



# THE WILLIAM SHIPLEY GROUP FOR RSA HISTORY

Newsletter 41: 2014

## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

**28 June 2014** at 2.30pm. **Caleb Whitefoord – The Man Who Made Peace with America** by Dr David Allan, FSA, Honorary President, WSG for RSA History. Twickenham Library, Garfield Road, Twickenham TW1 3JT. Admission £2 at door.

Wine Merchant, Diplomat and Art Patron Caleb Whitefoord FRS. FSA (1734-1810) was elected a member of the Society of Arts in 1762 on the proposal of his next-door neighbour and friend, Benjamin Franklin. He was active in the Society's affairs serving first as a committee member then as chairman. In recognition of his long service in the Society's affairs he was elected Vice-President in 1800. This talk will consider the role Whitefoord played in the peace negotiations between Great Britain and America.

**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' will consider some of the RSA's educational concerns over the centuries. Speakers include Dr David Allan, 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.

**25 June 2014** at 7pm. The first meeting of the **Friends of the Union Chain Bridge** is being held at Paxton House, near Berwick-upon-Tweed. This charity has been set up to support, conserve, protect and enhance the bridge and its immediate environment for public benefit. Membership is £5 and the sums raised will go towards commemorating the bicentenary of the bridge in 2020. This charity aims to promote the historical and engineering importance of this innovation in iron manufacturing which enabled the engineer,



Captain Samuel Brown RN (1776-1852), to design the first suspension bridge to carry vehicular traffic. In 1861 Lady Brown bequeathed the painting of the Union Bridge by Alexander Nasmyth, 1819 which her late husband, a member of the Society of Arts, had commissioned so that he could see how it would sit in the landscape. In 2003 the Adam designed Paxton House, which can be seen on the skyline in the centre of the painting, acquired the painting from the RSA.

## **2014 CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS**

WSG members met at the Medical Society of London on 19 March 2014 to hear the Chairman's Address following the group's 10<sup>th</sup> AGM. Dr Nicholas Cambridge spoke on the subject of **Coffee Houses, Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth Century London** and the role they played in furthering knowledge of new developments, particularly in the medical world.

Dr Cambridge focused his talk on the various networks of John Coakley Lettsom, founder of the Medical Society of London in 1773, and a member of the Society of Arts. In his 1900 address to the Society of Arts Sir John Evans stated that the Royal Society, the Society of Antiquaries and the Society of Arts figured as 'the trio from which nearly all the numerous learned societies of the present day have sprung by what may be regarded as a natural process of evolution'.

Dr Cambridge also made reference to many household names including Benjamin Franklin, Joseph Priestley, Samuel Johnson and James Boswell.

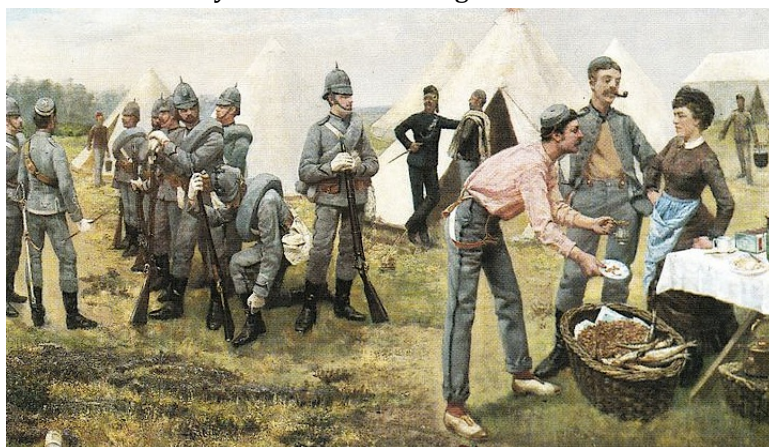
## **EXHIBITIONS**

### ***The Artists Rifles: From Pre-Raphaelites to Passchendaele.***

Southampton City Art Gallery, Civic Centre Road, Southampton SO14 4LP, 4 April – 28 June 2014; The Sainsbury Gallery at Willis Museum, Lesser Market, Basingstoke RG21 7QD, 5 July-27 September 2014; and The Gallery at Gosport Discovery Centre, High Street, Gosport, Hampshire PO12 1BT, 4 October -27 December 2014.

Former cavalry and TA officer, paint and colour expert and WSG member, Patrick Baty, FRSA, has curated this exhibition of some sixty works by members of the volunteer regiment known as the Artists Rifles.

Established in 1860 in response to a perceived threat of a French invasion. With its headquarters in Burlington House, behind the Royal Academy, musicians, architects, actors, authors and intellectuals joined painters and sculptors to take part in drill practice twice daily, with additional training and musketry practice on Wimbledon Common and Hampstead Heath. The Artists Rifles won more gallantry medals than any other regiment. Five past Presidents of the Royal Academy belonged to the regiment, and its members, include Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, Ford Madox Brown, Edward Burne Jones, John Everett Millais, and later members include Paul Nash, the painter of desolate battlefields, poets Wilfred Owen and Edward Thomas, the cartoonist Fougasse, and poster artist Tom Purvis. John Ruskin was proud to be an honorary member of the regiment. Their number included members and prize winners



Godfred Merry, *The Artists Rifles at Camp 1884*. National Army Museum



Cap badge

of the Society of Arts. The work on display spans over 80 years of membership of the regiment, looking at the artists, the art they produced and the regiment itself, and includes loans from the Imperial War Museum, British Council Collection, the Royal Academy, the Arts Council and many other regional and national institutions. After the Second World War the regiment was incorporated in the SAS.





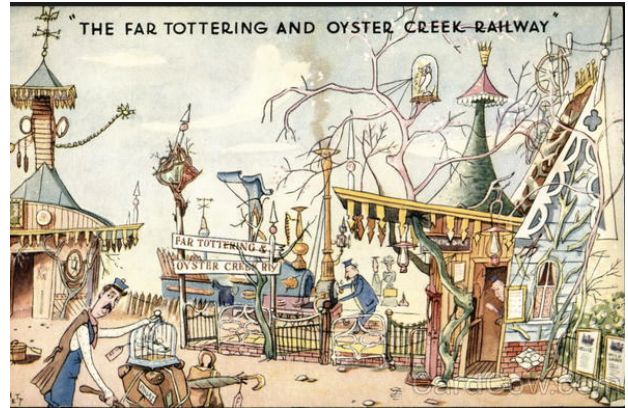
Bernard Lens, *George I*, c.1714

***The First Georgians: Art & Monarchy 1714-1760.*** The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London SW1A 1AA. 11 April -12 October 2014.

To mark the 300th anniversary of the beginning of the Georgian era, *The First Georgians: Art and Monarchy 1714-1760* explores royal patronage and taste in the reigns of George I and George II as a product of a time when Britain was the world's most liberal, commercial and modern society. It brings together over 300 works in the Royal Collection from royal residences across the UK.

***Marvellous Machines: The Wonderful World of Rowland Emmett.*** Gas Hall, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3DH. 10 May – 21 September 2014

Rowland Emmett (1906-1990) was educated at Waverley Grammar School, Birmingham. He excelled in drawing, caricaturing his teachers, vehicles and machinery so it is most appropriate that the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery have put on this biggest ever display of Emmett's work. His quirky moving machines, or automata, include items from the film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, fantastical flying machines and a bicycle for cycling across the moon.



Emmett exhibited three works in the RSA's Exhibition of Humorous Art held in its house in John Adam Street in 1949 and opened by the Society's President HRH Princess Elizabeth (later HM The Queen). His 'Far Tottering and Oyster Creek Branch Railway', at the Battersea Pleasure Gardens, carried over two million passengers during the Festival of Britain in 1951.



***Kenneth Clark – Looking for Civilisation.*** Tate Britain, Millbank, London, SW1P 4RG. 20 May to 10 August 2014. Admission £11 or Concession £9.50

This exhibition examines the influence and impact of art historian, patron and collector, public servant and broadcaster Kenneth Clark (1903-1983) in bringing art to a more popular audience. The story of Clark's life is told through his diverse and cherished art collection, including works by his favoured artists from the Bloomsbury Group, Euston Road School, Henry Moore, Victor Pasmore, John Piper and Graham Sutherland. Clarke instigated the War Artists Advisory Committee to employ artists to record the war which has given us iconic works such as Moore's 'Shelter Drawings'. In 1947 the RSA awarded Clark a Silver Medal for his lecture on 'International Gothic and Renaissance Painting'. Eleven years later he returned to the RSA's 'Great Room' to speak about the Italian Renaissance artist 'Andrea Mantegna'. He chaired Howard Robertson's 'Architecture 1919-1939' and described the lecturer as 'one of those rare people who are able to do a thing and also to talk about it'. Clark also contributed, as Director of Film Division, Ministry of Information, to



the discussion following Oliver Bell's talk on 'Wartime Uses of the Film' saying that 'Mr Bell had described exactly the kind of programme and policy that we are trying to carry out'.

**British Folk Art.** Tate Britain, Millbank, London, SW1P 4RG. 10 June to 31 August 2014. Admission £14.50 or Concession £12.50

As folk art has often been neglected Tate Britain has gathered together a treasure trove of folk art objects, from a single three foot leather boot to an intricate sculpture of a cockerel made out of mutton bones by French POWs during the Napoleonic wars; from toby jugs to the naïve work of self taught artists. The pieces chosen by the curators suggest an individual imagination at play and the show exemplifies the energy, variety and idiosyncrasy of British Folk Art. Mary Linwood, whose embroidered pictures feature in the exhibition, was awarded a silver medal by the Society in 1786 for 'submitting...three pieces of needlework, representing a hare, still life and a head of King Lear'. Her embroidered pictures, which she exhibited at the Hanover Square Rooms from 1798, were considered one of the chief sights of London.



### **REDISCOVERED GAINSBOROUGH PORTRAIT OF AN EARLY MEMBER**



Thomas Gainsborough, *Joseph Gape*

©St Albans Museum

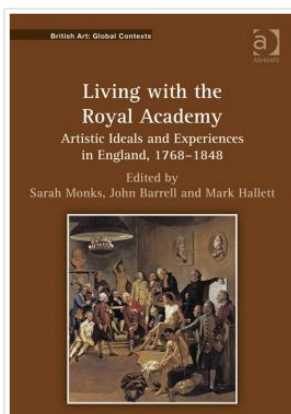
Earlier this year Philip Mould and Bendor Grosvenor, of BBC's 'Fake or Fortune' programme, identified this portrait of Joseph Gape (1720-1801) at St Albans Museum as the work of Thomas Gainsborough. Gape, who served as Mayor of St Albans on three separate occasions, and a councillor for more than 50 years, was elected a member of the Society of Arts in 1756. At least sixteen members of the Gape family have held the post of Mayor at various times and as considerable land owners, thanks to a fortune based on the tanning trade, it is not surprising to find that Gainsborough painted this portrait. A sticking point in the identification of the artist was the oval shape as Gainsborough never used this format. However, during investigation it was discovered that this portrait of Gape had originally been painted on a rectangular canvas. Although Gainsborough was never a member of the Society or Arts he did paint the portrait of its first President, Lord Folkestone, which can be seen in the Great Room today.

### **ZANDRA RHODES RDI**

British fashion designer and RDI Zandra Rhodes was made a Dame in the Queen's recent Birthday Honours, in recognition of her work across the fashion and textile industries, and to her work supporting breast cancer and stroke charities. Part of the wave of British designers who brought London to the forefront of the international fashion scene in the mid-1960s she was elected to the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry in 1976. She founded the Fashion and Textile Museum in London, dedicated to showcasing the work of fashion and textile designers, in 2003



## BOOK REVIEWS



**John Barrell, ed, *Living with the Royal Academy. Artistic Ideals and Experiences in England, 1768-1848*. London: Ashgate (2013) £65**

This collection of essays considers the rôle of the Academy as a reference point around which artists developed their careers. Personal rivalries were of course significant and the book covers the period in which Turner's name was pre-eminent.

Turner was, of course, an early prize winner of the Society of Arts as were Lawrence, Landseer, Millais and Frith. An even earlier link was Mary Moser, a foundation member of the Academy and a Society prize winner in 1758. She lived on until 1819 and in her later years attended a number of the Academy's meetings in person.

Frith, who won his first Society of Arts' medal in 1836 became ARA in 1845 and was elected a full Academician in 1853 filling the vacancy caused by the death of Turner. Such an upward climb in the artist's profession, so vividly recorded in Frith's own reminiscences, forms an essential element in the social analysis which is the theme of John Barrell's invaluable collection. The book has a hundred and seventy-eight illustrations, a hundred and sixty six being in colour.

*David G.C. Allan*



**Lesley Jackson, *Modern British Furniture. Design since 1945*. London: V&A Publishing, 2013. ISBN 978-1851777594. £40**

In this authoritative account on modern British furniture Lesley Jackson brings her focus on design ingenuity. She looks at the most inventive British designers and companies from 1945 to the present-day. The first section looks at post-war design pioneers 1945-60, then furniture in the space age, 1960-80 and she concludes with a section looking at the global impact of British furniture. This well illustrated and informative account includes many members of the Faculty of Royal Designers for Industry (RDI): Gordon Russell, Dick Russell,

Robert Heritage, Ron Carter, Geoffrey Harcourt, Ernest Race, Robin Day, Ron Arad, Jasper Morrison, Rodney Kinsman, Terence Conran, Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby. Jackson also highlights the influence of foreign born designers who have adopted the UK as their base and injected their influence into British furniture design.

## OBITUARY

### **JOHN FREDERICK PHYSICK (1923-2013)**

In his latter years, John was a revered presence in various cultural bodies where his eminence as an expert on English architecture and sculpture was recognised. At various times he was President of the Church Monuments Society, Vice-President of the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association, on the committee of management of the *Gunnis Dictionary of British Sculptors*, chairman of the Monuments Sub-Committee of the Council for the Care of Churches, on the church advisory committee of the diocese of Rochester (1964-1991), on advisory committees for the cathedrals of Rochester, Canterbury and Guildford, and on the Westminster Abbey Architectural Advisory Panel. He was awarded an Honorary degree of DLitt by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1996 and elected a Fellow of the RSA in 1984.





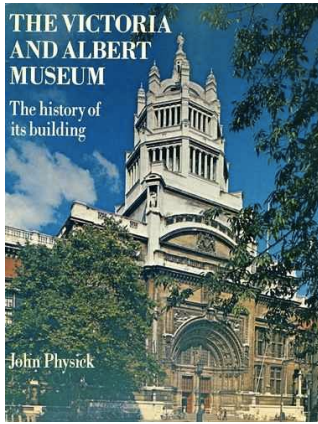
He attended Battersea Grammar School. When World War II broke out he left school and volunteered for the Navy and served in the Mediterranean. He missed out on a university education and so in peacetime, he was unsure what direction to take. John obtained the position of Museum Assistant, the basic entry level for those without social or academic prestige, at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1948. From here onwards his life was devoted to this institution (though he did continue his links with the services through volunteer reserve organisations).

The origins of the V&A were in an educational agency called the Department of Science and Art. Charged with fostering vocational education, this had little to do with the universities. So curators at the South Kensington Museum (as it was then called) usually learned on the job. By the early twentieth century most of the senior curators were Oxbridge graduates. It nonetheless remained possible for non-graduates to rise through the ranks, despite a structural division in the staff between upper and lower ranks. In Civil Service terms (and the V&A was part of the Civil Service up to 1983) the division was between “administrative” and “executive” grades. The careers of John, and a very few others, showed that it was still possible after World War II for non-graduates to rise by merit from the bottom to the top. The secret of John’s success lay in his efficiency – which was obvious when you met him –, and in his unusual adaptability – which was often concealed behind an old-fashioned conservative manner.

John started work in the Department of Engraving, Illustration and Design, achieving promotion in 1949 to a post as Research Assistant in the Library, from which he transferred back to EID in 1950. His job here was to help catalogue the collections. He recalled how the chief cataloguer would spend many hours discussing the philosophical intricacies of cataloguing with advisers, to the extent that a considerable backlog built up. When the chief cataloguer fell ill, a new head of department, Graham Reynolds, gave John the task of eliminating the backlog, which he speedily did, thus establishing a reputation as man who got things done. He also built up scholarly expertise, seizing the opportunities which a great learned institution like the V&A can offer: his catalogue of the V&A’s holdings of *The Engraved Work of Eric Gill* was published by the museum in 1963, publication being a privilege not often accorded then to junior members of staff.

John broke through the invisible Civil Service barrier between executive and administrative grades in 1967, when he was promoted to Assistant Keeper in the Department of Public Relations. The V&A was unusual in those days in having a public relations department which was run by the visionary and eccentric Charles Gibbs-Smith, who, while an intensely inspirational leader, needed efficient staff to function. Most of the V&A’s curatorial departments operated almost as closed societies, dedicated to their own discipline and little inclined to co-operate with others. The Public Relations department, however, worked with everyone, and spoke for the whole museum. So here John established himself as a museum-wide influence, close to the centres of power. It was widely expected that he would be Gibbs-Smith’s successor, but the Director, John Pope-Hennessy, brought in a younger outsider and sidelined John. John was mortified by this reverse, but did not allow it to inhibit his adaptability and efficiency. He was for a time in charge of Museum Services, overseeing the work of printers, joiners, and photographers, thus consolidating a web of respect and friendship at all levels in the museum. He was soon back at the centre as an assistant to the Director, from which he rose to become Deputy Director.

The fact that he was a necessary support to two very different Directors speaks volumes for his intelligence and adaptability. John Pope-Hennessy was a domineering personality, with an awesome mastery of traditional art history; Roy Strong, his successor, was more impulsive and emotional, with a volatile appreciation of the cultural trends of the moment. John served them both with clear-sighted shrewdness, exercising his influence for good when and where he could, and never painting himself into corners. Although many saw him as a representative of traditional museum values (his rather reserved and stately manner might have encouraged this), he well understood that the institution must change to survive, and in many tactful manoeuvres eased its transition into a new world.



Although John's career was chiefly in administration, he took care to establish and maintain an academic reputation, especially in the fields of architectural drawings and English sculpture. He was much concerned with the architecture of the V&A's own building. While the V&A was part of the Civil Service (until 1983), the building was run by the Department of the Environment, and John, as the museum's liaison with the DOE, was in a position to smooth another transition. The DOE was rather unsympathetic to Victorian architecture (in Pope-Hennessy's time covering the mosaic floors with linoleum), but Roy Strong set about restoring the Victorian architecture, with John urging him on. John's book on the V&A building was published in 1982, and its initial more detailed version earned him a PhD from the Royal College of Art. He was instrumental in setting up a joint MA course with the RCA in the history of the decorative arts, which sparked off an intellectual revival in the V&A.

John was shaped by the institution which he served, but, much more than most of its servants at the time, he himself shaped the institution as it proceeded into the late twentieth century.

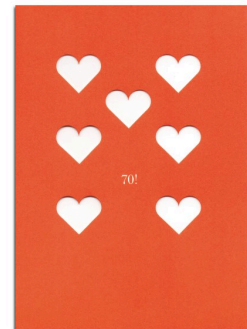
*Anthony Burton  
former V&A Curator*



#### **MASSIMO VIGNELLI HonRDI (1931-2014)**

Italian born Massimo Vignelli's designs have been part of everyday life in America for more than four decades. His designs include New York City subway signs, Bloomingdale's 'brown bag', the original American Airlines logo and the interior of Saint Peter's Church in Manhattan. He played a key role in the introduction of the typeface **Helvetica** to the US. His ethos was 'if you can design one thing, you can design everything'.

Massimo and his wife/business partner Lelia have donated their entire archive of graphic design, furniture and objects to the Vignelli Center for Design Studies for use in fostering studies relating to Modernist design. Among his numerous awards is his appointment as an Honorary RDI in 1996. When asked by Mike Dempsey, Master of the Faculty to design a postcard to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RDIs Massimo said 'I've got it. I know what I am going to do' and he produced this simple and direct design.



#### **ANNIVERSARIES**



**2014** marks the **250<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of Hogarth's death, at the age of 66, on 25 October 1764. A special commemoration with music and readings at St Nicholas Church, Chiswick (where Hogarth and his relatives are buried) will be held on Saturday 25 October 2014, marking Hogarth's last day in Chiswick. He had been re-working his copper plate of *The Bench*, which he first published in 1758.

Hogarth was an early member of the Society of Arts. The William Hogarth Trust is arranging a series of events and exhibitions during this anniversary year and they will announce details as they become available.

(<http://williamhogarthtrust.org.uk/>)

**2014** marks the **90<sup>th</sup>** anniversary of the foundation of the RSA's Student Design Awards in 1924. On 12 August of that year HM Queen Mary visited John Adam Street to view an exhibition of selected works submitted for the competition. She took great interest in the display and expressed her desire to purchase one of the designs. Rowland Hilder (1905-1993) was considered by the judges to be a very promising young artist and they awarded him the RSA's first Cadbury Travelling Scholarship of £50 and the Owen Jones Medal for his poster, illustration for the press and pictorial design for a box. He fulfilled that promise becoming an important marine and landscape artist and has been called the 'Turner of his generation'



Rowland Hilder, *A Following Breeze*  
©Francis Iles Galleries

The RSA is marking this anniversary with a series of events looking at how design can positively impact the world. Contact RSA for further information.

*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)