



# THE WILLIAM SHIPLEY GROUP FOR RSA HISTORY

Newsletter 27 March 2011

## Annual General Meeting and Chairman's Annual Address

The 7<sup>th</sup> AGM of the WSG was held on 23 March 2011. This was followed by the Annual Address on the great Victorian social reformer and Society of Arts activist Sir Edwin Chadwick (1800-1890) by the Chairman, Dr Nicholas Cambridge. The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine at UCL generously made their lecture room available for this meeting.

## Forthcoming meetings

**Tuesday 17 May 2011.** 2.00 pm. *No Longer the Oldest Name on the High Street: Preserving the history of the House of Dollond, opticians and scientific instrument makers* by Neil Handley, Curator, British Optical Association Museum. This talk, which will be followed by a tour of their museum, will be held at the College of Optometrists, 42 Craven Street, London WC3N 5NG (A £5 donation to the museum is requested for this event)

**Thursday 19 May 2011.** *Lord Asa Briggs: A celebration.* A one-day colloquium is being held to consider the remarkable contribution to academic history of the WSG Honorary Patron, Lord Asa Briggs by the Institute of Historical Research and the British Association for Victorian Studies. This event will also consider his role in the development of Victorian studies, the history of communication and the growth of modern universities will be considered and assessed. Tickets £40 (concessions £20). Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU email: [IHR.Events@sas.ac.uk](mailto:IHR.Events@sas.ac.uk) for further information.

**Monday 23 May 2011** at 7.00 pm. The Trustees of The Twickenham Museum seventh Annual Lecture, *Art and Artists in the Twickenham area from Tudor Times to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Dr David Allan, will take place at St Mary's Hall, Church Street, Twickenham. Tickets £6.00 available from museum during opening times or on the door. (020 8408 0070)

## **WSG OCCASIONAL PAPERS RECENTLY PUBLISHED:**

No.16: *The Development of Museums in Victorian Britain and the Contribution of the Society of Arts* by Anthony Burton, 2010 (£5.00)

No.17: *Sculpture in and on the Society's House* by David G.C. Allan, 2010 (£5.00)

No.18: *Early 19th Century Materials for Drawing and Painting. I. Clare Richardson, The RSA collection of 'trial' paintings on millboard and canvas 1820-1846. II. Peter Bower, George Steart's 'tablets' for drawing, 1820.* (£7.50)

## Exhibitions



***Journeys – Stories of the World.*** Orleans House Gallery, Riverside, Twickenham TW1 3DJ. 29 January to 22 May 2011.

The personal effects of the explorer Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890) have been taken as inspiration for his exhibition which investigates the theme of journeys through contemporary art created by local young people and artists from around the world. This exhibition is part of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. A member of the Society of Arts from 1875 Sir Richard Burton was awarded their silver medal in 1882 for his paper on 'Gold and the Gold Coast'.

**Prince Philip: Celebrating Ninety Years.** The Drawings Gallery, Windsor Castle. 12 February 2011-22 January 2012

Windsor Castle, the home of the Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen for nearly 60 years is marking his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with a special exhibition. Photographs, memorabilia, paintings and gifts selected from the Royal Collection, the Royal Archives and the Duke's personal collection are used to illustrate key moments in His Royal Highness's life, his many interests as well as his extensive work as Patron or President of 800 organisations.



*Prince Philip in his role as RSA President presenting HRH The Queen Mother with the Albert Medal*

**Robin and Lucienne Day. Design and the Modern Interior.** Pallant House Gallery, 9 North Pallant, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1TJ. 26 March to 26 June 2011



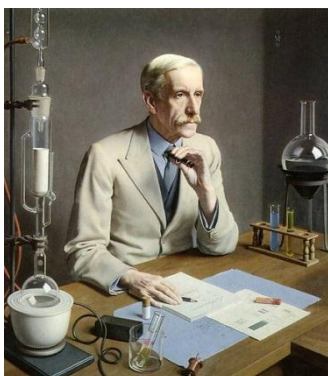
Held in the Day's home town this new exhibition is drawn from the collection of H. Kirk Brown III and Jill A. Wiltse of Denver, USA. As well as her furnishing fabric designs this exhibition also features a selection of Lucienne's dishware. Robin's fine craftsmanship can be seen in the 1950s furniture which includes very rare pieces on loan from the Target Gallery, London. During the course of the exhibition a series of related events will take place including a new documentary film which provides an insight into the designers' lives and work including unique footage and interiors. For details of the exhibition and this events see

<http://www.pallant.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/forthcoming/main-galleries/robin-and-lucienne-day/robin-and-lucienne-day> or phone 01243 774557

**Design Research Unit: 1942-1972.** Tate St Ives, Porthmeor Beach, St Ives, Cornwall, TR26 1TG. 5 February – 2 May 2011. £6.25 or £3.75 concessions.

Two of the RSA's Royal Designers for Industry (RDI) Misha Black and Milner Gray were involved in the foundation of the Design Research Unit in 1942. The DRU aimed to bring 'artists and designers into productive relation with scientists and technologists. This exhibition considers the group's early origins and founder members, its initial work in exhibition design and the Unit's role in devising some of the first and most comprehensive corporate design schemes commissioned for British industry, including British Rail. One of the first generation of British design consultancies combining expertise in architecture, graphics and industrial design this exhibition maps the history of the group and the currency of their designs.

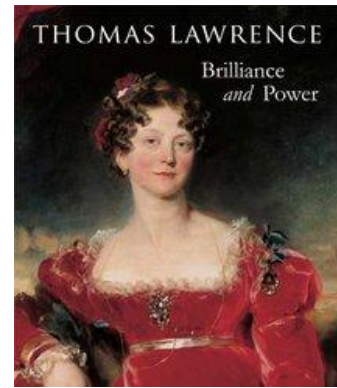
**Frederick Gowland Hopkins and the Chemistry of Life.** Royal Society, 6-9 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG. This exhibition is open to the public Monday to Friday 10.00am to 5.00pm until 27 May 2011. To arrange a visit to see this exhibition contact Felicity Henderson on 020 7451 2597 or [felicity.henderson@royalsociety.org](mailto:felicity.henderson@royalsociety.org)



The Royal Society has mounted this exhibition to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the father of biochemistry, Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins. He discovered the existence of vitamins, solved the riddle of scurvy, and provided new knowledge about nutrition improving the health of millions in the UK and abroad. This Nobel prize winner was awarded the Royal Society of Arts' Albert Medal in 1934 'for his researches in Biochemistry and the Constituents of Foods'. The following year Hopkins gave the RSA's Trueman Wood Lecture on 'The Study of Human Nutrition: The Outlook Today', which the Chairman said had left a deep and lasting impression on all who heard Sir Frederick speak.

**Thomas Lawrence. Regency Brilliance and Power.** Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut, USA. 24 February – 5 June 2011

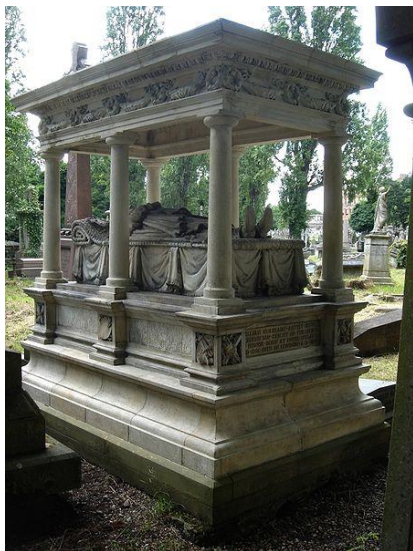
Visitors to the recent landmark retrospective exhibition of the important Regency portrait painter Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), held at the National Portrait Gallery London, may not have been aware that the Society of Arts [RSA] recognised the artist's talent when he was only thirteen years of age.



In response to the Society's published premium offer under class 129 'for the best drawing of any kind, made with crayons, chalk, black lead, Indian ink or bister by young gentleman under the age of 21' Lawrence submitted a pastel copy of Raphael's *Transfiguration*. However, it first appeared to the Committee that his drawing had been 'executed in the year 1782', and therefore did not fulfil the requirement that all performances had to begin after the publication of the premium offer in 1783. Such was the quality of Lawrence's work that the Society's Committee of Polite Arts was asked to consider 'whether and what bounty shall be given' for this performance identified as the work of 'T. Lawrence aged 13, 1783 in Alfred Street Bath'. As a token of the Society's approbation of his abilities he was awarded the 'Silver Pallet and Five Guineas' for his submission and, on 17 May 1784, Lawrence's brother William attended John Adam Street to collect this award.



The exhibition has now transferred to the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut, and features more than fifty portraits from collections around the world. A fully illustrated catalogue edited by A. Cassandra Albinson, Peter Funnell and Lucy Peltz, has been published by the Yale Center for British Art in association with Yale University Press is available from the NPG bookshop at a cost of £35.



#### **Tomb of William Mulready (1786-1863)**

In 1875 the Society accepted responsibility for the upkeep of the tomb of the artist William Mulready in Kensal Green Cemetery. Designed by Godfrey Sykes this memorial features a nearly life-size effigy of the artist. The base is decorated with twelve of his most important paintings and two academy drawings carved in outline.

Bad weather during the winter of 1963 caused serious damage to the monument. This required not only the expenditure of the capital sum of £109 12s 9d raised by the memorial committee almost one hundred years earlier, but also a not inconsiderable sum from the Society's own resources, in order to completely repair the tomb. With the memorial expected to remain in good condition for many years to come the RSA announced in

the April 1964 *Journal* that it was 'with regret that it is no longer able to accept responsibility for its maintenance'.

Mulready first came to the attention of the Society when he was 14 years old and awarded the Society's Greater Silver Pallet for 'the best Outline, after an original group or cast, in plaster of Human Figures'. Over forty years later he agreed to be the first exhibitor in a proposed series of one-man shows of contemporary art. The Society planned to use the profits from these exhibitions to establish a 'National Gallery of British Art'.



**Duff Hart Davis, *Philip de László. His Life and Art.* Yale University Press, 2010**

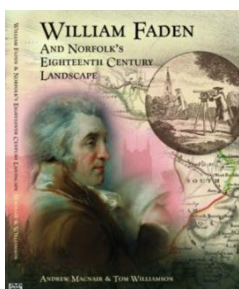
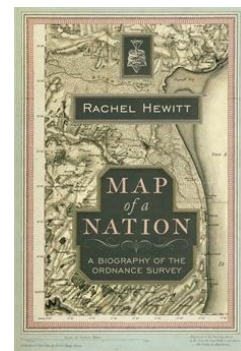
De Laszlo was very pleased to have his name added to 'the illustrious list of Fellows of such an historic institution' (p.265) he told his proposer, the art historian C.G. Holme. He agreed to give a paper to the RSA in 1935 shortly after his election to the Fellowship and told the Secretary that 'he would like to go back to the days when art was very elementary'. However, this talk had to be postponed for a year as de Laszlo was asked by the National Bank of Roumania to go to Bucharest to paint official portraits for them of Queen Marie and the late King Ferdinand. He eventually gave his 'remarkable' paper on 'The Art of Our Day' on 20 May 1936, for which he was awarded the Society's Silver Medal. Due to ill health the artist's wife and 'one or more of our sons' would collect the medal on his behalf, he told the Secretary.

Shortly afterwards the Society commissioned de Laszlo to paint the portrait of their President H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught. The artist wrote to the Secretary that he spent 'many happy hours at Bagshot while painting the portrait...I did a Kitcat size portrait, wearing the Garter Mantle with Chain, and I feel that I have succeeded in depicting that grand seigneur's most sympathetic personality, in spite of his being very frail, which added to my difficulties, as I painted the portrait straight away from nature'. De Laszlo added that 'what should have taken place in September of last year has, after many difficulties through illness both the Duke's illness and my own, had now been accomplished.' Shortly after completing this painting of 'the last personage of the great Victorian days' as de Laszlo described the Duke, the artist suffered a heart attack and died at the age of 68. As a consequence the Society became the possessor of his last completed work and in his obituary in the Society's *Journal* it stated it had 'lost a very keen as well as distinguished supporter'.<sup>1</sup>



**Rachel Hewitt, *Map of a Nation. A biography of the Ordnance Survey,* Granta Books, 2010**

In her popular history which tells the story of the creation of the Ordnance Survey map, Dr Hewitt describes the role the Society of Arts played in encouraging the production of accurate measured maps of the country, prior to the establishment of the Ordnance Survey. Political revolutions, rebellions and regional unions altered the shape and identity of the United Kingdom over the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, all of which had to be taken into account by the intrepid cartographers carrying out this work for the Ordnance Survey.



**Andrew MacNair & Tom Williamson, *William Faden and Norfolk's Eighteenth Century Landscape,* Windgather Press, 2010**

Using digitisation techniques and GIS technology the authors have coaxed new information from William Faden's survey of Norfolk originally published in 1797. As well as setting the map and its maker in their historical context this work shows how, when combined with other datasets, the interrogation of various patterns and distributions show the development of the Norfolk landscape many centuries before the map was surveyed. A digital version of the map on DVD is included with the book.

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from a description of manuscripts in the catalogue of dealer Richard Ford.

J.B. Harley's study, 'The Society of Arts and the surveys of English counties 1759-1809 (parts i-iii)' published in the *Journal of the RSA*, vol.112 (1963), pp.43-46, 119-124, 269-275, 538-543, provides the full story of the Society's awards and its place in cartographical history.

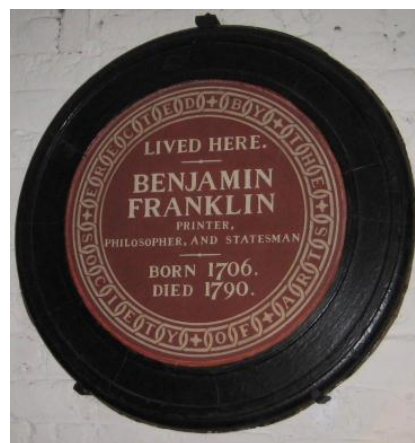
### **Arthur Murphy**

The text of WSG member Dr Garry Headland's talk, which he presented to a joint meeting of the WSG and the Johnson Society of London in 2009, on 'Arthur Murphy and Samuel Johnson: a case of intellectual affinity' has been published in the latest issue of *The New Rambler* (2008-2009). Readers are reminded that WSG Occasional Paper no.9 by Garry Headland on the subject of *William Shipley, Charles Ranger, Esq., Arthur Murphy and the Society of Arts* is available from the Honorary Secretary at a cost of £5.

### **Memorial tablet to Benjamin Franklin**

In 1869, the (Royal) Society of Arts, originators of what became the popular blue plaque scheme to identify the home of London's important former residents, commissioned a large terracotta plate surrounded by a wooden frame to honour Benjamin Franklin, one of their early international members.

Prior to two rounds of renumbering and the construction of new buildings on the street, Franklin lived at 7 Craven Street which had become 36 by the late 19th century. The plaque was affixed incorrectly, however, to the 7 Craven Street of 1869. This was discovered too late – it was cemented tight!



In 1914, when 7 Craven Street was demolished, the London County Council erected a new plaque on the correct building: a unique bronze scroll, denoting Franklin's only surviving residence anywhere in the world. The original plaque was donated to the London Museum, the forerunner of the Museum of London. It eventually resided in one of the Museum's storehouses until it was kindly donated to Benjamin Franklin House in 2010.

In 2011, Holden Conservation Ltd. restored and mounted the 1869 plaque on one of the House's original brick walls. The mortar remnants on the back of the plaque attest to its history of having first found a home on the wrong building!

*Sally James  
Operations Manager  
Benjamin Franklin House*

### **Obituary: Lawrence Kenchington**

Former Chairman of the RSA Southern Region Lawrence Kenchington died, at the age of 91, on 14 January 2011. During his term of office, which ran from 1980 to 1985, he steered the Southern Region through an important stage in its early development. Elected to the Fellowship in 1971 he was committed to the ethos of the RSA's mission to 'encourage arts, manufactures and commerce'.

### Strawberry Hill House re-opens

Horace Walpole's Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill re-opens on 2 April having undergone a £9 million repair and restoration programme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Strawberry Hill Trust.

WSG member Paul Leonard, chair of the Friends of Strawberry Hill (FOSH), would like to encourage members to contact him at [chair@friendsofstrawberryhill.org](mailto:chair@friendsofstrawberryhill.org) if they would like to be involved in any way with the preservation of Strawberry Hill House.



For Strawberry Hill House see <http://www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk/>; for the Friends of Strawberry Hill see <http://www.richardspires.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/FOSH/> and for a video explaining the restoration work undertaken see <http://www.strawberryhillhouse.org.uk/video1.php>



2011 marks the **200<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of the Society's award of its Silver medal to Dr George Cummings of Denbigh in Wales for his invention of a vapour, fumigation or shower bath for the use of public hospitals or private families. 'Its simplicity, cheapness and efficacy, to bring into general use an agreeable and salutary practice, as well as a powerful remedy in many diseases known in this country in former times but till lately neglected, and in a manner forgotten'. A model of his bath was placed in the Society's Repository as well as the General Dispensary of Denbigh.

2011 marks the **90<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of the opening of the first birth control clinic. Elected a Life Fellow in 1949 the pioneering Dr Marie Stopes contributed to discussions at meetings of the RSA on several occasions. In 1955 she informed the audience at Dr John Thomas's lecture on 'John Flaxman RA (1755-1826)' that she was the 'happy possessor of five large original works' by Flaxman who had received his first premium award from the Society of Arts when he was only eleven years of age.

2011 marks the **75<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of the establishment of the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry (RDI) by the RSA. For their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1986 the RSA organised the exhibition *Eye for Industry* at the Victoria & Albert Museum. The RDIs are celebrating their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary by working on a project together called 75 Days which will see them giving inspiration talks, workshops, work experience for graduates or advising RSA Fellows on the development of their projects. For further information contact Melanie Andrews, RDI Project Manager, [melanie.andrews@rsa.org.uk](mailto:melanie.andrews@rsa.org.uk). (<http://www.thersa.org/projects/design/rdi>)

2011 marks the **60<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of the Festival of Britain. To mark this occasion the Southbank Centre is holding a four-month festival of British culture and creativity. Members of the public are invited to lend personal photographs, letters and home movies, as well as contribute their own memories of the 1951 Festival. One of the planned events is a Chorus Weekend which will be held from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> May. The centrepiece of this weekend will be the performance of a *Massive Messiah* where singers and choirs are invited to participate in Handel's great choral piece at this event. Further details are available from the Southbank Centre on 020 7960 4200 or via their website: <http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/visitor-info/festival-of-britain>.



Festival of Britain on the South Bank, 1951

## **MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE SESSION 2011-2012 ARE NOW DUE**

Members are requested to send their £5 annual subscription to the Honorary Secretary, who would also welcome donations to the Group's funds. Please make your cheques payable to 'William Shipley Group' and post to Susan Bennett, WSG, 7 Drakes Drive, Ducks Hill Road, Northwood HA6 2SL

*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, FRSA; Mrs Susan Bennett, MA, FRSA (Honorary Secretary and Treasurer); Observer; Rob Baker, RSA Head of Archives and Library

*The history of the Society is extremely important to establish at almost every point in time, Lord Asa Briggs 2004*