

THE WILLIAM SHIPLEY GROUP For RSA History

Newsletter 38: July 2013

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

8-10 July 2013. The Centre for Medical Humanities at the University of Aberdeen is hosting the Association for Medical Humanities Annual Conference 2013. WSG Chairman, Dr Nicholas Cambridge will be talking on "Boz" in the Time of Cholera: Dickens and the Asiatic Cholera Pandemics', at a joint panel with Professor John Drew, 'Global Health Humanities and the Mid-Victorian Magazine: Free Trade or Fair Trade?' and Dr Tony Williams 'Over the border: Health Humanities in Dickens' Journals', from the University of Buckingham.

13 September 2013 from 10.00am to 5pm. **'Enid Marx and Her Contemporaries: Women Designers and the Popularisation of "Folk Arts" 1920-1960'.** This one-day conference is the result of a collaboration between Manchester School of Art and Compton Verney in Warwickshire. Tickets are £40 or student price £20, and include lunch and refreshments. Full programme details will be released shortly. See <u>http://folkartdesign.org/</u> for more information and to book tickets. Illustrator, book designer, printmaker, textile designer and painter, Enid Marx (1902-1998), who was appointed RDI in 1944, left a collection of her work to Compton Verney, together with a large number of pieces of folk or popular art which she collected with her friend Margaret Lambert (1906-1995). The Marx/Lambert collection has recently benefited from a rehang. An online gallery guide is available at http://www.comptonverney.org.uk/collections/marx_lambert.aspx

18 September 2013 at 2.30pm. **'The Society that pokes its nose into everything'** by Susan Bennett, Honorary Secretary of the WSG, to West Dorset Decorative and Fine Arts Society at Highlands End Leisure Park, nr Bridport, Dorset. Contact Mrs Ann Hebden at <u>ann.hebden@btinternet.com</u> if you wish to attend.

4 July 2104 from 9.30am to 1.00pm. **Fellowship Centenary Symposium.** For commemorating the centenary of the adoption of the style 'Fellow' by members of the RSA. Durham Street Auditorium, RSA, 8 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6EZ. Details to follow.

5 July 2014 from 1.40 to 4.00pm. Educational Concerns and the RSA. Second symposium commemorating the centenary of the adoption of the style 'Fellow' by members of the RSA. Richmond-upon-Thames College, Egerton Road, Twickenham TW2 7SJ. Details to follow.

EXHIBITIONS

Sir Hugh Casson PRA: Making Friends. The Tennant Gallery and Council Room, Royal Academy, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BD. 31 May to 22 September 2013. £3

Architect and artist, President of the RA and Master of the Faculty of RDIs, Sir Hugh Casson (1910-1999) bridged the gap which divided traditional and modern artists and architects in the mid to late 20th century. From his designs for camouflaging airfields during the Second World War to the Elephant and Rhinoceros Pavilion at London Zoo this exhibition demonstrates his optimistic approach to design. His topographical scenes which usually included well-known works of architecture, stage designs for major opera houses and his ceramic designs for Midwinter are also on display.



The construction of the Dome of Discovery, 1951 Festival of Britain, South Bank, London, 1951. © Estate of Sir Hugh Casson

Royal Paintbox: Royal Artists Past and Present. Windsor Castle, Windsor, West Berkshire SL4 1NJ. 22 June to 26 January 2014. Open daily 09.45-17.15. Admission included in ticket price for Windsor Castle - £17.75 Adult £16.15 Concession or if State Apartments closed £9.70 Adult £8.55 Concession Among the works by members of the British Royal family featured in this exhibition are drawings and watercolours by Royal Presidents and Patrons of the [R]SA, from HRH Prince Albert to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and HM The Queen.

Zandra Rhodes: Unseen. Fashion and Textile Museum, 83 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF. 12

July to 31 August 2013. Tuesday to Saturday 11am-6pm. £8 entry fee. This exhibition marks the 10th anniversary of the Fashion and Textile Museum which Zandra Rhodes created and opened to the public in 2003. Displays of her textiles, dresses and original sketches provide an opportunity to explore the archive, studio and creative process of this distinctive designer who was elected RDI in 1976.



2013 has also seen the launch of the **Zandra Rhodes Digital Study Collection** at <u>http://www.zandrarhodes.ucreative.ac.uk</u>. This collaborative project between the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) and Zandra Rhodes Studio and funded by JISC was officially launched at the Fashion and Textile Museum in March this year by Joanna Lumley. This resource will enable students of fashion to explore 500 of her dresses and garments and over 1000 pages of fashion drawings. Video tutorials show Zandra Rhodes and her studio team demonstrate some of the specialist techniques used to create handmade couture garments.

NEW WSG OCCASIONAL PAPER

'For We Shall Go Down Hand in Hand to Posterity'. Fanny Burney and Samuel Johnson: A Literary Friendship by John Abbott, Emeritus Professor of English, University of Connecticut. (WSG Occasional Paper no.25, 2013, £7.50)

BOOKS

Alan Powers, *British Murals & Decorative Painting 1920-1960*. London: Sansom & Co, 2013. ISBN 978 1908326232 (£40)



This beautifully produced book, illustrated with a series of specially commissioned colour photographs, provides us with a long over-due consideration of this neglected branch of 20th century British art. This important study was published to coincide with the major exhibition of murals held by the Fine Arts Society London earlier this year. The renowned 20th century historian Alan Powers has written the essay, which forms the first section of this volume. As well as placing mural painting within its historic context he also provides a survey of major events, significant dates and the role played by patrons, artists, art schools and institutions, which saw the revival of mural painting in the 20th century. Fifteen essays, written by experts in the field, provide in-depth case studies of selected works, as well as

considering the careers of specific these include the work of the 1932 RSA

artists as muralists. These include the work of the 1932 RSA Albert Medallist Frank Brangwyn for the Rockefeller Centre and RDI Edward Bawden's 'Country Life in Britain', which he painted for Lion and Unicorn pavilion at the Festival of Britain, 1951. Due to their size and scale many of these unique works have been lost, or have been poorly documented and largely unprotected, and are thereby at risk. It is to be hoped that this authoritative and well-illustrated volume will raise awareness of the importance of this form of decorative painting.



Frank Brangwyn working on one of the Rockefeller panels, 1930-34 ©Liss fine Art

SAMUEL MORE'S JOURNALS

Manuscript journals, compiled by the Samuel More, Secretary of the Society of Arts (1769-99), recording his detailed observations of primarily industrial sites during six expeditions around England and Wales are being auctioned at Sotheby's on 10 July 2013. Their importance to the history of the early years of the industrial revolution is reflected in their estimated value of £50,000 to £70,000. Former RSA Secretary, G.E. Mercer (1962-74), wrote an assessment of More and his achievement in his three part 1979 study 'Mr More of the Adelphi'. (*Journal of the RSA*, vol.127, pp.96-103, 173-179, 237-244)



Sketch of Watt's patent steam engine from More's record of his journey to the West Midlands, 1776 ©Sotheby's

HONOURS

43 year old Thomas Heatherwick described his recent award of a CBE for services to the design industry as an 'immense honour'. This designer of the London 2012 Olympic cauldron was appointed a Royal Designer for Industry in 2004 and received the Prince Philip Designers Prize two years later. Heatherwick has expressed his pride in working on public projects of national significance. The designers of the Olympic torch, Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby, who are both RDIs, were both awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Fashion designer Barbara Hulanicki received an OBE for services to fashion in the 2012 Queen's New Year Honours. Best known as the founder of BIBA in 1964 she was appointed an RDI in 2009.

CHRISTOPHER DRESSER SOCIETY

As the result of a donation of £10,000 from a Christopher Dresser scholar Teeside University and the Dorman Museum have set up a Christopher Dresser Society in order to recognise Dresser's work and to create a resource which allows further scholarship and recognition to continue. Harry Lyons, a Dresser scholar who contributed a paper to the RSA's History Study Group on Dresser's connection with the RSA said, 'Christopher Dresser was a household name who was famed for championing industrial design so that ordinary people could acquire well-made and engaging goods. He pioneered what we now recognise as the simple and modern aesthetic... Having a Christopher Dresser society is an excellent idea and will encourage research and scholarly activity into his contribution to design.' A conference around Dresser's work is being planned for 2014. http://www.tees.ac.uk/schools/sam/christopherdresser/

BEE CULTURE



In June this year 49 short-haired bumblebees, or 'dumbledores' as they were called in Old English, were released at the RSPB reserve at Dungeness in Kent. This native species had not been seen in the UK since 1988, and it was finally declared extinct in 2000. Its decline started during the Second World War Dig for Victory campaign which required hedges to be ripped out. Intensive agricultural practices and the change from wildflower gardens to ornamental cultivars further reduced the bees' food supply and led to the species dying out.

The Society of Arts had been instrumental in encouraging the transportation of these short-haired bumblebees to New Zealand in the 19th century. Mrs Mary Ann Allom is credited with sending the first bees from England to New Zealand's South Island. She had spent many months planning and experimenting with bees on top of her house in Bloomsbury, perfecting her scheme for safe transit. The special hive that she devised and put aboard the barque 'Clifford' ensured that all the bees arrived safely in New Zealand. She arranged for the wax, the first produce of these bees, to be sent

to the Society. Mrs Allom was awarded the Society's Silver Isis Medal in 1845 for the 'Introduction of Bees in New Zealand'. In 2003 biologist Professor Dave Goulson from the University of Stirling went to New Zealand to capture later generations of these bees with the aim of re-introducing the species in the UK. Following his successful trip to New Zealand Professor Coulson founded the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. The work of academics and other conservation groups has led to the provision of suitable wildflower habitat for these bees. It is hoped that this reintroduction is successful as these bees are important in crop pollination and will therefore help to maintain our ecological diversity.

From its early years the Society had taken an interest in the management of bee stocks as a minor

industry. It recognised that larger quantities of wax and honey could be collected if bees were preserved rather than destroyed, which had been the standard practice in the 18th century. The Society offered a large number of small prizes for keeping bees alive during the winter and the RSA archive still holds the certificate supplied by the Duchess of Norfolk in 1762 for her 65 stocks of bees.



The Society's Repository displayed bee hives of various construction and at a distribution of awards ceremony at the Society's headquarters in John Adam Street, the recently elected President of the Society, HRH Prince Albert, closely examined working hives on the premises. He ordered several of these and quickly put some of them to use at Windsor. The Society's *Transactions* and *Journal* also published information and papers on this subject, including a communication from the President of the Royal Society Sir Joseph Banks and the Abbé Mann of Brussels regarding a straw Hive for Bees invented by the Sieur Ricour, gardener to the Baron de Pœderli. 'The inventor commends this hive above all others he has met with, for collecting the honey without destroying the Bees.'¹

The Society continued to take an interest in this subject. In the 1950s Dr Stanley Gooding gave two lectures to the RSA concerning his research into bees. He wrote numerous books and papers on the subject including *Bees and the Law* (1952). Dr Gooding, a physician by profession, was considered a leading expert on bees from genetics to the culture of excellent honey. With a busy medical practice, extensively involved in local affairs, his position as President of the British Bee-Keepers' Association and Chairman of their Research Committee Gooding also found time to attend and contribute to meetings of the RSA following his election as a Fellow in 1951. Following his election to the RSA Council he served on a number of the Society's committees. His death in 1966 was considered 'a real, and deeply felt, loss to the Society'.²

OBITUARY

FAY CUTHBERTSON (1971-2013)

It is with sadness that we report the death, at an early age, of a former member of the Society's staff. Fay joined the RSA in 1995 as Admissions and Events Co-ordinator in the Design Department. She was employed to catalogue entries for the annual Student Design competitions and coordinated the award ceremonies and travelling exhibitions. She also helped with the running of the RDI Summer Schools from 2000 to 2003. A hard worker and friendly face she will be sorely missed by all her friends and colleagues.



¹ Transactions of the Society of Arts, vol. 3 (1785), p.171

² *Journal of the RSA* vol.114, (1966), pp.442-3

Former RSA Head of Design Sue Hewer (1996-2008) has kindly supplied this appreciation:

A chance meeting with Veronika Stetter at the inaugural Design for Ageing Network conference in Amsterdam in 1994, led to the start of Fay's association with the RSA. I (Sue Hewer) was looking for someone to join the Design team and happened to mention this to Veronika at dinner one night. She mentioned that her sister Alex might be interested and indeed she was, applied for the job and got it. When another position came up in Design, Fay, Alex's good friend from University, applied. Cheryl Kingsland and I interviewed her along with other candidates but from the moment she walked into the room, we just knew that she was perfect for the job. We were (unusually) rendered rather speechless as questions seemed redundant and as Fay reminded me often in years to come, our only interrogation was around, 'what time do you like to start work in the mornings?'. Fay teased me relentlessly about this – but actually, Cheryl and I were right, she was a perfect fit for the RSA.

Whilst she was at the RSA Fay made a huge contribution to the work emerging from Design and to the Society in general. She was all the things that people have described her to be of late – funny, gorgeous, bright, kind. I would add that she was generous with her time – always staying late when necessary to get things done – especially the last minute exhibitions we were always putting together. She liked to be involved in what was going on in the RSA overall too and she must have known everyone in the organisation during the years she worked there.

She also had a great empathy with all the students that we worked with – being a creative herself with two degrees under her belt. We worked a great deal with other college and she built up good relationships with tutors as well – especially with the RCA and the Helen Hamlyn Centre.

She worked directly to me for a lot of the time, and she had the marvellous ability to turn my thoughts and jottings into impressive documents that would win over any would-be sponsor or supporter. She also tirelessly booked all my European travel when I was going to EC Expert Assessor and Network meetings although she did have a tendency to assume that I could run fast to catch trains with ten minutes between them. She also engaged with my obsession with design for older people, a marginalized area of design at that time, and probably still is to a certain extent now.

Everyone loved Fay and everyone somehow felt better for being part of her world and experiencing her glamour. She had an impressive knack of always looking stylish be it a day in the office sorting through artwork or organizing an event such as the occasion when we all went to St James's Palace (1999) for an evening with Prince Philip to celebrate 75 Years of the Student Design Awards. Clive Grinyer, now an RSA Trustee, was accepting an award for (now) Sir Jonathan Ive, and both he and Prince Philip spoke from a podium, surveying all the great and the good from the design industry and world. Much to everyone's surprise (it really shouldn't have been though...) as soon as Prince Philip finished speaking, he made a beeline for Fay, having picked her out as THE most attractive woman in the audience. She was so taken aback by this that when he asked her what she did at the RSA, she mumbled, 'Oh not a lot really....'.

I would really have loved to have worked with Fay forever but her new skills and qualifications meant that she had to move on and work in different, exciting areas of design and at the same time, giving other people the pleasure of having such an interesting, stimulating, fun and captivating colleague.

RONALD CARTER OBE, RDI (1926-2013)



The recent death of Ron Carter at the age of 86 is a reminder of a remarkable group of designers who emerged in the post war years, many of them trained at the Royal College of Art.

Ron entered the School of Wood, Metals and Plastics, which had been established by Robin Darwin at the Royal College of Art and was led by Professor R D (Dick) Russell RDI, at an exciting time. Many young students were drawn into working with architects and professional designers on the

1951 Festival of Britain. I met Ron at this time and over the years I have admired his work for its timeless impeccable quality, with meticulous attention to detail and, above all, essentially British.

On leaving the RCA he established his own practice and began a long and distinguished career as a furniture designer working with leading British furniture manufacturers, including LM Furniture and Stag and he worked closely with Robert Heritage RDI. In 1966 he was commissioned by Gordon Russell to design a dining room group, 'The Farncombe Range' to be made in American black walnut. The restrained design epitomised the quality of Ron's work and proved a success for Gordon Russell Ltd. However, when I joined Gordon Russell some years later, I discovered he had tried to persuade the company to make it in English oak, which would have been even better.

In 1980 he went into a highly successful partnership with Peter Miles. They established a small manufacturing business at Wirksworth in Derbyshire to produce his distinctive designs which led to contracts from the BBC, the British Library, the V&A and many others. In 1984 I commissioned Ron to design a group of exhibition pieces for Gordon Russell to be made to order. His exceptional design for a table and chairs in red lacquer created a great deal of interest.



A quiet modest man Ron was a delight to work with and he was also good company. He will be remembered for his contribution to British design in the last half of the 20th century. In recognition of his outstanding work as a designer he was appointed a Royal Designer for Industry in 1971 - a rare distinction he shared with Dick Russell, Robert Heritage and Robin Day.

Ray Leigh Former Chairman, Gordon Russell Ltd

For Fiona MacCarthy's obituary of Ronald Carter see The Guardian for 30 May 2013

ALEXANDER (ALEC) STIRLING (1941-2013)

The eldest son of the late James Stirling and of Dora-Elena, brother of Stuart and adored father of Jamie and Catriona, Alec Stirling died in May this year. He was a long-time supporter of the RSA History Study Group and latterly the William Shipley Group. The WSG sent a wreath to the moving memorial which was held at St Mary's Battersea, the Thames-side church that Alec and his wife Maggie liked so much. Alec generously donated prints and copies of historic photographs by Peter Le Neve Foster to the RSA and contributed a series of valuable studies and reviews to the Society's *Journal* which we hope to bring together as a WSG Occasional Paper.

Dr Allan writes:

Alec brought kindness, interest and a very special sort of humour to his association with the RSA Library and Historical Collection. I only had to mention a special <u>desiderata</u> and he would go out of his way to fill it – often taking time off from his work as a dealer and connoisseur. The self portrait of Valentine Green, reproduced on the next page is just one example. An early caricature of the Duke of Norfolk and a photographic portrait of Henry Cole, with many others, all came into the collections through is generosity. He acted as 'midwife' in the transfer of Carlini's statue of Joshua Ward to the V&A museum and consoled me for the loss – he would often tease me with a phone call to say 'are the Barry paintings safe?' or 'is John Adam Street to let? In recent years he came to give me support at my meetings at the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries. His presence in the audience gave me confidence and assurance. He communicated his belief in the value of the RSA's history to a wide circle of friends. He will be greatly missed.

ANNIVERSARIES



Mezzotint of portrait of Valentine Green, presented to the RSA by the late Alex Stirling

2013 marks the **bicentenary** of the death of Valentine Green FSA, ARA (1739-1813). Valentine Green who died on 28 June 1813 deserves to be remembered as the most active 18th century artist member of the Society of Arts. In his own day he was esteemed as a Mezzotint Engraver of great skill and today his prints are much sought after by collectors. Twice awarded the Society's Gold Medal, firstly in 1778 'for respected services' and secondly in 1787 'for eminent services', he became on his election as a member in 1772 a regular attended at the Society's Committees of Polite Arts and Correspondence and Papers. He was chairman of the latter from 1775 to 1780 and of the former from 1780 to 1786 and continued to attend these committees until 1798.

The son of a Worcestershire Dancing Master, Valentine was apprenticed to the Town Clerk of Evesham, but disliked the idea of a legal profession he ran away after two years to Worcester and entered the studio of the engraver Robert Hancock. He was much interested in history and he collected materials and illustrations for his *Survey of*

Worcester which he published in 1764. In the following year, at the age of 26, he came to London and began work as a Mezzotint Engraver at Queen's Square Westminster, exhibiting regularly at the Incorporated Society of Artists from 1766 to 1772 and becoming known for his fine handling of the chiaroscuro effects. In 1775 he became an Associate of the Royal Academy and was granted the title of 'Mezzotint Engraver to the King'. He planned the decoration of the Society of Arts 'Great Room' in 1774 and negotiated the appointment of James Barry to undertake the work in 1777. He initiated the publication of the Society's *Transactions* in 1783, inspired Caleb Whitefoord's appointment to the Prince of Wales in 1785 and advocated the appointment of a governing Council in 1797.

The collapse of an ambitious scheme to engrave the collections of the Elector Palatinate and Dusseldorf in 1798 led to the near bankruptcy and caused him to stand for election to the salaried post of Secretary of the Society in 1799. He failed in this and endured years of penury until Whitefoord, who had already given him pecuniary help, secured him the post of Keeper at the newly established British Institution in 1805 which he held until his death.

D.G.C. Allan

2013 marks the **centenary** of the death of the naval architect Sir William Henry White FRS (1845-1913). Although elected a member in 1885 White's connection with the Society was much earlier. At the age of 16 he obtained the first of eight certificates for the Society's examinations in arithmetic, algebra, mensuration, English history and geography which he took at the Devonport Mechanics Institution. He was one of the first apprentices sent to the Royal School of Naval Architect and Marine Engineering at South Kensington where he passed out with the highest honours. He joined the Admiralty's constructive department where he rose to become Chief Constructor. Twenty-eight large armoured cruisers,



HMS Mars – one of the largest class of battleships designed by Sir William White

many smaller cruisers, torpedo boat destroyers and miscellaneous vessels were designed by White and built for the Royal Navy. He also took a two- year break to work as designer and manager for Armstrong & Company's warship division.

The minutes for the RSA Council meeting held on 17 March 1913 records their 'deep sense of the loss...From the date of his first election to that of his lamented death he was a regular and constant

attendant at the meetings of the Council and its financial committee'. White had been a Council member from 1889 and was elected Chairman of the Council in 1908. Four years later he was appointed one of the Society's Treasurers. 'A man of varied interests and of great mental energy he was unsparing in his devotion to the many institutions with which he associated and the members of the Council had constant opportunity of availing themselves of his wide advice and his appropriate suggestions for the conduct of its business. His kindly nature and his unfailing gentility of heart and manner endeared him to a wide circle of friends, among whom few can more keenly feel his loss than his colleagues on the Society's Council.'

It is not surprising, therefore, to find the RSA Council members responding positively to an invitation from the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) which invited them to nominate four Council members to sit on the Sir William White Memorial Committee. Lord Sanderson (Chairman), Sir Owen Roberts, Mr Dugald Clerk and Mr R. Kaye Gray took up the invitation. The Council then resolved that any necessary The ICE also invited expenditure be authorised. representatives from several other bodies with which White was closely associated, including the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, the Institution of Naval Architects, The Iron and Steel Institute, The Institute of Metals and the Institute of Marine Engineers. The Memorial Committee agreed to fund a memorial tablet to White and sought the advice of the ICE's architect, James Miller (1860-1947) who had recently completed the ICE headquarters at One Great George Street. They asked Miller to provide the committee with the most suitable location, together with the dimensions and style of tablet that would fit in with the design of his building described as a 'monumental neo-classical design'. Built in Portland stone, this 'modern rendering of the late Renaissance', has ornately decorated rooms in French walnut and oak panelling, carved plaster ceilings and elaborate



Memorial to Sir William White in entrance hall of the Institution of Civil Engineers, One Great George St

crystal chandeliers. White had been Chair of the Building Committee which approved Miller's scheme. A sketch of the proposed Memorial was presented to the Council of the ICE on 4 April 1916 and they agreed to place the Memorial on one of the panels in the entrance hall. At a special meeting held on 26 July 1916 in the presence of the ICE President, past Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and members of the ICE Council, the Rt Hon Earl Brassey, on behalf of the Memorial Committee, formally presented the onyx memorial tablet. The plaque shows Sir William White seated with profile of HMS Dreadnought in the background, and inscribed as a tribute from the engineers of many nations. 'His death leaves vacant many places which will be hard to fill, and a void in the regard and affection of numerous friends which is never likely to be filled at all.'³

Honorary Patron: Lord Asa Briggs of Lewes FRSA. Honorary President: Dr David Allan, FRSA; Honorary Vice-Presidents: Gerry Acher, CBE, LVO, FRSA; Sir Paul Judge, FRSA; Professor Franz Bosbach, Director, University of Duisburg-Essen. Honorary Benefactor: Ronald Gerard OBE, KStJ, FRSA. Honorary Member: Hermione Hobhouse MBE; Committee: Dr Nicholas Cambridge FRSA (Chair); Dr David Allan FRSA (Director of Studies); Prof John Davis FRSA (Deputy Chair); Anthony Burton; Paul Leonard, FLS; Jonathan Rollason, FRSA; Susan Bennett, MA, FRSA (Honorary Secretary, Editor and Treasurer)

³ Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, vol.61 (1913), p.453. My thanks to Carol Morgan, ICE Archivist, for her help in tracing the story of this memorial.