



# BLACKWATER

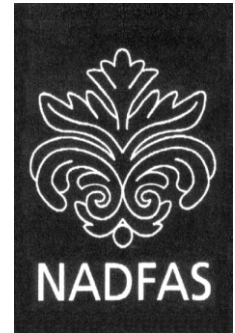
Decorative & Fine Arts Society

# NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 16

Summer 2013

[www.blackwaterdfas.org.uk](http://www.blackwaterdfas.org.uk)



The AGM in July 2013 marked the completion of my three years in office as Chairman of Blackwater. If I may indulge myself on a brief retrospect of my high lights in that period. 2011 marked the 40th Anniversary of BDFAS and we were honoured to host the national chairman Gri Harrison. We have had three excellent Study Days - Peter Darty on Art Deco, Jane Tapley on Dickens and Austen and most recently Peter Medhurst on "Music on the Grand Tour" For me among the outstanding visits I remember were Madrid, Batemans and Farley Farm, The Geffrye - a little gem in East London, Durham and environs followed this year by Bristol and the "White Christmas" trip for lunch at Waddesdon Manor. And our own Craft and Arts Exhibition with the talent in our midst + Young Arts, Volunteers & Church Recording.

Lectures - so many well presented topics (with the very occasional not so good). But in general one of the strengths of NADFAS is the quality of the approved speakers. Some are famous on the circuit and we have had the pleasure of Oliver Everett, Louise Schofield, Twigs Way and Chloe Cockerell to name but four. And as always sometimes the most unpromising sounding subject turns into an interesting and informative gem. Take for example Yasha Berensiner on "Playing Cards" or Imogen Corrigan on the "Luttrell Psalter" and for sheer entertainment Bertie Pearce on "Wonder Workers and the Art of Illusion."

During my three years lectures have gradually seen the change from slides to digital and with that a greater quality of image and ability to enhance the presentation with details and close ups. I suspect like LPs, Cassette Tape and Beta-Max the slide is dead long live Digital (that is until the next generation of visual capture comes along!)

I have been grateful for the support of so many members serving on Committee and the teams organising Audio-Visual, Coffee and Hall setting up. It would be unfair of me to name individuals - they all deserve plaudits. Membership has remained buoyant in numbers with newly retired joining us annually - they clearly know the trick of staying young. As Ronnie Scott used to say "You want to stay looking young? ..... Hang around with old people"



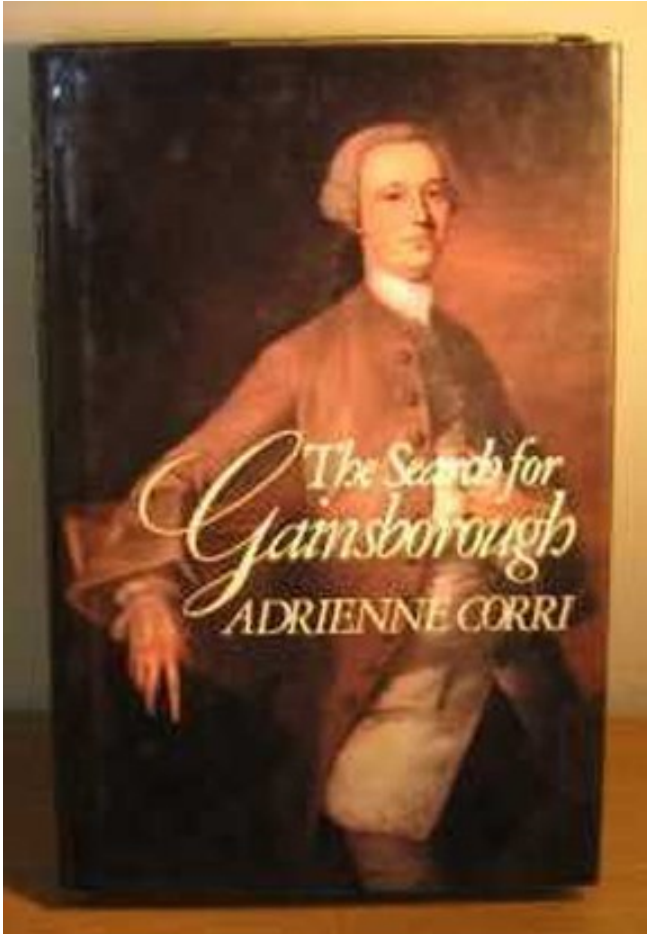
Peter Medhurst & Rob Norman – Study Day 2013

Well this old man has had a very happy time as your Chairman ..... and you haven't quite got rid of me yet - I will remain as Editor of the Newsletter and Webmaster until someone wants to take over from me!

And just a postscript to end on a serious note Eric Hobsbawm, the historian, died this year and in one of his essays he painted a gloomy picture of the "Arts" To quote: "The cultural experience is disintegrating - Classical music has no future, only a past. In many parts of the world, state subsidies of the Arts are being replaced by market forces, to disastrous effect" But he goes on to add "It is not going to happen in the UK." Sadly as we have seen, here he wasn't nearly pessimistic enough. And the challenge is to persuade our elected representatives to see that the very heart of our nation depends on preserving and nurturing our rich cultural history. Messrs Cameron, Clegg and Milliband take note!  
Bill Allen

## BOOK REVIEW

### **"The Search for Gainsborough" by Adrienne Corri.**



I have recently finished reading this very interesting book. The copy I read was on loan from Sheila Bates, who had recommended it to me. Sheila is lucky because her copy is signed by the author and numbered 186, although it is not dedicated to Sheila, who bought the book second-hand. It was published in 1984 ISBN 0-224-021

Adrienne Corri is an actress who is probably known to many of you. I must confess that I knew very little about her before I started the book. As I was reading, I imagined her to be a smallish, redheaded and very feisty, Scottish lady. After I had finished the book I looked her up on the Internet and got quite a surprise! I found that she was a beautiful, unconventional, and sometimes very daring actress, who is famous for a particular scene in "The Clockwork Orange." I admit to not ever having been brave enough to watch that film! She was also once married to Derek Fowlds, who I remember as the man who accompanied the "Posh Fox" i.e. Basil Brush! Her anecdotes about her domestic life, her friendships and celebrity tittle-tattle are woven into the story along the way, making it very entertaining. The book covers a period from 1977 to 1983, and is written in diary form, which makes it very easy to read.

The subject of the book is a painting, noticed by the author, hanging in a dingy corridor of the Alexandra theatre in Birmingham in 1977. The portrait is of David Garrick, the actor. It was rumoured to be by Thomas Gainsborough, and was in a terrible state of repair. The author was captivated by the portrait; and so began a six-year campaign to get it authenticated as a true Gainsborough. The diary quickly turns into a detective story as Adrienne goes into battle with the established art world, leading her to become a self-taught expert in genealogy, restoration, Eighteenth-century art and banking practices as she gradually uncovers more and more previously unknown facts about the lives of Gainsborough and Garrick.

The task becomes an obsession, which takes more and more of her time, leaving her very little time to follow her acting career. Later a very small portrait, which could possibly be an early self-portrait of Thomas Gainsborough, comes into the story, causing much friction and debate in the established art world.

I found this book very interesting and entertaining, especially as it touched on places we have visited as a group i.e. Gainsborough's house and the Garrick Club. I could also relate to her telling surprising stories about her research in various Record Offices. We also find many fascinating things to read to each other during the course of our group work on the NADFAS project at the Essex Record Office. The reader is kept guessing right until the end of the book. I did enjoy it. I hope you will too! Copies are available on Amazon and ABE books.

Sue Roache Vice-Chair.

*This is our second Book Review - can I remind members this is an opportunity to submit their own review of a book they would like to draw to our attention. Please send to - wrallen@dsl.pipex.co.uk*

## Church Recording

Church recording at St Giles Langford has recommenced in April 2013. For our sessions this year we will meet at the church at 10 am on Mondays or Wednesdays Anyone who would like to come along to see what we are doing are more than welcome. Volunteers help as and when they can, not necessarily every week.

Rosanne Kirkpatrick has arranged for the annual church crawl to take place on 13 August. We will meet at Little Waltham at 10.30 for 11. We will also visit Great Waltham and Black Chapel. Further details will be available nearer the time.

Grace Waight

# Young Arts Project for 2013.



Sue Roache and Hayley Lee and pupils from the Academy

On 15<sup>th</sup> May I returned to The Maltings Academy, accompanied by Alec Fraser who took the photo shots, to present a cheque for £250 for a Young Arts project in 2013.

The committee has decided to give a further sum of £250 to The Maltings Academy for a Young Arts project this year.

NADFAS guidelines state that continued support for a school or organisation can be mutually beneficial if the recipient puts forward a good suggestion for continued help. When I asked Mrs Hayley Lee [Head of Art] at Maltings Academy if she had any more projects in mind, she immediately came back with several ideas.



The newly- built Academy provides an excellent working environment for the staff and pupils, but the Art Department still has a great need for fixtures to display students completed work. There is a need for extra fittings to comfortably accommodate the End of Year Exhibition.

When BDFAS donated money for some permanent display boards last year, Mrs Lee explained to me that it is very important for a student to be able see their work displayed as in a professional gallery.

The further £250 given by BDFAS will be used to purchase wood and board to make temporary display boards for the coming End of Year exhibition in June. When the exhibition is over the materials will be recycled, and a permanent art- work will be made by a group of young students who have shown special artistic ability.

Alec and I met with the pupils who will be taking part, and discussed their plans for the work. This will be a wall-hanging which will be hung in the canteen. It will be after the style of Roy Lichtenstein. The aim is to complete this work in one day, with only finishing touches to be added later. I liked the idea that the

money will go towards two projects, one useful and the other exciting...Watch this space!

Mrs Lee has always shown such enthusiasm for her job, and her department has such a vibrant atmosphere. Alec and I both felt this again when we talked to the younger students. We are looking forward to attending the End of Year Exhibition when we will again be selecting entries for the NADFAS RBA exhibition for 2014 [see NADFAS web-site]. This year we hope we might be lucky.

Sue Roache Vice Chair / Young Arts.

## Your Paintings

We are all familiar with great collections, Tate, National Gallery, Kettle's Yard and countless others. Now there is another of over 200,000 paintings held in this country. What is special about this collection is that it is available in your own home at the press of a button or two. As is to be expected J.M.W. Turner is the most represented with 393 pictures. John Constable has 339. They are all there from Aa (2) to Zoffany (102) via Van Gogh (20).

Over the past decade Dr.Frederick Hohler, a former diplomat and retired businessman, has pursued his vision of cataloguing and photographing all the paintings held in town halls, government offices and other public buildings throughout this country. He set up a small and enthusiastic team and obtained support from the BBC. The quality of the photographs is remarkable.

Now all you need do is to open the Internet, type [www.bbc.co.uk/art/yourpaintings](http://www.bbc.co.uk/art/yourpaintings) , enter the name of an artist or subject and you are away.

The collection includes paintings from Laycock Abbey and the National Museum and Art Gallery in Cardiff recently visited by members. Paintings held in storage and not currently on displayed in a gallery are often included.

Click on "Galleries & Collections" and you will find over 70 in Essex, some well known others small and obscure. So now you know what to do on a cold wet summer's day - happy hunting!

Harry Bacon

## Next Years Lecture Programme

Pamela Turnbull writes "The programme for the next season sees a return of speakers who have visited previously, as well as some new ones. The lectures will cover a diverse range of topics from architects to composers, lesser known artists to wartime artists, as well as some well-known names and places. Chloe Cockerill, who is known to Blackwater members, will be the lecturer for next year's Study Day in February, the details of which will be available in the autumn."

## ***BDFAS / Essex Area Project at Essex Record Office***

I have been involved, along with two other Blackwater members and two from Colchester, with the project at the Essex Record Office for a few years now. The project is a five year one and consists of cleaning and assessing the books and entering them onto the Elan system so they can be found by researchers. Any library must clean and assess it's books constantly as paper and leather are organic and subject to attack by micro-organisms, the main culprit is dust and many of the books are very dusty! In the present climate when resources are being cut, volunteers do a vital job preserving our archives.



Although it is hard work we do it because we love books and it is quite exciting never knowing what is going to turn up! All of Essex life and history is here, so we learn a lot; for instance, I, as a non-Essex girl, did not realise what a great manufacturing hub Chelmsford was with Marconi, Hoffman, Crompton and many other firms employing thousands. There are many very old books with tales of the Civil War, Witch finding, Fire raising by agricultural workers in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and of course the Workhouse reports to chill the soul. Some books are a delight, the handwritten and illustrated ones of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century including one of Humphrey Repton's Red Books showing his hand drawn designs for Rivenhall Place amongst others.

I was able to sort out a piece of my own history through a set of books on East Anglia during the second World War. I was able to put a date to a family tale when mother and I were caught in an air raid on Norwich, not in 1941 as I had believed but in 1942. During a "Baedeker Raid" when Caleys Chocolate Works were hit and we were sheltering across the road in a vicarage. The book highlighted a report of electrical cables under the road being ignited and threatening to blow up a sub-station near to where we were, obviously it didn't or I wouldn't be writing this!

If any members feel they would like to join us, we go there once a fortnight on a Tuesday, we'd love to hear from you.

Sheila Bates     Heritage Volunteers

ps We are about to start dusting the books at the Plume Library Maldon. So a new opportunity for members to get involved in a worthwhile project helping to maintain our local history. Please contact Sheila if you feel you can help.

## ***Visit to Watts Gallery and Polesden Lacey April 17<sup>TH</sup> 2013***

38 members and guests departed from Wickham Bishops at 8.30am on a rather misty morning. Fortunately the weather had much improved by the time we arrived at Watts Gallery. When we arrived we were greeted by a member of staff and then made our way from the coach to the gallery.



Watts Gallery

The Victorian artist George Frederic Watts and his wife Mary founded the gallery in 1904 to display his paintings and sculptures. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the building was in desperate need of repair, and after a major restoration project the gallery was re-opened to visitors in 2011 - displaying the original decorative theme. We were able to view over 100 paintings, spanning 70 years, portraits, landscapes, and his symbolic works.

We saw a self portrait of the artist aged 17, which he had painted a year before he entered the Royal Academy School. It shows a confident and relaxed style. Watts first painting to be exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1837, was –A Wounded Heron – which hangs in the green gallery.

His world famous painting – Hope – a curled, blindfolded woman, perched atop a globe, caressing a broken lyre was also displayed. This is the finest version, and is on loan from a private collection. On display in the Exhibition Gallery was work by Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale. A Pre-Raphaelite Journey. We saw amazingly intricate watercolours and drawings which she used in her illustrated books.

We then ventured into the Sculpture Gallery, with its large glass wall bringing light in from outside. The impressive towering sculpture – Physical Energy – and a monument to Lord Tennyson towered above us.

Some of our party managed the short walk to the Watts Chapel, designed by Mary Seton Watts.

After lunch, we returned to the coach and were transported to our next destination, the country residence of Mrs Margaret Greville, a beautiful estate set in 1400 acres of rolling downland and ancient woods, historic farmsteads and scenic pastures. This house, with its rich collection of art and stories, provides a fascinating insight into the Edwardian era and it was enjoyable to view it set out ready for the arrival of guests.

Dwellings are recorded on this site since the 14<sup>th</sup>

century. Richard Sheridan, the playwright, bought Polesden in 1797. Then in 1824 Thomas Cubitt was commissioned by a new owner and created the core of the house seen today. In 1906 this simple neo-Grecian building became the home of Mrs Ronald Greville. A skilful hostess, she entertained people of power and fashion here for nearly forty years. Her guests included King Edward VII and she lent the house to the Duke & Duchess of York for part of their honeymoon in 1923. The Queen Mother remained a good friend and frequent guest.

This champagne lifestyle was funded by her father's business (McEwan's Brewery), whose India Pale Ale was supplied to the British Navy and Army. His daughter used to say "I'd rather be a beeress than a peeress". It appears she was illegitimate, as he did not marry her mother until Margaret was 21 years old. The rich and rare objects with which she filled the house show an eclectic taste: a "Jacobean" corridor, a hall panelled with the reredos of a demolished Wren church, a drawing room whose gilded carvings and ceiling were transported from an Italian palazzo. There are also miniature paintings, porcelain, silver and fine English and French furniture. The paintings fall into three main types: Dutch 17<sup>th</sup> century, English portraits and 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century Italian and Flemish.



The Dancing Couple by Gerard ter Borch

The gardens and parkland are magnificent and, despite the strong wind, many of us ventured outside to explore the terrace, rose garden and long herbaceous border. The paths on the approach to the house were lined with thousands of narcissi. Altogether, a very enjoyable day and we are most grateful to Rosemary for her organisation and shepherding skills.

Sylvia Frost & Anne Walklett

## Meet the Committee No. 16, Mr Alec Fraser



I went on a boating trip in 1968 and spotted Margaret who has now been my dear long-suffering wife for 41 years. Three sons and five lovely grandchildren, enjoying retirement. What else happened?

I'd studied engineering at UCL and The City University, London, and was fortunate to get a student apprenticeship in the aircraft electronics industry in Rochester, Kent at Elliott Brothers, later GEC-Marconi. Experience on aircraft and defence while being sponsored for study was invaluable and after graduating I joined the team developing the autopilot for Concorde.

Defence projects and postgraduate study (including learning to fly which the Company thought beneficial). Moved the family to Bristol to set up a new engineering department but "headhunted" by Thorn EMI at Wells, a company which supplied data-recording for the Space Shuttle programme and needed new products. My engineering group was based in Wookey Hole, sharing (with Mme Tussaud) the historic Paper Mill by the Caves. Her tourist attractions included a loud mechanical fairground organ above my office repeating tunes every 20 minutes. My fondness for these instruments was soon cured! Margaret and the boys kindly but reluctantly moved again, now to Essex. Consolidation of many local Marconi sites was needed and in restructuring I briefly ran Marconi Marine, Microwave Division and Marconiphone, (our early cellphone sales operation) in succession as a caretaker/troubleshooter while new divisional managers were found.

Still in Chelmsford, now in Marconi Radar to help lead a big Australian government project, which was fun but involved unsocial hours in daily/nightly conference calls to Down Under, and trips to Melbourne. Back to telecoms, at Marconi Communications this time driving weekly to Coventry and Liverpool rolling out major networks to BT. Grabbed an opportunity for career change, this time to sell into Europe (we had been using the mighty Siemens for this) so our tiny team was given Benelux and set up offices in The Hague

and Brussels. With backup from UK, local Embassies and local partners we beat the telecoms giants, including Siemens to win crucial contracts in Belgium. We battled to keep the opposition at bay through Marconi's financial troubles and I commuted weekly to Brussels for six years until we were taken over by the Swedish company, Ericsson. Returned to the UK (Guildford and Coventry) working for Ericsson on large telecoms infrastructure contracts, mainly BT.

Retired- Hooray! Only seven months late. Time to indulge long standing hobbies, so joined Chelmsford Camera Club (now Secretary).

BDFAS- Margaret had long been a member, lectures and trips were wonderful so I enrolled too. Recruited to Grace's Church Recording group as photographer; also volunteered to help put out chairs in the Hall for lectures. Somehow I was co-opted onto the BDFAS Committee, and became a Trustee of BHSa which runs the Hall. With Margaret, joined U3A and Wine Circle and Probus. What was that about free time?

## ***The History and Houses of the Heart of England and Cardiff 29<sup>th</sup> April-3<sup>rd</sup> May 2013***



Sunshine inside Hereford Cathedral

Some forty of us boarded our coach on a sunny but rather chilly morning for our journey to Bristol for a four-night stay at the comfortable 4 star Thistle Grand. We broke the journey at Lacock, a very attractive Wiltshire village which had been the setting for a number of period television dramas including 'Cranford' by Mrs Gaskell. We visited *Lacock Abbey*, parts of which date from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and which during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the family home of William Fox Talbot – the famous inventor and photography pioneer. The next day we drove to Cardiff to visit the *National Museum and Art Gallery of Wales*, which has an extensive collection of French Impressionist paintings and a number of Turners. We then went on to *Cardiff Castle* the highlight of which was the wonderful interior designed in the Gothic Revival style during the ownership of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Bute in the mid-nineteenth century. The painted murals, stained glass, gilding and sculpture set within the framework of the Norman Castle were truly wonderful.

On Wednesday in perfect weather we had a conducted tour of Prince Charles' garden at *Highgrove* which he has spent some thirty years transforming into a beautiful garden with a strict adherence to organic and other environmentally-friendly methods in order to

encourage wildlife to thrive. The afternoon was spent visiting *Berkeley Castle* where Edward the Second was put to death in a rather gruesome manner.

The next day again in bright sunshine we enjoyed a drive up the Wye Valley en-route to Hereford, passing *Tintern Abbey* on the way. After a conducted tour of the city we explored the Cathedral and viewed its most famous artefact, the Mappa Mundi, dating from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and which is the largest surviving medieval world map. In the afternoon we toured the Herefordshire Countryside with stops at two attractive villages consisting mainly of the traditional black and white timbered houses.



John Peirson communes with Elgar

The morning of our last day was spent visiting *The Elgar Birthplace Museum* at Lower Broadheath near Worcester. This very modest cottage contained much archival material connected with the composer and many interesting photographs. There is a small attractive garden at the end of which is a bench where there is a lifelike sculpture of Elgar relaxing and enjoying the uninterrupted view of the Malvern Hills which he so loved. It is almost as if the great man is inviting you to join him and enjoy the view.

The last visit of the tour was to *Compton Verney Art Gallery* which is housed in a Grade 1 listed Robert Adam mansion and which was a fitting end to a very well organised, interesting and enjoyable trip.

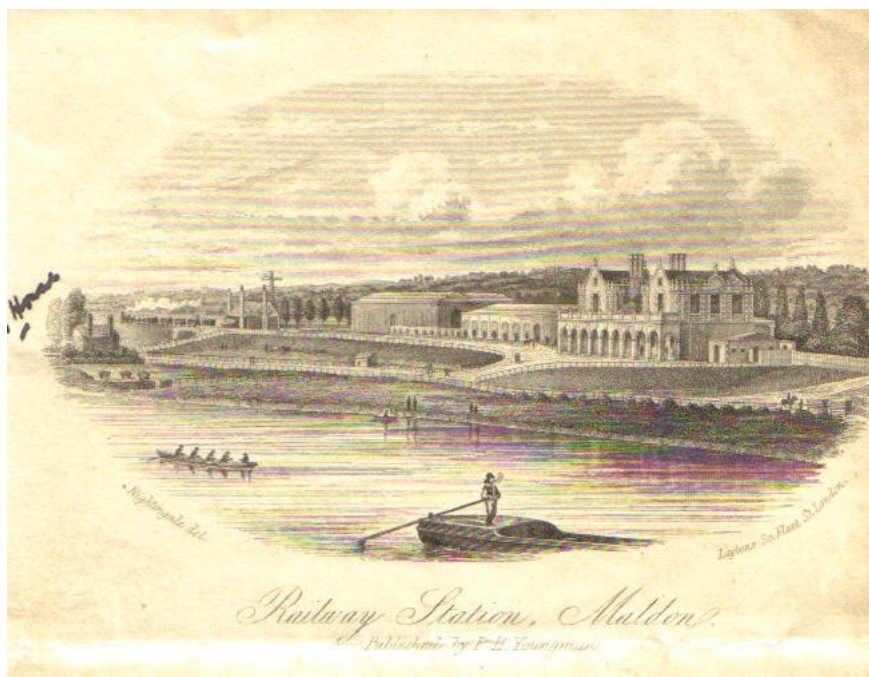
John Peirson

## ***Study Day 2013***

The Study Day this year was led by Peter Medhurst ably assisted on violin by Rob Norman. Music on the Grand Tour gave Peter the scope to discuss and illustrate both with images and music the people, route and ambiance of that period. Peter's illustrations captured the iconic settings - the "tourists" painted in the Italian surroundings - early examples of why Japanese tourists insist on being photographed in front of the place they are visiting! He stressed the importance and seminal nature of Italian Music and found a lost English composer, Thomas Linley, to delight us. Peter's talents as a musician and scholar are well known and his afternoon performance completed an excellent event. The day was well organised by Pamela Turnbull and a full house expressed their thanks at the end.

Bill Allen

## Brush with the Past - Maldon connections by Paddy Lacey



Maldon Station Engraving by Robert Nightingale circa 1850

In 1902 Richard Poole, stationer, newsagent, printer and editor of the local weekly newspaper, 'The Maldon Express' gave a lecture to the Maldon Christian Association on his 'Reminiscences of Maldon in the 1840's and 50's' in the course of which he mentioned that Maldon could claim two artists of note, viz.: John Rogers Herbert, RA born in the town in 1810, who in 1846 was commissioned to paint frescos in both Houses of Parliament and Robert Nightingale, who was an apprentice painter and decorator in the town with special skills in marbling surfaces. Nightingale's artistic talents were recognised and he was accepted by the Royal Academy Schools for training achieving a reputation for still-life and animal pictures. John Ruskin said of one of Nightingale's pictures that "he had never seen better fur or feathers!"

Poole also mentioned that Sir Edwin Landseer spent many of his early years at Beeleigh Grange near Maldon.

Armed with this information the Maldon Museum decided to mount a small display of these artists together with five other professionals with local connections hoping that more might be learnt of their relationship with our District.



Shoeing Old Betty Oil by Sir Edwin Landseer



The Old Granary at the Fullbridge Pen and wash by W.A. Cuthbertson 1935

The other five artists are W.A. Cuthbertson who was the official artist aboard the 'Scotia' on its expedition to the Antarctic in 1902, Frederick Hamilton Jackson's whose 1885 pictures of Maldon are well known, Arthur Kemp Tebby who was a member of the Maldon Art Club as were Charles Grigg Tait and Eric Hebborn. The latter won notoriety by becoming a confessed forger of Old Master paintings that fooled many art experts and who was murdered in strange circumstances in Rome in 1996 where he had made his home.

There is much scope for new information to be obtained on all of these people, particularly on their local connection

Already the Museum is supported by BDFAS members working as stewards, as well as in other roles, perhaps this year's display may tempt other volunteers from our membership - stewards usually work one afternoon a

### **BDFAS VISITS PROGRAMME 2013-2014**

2013

17 October **Banqueting House and Churchill War Rooms**

3 December **Hintlesham Hall**  
Christmas Lunch

2014

19 March **London Museum – Cheapside Hoard** – 1 hour lecture followed by time for lunch and free flow tour of the exhibition

May  
5d 4n **The Historic Houses & Heritage of Edinburgh & the Scottish Borders**

14-19 May

4 June **Turner Contemporary Gallery Margate & Pugin's House, The Grange, Ramsgate**

8 July **Peckover House and Octavia Hill's House, Wisbech**

16 October **London Glassblowing Studio** (Peter Layton) and refurbished William Morris Gallery Walthamstow

October  
6d 5n **The Palaces & Art of Bologna, Ravenna, Mantova & Ferrara**

27 October – 1 November

A flyer for both Scottish Borders and Italy is included in this mailing. Booking forms can be downloaded from the website or from the Visits team.

## **Postscript**

Rosemary Woods writes: "To those members who joined me on our recent visit to The Heart of England and Cardiff, may I say a huge thank you for the beautiful flowers which for many days (indeed at least 3 weeks) reminded me of your excellent company and the many wonderful visits we had together."

### ***This is your Newsletter***

*and the committee is very appreciative of the articles and photographs members have contributed. Please keep them coming. The next deadline for sending items to the Chairman is 1<sup>st</sup> May*

*Photographs by courtesy Bill Allen & Alec Fraser  
Assembled and Printed by Chris Cooper - Beaver Press, Witham*

month between April and October -if so details may be obtained from:-

Sheila Bates Heritage Volunteers BDFAS Tel no. 01621 840956

or Christine Steel, Chairman of Maldon District Museum,

Tel no. 01621 853699, email [cdsteel@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:cdsteel@tiscali.co.uk).

## **The Clink & Queen's Gallery**

A day of two halves: the Clink Museum in the morning and the Queen's Gallery in the afternoon; with the irresistible prospect of seeing the Northern Renaissance Exhibition.

The Clink Prison has become the generic term for all others. We were conducted on our tour by a most enthusiastic & informative gaoler and learned that the south side of the Thames was the place for 'relaxation and enjoyment'. Such licentiousness led of course to general lawlessness and criminals faced stern correction. Conditions were harsh...but could always be improved were the internees able to offer inducement to their gaoler! Our gaoler happily demonstrated instruments of torture on display on some of the party. Fever & plague and flooding were also highly likely... the prison held debtors, heretics, drunks and harlots... and the religious and political!

After lunch there was time to explore the area around Bankside: the 'Golden Hinde', Southwark Cathedral and Borough Market were all within easy reach. And then from the Prison to the Palace (one could almost say from the ridiculous to the sublime).

The Northern Renaissance Durer to Holbein Exhibition brought together over 100 paintings, drawings, prints, manuscripts, miniatures, sculptures and tapestries by the great northern European artists of the period. Albrecht Durer together with Hans Holbein the Younger led to the art produced at this time often being referred to as the Northern Renaissance. Durer's 'entrepreneurial skills' meant the wide distribution of his work throughout Europe. He had established his own workshop in his early twenties and his influence was strong..

There were so many other marvellous paintings, portraits and other treasures to be seen...The Holbein portraits were superb and there was the opportunity to see the comparison of some between the drawing and the painting. In some cases one almost felt that it was the drawing that captured the 'essence' of the sitter whereas the painting displayed the 'stature' of the man

Singling out the Northern Renaissance does not do justice to the other paintings and artefacts that were on offer e.g. Cranach, Memling, Bellini, Breugel, da Vinci.

I have not touched on the miniatures, the silverware and armour. I had to laugh at the two colossal tapestries...not AT them but at the signage - they had originally belonged to Cardinal Wolsey (which in itself made one pause for thought) but had been acquired by Henry VIII. Kate House

Editor's note: due to lack of space I have had to edit Kate's article - for the full piece + photos go to the website