

Out and About in 2015

In March we visited the Houses of Parliament and St Paul's Cathedral in London.

Parliament was fascinating, particularly the House of Lords, which was enriched by a great feeling of history and tradition. Our Blue Badge Guide entertained us on the history of London as we travelled to our second destination, the masterpiece of Sir Christopher Wren, St Paul's Cathedral.

A visit to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford took place in June, where we admired an exhibition of Egyptian Art & Architecture (linking up with a Study Day in September) enjoying an interesting delve into the artefacts of the ancient world. Lunch at Trinity college was followed by a walk through their delightful grounds. Our day ended at one of the first Botanic Gardens ever created where excellent Guides enabled us to appreciate the fascinating plant life in the walled gardens.



Windsor Castle

In September we visited Kelmscott Manor House, the summer retreat of William Morris, which was full of superb tapestries and fine art. The gardens still provide a restful retreat on the banks of the river Thames. We then travelled on to Buscot Park, a magnificent house and gardens with one of Britain's finest water garden.

The visit to the magnificent Windsor Castle in December was wonderful, showcasing some of the finest treasures from the Royal Collection, paintings by Old Masters and the spectacular private apartments created for George IV. St George's Chapel, set within the Castle Precincts, where ten monarchs are buried including Henry VIII & Charles I, was a fitting finale.



Kelmscott Manor

Young Arts

Every year STRADFAS supports students within the Stratford area and this year the focus has been on primary schools.

A consortium of nine schools is presenting an art/music project in November with a World War One theme, and financial support has been provided to help young musicians compose music for the event. Welcombe Hills School has purchased a SKOOG, a multi-sensory piece of technology, which will make music more accessible to children with profound disabilities.

The Gifted and Talented pupils of Wellesbourne are providing some artwork for the school entrance hall, while the children at Salford Priors aim to make a book arch. This year, for the first time, we are supporting the Shakespeare Hospice, by giving funds for artwork to be undertaken by bereaved children.



A painting by a young carer

Church Recorders



A burse at St Michael and All Angels, Claverdon

The Church Recorder Group has recently started working at St Michael and All Angels Church in Claverdon, a village which was mentioned in the Domesday Book. A complete list of Vicars from 1208 is on display near to the 15th century Bell Tower.

Our group of ten members are documenting every aspect of the church interior from the grandiose Spencer Altar to the Millenium Time Capsule.

On 6 December 2015, the completed record of St. Milburga's Church, Wixford, was presented by the Church Recorders to the Vicar and congregation after the evening service. Our STRADFAS Chairman and a group of members attended the event, and warming refreshments added to this festive occasion.



St Michael and All Angels Church, Claverdon

Membership and our Funds

Our Society's considerable successes in 2015 in our lectures and events have been matched by corresponding progress in our administration.

Membership has risen steadily from 540 in 2009, to our present 640. We need to ensure security in our relationships with the ArtsHouse as this is now the only facility in Stratford which can accommodate our meetings at realistic expense.

Our finances absorbed the annual cost increases, despite holding our subscription fees for two years, and helped by the ArtsHouse not adjusting their tariffs.

Income has been augmented by Gift Aid rebates (50% of our members 'Gift Aid'), and in keeping with our charitable objectives this sum will be used to increase our Young Arts donations in 2016.

In total we should make a marginal surplus in 2015, but we will need to increase subscription rates by £2 for 2016. Our cost of membership will nevertheless remain well below the average for NADFAS societies.

Overall it has been a most satisfactory year; in the future it will be important to keep our membership at or above current levels, so that we can continue to enjoy the high quality of our lecturers and facilities.



STRADFAS Stratford-upon-Avon Decorative and Fine Arts Society



A member society of NADFAS



Newsletter and Programme 2016-2017

Chairman's Report

Art lovers enjoyed another feast this year! We have been treated to Cezanne's masterpieces, gasped in awe at the immense collection of King George IV and learnt about Dido Belle as painted by Reynolds and Turner. Religious architecture has been examined as well as the burning of the Houses of Parliament. We marked the Battle of Waterloo with a lecture on the art of that period, and were asked if photography can be regarded as Fine Art.



Chairman Judith Dorricott with Chairman Elect Ursula Russell

This April, Stratford-upon-Avon will mark the 400th Anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare. To commemorate the occasion, STRADFAS will combine with the Orchestra of the Swan to present a special afternoon event on Tuesday 5 April, called "Art Meets Music: Turner's Stratford Sketches Inspire Sweet Sounds". Nicola Moorby, a lecturer specialising in Turner, will give a short lecture on the Stratford Sketches, and after tea, Dobrinka Tabakova, the Orchestra's guest composer, will perform some of her music inspired by Turner's works.

I must thank our committee for all their hard work as we end another excellent STRADFAS year. I am finishing my three years as Chairman - a task which has been made much easier by the support and enthusiasm of my fellow committee members. They are a great team, and I shall miss the fun and camaraderie of committee meetings, but Ursula Russell will be a tireless leader and I know we are in safe hands. I can now sit back and relax without worrying if the speaker has arrived or if the images are in focus!



J M W Turner

Picturesque Provence

Our happy band of art-lovers were based for six days in the elegant town of Aix-en-Provence, with its wide boulevards, designer boutiques and tempting cafes, where we enjoyed French food and wine under a glorious hot sun.



In the Palais des Papes in Avignon

Roman amphitheatre in Arles.

In Avignon, we admired the splendid medieval Palais des Papes, the Petit Palais and the famous remains of the Pont d'Avignon. We followed in the footsteps of Paul Cézanne in Aix and admired his studio while in Arles we visited Van Gogh's workrooms. The Roman Pont du Gard is an

We saw spectacular examples of a Roman Arena and a temple, the Maison Carrée, in Nîmes, as well as a

awe-inspiring three-tiered aquaduct and some brave souls swam in the River Gard below. A welcome break from the heat of the sun was found in the "must see" Carrières de Lumières at Les Baux, where we enjoyed the coolness of the underground limestone quarry and were wowed by moving images of works by Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Botticelli, projected onto the walls of the quarry - complete with Renaissance music.

Our final day was spent in the vibrant city of Marseilles where we admired the Basilica Notre Dame de la Garde and its views over the city, and we ended our tour with a typical French lunch by the refurbished Vieux Port.



The Arena in Nîmes

Art History in Depth

Have you ever attended one of our Study Days? These Days of Special Interest are a wonderful way to appreciate a subject in depth over three lectures. Last year, many of us listened in both awe and horror as we learnt about the French Monarchy in the 16th and 17th centuries. Francis I was a passionate supporter of the art of the Italian Renaissance, but after his death, religious uprisings, combined with problems of succession (involving mistresses and murders) prevailed. The beautiful chateaux of the Loire were the background to these turbulent times, when a Queen and a Mistress held court in separate gardens within the same Chateau grounds. It would be impossible to cover such a complex topic in one lecture, so a Study Day was the perfect solution.

Another subject which lent itself to a Study Day was the art and architecture of Egypt during the time of the Pharaohs. Again, the three lectures on the monuments, the museums and the temples and tombs on the banks of the Nile in Ancient Egypt filled us with admiration for the Egyptians' skills. Of course Tutankhamen featured in the Valley of the Kings and the day ended by focussing on some of the superb Egyptian Antiquities in the Ashmolean Museum.

The Study Days always include coffee and an excellent lunch, when members have a chance to chat to friends, old and new, and introduce themselves to the speaker.



Louis XIII of France

Programme of Activities

Visits

On Sunday 3 April a visit to the Botticelli Reimagined exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London is planned. This exhibition explores the enduring impact of the Florentine painter from the Pre-Raphaelites to today. There will be forty original works by Botticelli shown alongside more recent masterpieces by Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Magritte, Schiaparelli and Warhol. After visiting the exhibition, members will be free to explore the V&A further.



Hampton Court

On Monday 20 June, we are arranging for a visit to Hampton Court Palace and Gardens. We will be guided round this majestic palace and its grounds by two Blue Badge Guides, who will highlight the most important events in its 500 year history.

On Tuesday 27 September, the ever popular Tim Bridges will be showing us the delights of several churches in the Forest of Dean area. Tim will once again guide us round some fascinating churches and open our eyes to features we might otherwise miss. As always on these trips, we will have a stop for lunch at a local hostelry.

Our Coffee Morning for New Members will be held at the Artshouse on Tuesday 10 May, where members joining STRADFAS have a chance to meet one another and the committee.

Extended Tour

Our five-day tour this June will take us to Suffolk to explore its many historic houses. Firstly we will visit Ickworth House with its stunning 'Capability Brown' parkland. Naturally we will explore Constable country including a visit to East Bergholt, Dedham and Flatford Mill (where there is an exhibition of Constable's work). Other treats include picturesque Aldeburgh (of Benjamin Britten fame) and Sutton Hoo, the Anglo-Saxon burial site where priceless treasure was found in a huge ship grave.

The 16th century house in Sudbury, where Gainsborough was born and where many of his works are displayed, is included, followed by a visit to Melford Hall, an exquisite Elizabethan mansion. Lastly we visit Audley End House and gardens to admire one of England's grandest stately homes.



Willy Lott's Cottage

Study Days



The Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai

On Thursday 3 March Anne Haworth will take us on **A Journey through 3000 Years of China's Civilisation**. History, art and culture will furnish the background to a country at the forefront of world events today.

The 3 lectures start in the first millennium BC when skills in bronze casting, jade cutting, silk weaving and tea-production flourished, through the time of the mighty First Emperor and then the golden ages of the Silk Road. Religions from Buddhism to Confucianism will be considered, as well as the value given to literacy, writing and poetry composition, as supreme elements of China's cultural identity. An elite class of literati emerged, skilled in calligraphy and painting, who developed the culture of gardens. The importance of trade

with Europe in tea, porcelain and silk will be outlined before charting the end of the Empire.

To mark the 300th anniversary of his birth, 2016 sees the launch of a 'Capability Brown Festival' involving many sites where he designed his iconic landscapes and we shall be holding **A Day of Special Interest at Compton Verney** on Tuesday 11 October.

During the course of the day we shall learn about Compton Verney from a member of staff and volunteers, listen to an illustrated talk on 'Capability' Brown given by Professor Timothy Mowl, consultant curator for the recent exhibition at Compton Verney, have a guided tour of the grounds and be shown the highlights of the Compton Verney Collections.



Capability Brown

Heritage Volunteers

Our volunteers have covered a wide variety of textile projects including restoring two banners at Ladbroke Church, making Stuart costumes for Hall's Croft and stitching six cushions for Holy Trinity Church, Stratford.



The restored embroidered banner at Ladbroke Church

Archivists have been researching Capability Brown's landscape at Compton Verney and have been working in the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust archives.



STRADFAS members knitting at Warwick Museum

STRADFAS has again worked with Warwick Museum running workshops in knitting and in traditional Christmas decorations.

Lecture Programme 2016-2017

February



Programme Organiser: Thursday 18 February
lectures@stradfas.org.uk

Stories in Stained Glass

Susie Harries

Stained glass has been used to play politics, bribe bishops, recruit soldiers and tell jokes. Its panes illustrate remarkable subjects, from miracles to Mandela and tanks to Tiffany. It is a powerful way to create atmosphere and send a message. The lecture will look at its stories near Stratford: our saints and our sinners!

Mornings at 10.45 am
Afternoons at 1.30 pm

Website:
www.stradfas.org.uk

March



Thursday 17 March
The Bayeux Tapestry
Imogen Corrigan

Embroidered on linen cloth in only ten different colours, vibrant as when it was first made 900 years ago, the Bayeux Tapestry tells the story of that most famous battle in English history - Hastings 1066. At nearly 70 metres long, it is one of the supreme achievements of the Norman Romanesque. It reveals a moral tale of kings, chivalry and ambition, demonstrating that good cannot come to those who break their word. But who made it, where and why?

April



Thursday 21 April
Magyars and Gypsies: Liszt and the Hungarian National Style
Rosamund Bartlett

In the 19th century Liszt was a celebrated composer and virtuoso pianist in Europe. Yet for many, he represented the soul of the Magyar people and was seen in Hungary as a national hero; his nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies were wildly popular. But what exactly was Hungarian about them? And why did Liszt and other composers associate Hungarian music with gypsies?

May



Thursday 19 May
Leonardo the Scientist
Guy Rooker

'The noblest pleasure is in the joy of understanding'. Leonardo would say that art is based on a scientific understanding of everything depicted. His powers of draughtsmanship and astute sense of observation made a remarkable contribution to our early understanding of anatomy, aeronautics, warfare, cartography and water engineering, to name but a few. It took centuries for others to catch up with his ideas.

June



Thursday 16 June
Magnificent Mosaics - Windows into the Colourful Roman World
Christopher Bradley

Using only mosaics from start to finish this lecture brings the distant world of the Romans gloriously back to life with vibrant, colourful images full of action. This is the rise and fall of the Roman Empire but as you have never seen it before - through the eyes of the Roman people themselves and the contemporary mosaics they created to reflect and decorate their fascinating world.

September



Thursday 15 September
Legacies of Colonialism
Vivienne Laws

Singapore's British heritage in the early 19th century profoundly influenced its artistic traditions. Changes began in the 1930s with the foundation of the Nanyang School of Art and the fusion of Chinese ink painting with the Western modern movement. In the 21st century Singapore is investing enormous effort and expense in developing the art infrastructure as the profile of its contemporary artists rises.

October



Thursday 20 October
Symbols, Emblems and Double-entendre in Dutch genre painting
Lynne Gibson

The merchants of 17th century Holland filled their town houses with paintings. A favourite subject was scenes of everyday life. But these Calvinist citizens wanted nothing to alarm, offend or corrupt their guests or children. Instead, innocent objects hint at adult themes in a world of subtle hints and double-entendres. Let's explore the hidden meanings!

November



Thursday 17 November
'Thy Trembling Strings'
Sarah Deere-Jones

Using her restored Regency pedal harp and the music of some forgotten English harp composers, Sarah explains how the instrument became the most desired and fashionable instrument in 19th century England. It, and the harp lute are full of symbolism and meaning. The skills and techniques used in harp decoration are examined and their popularity and status discussed as Sarah performs on two of her restored instruments.

December



Thursday 8 December
Artists and their Muses
Alexandra Epps

In Mythology the nine Muses were goddesses who symbolised the arts and sciences. Today a muse serves as an artist's inspiration, motivating them to create their best work through symbolism, spiritualism and even imperfections, as seen in the works of the 19th century Pre-Raphaelites and in the 20th century Picasso and Dali. The role of the muse is to penetrate the artist and bring forth a work of art.

January 2017



Thursday 19 January
America's Realist Genius - The Art of Edward Hopper
Eric Shanes

'A painter of gloomy paintings that don't make us feel gloomy' Hopper helps us to recognise the loneliness which so often lies at the heart of sadness. Born in New York State in 1882, Hopper felt like an outsider. His paintings show how isolated life can be, echoing our own griefs. This realist painter shows his personal view of the American Dream in the 20th century.

February 2017



Thursday 16 February
AGM 11am followed by a lecture and buffet lunch
Love, Power and Scandal - A Royal Jewel For Every Occasion
Susan Rumfitt

From Henry VIII to the Duchess of Cambridge, this lecture will focus on Royal Jewels which have caused gasps of shock over the last 500 years. We will admire the symbolic jewels of Henry VIII and Mary, the scandalous jewels surrounding Charles II and George IV and the romantic stories behind the jewels of Queen Victoria.