



# THE WILLIAM SHIPLEY GROUP FOR RSA HISTORY

Newsletter 40: February 2014

## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

**4 March 2015** at 5pm. **The RSA 1754-2014. Some local, national and international connections** by Dr David Allan, FSA, Honorary President, WSG. Radnor House School, Radnor House, Pope's Villa, Cross Deep, Twickenham TW1 4QG. Please email Lucy Johnson on [ljohnson@radnorhouse.org](mailto:ljohnson@radnorhouse.org) to reserve a place

**6 March 2014** at 7pm. **Four Centuries of Radnor House History** by Dr David Allan, FSA, Honorary President, WSG for The Twickenham Society, The Twickenham Club, 7 Church Street, Twickenham TW1 3NJ. (Non-members admission free but optional donation to Society funds welcomed)

**19 March 2014** at 11.30am. **10<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the William Shipley Group for RSA History.** Meeting will be held in the Council Room of The Medical Society of London, 11 Chandos Street, London W1G 9EB

**19 March 2014** at 12.00pm. **Coffee Houses, Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth Century London** by Dr Nicholas Cambridge FSA, FRSA, Chairman, WSG. The meeting will be held at The Medical Society of London, 11 Chandos Street, London W1G 9EB.

**28 April 2014** at 6.30pm. **'Printed for the author'. Johann Christoph Haberkorn – an 18<sup>th</sup> century London printer as collaborator in the publication of key works in the fields of art, architecture and design** by Graham Jefcoate, former Head of Early Printed Collections, British Library and Director, Nijmegen University Library. Thanks to the generosity of the Royal Academy this meeting will be held in the RA Library, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BD

**4 July 2014** from 9.30am to 1.00pm. **Fellowship Centenary Symposium** to commemorate the centenary of the adoption of the style **'Fellow'** by members of the RSA. Vikki Heywood, Chair of the RSA Trustees, will kindly welcome delegates and speakers, who include Professor John Mee and Dr Georgiana Green, University of York; Joanne Corden, Archivist, Royal Society; Dr Elizabeth Eger, King's College London; Julian Pooley, FSA, The Nichols Archive; Dr David Allan, FSA, FRSA, Honorary President WSG and Honorary Historian, RSA and Susan Bennett, WSG Honorary Secretary. Full programme details will follow shortly. The Durham Street Auditorium at RSA, 8 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6EZ has been made available for this meeting thanks to Matthew Taylor, CEO, RSA.

**5 July 2014** from 1.30 to 4.00pm. **Educational Concerns and the RSA.** A second symposium to commemorate the centenary of the adoption of the style **'Fellow'**. Speakers include Pat Francis, Dr Jana Sims and Professor Paul Leonard. The meeting will be held at Richmond-upon-Thames College, Egerton Road, Twickenham TW2 7SJ. Full programme details will follow shortly.

## RADNOR HOUSE SCHOOL LECTURE REPORT

On 21<sup>st</sup> January Dr Allan gave a further lecture to Radnor House School, Pope's Villa, Twickenham. Surveying the history of the Society from its foundation, he told the story of William Shipley's pioneering work and of the national and international reputation which the Society had gained by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Local prize winners such as Turner, the Hilditches and Delamotte were pinpointed. The works of Matthew Duane who lived not far from Pope's Villa in the 1780s and of local nineteenth century members such as Thomas Twining and H.G. Bohn were described. The Society's concern with the Great Exhibition and its success as well as host of miscellaneous initiatives such as the 'shilling colour box' and the erection of memorial tablets were noted. The campaigns to preserve English vernacular architect and to raise the standard of industrial design in the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed that the Society remained one 'that pokes its nose into everything'.

The adoption of the style 'Fellow' by members in 1914 added prestige to the work of Mrs Lucy Millett FRSA, whose Hampton Wyck School of Art evolved into the Thames Valley Arts Club, which survives to the present day. A tribute was paid to the memory of Brian Louis Pearce (FRSA in 1974) whose monographs on Twickenham and RSA History will be familiar to WSG members.



Brian Louis Pearce

Dr Allan recalled with gratitude the recruitment into the WSG of the School's Headmaster, David Payton FRSA and of Lucy Johnson, Head of History at the School. Finally he mentioned the work of Professor John L. Abbott, FRSA, Emeritus Professor of the University of Connecticut, who visited the School and was shown over Pope's Grotto when he was in the UK in November last year. The lecture will be repeated at Radnor House School on 4 March at 5pm

## EXHIBITIONS

**Bawden's Britain.** The Higgins Bedford, Castle Lane, Bedford, MK40 3XD. 7 December 2013-11 May 2014. Free entry



This exhibition celebrates Edward Bawden's unique take on Britain and its inhabitants, both human and animal.

From wood pigeons to church spires on a wallpaper design to a village bobby in one of his historic linocuts, Bawden's closely observed depictions of British life show a wit and humour that is unique to the artist.

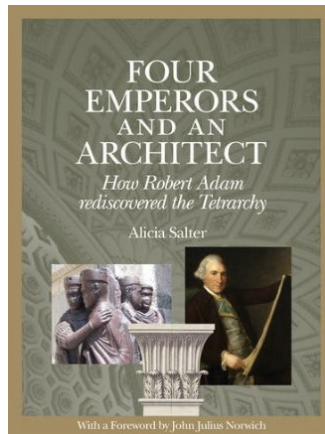
**Designing Modern Women 1890-1990.** MOMA Architecture and Design Galleries, third floor, 1 W 53rd St, New York, NY 10019, USA



Drawn entirely from MOMA's collections this installation celebrates women's contribution to 20<sup>th</sup> century design including a newly conserved kitchen by Charlotte Perriand with Le Corbusier (1952)

from the Unité d'Habitation housing project, furniture and designs by Lilly Reich, Eileen Gray (RDI), Eva Zeisel, Ray Eames, Lella Vignelli and Denise Scott Brown (awarded the RSA's Benjamin Franklin Medal, jointly with her partner Robert Venturi, in 1993). Also on display are textiles by Anni Albers and Eszter Haraszty; ceramics by Lucy Rie; 1960s psychedelic concert posters and a never-before-seen selection of posters and graphic material from the punk era.

## BOOK REVIEWS



ALICIA SALTER, *Four Emperors and an Architect. How Robert Adam rediscovered the Tetrarchy.* (Lexicon Publishing, 2013) £20

This is a useful retelling of the absorbing story of the life and career of Robert Adam who as John Swarbrick once wrote 'will always occupy a place of honour amongst the great architects of this country...[and who] struck a note that no other English Renaissance architect had touched before him'. [John Swarbrick, *The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam* (London, 1959, p.1). The 'Four Emperors' in Alicia Salter's title and depicted on the cover of her book are the four rulers of the Roman Empire whose statues Adam would have

seen in Venice. One of them, the Emperor Diocletian had built a great seaside palace at Spalatro on the Adriatic coast the ruin of which Adam determined to visit and survey in the summer of 1757. In the following year Adam returned to England and on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1758 'Robert Adam, architect, of Lower Grosvenor Street' was elected a member of the Society of Arts on the proposal of his friend Allan Ramsay. The Society, which had been founded only four years before, had already gained a national and international reputation. It occupied four rooms in one of the largest houses in the Strand but was already considering the need for more permanent premises. William Chambers, who had become a member in 1757, put on paper a grandiose 'Plan for a Building for the Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce' which was on the scale of his subsequent rebuilding of Somerset House. This would have been beyond the means of the Society but it did obtain the lease of a large warehouse in Denmark Court which Chambers converted into a superb meeting room ornamented in the Palladian Manner. These would have been the premises known to Robert Adam and his brother William, who joined the Society in 1762 and to James who joined in 1764.



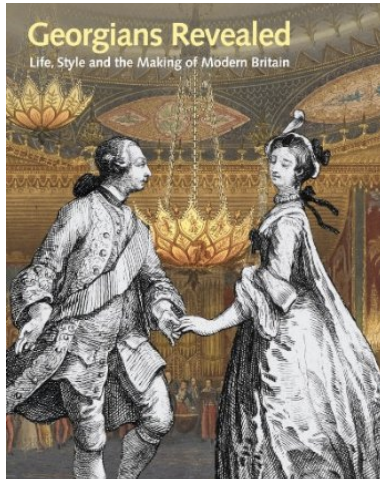
Slater makes much about the rivalry between Chambers and Robert Adam, but in 1761 they were appointed joint architects to the King. She believes that it was because of Chambers's intervention with the King that neither Robert nor James were invited to become members of the Royal Academy when it was founded in 1768. What the Adams thought of this we do not know and it should be remembered that the King's Academy took some years to gain a position of primacy and that the Free Society of Artists and the Incorporated Society of Artists continued in existence and that the Society of Arts would seem benefit from the service of Robert and James. In 1771 they proposed to build a house for the Society of Arts with an adjoining residence for the Secretary in the great riverside



development of the Durham House estate which they modelled on Diocletian's Palace in faraway Illyria and which they gave a name which has survived into the present century: 'The Adelphi'. The RSA house, though not alas the Adelphi Terrace, is still to be seen.

The book also reviews Robert Adam's other famous commissions in England and Scotland and the ancient Roman and Greek sources which inspired them. It is sumptuously illustrated.

*David G.C. Allan*



AMANADA GOODRICH, ed, *Georgians Revealed. Life, Style and the Making of Modern Britain.* (London, British Library, 2013)

In this collection of essays, which form the background to a splendid exhibition, Amanda Goodrich follows Alicia Salter in endeavouring to summarise the relations between the Society of Arts and the Royal Academy. She writes that in 1768 'led by Joshua Reynolds' the artist members of the Society 'established their own society under the patronage of George III. In fact Reynolds had given up his membership in 1762. The RA [R]SA connection has long been the source of confusion both to historians as well as to contemporaries. Specifically in

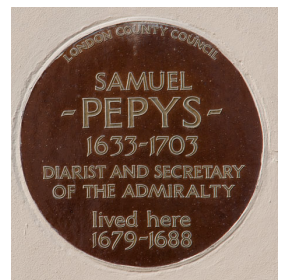
regard to Reynolds and the Society of Arts the article in *Reynolds Newsletter* 9 (Spring 2004) is of value.

*David G.C. Allan*

## 19 BUCKINGHAM STREET

No 19 Buckingham Street has been converted into eleven apartments with interior design by David Linley and though described as within the 'Adelphi Conservation Area' [*Evening Standard*, 17 April 2013] actually antedates the work of the Adam Brothers. The Street was laid out in 1675 when George Villiers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Buckingham, decided to develop the site of York House and its gardens. Samuel Pepys lived at no.12, and then no.14. His occupancy is commemorated by a memorial plaque.

*David G.C. Allan*



Samuel Pepys plaque at 12 Buckingham Street, Covent Garden

## RSA TIME CAPSULE

As part of the RSA Explore Your Archive campaign Archivist Evelyn Watson has put together a Pinterest board from the RSA's Archive on the contents of the time capsules placed under the foundation stones of the Adam headquarters building on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1772. Included in the pins are images of the items identified in the Society's Minutes see <http://www.pinterest.com/thersaorg/the-rsa-explore-your-archive-1772-timecapsules/> Sixth form students at the RSA's Arrow Vale Academy Redditch were inspired by the 1772 time capsule to put together a 21<sup>st</sup> century version which they have buried in the grounds of the Academy.





## **HRH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARDED BESSEMER MEDAL**

Sir Henry Bessemer's connections with the RSA were reported in the last issue of the WSG newsletter. Since then the Editor heard that, to mark the bicentenary year of Sir Henry's birth, the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining had awarded their prestigious Bessemer Gold Medal to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh for his outstanding support for engineering technology and materials innovation to the benefit of mankind.

## **JONATHAN BETTS MBE, FSA, FBHI, FIIC**



WSG Member and Senior Curator of Horology at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich Jonathan Betts was installed as Master of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014. In the Queen's 2012 Birthday Honours he was awarded the MBE for his services to Horology. He is taking a close interest in Grignion's clock which hangs in the RSA's 'Great Room'. When the eminent clockmaker and active member of the Society of Arts, Thomas Grignion presented the clock in 1760 he described it as 'more elaborate and correct than common'. This clock and the 'President's Chair' designed by William Chambers represent the two oldest surviving items in the RSA's historic collection. We look forward to a paper from Jonathan Betts on the Society's interest in clocks and clock making following the completion of his year as Master of the Clockmakers.

## **AMBROSE HEAL RDI & JOAN'S CHAIR**

The V&A Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green have recently acquired a chair designed by Ambrose Heal and built by Heal & Son. Dating from 1901 this Arts & Crafts piece was commissioned by Joseph Angus for his five year old daughter Joan. Made from oak this chair's high back allows the inlay work to still be visible when the child is sitting on it. The inlay design of winged cherubs, lily and rose motifs are said to be by Joan's older sister Christine, who was the wife of the artist Walker Sickert. Examples of high quality design for children are very rare and this chair will form part of the museum's permanent display.

Sir Ambrose Heal was elected to the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry in 1939 and sixty years ago he attended Buckingham Palace so that the RSA President HRH the Duke of Edinburgh could present him with the Albert Medal 'for his services to industrial design'.



*Joan's chair, Ambrose Heal, England, 1901 © Victoria and Albert Museum*

## **OBITUARY**

### **SIR CHRISTOPHER CHATAWAY (1931-2014)**

Although better known as a middle and long distance runner who helped Sir Roger Bannister become the first man to break the four-minute mile it was his career as a politician that brought him into contact with the RSA. In 1963 as Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the Department of Education and Science he opened the exhibition of prize winning and commended entries for the RSA's Industrial Art Bursaries Competition. In his opening address Mr Chataway remarked that 'the Society has constantly sought to develop co-operation between artists, designers and manufacturers, and that is no less important an objective today than it was at the outset of the industrial revolution'. He continued that it was 'encouraging to learn that no less than 71 art schools were represented among the 880 entrants' and that the wide interest coupled with the 'very high standards of assessment by the distinguished members of the jury, ensure that this effort of the RSA is of the utmost benefit in stimulating further the development of design creativity.'



Chataway expressed the importance of a coherent policy for telecommunications at the 1981 lecture by Sir Peter Carey on 'Telematics – the impact industry' and eight years later he took part, as Chairman of LBC, in the debate on 'The Future of UK Radio: For Better or Worse?' was part of the RSA's consultation evening regarding critical issues contained in a recent White Paper on national, local and community radio.

### **MARSHALL MEEK, CBE, RDI (1925-2013)**

Following a short illness Marshall Meek died in August 2013 at the age of 88. He was one of Britain's leading naval architects and an important innovator of ship design. His first ship as Chief Naval Architect for Blue Funnel was the *Centaur* custom-built for carrying 200 passengers, 5,000 sheep and 700 cattle, as well as general cargo, on the Western Australia-Straits service. He remained proud of this vessel throughout his life. Meek went on to design the first ocean-going container ship. He had to go back to basics in developing this new vessel. How big should they be? What was the optimum speed of such speeds? How easily would conventional cargoes go into standard-size containers? They would need new port facilities and cranes and no single company could afford the cost so a consortium was formed which led to the designer's close involvement in the decision-making process. His *Encounter Bay* container ship entered service in 1968 and was still sailing thirty years later. Meek also designed the larger *Liverpool Bay* class containers.



Elected RDI in 1986 and appointed Master of the Faculty in 1997 Meek spoke about his experience as a Naval Architect in his Master's Address, 'They that go down to the sea in ships' published in the *RSA Journal*. He reflected that 'the only limit to the size of our ships was the dimensions of the Panama Canal locks'. He also served as President of the



Royal Institution of Naval Architects from 1996. Founded in 1860 during a meeting at the (Royal) Society of Arts with a former Secretary of the Society, John Scott Russell, among its founding members the Institute continued to hold its meetings at John Adam Street



## ANNIVERSARIES

2014 marks the **25<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the **World Wide Web** by Sir Tim Berners Lee, RDI, FRSA. In 2002 he was awarded the RSA's most prestigious award, the Albert Medal 'for his outstanding contribution to the World Wide Web', and seven years later he was elected to the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry. In 2004 he was knighted for his pioneering work. He has received world acclaim for his invention which he has given freely - as he tweeted at the 2012 Olympic Games - 'This is for everyone'.

## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR THE SESSION 2014-2015 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; Paul Leonard, FLS; Jonathan Rollason, FRSA; Susan Bennett, MA, FRSA (Honorary Secretary, Editor and Treasurer)