenious' event in September.

Although not the winner, M Shed was short-listed for the European Museum of the Year Award. It was also in the final ten for the national Art Fund Prize, which was won by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter. It was awarded Best Community Building in the recent local LABC (Local Authority Building Control) Building Excellence Awards and will now go on to the final.

The Historic Houses

From 3 September 2012 the houses are on reduced opening hours for the autumn after a busy summer.

Blaise Castle House Museum

- to 31 October 2012: Wednesday to Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays. 10.30am to 4pm
- 1 November 2012 to Easter 2013: Weekends only - Open Saturday and Sunday 10.30am to 4pm

The Georgian House and The Red Lodge

- to 31 October 2012: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays. 10.30am to 4pm.
- 1 November 2012 to Easter 2013: Closed

Bristol Record Office

Bristol Record Office introduced a dedicated reception service in July, following the removal of the council's security service at 'B' Bond Warehouse. New visitor guidelines were also introduced to help researchers understand good practice for using and handling archive material.

Significant recent accessions to Bristol Record Office include: records of nurses' training from the early decades of the NHS; reminiscences and documents collected by the Anglo-Polish Society Bristol and South-West; a collection of visual material about the Ashton Court Festival; and Second World War bombing reports deposited by the Ministry of Defence.

Staff news

John Williams has taken early retirement from Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives. John had worked in Bristol Record Office since the mid-1980s, latterly as one of the service's Deputy Directors. He will be missed by his staff and the many people with whom he worked professionally over the years.

Max Parkin has joined Bristol Record Office as an archives assistant. Max was previously a visitor services assistant at M Shed.

Several new staff posts are to be advertised soon as a result of the funding received from the Arts Council England (ACE) as a 'Major Partner Museum'. This will include new collections staff in the Natural Sciences, World Cultures, Object Conservation and Documentation, together with staff for Exhibitions and Events, Creative Partnerships, Volunteer Co-ordination, Front of House, Development and Technical Departments. A lot of these posts will be ACE funded until March 2015.

Lisa Graves (Collections Officer, World Cultures) will return to her post in September after maternity leave and an unpaid sabbatical year.

Kerrie Grist, Marketing Officer (maternity cover for Claire Royal) has recently married – congratulations to Kerrie Dodd as she will now be known.

Exhibitions at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Artist Rooms

Until Sunday 23 September 2012

Artist Rooms is a Tate-National Galleries of Scotland touring collection. Donated by Anthony d'Offay the collection offers an inspirational collection of modern and contemporary art.

Exhibitions at M Shed

Bristol Urban Sport

Until Sunday 9 September

Bristol Urban Sport explores the range of sports that take place using the city's infrastructure - both the natural landscape and the urban environment. This exhibition brings together contemporary and historical stories to give a picture of people who use the city for sport.

Exhibitions at Bristol Record Office

Clifton Rocks Railway

Until Friday 28 September

An exhibition revealing the history of the Clifton Rocks Railway, the Victorian funicular railway built within the cliffs of the Avon Gorge.

Arnolfini Artists' Books

Tuesday 9 October 2012 - 18 Jan 2013

Highlights from the Artists' Books Collection including works by Bruce Nauman, Ed Ruscha and Lawrence Weiner, all of whom featured in the Artist Rooms Exhibition at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.

Winter Lecture Series

The Winter Lecture Series for 2012/13 will kick off in October with a talk by Michael Wood to accompany his recent TV series 'the Great British Story'. Booking for all the talks will open from the beginning of September.



Visit to the Willows and Wetlands Centre

Friday 27th April 2012

A group of Friends made a very successful visit to the Willows and Wetlands Centre near Taunton to discover this ancient craft. We enjoyed an audio-visual presentation about willow-growing, processing and weaving, and watched craft workers. There was a Museum of Baskets, a showroom and a café to enjoy.

◀ A willow coffin being made for delivery later that day

Stripping the willow. John Coates feeds withies into a machine to peel off the bark. ▶

Photos by Shirley Hodgson



The Devon Trip Overview

Friday 18 May – Monday 21 May 2012

Our Devon trip began with lunch in Exeter at the recently-renovated Royal Albert Memorial Museum. This exciting makeover has updated collections in a modernised setting with increased exhibition space and an improved eatery. It won the Art Fund Prize ahead of M Shed, and will be a day trip in 2013. Advertising will follow!

On Saturday we visited award-winning World Heritage site and star of much TV exposure, Morwellham Quay. This historic port village, which features a copper mine, working Victorian farm, railway, heavy horses and museums of costume and mining, is run very much on a commercial basis.

On Sunday our tour of Plymouth and Devonport featured Royal William Yard. The high granite fortifications of this naval victualling yard are re-emerging as posh housing, bars, restaurants and everything expected of modern urban seaside living.

In the afternoon, our customary boat trip explored Plymouth Sound with power boat racing; the river Tamar; and Devonport docks complete with nuclear submarines (working and mothballed) and frigates from various nations. We went on to visit Mount Edgcumbe House and Park – quite a contrast to Morwellham Quay – which showed us just how good a seaside venture jointly run by two local authorities can be.

On our return journey on Monday we visited the Dartmoor Prison Museum and then Killerton, a fine 18th century house with pleasant gardens, an interesting collection of costumes, and a leader in the National Trust's new approach to catering based on the produce of individual estates.

It was an action-packed weekend and we apologise that there is no space in the newsletter for all the reports. Thanks to all the photographers and writers who kindly contributed and we apologise for any omissions.

Keith Borissow



▲ *Josua Reynolds self portrait*

Photos by Elly Chapman

Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery

Saturday 19 May 2012

The museum houses a maritime collection that covers different aspects of Plymouth's history and its relationship with the sea. This includes a collection of ship models, some of which were carved in bone by Napoleonic French prisoners of war. Notable objects include Scott's skis from his 1902 Antarctic expedition and Drake's Drum.

The gallery is custodian of the outstanding Cottonian Collection, assembled by Robert Townson (1640 – 1707) and, later, Charles Rogers FRS FSA (1711 – 1784) which includes oil paintings, Old Master and English drawings and watercolours, sculpture, furniture and ceramics. There are also family portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds who was born near Plymouth and was a friend of Rogers, as well as a library of 2000 books housed in purpose-built cabinets. The collection was donated to Plymouth Proprietary Library in 1850 by William Cotton who was a great admirer of Reynolds. Also saved are documents from the business and family archives. The collection survived two wars and in 1915 the trusteeship was transferred by an Act of Parliament to the care of Plymouth Corporation.

The museum also had a temporary exhibition, which included vases made from soap, modelled on Chinese originals. Altogether, it was a fascinating morning's viewing.

Catherine Dixon

▼ *Part of the Cottonian Collection*



See more on <http://www.cottoniancollection.org.uk/main/index.cfm>



◀ The dock and one of the trucks used for loading minerals onto cargo ships.

Photo by Martin Bailey



▲ The overshoot waterwheel turned sedately providing green power for the quay.

Photo by Harry Hibberd

Morwellham Quay

Saturday 19 May 2012

Morwellham Quay on the Devon bank of the River Tamar is an impressive visitor attraction comprising an historic port; a mine with a train ride and display dioramas; and a working farm recently used to film the BBC's Edwardian Farm programme. There are several small museums, a market garden, an apple orchard, a playground, a nature trail, an inn and a restaurant. There is also a 'costume try-on' with a big stock of historic clothes for people of all ages to see in mirrors what they would have looked like in former times.

Millions of years ago heat generated by gigantic geological movement in the area created deposits of minerals such as silver, tin, copper, arsenic. These provided material for hundreds of small 'lode' mines. At Morwellham the Tamar provides a double benefit: erosion by the river exposed some of these mineral lodes, while the river itself formed a transport corridor to the sea.

Although the George and Charlotte Mine first opened in the early 1700s, Morwellham Quay had developed long before to provide transport on the river. In the early 1800s it was reconfigured to connect with the Tavistock Canal which transported ore from Dartmoor to a terminus about 72m above the level of the Tamar. From there boats were lowered on an inclined plane, and emptied into trucks which ran on elevated railways to be discharged into ships waiting at Morwellham quayside. We were able to see these railways and visualise the job they had to do. We were also able to see the waterwheel, still powered by water brought from the Tavistock canal, turning as it would have done to provide mechanical power to the quay. In the mid 1800s Morwellham Quay was 'the richest copper port in Queen Victoria's empire'.

We took a train ride into the mine. The tunnel is comfortably wide allowing full scale dioramas that show working conditions in the mine. The miners had to follow the lode, a vein of highly mineralised rock, as it wound its way through the main rock body. We could well appreciate how difficult and arduous this would have been, particularly when lit only by candles.

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit. The site is of immense technical and historical interest and well deserves its UNESCO world heritage site status.

Harry Hibberd

See more at <http://www.morwellham-quay.co.uk/>



▼ The cooperage at Morwellham contained a plethora of weirdly-named barrel-making tools including bick iron, chive, jigger, and buzz. A puncheon (not shown here) held 72 gallons.

Photo by Martin Bailey

Plymouth and Devonport

Sunday 20 May 2012



▲ The Friends gather outside the Brewhouse on the Royal William Yard quayside ready for the next stage of the trip.



▲ The Royal William Victualling Yard used to be the main supply depot for the Royal Navy. Devonport Dockyard is nearby.



◀ The Friends disembarking at Mount Edgcumbe



▲ The Royal Albert Bridge crosses the Tamar at Saltash. This Bowstring Suspension Bridge is a handsome construction but, arguably, not Brunel's most spectacular or elegant work.

Photos by Martin Bailey

Killerton House

Monday 21 May 2012

The final stop in our weekend visit to Devon and Cornwall was at Killerton. This lovely National Trust house and garden was an ideal choice to complete an enjoyable and informative weekend.

The house is a great favourite with Friends and did not disappoint. Entitled 'Gems' the costume collection included lovely displays of stick pins and hat pins – the latter so attractive one wondered if hats should not come back into fashion just for the pleasure of wearing the pins! The stays, on the other hand, looked so stiff and uncomfortable, that one was relieved not to have them in the wardrobe.

The weather was perfect (thank you, Keith) so the gardens enticed us, especially as the rhododendrons and azaleas were at their best.

As with everything we did, the cry from Friends was 'We need more time', so well done Keith and thank you for all your hard work in organising such a varied and enjoyable weekend.

Ruth Welch

See more on
<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/killerton/>

Clifton Hill House

Monday 25 June 2012

Clifton Hill House was built for Paul Fisher, a successful Bristol linen draper, merchant and ship-owner, who was involved in the foundation of the Bristol Royal Infirmary in 1735. He was also, like many other Bristol merchants at that time, involved in the slave trade.

The house contains some remarkable rococo ceiling carvings by local craftsman Joseph Thomas and the first cantilevered, stone staircase in Bristol. The garden, the layout of which has not changed greatly since the eighteenth century, contains several rare tulip trees.

In 1851, Clifton Hill House was bought by Dr Symonds, a Bristol physician famous not only for his medical work but also for entertaining literary grandees, such as Mr. Gladstone, with whom he debated Greek translation. In 1871, the house passed to his son, John Addington Symonds, poet, historian, literary and art critic. He was a friend of Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry James and Edward Lear (the Owl and the Pussy Cat was written for Symonds' eldest daughter, Janet). In 1877, when the Symonds family emigrated to Switzerland, John's wife, Margaret, took great delight in having many of the classical busts, acquired by the Symonds family down the years and which she detested, buried in the garden! However, despite several digs these have never been unearthed!

In 1909, the year the Bristol University received its Charter, Clifton Hill was acquired for £5,500 as a hostel for female students. Fifteen ladies were accommodated initially, some of whom were accompanied by their maids! It was later connected with next door Callander House, former home of John Percival, the first Headmaster of Clifton College and later Bishop of Hereford. During the 1920s, the Wills family financed improvements and many features were renovated under Mrs Annie Burnside, the Warden of Clifton Hill House from 1988 to 2010, who was our host for this visit. Clifton Hill House is now a mixed hall of residence for 225 students.

Brian Vincent



▲ Clifton Hill House was designed in the Palladian style by architect Isaac Ware and was constructed during the period 1746 to 1750.

Find out more in Annie's book (2009): *A Palladian Villa in Bristol, Clifton Hill House and the People who Lived There.*



◀ Inside Clifton Hill House showing restored period features. In 2004, Clifton Hill House won the prestigious London Georgian Group Architectural Awards, in the category 'Restoration of a Georgian Country House'.

Photos ©
Dave Pratt

Alan Jocelyn's talk

The Bristol Riots of 1831

Saturday 12 May 2012

At the time of the riots Bristol trade was declining; the Bristol Corporation was viewed as extravagant and remote; and, while a labourer's weekly wage was about 9 shillings, the reported annual salary of the Bishop of Bath and Wells was £40,000 p.a.! The population was increasing, resulting in unemployment and gross over-population with many living in overcrowded tenements with no sanitation or clean water.

It was also a time of growing discontent with Parliamentary representation. Sir Charles Wetherall, the Recorder of Bristol, whose job was to preside over the Assizes and to pass the death penalty on those convicted of capital crimes, was far from popular.

In early October 1831 the House of Lords threw out the second Reform Bill resulting in demonstrations in Queen's Square. On Saturday 29 October Wetherall, accompanied by the 14th Light Dragoons and the 3rd Dragoon Guards, arrived in Bristol to open the Assize. As he progressed towards the Assize Courts a mob tried to overturn his coach, so he headed for the sanctuary of the Mansion House in Queen Square. The mob threw stones at the windows. Eventually Charles Pinney, the Mayor, was forced to read the Riot Act and Lt. Col. Brereton, heading the troops, was ordered to disperse the mob. He attempted to do so as peacefully as possible and believed that he had succeeded as much of the crowd withdrew. Meanwhile Wetherall, fearing for his life, made an undignified exit over the Mansion House roof.

Next morning Brereton, believing the riot had ended, withdrew the remaining troops from Queen Square. The rioters, fired up with ale, besieged the Mansion House. The Bishop's Palace, the Mansion House, the Custom House, the Excise Office and warehouses in Prince's Street were set ablaze. The inferno even threatened ships on the river. Troops sent for from as far away as Dublin and Cork finally restored order on 31 October. In all nearly 500 people lost their lives.

▲ *The Bristol Reform Iron Bar of 1831 can be found in the Museum. The inscription on this metal bar reads 'This Bar Was Wrested from the hands of the first of the Bristol Rioters that came to destroy the Bishops Palace'.*

Photos © Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives

▼ *The Burning of the Custom House*
Artist: William James Müller



In subsequent court hearings five rioters were sentenced to death and many were transported. The hated Wetherall survived but the well-meaning Brereton was court-martialled for dereliction of duty. He shot himself before the trial ended. Pinney was tried for neglect of duty, but he was acquitted and retired to what is now known as Engineers' House on the Promenade in Clifton. The first of the Reform Acts was eventually passed in 1832, though it did not have a great deal of effect on the lives of the underclass.

Alan Jocelyn commented that it was strange that the Peterloo Massacre, which occurred in Manchester in 1819 and in which only about 15 people were killed, is much better known than the three days of the Bristol Riots which resulted in so many more deaths and so much greater destruction.

Lesley Pugsley



▲ *The Burning of the Bishop's Palace*

Artist: William James Müller

The Burning of the New Gaol ▶

Artist: William James Müller



Andrew Smith's talk

Nailsea Glassworks 1788 to 1873

Saturday 21 April 2012

In what is hoped will be the first of many successful Friends' talks in the M Shed Studio, Andrew explained how his childhood ambitions to be an archaeologist were realised when he completed a MA in Archaeology after a successful career as an Electrical Engineer. Invited to complete a major study on the old glassworks by the Avon Archaeological Unit in 2002, Andrew received funding from Tesco, who had developed some of the site, and the project resulted in an exhaustive historical and archaeological study published in 2004.

John Lucas' Glassworks opened in 1788. It became the fourth largest glassworks in the country, primarily producing glass for windows, tables and other utilitarian purposes. The earliest manufacturing process was the 'Crown' system where a bulb of glass is spun rapidly on the end of a Pontil rod producing a disc as wide as 50 inches. The disc is annealed and cut into sections for windows. The central 'bull's eye' where the rod was connected was sold as inferior window glass. The Nailsea Glass Works introduced an innovative German Sheet system in 1805. A cylinder of glass was blown, and made larger by swinging it (rather like a pendulum) above a deep pit. Gravity extended the size of the cylinder which was then sliced open and flattened before being cut into useful shapes.

Detailed plans and photographs showed the development of the site from a single 'Cone' furnace in the 1790s, to the later developments of the 1820s when the New House Cone was built over 100 feet high and 60 feet wide, with swinging pits alongside to allow the production of as many as 4800 pieces of glass a week. The site, which closed in the late 1870s, has been scheduled for preservation.

Andrew also described the working conditions and shocked us with tales of child labourers, regular exposure to arsenic and temperatures hot enough to distort the shape of a hat. Visitors to the Nailsea Tesco should examine the murals on the store walls, which describe the manufacturing processes with real clarity. Members thanked Andrew for his fascinating talk.

David McGregor

▼ *The Red House Cone at Wordsley, Stourbridge, which is comparable in size with that at Nailsea.*

© AFS



L Shed visit

Friday 4 May 2012

Andy King, Senior Collections Officer for maritime and working exhibits, says he often feels like an undertaker finding the mechanical corpses of doomed industries when he goes into local factories to assess pieces of machinery for possible collection. The machines he selects join about 5,000 industrial and maritime objects stored in L Shed, alongside 10,000 paper items and hundreds of thousands of photos. The L Shed is both a happy hunting ground for researchers and a delight to visitors, proving so popular that there are now four public tours a week.

We had the de luxe tour, spending a couple of happy hours exploring the shed. It was a personal delight to spot an original linotype machine and an original Heidelberg press. Women were not allowed near these things when I started work in print factories.

But these were small fry compared to some of the giants in the store: huge pit engines, great carriages, like the Mayor of Bristol's dress coach, steam engine bed plates, and skeletons of once-great horse buses. In one row was a monstrous dental chair dating from the 1900s, a collection of prams and dog-carts, ancient tractors, giant whale bones and the bomb-damaged Dormeuse chariot, owned by the Duke of Beaufort until railway trains tempted him to ditch the vehicle.

We also saw the workshop, which the Friends helped pay for, where around 100 cheerful volunteers work on restoration and repair jobs for Andy. Upstairs is the Paper Store, cramped home for thousands of engineering drawings, photos and prints, plus five stationery cabinets crammed with cigarette and tobacco packaging, and 63 bound volumes detailing every ship that visited Bristol docks.

Three thousand objects are on public show in M Shed, an example of how display techniques and technology can be used to educate and entertain museum visitors. But the L Shed is a joy to people who want to see industrial and social history in the raw.

Wendy Walker



▲ *Signs of the past*

Photos by Andy King,
Sue Thurlow, Ann Wood



▲ *A direct descendant of Gutenberg's hand-operated printing press of 1451*



◀ *Andy King showing models of ships*

▼ *An Aladdin's cave full of treasure waiting to be discovered by visitors*



Mining on the Mendips

Tuesday 8 May 2012

A February talk at the Bristol Record Office by Colin Budge, a member of CHERT (Charterhouse Environs Research Team) who has a special interest in the industrial and social history of Mendip mining, introduced us to the history of mining on the Mendips. In May we visited the central part of the site at Charterhouse and were fortunate that Colin was there to show us round.

Although there is evidence of earlier mining, it was the Romans who first mined lead and silver at Charterhouse on a large scale. This was first organised by the military but later contracted out to civilians. There are the remains of a fort and an amphitheatre near the site. Mining, mainly of lead, revived in the Middle Ages and again in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1844, the Mendip Mining Company employed Cornish miners to sink several shafts, the deepest being 108 metres. However, they discovered that most of the best ore had been close to the surface so they concentrated on re-working the slag from previous mining operations, some of which yielded over 57% lead. Capital costs, compensation for contamination from the lead smelter, and embezzlement eventually caused the operation to fail. The mines were abandoned in 1885.

We were fortunate that the weather was only mildly blustery. So rather than having to dry out, we were able to enjoy a pub lunch in Burrington Coombe on our way home.

Alex Stakhanov

▼ Part of the First Edition (1884) 6" Ordnance Survey map showing the area round Charterhouse adapted by Colin Budge.



Dates for your diary

Here are some forthcoming trips to whet your appetite for next year.

Repeat visit to Museum of Somerset, Taunton

Tuesday 8 January 2013

This will be an opportunity for those Friends who were unable to join us on our first visit to see the restored museum and find out the story of Somerset. The museum underwent a £6.9 million project to restore Taunton Castle and modernise Somerset County Museum.

Visit to Yorkshire

20–24 May 2013

A visit to Yorkshire is planned for May 2013, staying for four nights in Harrogate. Among the highlights of the trip will be the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the Hepworth Gallery, which was runner up in this year's Art Fund Prize. More information will be available in the next Newsletter.

Application forms for these events will be with the next newsletter.

Hereford Trip

Cider Museum

Tuesday 29 May 2012

The Hereford Cider Museum is run by an independent charitable trust, established in 1973 by Bertrand Bulmer to preserve the history of cider-making. The extensive collection includes cider mills, presses, bottles, paintings and other memorabilia concerning cider, and an impressive collection of English lead crystal cider flutes.

The museum occupies the site of the old Bulmer cider factory founded in 1887 by Percy Bulmer, the twenty-year-old son of the local rector. He took his mother's advice to make a career in food or drink, 'because neither ever goes out of fashion'. Percy and his brother Fred borrowed £1,760 from their father, to build their first cider mill.

Early cider-making was a hit or miss affair, using yeast occurring naturally on the apples. More often than not the cider turned sour. A friend of Fred's, Dr. Herbert Durham, created the first pure cider yeast culture in the 1890s, ensuring fermentations were consistent. This enabled commercial cider-making.

Cider apples were first crushed. The pulp was transferred to a press and built up in layers known as cheeses with up to twelve layers of pomace placed between horse-hair cloths held in place by slatted racks. The pomace was then subjected to increasing pressure until all the juice was squeezed out. This juice was strained through a coarse sieve, and put into either open vats or closed casks. Fermentation was carried out by adding yeast, and the liquor was siphoned into vats. The cider was ready to drink after three months, though more often was matured in vats for up to two or three years.

A 'Champagne-style' cider was made from 1906 at Bulmer's. For this a second fermentation was carried out in bottles which were stored upside-down with the necks refrigerated, so the frozen yeast could be forced out under pressure, before the bottles were re-sealed.

In addition to being a well-liked beverage, particularly in the West Country and East Anglia, cider was used as a source of vitamin C aboard ships, as an antiseptic, and as part of the wages of the Bulmer cider factory workers who were allowed up to 8 pints a day!

Brian Vincent



▲ *An apple crusher. Cider apples are rich in tannin and grow well on the sandstone soil of Herefordshire. Traditionally, picked apples are scrapped (ground down) into pomace or pommage by pressing stones with circular troughs, or using a hand-, water-, or horse-powered cider mill.*

Photo by Peter Hodgson



▲ *Cider press.*

Photo by Catherine Dixon



◀ *Morning coffee and the obligatory cake.*

Photo by Peter Hodgson

The Waterworks Museum

Tuesday 29 May 2012

What a treat for steam lovers! After a ploughman's lunch at the Cider Museum, we drove to the old water pumping station, where the engines were steamed up specially for us. We sat outside in kindly weather, near the 1805 horse-drawn fire engine, to hear an interesting introductory speech from the Trust's chairman, Noel Meeke. The Hereford Improvement Act in 1854 provided Government money for the City Council to pave the High Street, install gas lighting and provide the city with piped drinking water. The water was pumped through the present museum building from the river Wye to the city from 1856 until 1974 when a new pumping station was commissioned nearby.

The museum's major show-piece is a huge Worth Mackenzie vertical, inverted triple expansion steam engine. It is a masterpiece of Victorian engineering. In its day it could pump one million gallons in 12 hours, from over 25 feet below ground level to the reservoir on nearby Broomy Hill. These magnificent steam engines were gradually superseded, being last used during the Second World War, except briefly in the 1950s when flooding disabled the replacement electric pumps.

For me, the most interesting of the acquired machines were the two Hayward-Tyler vertical hot air engines, both operating and probably unique in Europe. A small furnace under one cylinder heated the air inside directly, causing it to expand and provided the power stroke. The hot air then passed into the 'cool' cylinder, where it contracted before being pumped back into the larger cylinder for another cycle. There was no steam, so no danger of an explosion, but it was very inefficient.

But we saw much more: steam, diesel and gas engines, electric pumps, ancillary equipment, a water wheel and a wind pump, mostly representing 20th century technology and all water-related. This fascinating site, run by volunteers, is open on Tuesdays and steamed on the second and last Sundays of the month. Our thanks go to Shirley, our four excellent guides, and the tea ladies.

Chester Guttridge



▲ *The vertical inverted triple expansion steam engine was installed in 1895 and is still running.*

Photo by Peter Hodgson

Learn more at <http://www.waterworksmuseum.org.uk>

The Hotwell Spa Talk

Saturday 23 June 2012

Sue Stops set the scene, describing a time when there was no New Cut or Floating Harbour and no Cliftonwood area, and the link between clean water and health had yet to be made.

In 1686, the Merchant Venturers bought the manor of Clifton to enable the wealthy to live outside the noisy, smelly city that was Bristol in the 17th and 18th centuries. By doing this they became owners of a freshwater spring, thought to be medicinal, coming out of St Vincent's Rock. They leased the land on condition that the leaseholder provided a pump house, lodging rooms and a wall around the well to protect it from being regularly flooded with dirty tidal river water.

This new spa became very popular and Clifton grew as more lodging houses were built to accommodate visitors. The logistics of handling and catering for all of these visitors must have been a challenge. Horses had to be stabled and fed, carriages parked, visitors fed and cared for. Many who came were unwell and not very mobile. In fact, some died there.

The spa season ran from April to September. There was much promenading and taking of fresh air as well as drinking the water. People also came to see the quartz crystals that sparkled in the rocks of the gorge which were known as 'Bristol Diamonds'.

The Hotwell Spa remained popular until the recession of 1793. At that time seaside visiting promoted by George III became popular and spas became less fashionable. A rheumatic institute, supported by Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, was set up and later Humphrey Davy experimented there with gases to treat various ailments. However, research could not prove conclusively that the hot water was medicinal. The spa closed in 1867 when the gorge was enlarged to allow larger ships to use the river. The spring was probably fatally damaged during this work.

Sue is a former teacher and her excellent talk conveyed her enthusiasm for this subject. I learned a lot about this part of Bristol, with which I was not very familiar, which prompted me to walk around Hotwells seeing for myself some of the places Sue mentioned.

Angela Johnson

Diamond Jubilee Event:

The Origins & Traditions of Morris Dancing

Tuesday 5 June 2012

How appropriate for the Friends to mark the Diamond Jubilee by this celebration of English Morris dancing. The day had started wet but cleared enough for Bristol Morris Men to show some dances to an appreciative audience on the forecourt of Blaise Castle House Museum.

The Bagman, otherwise known as the secretary Cliff Woolley, introduced us to the basic steps; some regional styles, including the Cotswold Morris tradition as practised by the Bristol Morris group; and the use of handkerchiefs to ward off evil spirits and of sticks in lieu of swords – the latter generating an energetic beat to punctuate the dancing. The set of six dancers was accompanied by lively music – accordions, pipe and violin – and the 'horse', who maintained a wilful wandering to add to the fun.

Half-a-dozen dances culminated in birthday celebrations for a young lady as the dancers concluded their display with her at the peak of a pyramid, before trooping off accompanied by our enthusiastic applause.

Our thanks to Bristol Morris Men for their contribution to our Jubilee celebrations, and to the members of the Friends' Programme Committee who organised the afternoon, which concluded with tea and coffee, and a delightful selection of Jubilee-themed cakes.

Roy Taylor

Photos by Roy Taylor and Martin Bailey



◀ The name originates in Moorish dancing. Many dancing teams (set or sides) have a beast (often called hobby), such as a horse, that interacts with the audience – especially the children.

▼ Cotswold Morris dances are usually for 6 to 8 dancers with occasional single or double jigs.



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

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