

Newsletter

**September 2022
Issue 218**

Our Friends in the Northeast

In this edition

- reports of the Friends trip to the Northeast
- the acquisition of a deftware punch bowl
- a visit to the Dorset Museum
- news of upcoming exhibitions and events



From the Chairman

For the first time in two years, and helped by the lovely summer weather, outdoor events have returned to the museums and are being enthusiastically supported by returning visitors. I say 'lovely summer weather' but in fact one of our own events, a behind-the-scenes tour of the Albion Dockyard in July, needed to be postponed because it fell on one of the days when the temperature was forecast to reach 35 degrees!

Harbour Festival

The weekend immediately before that heatwave saw the return of Bristol Harbour Festival, with *Pyronaut* the fireboat opening and closing each day's activities with a spectacular display of water jets. Bristol Harbour Railway was running, and Chris Ecclestone and his volunteers arranged a space for us in L Shed to sell our home-made cakes and second-hand books. Many thanks to those of you who helped with the sale, which raised over £500, and to those of you that visited us for a chat and to contribute to the funds. I hope you enjoyed the buzz of the festival as much as I did.

Events at Blaise Museum

Another great museum event that the Friends were involved in a little later in the month was Bristol's Brilliant Archaeology in and around Blaise Museum. Our food group (on this occasion Mary Bailey and Rosemary Silvester) organised a fascinating display of fresh medicinal herbs that were used in the 18th century to treat all sorts of ailments and also baked some cakes and biscuits replicating 18th century recipes, giving visitors a real sense of history. They shared a gazebo with Amber Turner, Curator of Applied Art, who was helping children paint paper plates to take home, inspired by replicas and pictures of real plates and the designs on broken pieces of 17th and 18th century Bristol Delft that Amber had brought for them to handle. I spent a very enjoyable day on the Welcome desk and was delighted to learn later that the average visitor satisfaction score for the event was an excellent 9.3 (out of 10) and for how welcome they felt was even higher at 9.6. Again, thank you to those of you who visited – and are hopefully already looking forward to the return of this annual event in 2023.

Staying on the subject of Blaise, over the school summer holidays the team there have run a series of family activity days particularly focused on involving their local community. Themes included butterflies, historic toys and Goram the giant's footprint (a geological feature on the estate). We supported those days by funding the services of a professional storyteller and a craft activity leader.



▲ *18th century treats on show at the archaeology festival*

© Rose Silvester

▼ *Fresh medicinal herbs on our Food Group stall at the archaeology festival*

© Rose Silvester



Think Global, Act Bristol exhibition at M Shed

The latest exhibition at M Shed looks at the big environmental questions affecting people across the globe and explores them from a wide range of local perspectives. There are some important messages there for all of us about how individuals making small changes can cumulatively have a real positive impact.

The exhibits include many historical objects from the museum's own collections illustrating how the industry and growth of our city – and many others across the globe – has

Cover photo: The Angel of the North

© Mary Bailey



▲ **Bristol's Brilliant Archaeology at Blaise**

© Sue Thurlow

contributed to the problems now and in the future. Quite a few are objects I am familiar with as I come across them when leading the public Behind the Scenes tours at M Shed (11am every Tuesday to Friday, plus 3pm Wednesday), and it is great to see them getting a larger audience. One of those objects is the Bristol-founded ships bell from the *Emilia* which was built in Bristol in 1791. The *Emilia* made many voyages from Bristol to Grenada, Barbados and Demerara, shipping supplies to the plantations worked by enslaved Africans, and shipping commodities back to Bristol. Together with the ACE and the V&A we provided the funding for the bell to be acquired last year (and published an article about it in our March Newsletter), so do look out for it when you visit the exhibition.

Museum Winter Lectures

This year the museum's Thursday evening Winter Lectures Series will take place at M Shed and, thanks to funding from us to enable the purchase of the necessary technical kit, will simultaneously be broadcast on Zoom. The subject of the first talk, on 13 October, will be Ken Stradling and his remarkable collection of twentieth and twenty-first century design. Ken sadly died in August at the age of 100 and was still adding to his collection – started in the 1970s – just a few weeks earlier. I hope to see you there at M Shed, or perhaps via Zoom if that works better for you.

Sue Thurlow Chairman

*The ship's bell from the *Emelia* part of the Think Global: Act Bristol display of objects related to the legacy of Bristol's historic transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans*

© Sue Thurlow



Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Service-wide developments

The Service Review being overseen by Genevieve Adkins as Head of Culture & Creative Industries will move forward this autumn with changes to the Senior Management Team which reports directly to Genevieve. This will be followed by the announcement of changes to the rest of the workforce along with work on the new initiatives to enable the service to generate more income. Before those changes are implemented though, Becky Peters, who most recently has been Head of Audience Experience, has decided to leave the Council and will depart at the end of September. Becky first joined Culture over 10 years ago as a member of the front of house team and then moved over to lead the exhibition planning team. Following the departure of Philip Walker, Head of Engagement, before the pandemic, she was seconded to be part of the Management Team and has made a wonderful contribution to the operating of the service through some very tricky times. She will be much missed, and we wish her the very best.

The exhibition *Think Global Act Bristol* opened appropriately at M Shed on the very day in July that the country was witnessing record breaking temperatures in the 40°C range. This exhibition aims to highlight the environmental emergency that we all are facing both from climate change and our rapidly disappearing biodiversity, both worldwide and at home. Although this can seem rather a depressing subject, it is an important one and we hope the exhibition will show some of the positive things

we can all do to reduce our impact and work towards a healthier environment for the generations to come. I encourage you to visit and be inspired to take a positive outlook for the planet! As an added attraction, check out the Martian House in Museum Square just outside M Shed.

The hot weather has made us all review our lifestyles perhaps and in museums and archives we may need to plan for protecting our collections from extreme heat in the future. Fortunately, our large buildings often insulate against extremes of weather making our target of keeping collections in a steady 18-20°C and about 50% relative humidity to prevent deterioration easier to maintain. With some exceptions, museum galleries can be cool places to visit when the outside temperatures are rising, as well as being 'cool' places in the other sense of the word.



▲ *Martian House interior*
© Luke O'Donovan



◀ *Martian House*
© Luke O'Donovan

Blaise Museum and Kings Weston Roman Villa

The July Open Day at the Villa was very successful in attracting families to experience not only the hypocaust and mosaics but also a storyteller and our very knowledgeable staff taking visitors back 2,000 years

There were more such activities on offer at *Bristol's Brilliant Archaeology Day* at Blaise – both inside the museum and outside – later the same week. This collaborative event was co-ordinated by the museum as part of the national Festival of Archaeology and involved a whole host of local societies, re-enactors, field archaeologists and heritage organisations, offering a wonderful variety of demonstrations and activities. After the restrictions of the last two years, it is fantastic to be back delivering engaging programmes face to face with and to appreciative people.

Working Exhibits

The welcome return of the Harbour Festival in July saw the working exhibits back doing what they do best – entertaining and thrilling visitors young and old. The sights and sounds of steam engines and the fireboat *Pyronaut* squirting water high into the sky never fail to impress in a city centre location. They do a brilliant job in reminding us of how things have changed and how life was very different for previous generations. Huge thanks to the volunteers who make all that possible and also to the Friends who manned a display and sold splendid cakes in L Shed over the busy weekend

Ray Barnett Head of Collections & Archives

▼ *Pyronaut, the museum's fireboat, gives a spectacular water jet display outside M Shed during the Harbour Festival*

© Bob Edwardes



▲ *Mary Bailey and Rosemary Silvester with some of the food they made from 18th century recipes as part of Bristol's Brilliant Archaeology*

© Martin Bailey

▼ *A replica delftware plate with some shards of 18th century delftware found in Bristol acted as inspiration for the plate-decorating activity at Bristol's Brilliant Archaeology.*

© Martin Bailey



What's on at the museums

Think Global: Act Bristol

Until 30 October

M Shed

Bristol has declared climate and ecological emergencies. How did we get here? What is our city's role in it, and how can we help get out of it? What does a just, green future look like?

Think Global: Act Bristol explores big environmental questions affecting people here and worldwide and presents perspectives from a wide range of local voices.

Historical objects from our collections help us to think through how the industry and growth our city is built on has contributed to the problem and led to changes we are experiencing right now. Art commissions help visualise invisible effects and collaborative solutions. Experts and community members discuss the challenges, and the kaleidoscope of great work happening to tackle them.

We invite you to come along and join the discussion. Find out more about how you can make a difference, share your tips and actions, contribute your vision of a future Bristol and help to harness the power of collective thought and action. Whether you are an activist, a scientist, or just feeling anxious and overwhelmed by it all, we hope you will leave feeling more confident in your power to make change.

Building a Martian House

until 30 October

M Shed Square

Presented in collaboration with our *Think Global: Act Bristol* exhibition, *Building a Martian House* is a public art project that has made a prototype of a real Martian house. The project has brought together space scientists, architects, engineers, designers and the public to explore how we live today and stimulate visions for new ways of living here on Earth and on Mars.

Mars is a place where you would have to live carefully and resourcefully. Imagining how a small community would live there offers a sharp lens on our lives here and now on Earth. The house offers a programme of workshops, talks and events about sustainability and future living to appeal to all ages.



◀ **The Martian House outside M Shed**

© Luke Donovan

Disability Activism in Bristol: pioneers, protests and progress from the 1980s to now

Until 30 September

M Shed first floor landing

Bristol has been a vital city in disability activism, but this history has been largely unwritten. Until now. This brand-new display is a collaboration with Bristol Disability Equality Forum. Activists in the 1980s and 1990s put disabled people at the heart of decision-making for disabled people. This display is no different.

The research and interviews were carried out by young disabled volunteers. The themes, design and feel of the museum display have all been guided by the experiences of disabled young people. The images were taken by Bristol-based photographer David Constantine. The activists celebrated in the display changed the lives of tens of thousands of Bristolians. It is time their stories were told.

The Art of Japanese Porcelain

Until July 2023

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

This display explores the story of Japanese porcelain, which starts in the 1600s in the small town of Arita, southwest Japan. Learn how Japanese porcelain was made in the town in the past and how it is made in Arita and the surrounding region today.

The exhibition also showcases examples of these Japanese wares that were made for Japanese dining culture and aesthetic tastes. These wares differ in style and function from porcelain made for the overseas market. Much of the porcelain featured in this exhibition comes from the Irene Finch collection. Miss Irene Finch (1918-2019) was a retired science teacher with a deep passion for Japanese porcelain, who gifted her collection of Japanese ceramics to Bristol Museum in 2012.

Trip to the North-east

13-20 June 2022

Northumberland is renowned as a county with impressive castles and a beautiful coast. We were able to experience both on our trip to the north-east, based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Gary Gostelow arranged a varied and interesting programme of visits for us, including Alnwick Castle and a view of the coastal area from the coach on the trip back to our hotel. Some members also took themselves to the seaside on our free day and savoured the delights of Tynemouth and Cullercoats in sunny, if breezy, weather. Throughout the week we were driven in a safe and comfortable manner by the Bakers Dolphin coach driver, Jake. Our thanks are due to him and Gary.

Mary Bailey

Beamish – The Living Museum of the North

Tuesday 14 June

What better place to start a tour of the North-east than at Beamish Museum? The museum aims to preserve examples of everyday life in urban and rural north-east England at the climax of industrialisation in the early 20th century.

The entrance was through an arch formed by a large steam hammer called Tiny Tim. The bus passed easily underneath this enormous machine. With school parties, trams, buses, carriages and pedestrians bustling about it was hard to decide where to go. The group set off in different directions to view the many attractions.

Our first decision was to make for The 1900s Town and a cup of tea. After a bus ride we walked through Redman Park complete with bandstand and up to the Tea Rooms. All wood panelled with some fine tables, the walls were filled with advertising promotions and pictures of the era.

After a refresh we crossed the road to Ravensworth Terrace, a row of houses presented as the premises and living areas of various professionals. The front gardens were a mix of formal and natural, but all complete with railings.

Number 2 is presented as the home of Miss Florence Smith, a music teacher. Numbers 3 and 4 are, respectively, the dental practice and home of dentist J. Jones. Approach with caution if of a nervous disposition! It featured a check-up room, a surgery for extractions, and a technician's room for creating dentures. At this time, it was cheaper to have teeth out than filled, so a common practice was to give daughters a set of dentures on their 21st birthday to avoid future expense for the husband.

After visiting the Co-op and other stores, we decided to drop into the Sun Inn. A tram ride to took us to a 1940s farm where we were presented with scenes and stories of wartime life in north-east England. From there to a colliery village, with a fine row of 1860 cottages, each presented in a different way to show changes in fashion with the passing of time. Here was the school, chapel, fish and chip shop (unfortunately closed) and of course The pit village brass band hall.

Nearby was the museum main pit with its heapstead (buildings and works around the pithead) complete with winding gear. For



▲ *Tiny Tim at the entrance to The Beamish Museum*

© Beamish, The Living Museum of the North

▼ *The 1900s town at Beamish Museum*

© Beamish, The Living Museum of the North



FRIENDS' TRIP TO THE NORTH-EAST

over 150 years, this had been a familiar sight in the north-east – the backbone of industrial Britain. Some went down the Mahogany drift mine, opened originally in 1859, to get a flavour of working conditions endured by miners. The minimum roof height is 4ft 6inches to allow the use of pit ponies.

Beamish is a place to spend time and revisit. There is so much to see and do and so many places just to sit and take in the ambience. My only fear in revisiting Beamish is that the completion of the 50s era town may remind me a bit too much of my own childhood.

Trevor Mussett



Vehicles at Beamish Museum

© Richard Avery

Visit Beamish Museum's excellent web and Facebook pages to find out more.

Tour of Newcastle and Gateshead

Wednesday 15 June

Our Blue Badge guide joined us at the hotel for what she described as a 'mooch around the area by coach'. Laura, a resident of Newcastle for 25 years, has infectious enthusiasm for the city which made our morning really enjoyable. There is space here only for highlights.

Our hotel was in Grainger Town with its stylish buildings constructed by Richard Grainger in the 1830s. Grey Street, which has been voted Britain's most elegant street, is dominated by a statue of Earl Grey, famous for 'that tea' and for being MP for Newcastle in the 1830s. The area is alive with shops and cafés and Grainger Market, opened in 1835 as Newcastle's first covered market, is still going strong.

We crossed the Tyne to Gateshead on our way to visit the Angel of the North. The head and wings gradually appeared as we approached along the main road and then suddenly the whole sculpture dominated the skyline. The Angel represents the rebirth of the North after the decline of the coal and steel works. The site, formerly a colliery pithead baths, is now a grassy hill which is totally uncommercialised. It was good to be able to spend time here and experience a strange sense of calm and awe as we stood beneath this enormous, weathered steel angel. It is 20 metres high and has the wingspan of a jumbo jet. It is thought to be one of the most viewed pieces of art in the country.

The Central Arcade in Newcastle

© Martin Bailey



Then we went down to the Gateshead side of the river. The Millennium Bridge is a shiny tilting bridge for pedestrians and cyclists that links the new developments on both sides of the Tyne. Standing on the middle of the bridge we could see six of the seven bridges crossing the river, including the iconic Tyne Bridge and the two-storey road and railway bridge. From the viewing platform on the fourth floor of the nearby converted flour mill, which is now the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, we had a wonderful view of the city. Just below we could see the shiny metal slug-shaped building which is the Sage concert venue. As a bonus we were able, at close hand, to view the hundreds of kittiwakes nesting on the ledges of the flour mill, the nearest they could get to a cliff this far inland.

We recrossed the river to visit the Anglican Cathedral. It is a great combination of traditional and modern. One of the most spectacular objects is the beautiful 13th century effigy of Sir Roger Thornton and his wife. Known as the 'Thornton Brass', it is probably the largest brass in the UK. The cathedral is currently home to an impressive exhibition of contemporary pottery by the Northern Potters' Association. The 60-metre-high Lantern Tower is an unmissable feature of the Newcastle cityscape. There are 162 steps to climb and, at the top, the original lantern which is still there to warn ships of fog on the Tyne.

Some of us popped down the road for a quick visit to the Castle and then we boarded the coach to return to our hotel, now easily spotted because of the 24-hour Greggs on the corner. Thanks, Laura, for a great tour which prepared us perfectly for our afternoon of exploring on our own.

Sue Pears

▼ *Some of the many bridges of Newcastle/Gateshead with the Sage centre on the left*

© Martin Bailey



▲ *Kittiwakes nesting on the ledges of the Baltic Centre*

© Martin Bailey

▼ *The Angel of The North by Antony Gormley*

© Richard Avery



Alnwick Castle

Thursday 16 June

The massive structure of Alnwick Castle dominates the Northumberland countryside. It dates from Norman times and has been the home of the Percy family since 1309. The present occupant is the 12th Duke of Northumberland, who has recently written a book about the family called *The Lions of the North*. This title indicates the bravery of the family and their prowess in battle. There is an impressive display of weapons and armour in the Constable's Tower.

The State Rooms were almost overwhelming in their magnificence. The ceilings alone, carved in pinewood and overlaid with gold leaf, took eleven years to create. The spectacular improvements took place in the time of the 4th Duke, who wished to house the outstanding collections of books, antiques and paintings in the finest surroundings. In the library there were three paintings by Titian. We were lucky to be there when a curator was giving a short talk about these priceless portraits. In the dining hall the huge table was laid for a formal dinner. It was fascinating to learn what protocol was involved in drawing up the seating plan and what were the uses of all those glasses and pieces of cutlery laid in each place-setting.

It was a sunny day and after our tour of the house, we enjoyed walking round the extensive grounds and parklands. The formal garden has been re-designed by the present Duchess to give colour and interest all the year. One of the main features is a spectacular waterfall and there is a Rose Garden which was in full bloom at the time of our visit. One of our members said it was the best rose garden she had ever seen. There is also a Poison Garden, which no-one can enter without a guide; ours had many stories to tell about the toxic qualities of these plants and their use for good or bad. This seems an appropriate place to mention broomsticks because they were much in evidence at Alnwick! The castle's inner bailey was the setting in the Harry Potter films for the game of quidditch – a sort of 3D aerial hockey astride broomsticks. We witnessed an important part of a visit by some 30 Harry Potter fans: a training session on broomstick-riding for aspiring participants.

So, collections of weapons, paintings and rare books, the opulent splendour of the interiors, the Rose and Poison Gardens, broomsticks and a sunny day – what more could anyone ask?

Carol Lear



▲ **Alnwick Castle**
© Richard Avery



▲ **A stone lion outside the castle, representing 'The Lions of the North'**
Photo by kind permission of Alnwick Castle



▲ **Alnwick Castle State Rooms – Saloon**

Photo by kind permission of Alnwick Castle

The Laing Art Gallery

Friday 17 June – A free day

Jean Scott, chairman of the Friends of the Laing Art Gallery, kindly gave up her morning to welcome a core group of 15 FBMGA members to the gallery and show us the highlights of the collection. The Laing is unusual in having started in 1904 as a building without a collection. Its benefactor, Alexander Laing, who was a successful wine and spirit merchant, was not a collector but was confident that sufficient pictures and statuary would be donated by the local inhabitants. The opening exhibition concentrated on the British School from William Hogarth onwards and the permanent collection has followed this path since then.

The original Art Nouveau-style building is attractive, with paintings in the ceiling lunettes in the galleries, while the modern extension and entrance gives the gallery more street presence. Peppering her explanations with amusing asides, Jean ushered us through the upstairs galleries pointing out paintings by Holman Hunt, Burne-Jones, Landseer, Stanley Spencer, George Clausen and John Martin (a well-known local artist) amongst many others in the impressive permanent collection.

We then ventured downstairs through two large school parties, one of immaculately-dressed, well-behaved but slightly-bemused teenage Gurkha boys, to the Northern Spirit gallery, which focussed on works by artists from the northeast. Apart from the collection of paintings, Maling pottery, glass and silverware, some of us were particularly interested in the section on Thomas Bewick, whose woodcut of the magpie was used as the logo for the Bristol Magpies, one of the original incarnations of the Friends of BMGA. There was also a fine collection of paintings by members of the Cullercoats Colony depicting the fisherfolk who lived there on the coast at the end of the 19th century. Their aims and style were similar to those of the Newlyn School in Cornwall but their work was rarely shown outside the northeast. Finally, of course, there was an excellent café and shop.

The Laing Art Gallery certainly deserves its reputation as one of the UK's special galleries and we are very grateful to Jean for sharing her favourite items in the collections with us.

Mary Bailey



▲ *Isabella and the Pot of Basil* by William Holman Hunt

Photo by kind permission of the Laing Art Gallery

A Day at Hadrian's Wall

Saturday 18 June

One thousand nine hundred years after the visit by Emperor Hadrian in AD 122 the Friends walked in his footsteps to see the 80-mile wall he decreed should be built '... to separate the Romans from the Barbarians ...'. Hadrian's Wall, which ran from the mouth of the River Tyne in the east to the Solway Firth in the west, formed the northwest frontier of the Roman Empire for nearly 300 years. It is now part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We visited two places – Segedunum Fort, the eastern terminal of the wall – now in urban Wallsend, Tyneside; and Vercovicium Fort (Housesteads), the Wall's mid-point – now in rural Northumberland.

Archaeological excavation at Segedunum, has been done only since the late 1970s when heavy industry in the area declined and



▼ *Hadrian's Wall near Housesteads*

© Martin Bailey

FRIENDS' TRIP TO THE NORTH-EAST

terraced houses on the site were demolished. The site and its substantial, fascinating, museum opened in 2000. It is now one of the most fully excavated fort sites in the Roman Empire.

The vivid museum displays showed how the fort was built and then occupied from the first century AD until the Roman Empire disintegrated from the early fifth century. After that, all stone above ground level was gradually removed for local building. Then, following mining works nearby, the site was covered by terraced houses and largely forgotten until the late 20th century.

From the recently-built museum viewing tower we could see the ground plan of virtually the whole fort and parts of the once-adjoining Hadrian's Wall. The fort was built to a standard layout, widely adopted throughout the Empire. A central range contained an HQ building, a dominant house for the Commander and family, a granary and a hospital. These were flanked by four cavalry and six infantry barrack blocks which housed over 600 troops from all parts of the Empire.

This excellent museum showed how the fort had worked – together with its supporting civilian settlement (the vicus) and a branch wall linking the fort with the River Tyne. A detailed video helpfully illustrated the evolution of the site over two millennia. We were able to walk over most of the fort site and look at the remains of a bath house plus an interesting reconstruction of a section of Hadrian's Wall alongside foundations of the wall itself. It was a fascinating visit!

Housesteads Fort occupies an exposed, open moorland site, often wind-swept and wet. Our 15-minute walk from the car park to the fort site itself, on rising ground, gave an immediate impression of the difficulties of manning and maintaining a fortress in this position. Some 800 militia were posted to Housesteads. A large vicus held a further 500 residents. In this isolated rural location, their lives must have been harsh.

We walked among significant parts of some of the principal buildings such as the HQ building, a hospital, granaries, barracks and communal latrines. We had wonderful views of Hadrian's Wall which formed part of the walls of the fort and then stretched away into the distance as far as the eye could see.

After our absorbing day looking at 300 years of Roman civilisation in northern Britain one could feel only astonishment at its achievements and its long-term influence, evident even today. All hail Emperor Hadrian!

Martin Bailey



▲ *A communal latrine at Housestead*

© Martin Bailey

▼ *Image of Segedunum*

© Martin Bailey



Cragside visit

Sunday 19 July

For our final day we were taken to see Cragside, the country mansion built by the Victorian engineer Sir William Armstrong, founder of the Armstrong Whitworth company, and his wife Lady Margaret.

Armstrong became one of the wealthiest men in Europe and was the first engineer, indeed the first scientist, to be raised to the peerage, becoming Baron Armstrong of Cragside in 1887. He was a visionary inventor, engineer, scientist and businessman, bringing global renown to his great Elswick works on the north bank of the Tyne to the south west of Newcastle. In its heyday, Elswick employed over 25,000 people in the manufacture of hydraulic cranes and machinery, ships, and armaments.

In 1869 Armstrong employed the architect Richard Norman Shaw to enlarge his modest shooting lodge. Between 1869 and 1882 they transformed the building into the grand house we see today. It was filled with inventive machinery and was the first house to be lit using hydroelectric power. Dams were built to create lakes which fed the generating station and powered a sawmill, a laundry, an early version of a dishwasher, a dumb waiter and an hydraulic lift.

Inspired by their passion for natural sciences, the Armstrongs were influenced by nature and wildlife in their design choices. The interiors included timber panelling, intricately carved with woodland animals hidden amongst leafy branches, and sunflowers depicted on stained glass by William Morris. There were impressive collections of exotic taxidermy and an assembly of 4,000 seashells – each carefully labelled and displayed in cabinets.

Lady Margaret created spectacular gardens within the 1,000-acre estate. Cragside house is situated on one side of a deep and steep-sided valley, with the formal garden on the opposite side. An elegant iron bridge spans the divide. Many trees were planted, including some non-native conifers specially selected for their spectacular height.

The house became famous, particularly for all its gadgets, and an invitation to spend time there became much sought after. Crowned heads and other important dignitaries from



▲ *View of Cragside, appearing to cling to the side of the steep valley*
© Martin Bailey



▲ *The elegant iron bridge which spans the valley joining the house with the formal garden*
© Richard Avery



▲ *Cragside from the entrance courtyard*
© Richard Avery

FRIENDS' TRIP TO THE NORTH-EAST

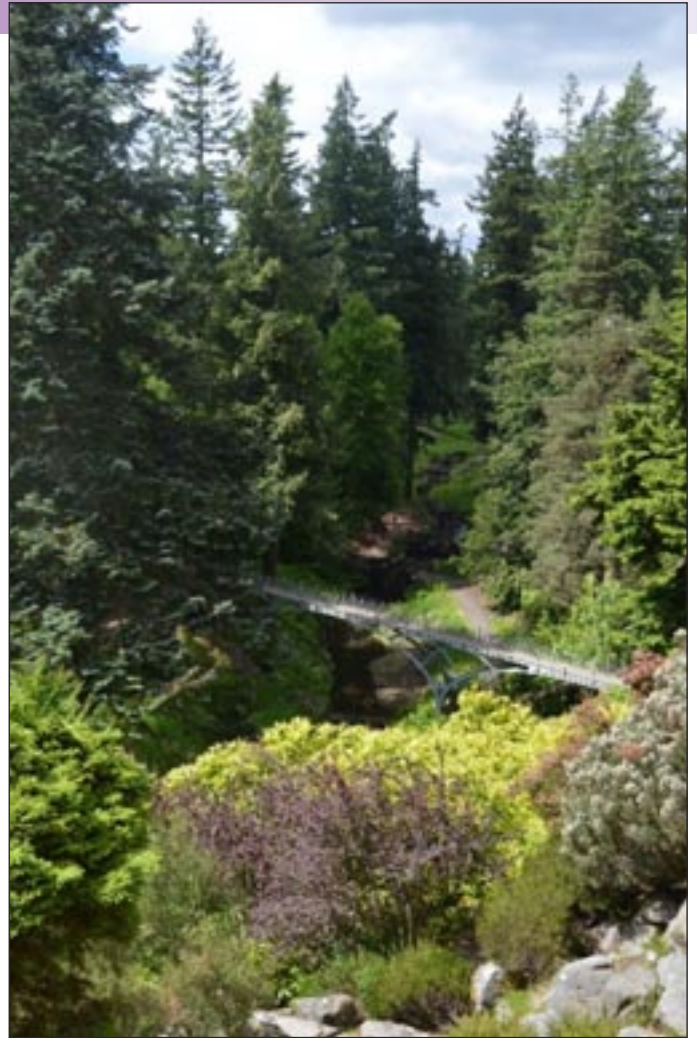
foreign countries with whom Armstrong did business were obviously invited and, in 1884, the future King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra came to explore the home of this Geordie genius. Regrettably, the best of the art collection was sold off to meet expenses following Sir William's death in 1900. Cragside was acquired by the National Trust in 1997.

Whilst walking along a corridor lined with old photographs, I came across one featuring one of my namesakes and his wife. It came as no surprise to me to find that this Richard Avery was not some distinguished guest of the Armstrongs but just a member of staff. He had been a gamekeeper on the estate during Sir William's time there. Such is fame!

Richard Avery

The iron bridge, viewed from the house showing the rich, spectacular tree planting

© Richard Avery



Durham Cathedral

Monday 20 July

On the return journey to Bristol the Friends enjoyed a short visit to Durham Cathedral.



View of the nave, Durham Cathedral, with its massive columns of alternating design and soaring vaulting.

© Martin Bailey

Sanctuary knocker on the door at Durham Cathedral

© Martin Bailey



Dorset Museum

Tuesday 22 March 2022

The trip to the Dorset Museum was a welcome return to days out with FBMGA after two years of the pandemic. It was very good to see friends and acquaintances again after a long gap and find that they still looked much the same! We had a warm welcome from Max Hebditch, one of our patrons and a former Dorset Museum trustee involved in the recent lottery-funded extension of the museum. After an introduction which gave us an insight into all the building work that had taken place since 2015, we were free to patronise the café and browse the displays (in that order!).

The top floor was devoted to the sculptures of Elisabeth Frink, donated to the museum in 2020 by her late son Lin Jammet, giving us a fascinating introduction to her life with plenty of examples of her work. For me this was the highlight of the visit, closely followed by the Hardy exhibition. In 1937 the museum was bequeathed Hardy's papers and the contents of his study at his last house, Max Gate, on the outskirts of Dorchester. We saw his personal belongings, including his desk, childhood toys and musical instruments, the latter a reminder of the village musicians in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. The display was excellent, full of interesting material, and made me want to revisit books last read sixty years ago. Other members of our group were engrossed in the natural history gallery, which displayed many fossils from the Jurassic Coast including the skull of a pliosaur discovered in 2011. This one looked a lot less friendly than our own model pliosaur, Doris, who is suspended from the ceiling of the rear hall at BMAG. The opportunity for children to climb through a pliosaur head was one of many attempts to make exhibits accessible to youngsters.

Altogether, there was far more to see than there was time available. Everything was well presented, and the staff and many volunteers had great pride in their museum. Many thanks to Richard Avery for organising the trip.

Katherine Martin



▲ **Dorset Artists' Gallery**
© Dorset Museum 2021



▲ **Hardy's Dorset Gallery**
© Dorset Museum 2021



▲ **Thomas Hardy's Study**
© Dorset Museum 2021

A rare delftware punch bowl

We have recently acquired a rare delftware punch bowl, probably made in London or Bristol circa 1750, with the support of the Friends. It will be incorporated into a re-display which is scheduled for completion later this year. This is part of a two-year Arts Council England funded project to re-examine the collection.

In addition to enriching our delftware collection, the punch bowl introduces difficult themes of colonialism, enslavement and race in the 18th century and will allow us to explore these topics with our audiences. While the decoration on the exterior is a generic delftware landscape scene, the depiction of a Black child presenting a punch bowl in the centre of the bowl is unusual. As the punch bowl is an object associated with pleasure and excessive alcohol consumption, the depiction of the child is both troubling and thought-provoking. Images of Black servants and their presence within British homes can be found in prints, paintings, textiles and ceramics of the period. Here the figure is painted unclothed, infantilised – many depictions of Black servants at this time are usually shown serving tea – and offering a punch bowl. The portrayal of the child in this manner, and the use of the curtain as a framing device, highlights his role in serving and entertaining others.

At the time the punch bowl was made, the city of Bristol had acquired and continued to acquire substantial wealth from the transatlantic traffic in enslaved Africans and the trade of goods, such as tobacco and sugar, planted and harvested by enslaved Africans forced to labour in Britain's American colonies and West Indian plantations. Earthenware made in Bristol, such as delftware, was exported to these places on a large scale in response to the growing population. Sugar and rum are key components of punch, the consumption of which increased as these commodities became widely available. It was mostly consumed by men in clubs and at other gatherings, which is illustrated in contemporary prints such as William Hogarth's *A Midnight Modern Conversation* (1733); a scene depicted on another punch bowl in our collection.

An object such as this may have been purchased for a particular business or building, such as a pub or an inn, possibly in Bristol. By the early 18th century images of Black people on trade cards and on trade signs which hung outside shops and inns had become commonplace to advertise goods or services. The stance of the child reinforces this as a possible explanation, as he appears to be offering or advertising the punch to the drinker. The bowl will enable us to address the history of punch drinking and its connections with British colonialism and the transatlantic traffic in enslaved Africans for today's audiences, while helping us to research the everyday objects that were made from which to drink it. Our approach will necessarily evolve as our decolonisation work continues, and we will be working with community groups to contribute towards interpretation and display strategies.

Amber Turner Curator of Applied Art



▲ The newly acquired punch bowl with the depiction of a Black child presenting a punch bowl in the centre
© Bristol Culture



▲ The exterior of the bowl showing a generic delftware landscape scene with a bridge, building, trees and figures
© Bristol Culture

**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
sue.thurlow@outlook.com

Secretary

Katherine Martin
07891 547624

Membership Secretary & FBMGA website manager

Richard Avery
0117 329 6656
rchrdrvry@gmail.com

Treasurer

Robert Walters
0117 9682639

Events Group Chairman

Mary Bailey
0117 942 1944
events@friendsofbmga.org.uk

Members:

Clive Burlton
01934 832113
Gary Gostelow
0117 971 1323
June Hibberd
0117 962 4872
Susan Hibberd
01934 833544
Carol Lear
0117 942 3610
Toby Pinn
01934 830111

FBMGA website

www.friendsofbmga.org.uk

**Newsletter designed and
edited by Tim and Ann Wood**
tim-wood@blueyonder.co.uk
07917 331810

The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of the FBMGA or Bristol Culture

**Next issue: copy deadline
21st October for a December
publication**