

Chairperson's Report – March 2018

We enjoyed a series of interesting and varied visits again this year. July, unusually for a summer trip, took us to the National Gallery for the 'Monet and Architecture' exhibition. We visited Dorney Court in Buckinghamshire and the installation of chairs, the Jurors, at Runnymede in August. September saw us heading south, to visit the Mary Rose at Portsmouth and the impressive D-Day Museum at Southsea. Back to London, as usual in the autumn, for our October visit, where we saw the Mantegna and Bellini exhibition at the National Gallery. We went to Tate Britain in November for the Burne-Jones exhibition. Two strikingly different London houses fascinated in December: Leighton House, with its spacious studio and beautiful Arab Hall, and Linley Sambourne House, stuffed full of Victoriana, with some rather odd photos on the upper floor!

2019 got off to a good start with a trip to the National Portrait Gallery for 'Gainsborough's Family Album'. In February we went to the Queen's Gallery for 'Russia, Royalty and the Romanovs'. As I write, we are still excited to see what Tate Britain has in store for us with 'Van Gogh – Emotion in Paint'.

One of the strengths of our society, of course, is the way we link our lectures to the exhibitions we are due to visit shortly afterwards, which means we always have a better appreciation of the artist, and the works on display, when we go there. Saying that, we had a September lecture by Ann Clements on Australian Impressionists which was not linked to a trip, but interesting nevertheless, especially for those who made a private visit to this exhibition.

The very lively Sian Walters gave us 'Mantegna and Bellini' in October. I don't know whether members are aware that Sian gives super 10 session art history courses in Cobham, on a Friday morning I believe. I went to one a few years back and learnt a great deal. Details can be found on her website: arthistoryinfocus.com

Hilary Underwood was her usual interesting self for 'Burne Jones' in November, and Angela Cox was very enlightening and crystal clear in her talk on 'Gainsborough's Family Album.' Linda Collins gave an entertaining talk about the Royal Collection 'Thank you, Your Majesty: the Queen's Paintings' in February.

I am particularly looking forward to our March lecture on 'Van Gogh – Emotion in Paint', firstly because of the subject matter, but secondly as it is a while since I have had the pleasure of listening to Eveline Eaton. She is of course a great lecturer, but I must also confess, having spent a good deal of my life in Eveline's native Germany, that I love her gentle German accent!

Once again, heartfelt thanks to Barbara Logan for organising our wonderful trips, and to Beryl Davis for the fascinating lectures.

With regard to making our usual annual donations, we have an idea, which will surely come to fruition shortly, and which my successor as Chair will then report on in her/his summer newsletter. We were also hoping to work with the GBC Heritage Team on a project, but with the departure of Jill Draper, and the sad loss of another colleague, the team is currently snowed under with work to cover, so that idea is now on the back burner.

I now need to talk about committee matters. As I intimated in my summer newsletter, I shall be standing down as Chair after 3 years in post. I shall also be retiring from the committee, which I have been a member of since 2010. Life moves on, and now John and I are spending a good deal of our time up in North Norfolk, and it is difficult to fit too many commitments into 2 weeks per month

only. I have really enjoyed my time on the committee, and as Chair. I love introducing and thanking the speakers, and chatting to them pre/post lecture.

Nancy Butcher has also decided to call it a day. In the days when volunteer stewards were needed at the Gallery – remember Marion May's lovely costume exhibitions, for example – Nancy organised the volunteer rota. She also stood in for a couple of years organising our lectures very competently. So thank you, Nancy, for all your hard work, and your sense of humour too.

This means that we have at least two gaps on the committee. Please, please, please consider joining it, only 4 meeting per year, not too onerous, and good fun in fact. If you yourself are can't, why not encourage a friend to. People are often a little shy about suggesting themselves, but encouragement from a friend, who knows their strengths, might tip the balance!

We have been joined on the committee this year by Ann Fearey, who is proving to be full of good ideas and energy. Thank you, Ann, good to have you on board.

We need a full, lively committee to carry on the great work we do, and to help plan our Golden Anniversary celebrations for 2020. Our founder, Iris Hawkins, who still attends most lectures, should be very proud indeed of having started this good, solid society of Friends, which has provided support for Guildford House over the years, buying many items for the Borough Collection; presenting for example the lovely sundial in the courtyard; supplying display cases, and much more. She should also be extremely proud of having founded this society which has given so much enlightenment and pleasure to so many people over the last 50 years. I sincerely hope that it might continue to do so for a further 50 – but that, dear Friends, depends on you, our members, coming forward to help run it!

Pauline Surrey