

NEWSLETTER



December 2016

WELCOME . . .

Greetings to all our members and, especially, to those who joined us during the year. I hope you have enjoyed our 2016 programme but, with attendances at lectures up by 10% this year and waiting lists for our Visits, this would seem to be the case.

I am pleased to say our Accounts for 2015/2016 remain robust. We have been able to continue to support the Art Room at Stepping Stones School and also make a donation towards the renovation of the stained glass windows, originally installed by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, at Undershaw. Once again, our Bridge Drive proved very successful and so this will become an annual event in our programme.

The highlight of our Visits this year was a four-day tour of Norfolk to explore some very fine country houses. Next year we are planning an exciting overseas visit to Bologna, Ravenna and other highlights of Emilia Romagna.

I am pleased to say that all this year's Committee vacancies have been filled. This says much for our members' support. I would like to thank Derek Slee, our AV Manager, who joined the Committee ten years ago, Patricia Oliver, our Treasurer,

for the past seven years and Adrienne Sherwood who has organised our Study Days since 2011, for their invaluable contributions to our society. A warm welcome to our new Committee members, Barbara Doyle –Davidson (Treasurer) Heather Hooker (Young Arts), Ros Balfour (Special Interest Days) and Yeside Linney, our new V& A Manager.

Mike Evans, our President is retiring at the end of the year after filling many roles for the Society, most notably as Chairman for five years. I am delighted to welcome Nicky Wilson as our new President. Having been previously Secretary and Chairman, she brings a wealth of experience to the role.

This is my last Newsletter, as I will be stepping down at the end of the year. It has been a pleasure and a lot of fun and I would like to thank you all for your support over the past five years. I am very pleased to welcome Derek Linney as our new Chairman. I am sure you will all give him your full support in the future. Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, and peaceful New Year to you all. ■

John Sherwood, Chairman

Young Art

It has been a joy to be able to continue our support to the Art Department at Stepping Stones School. Steve Grigsby, the new Head of Art there, has produced a very exciting Sculpture and Stencilling Project. This will help students develop creative, innovative and effective approaches to their understanding. The new site at Undershaw will be used to develop the Forest School/Fairy Garden and bring the history of the site back to life. The students will be developing understanding of pyrography/3D sculpture based art mediums. We have made an initial grant of £426 towards this project. This donation encapsulates the GDFAS aims of building a lasting enthusiasm among young people for the Arts.

Similarly, we are pleased to have made initial positive contact with Hindhead Music Centre; with a view to both working with them in the year ahead and giving appropriate financial assistance. ■

Heather Hooker



Days of Special Interest

In March, we had an outstanding day when David Phillips gave three fascinating and extremely informative, lectures on behind the scenes of the Art World. He started the day describing how damage can be done by time and conservation while his second lecture, devoted to fine art forgery, revealed how scientific and technical evidence can be faked as readily as the artwork. Finally, he posed the question: 'Can we trust the experts on good and bad art?' After such an enlightening day, greatly enjoyed by everyone, there was much to consider before answering that question. Catherine Wallace has considerable knowledge and experience of Cornish Art and her Special Interest Day in late November: 'Under the Open Sky: Newlyn and Lamorna Artists 1880-1940' is eagerly anticipated.

Next year will bring two very different days. In March, Dr Helen Rufus-Ward will explore Byzantium through its art and its holy places in *Other Worldly Byzantium: Holy Places, Sacred Art and Priceless Treasures*. Then, in November, Anthony Rayworth's *Living with History* promises an intriguing insight into correlations between the historical and the contemporary. His three lectures will explore residential interest, antiquarian minimalism and give a new perspective on classical gardens.

Be sure to get these dates in your 2017 diary. ■

Ros Balfour / Adrienne Sherwood

Have you thought

About going to the 2017 National AGM in Birmingham and taking advantage of one of the exclusive tours arranged by W. Midlands Area?

Programme Report

The calibre of lecturers this year has been as impressive as ever. We have enjoyed learning about topics as diverse as 'Russian Art: The Avant-Garde & Visual Russia', 'Treasures of the Black Tent', 'The C19th Harp and Harp Lute' and the inimitable Bertie Pearce's 'The Punch and Judy Show (From Comedia dell'Arte to the Present Day'.

In January 2017, the Assistant Curator of the Dulwich Picture Gallery will discuss their superb permanent collection and give us a foretaste of their 'block-buster' exhibition on Vanessa Bell, which we will visit in April. February gives us the opportunity to look at some of the intriguing works of George Seurat. It was requested by one of our members and



is one of the most popular lectures on the circuit. In June, Jane Choy-Thurlow, our brilliant guide at the Mauritshuis, will explore the work of Holbein. There will be some local interest in Nicholas Reed's lecture on Pissarro as Lucien actually stayed and painted in Grayshott.

I hope you like the look of next year's programme which also includes the gardeners' favourites, Lutyens and Jekyll, a fascinating insight into the world of publishing via Faber and Faber, an amusing look at Pub Signs (again requested by one of our members) and a seasonal look at Pantomime.



I try to cover a broad spectrum of interests but if there is a particular topic you would like to learn more about, please do tell me and I shall try to include it in a future programme. These afternoons are for you to enjoy. ■

Julia Tarento



Have you heard?

Our next Bridge Drive will be in March 2017.

Heritage Volunteers

We have completed our joint project with the Mothers' Union branch at St Alban's Church Hindhead. The design of this Ceremonial Banner for the branch is based on the Nativity Window in the Church and depicts the Holy Family. Led by Barbara Doyle-Davidson, two other GDFAS members, Jan Gale and Sally Elliott, worked with stitchers from the MU branch. NADFAS approved a Training Project Grant for materials as skills learned will enable members to create, conserve and repair ecclesiastical vestments in the future.



Our next project is a Childrens' Church Trail, for St Alban's, followed by one for St John's, Churt.

Our society presented their first major charitable grant of 2016 to Stepping Stones School at Undershaw. One of the most striking achievements of the recent refurbishment of Conan Doyle's former home is the main hall's stunning, stained glass window that bears



the family crests. This window had been badly damaged by vandals. Our Chairman, presented a cheque for £1,500 to the DFN Charitable Foundation, to assist with the cost of restoring the window to its former glory. ■

Sally Elliott

VISITS

In February, we visited two Heritage Mills. At Whitchurch we saw how silk was produced and, at Laverstock, the gin making processes. This latter visit was inspired by a recent lecture that discussed Thomas Heatherwick's amazing glasshouses there. April saw us enjoying the contrasting decorative extravaganzas of Charleston Farmhouse and Brighton Royal Pavilion while in May, thirty two of us spent an enjoyable and convivial, 4 days visiting some of the great houses in Norfolk as well as walking tours of Norwich and Cambridge.



On a warm June day, following up on Twigs Way's lecture, we saw the magnificence of Blenheim Palace and its Capability Brown landscaped parkland. Possibly the highlight of our day visits was our tour of Longford Castle's amazing art collection. Record numbers have booked for our late October visits, to the famous London homes of the performing arts, the Garrick Club and The Royal Opera House, plus the grand Art Deco Freemasons' Hall.

2017 starts with a visit to the major London exhibition of Picasso's portraits. In April, to follow up the January lecture, we go to the Dulwich Picture Gallery and William Morris's Red House in Bexleyheath. In the summer, I've arranged two visits which will partly complement April's talk on Lutyens and Jekyll – first, Pashley Manor Gardens and Great Dixter in Kent and then, closer to home, Gertrude Jekyll's garden at Munstead Wood, near Godalming. By contrast, in September we have tours of the seats of government and law – the Houses of Parliament and the Supreme Court.

Encouraged by your support of the last two tours, we hope to continue with alternating overseas and UK tours. Next October, we will visit Italy for a 6 day tour, based in Bologna, to sample the many artistic and cultural delights of the Emilia Romagna region.



It's been a pleasure to have members' company on our various trips and I hope many of you will enjoy my choices for next year. ■

Peter Crowfoot