

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



The reopening of the splendidly restored Usher Gallery has been the high point of our year. The Usher Gallery now regains its title as the County's foremost art gallery and it is to the credit of Lincolnshire County Council that it has enabled this important work despite financial restrictions. Jeremy Webster and the rest of the staff of the Heritage service are to be congratulated on this notable achievement.

We are also delighted that Museum of Lincolnshire Life has continued to attract more visitors since the introduction of free admission. The Friends are proud to have been able to support them both.

The Friends of Lincoln Libraries Museum & Gallery was inaugurated at a meeting on 27th May 1971. Circumstances over the years have changed our name but we have retained our objectives:-

- To promote the use and enjoyment of the Museums and Gallery.
- To encourage the appreciation of the collections by arranging lectures, meetings, discussions and visits.
- To raise money by subscriptions and by the events we arrange, thereby...
- To assist the Museums and Gallery in acquiring, conserving, displaying and publicising their collections.

We have to thank my predecessors, Chairmen Mr. Sutcliffe, Mr. Drury, Mrs. Collinwood, Norrie Summerville-Jacklin, Tim Wheeldon, David Freeman and their committees for navigating the Friends; and I would like to thank the present committee for their continued support.

What of the future? We want to attract new members so that we can continue to support the museums and gallery. Our broad range of interests enables us explore the interconnections between archeology, artefacts and fine art. In 2009 we collaborated with the Art Fund by publicising a talk by the curator of Dumfries House and last year we visited there during our Glasgow holiday. Last year we also collaborated with SLHA in presenting "Lincolnshire's Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions"; talks on the development of industry and on the depiction of the county. As a result of these collaborative events we are pleased to have attracted a number of new members; we will continue to liaise with other local heritage groups to broaden the appeal of our events; wider and deeper.

This year the Friends of Bristol Museum and Gallery entertained us during our Bristol weekend. More recently we were invited by Friends groups to previews at York Art Gallery and at The Ferens, in Hull. During the coming year we will be actively seeking to liaise with other Friends groups in the region to participate in each other's events.

The launch of our website www.lincolnmuseums.org.uk will "raise our profile", tell a wider audience about our future events and attract more new members. Our future programme will include talks and guided visits relating to important collections at our museums to raise awareness of their significance and we hope to sponsor informative leaflets about aspects of those collections to guide future visitors.

We hope that you will find lots of interest in our programme this year and that you will be joining us in celebrating our 40th Anniversary.

Hugh Cooke, Chairman

USHER EXHIBITION



Along with opening its doors to the public on the 1st of October, after a year's closure, the Usher Gallery was able to proudly play host to the most important contemporary portrait exhibition in Europe. The BP Portrait Award 2010 had finally come to Lincoln; after years of cajoling and pestering the National Portrait Gallery succumbed to our wishes. Although only open for 6 weeks at the Usher Gallery, the exhibition managed to draw in over 6,000 visits, making it one of the most successful exhibitions to date.



Schools, colleges and the public alike flocked to see this wondrous display of contemporary painting.

The exhibition is an international competition held annually at the National Portrait Gallery, which this year attracted over 2,177 entries. Each painting is judged by the panel in the flesh and not from photographs, which I think is part of its reason for being so successful. The exhibition usually does a short tour of venues outside of London.

To accommodate the show, which is normally held in just one room at the National Portrait Gallery, we extended the two temporary galleries to three adding much needed space. The variety and scale of work meant that all three gallery spaces were filled. The show extended into the former 'DeWint' room with its rotunda seating and new window, it was perhaps this room that quickly became the public favourite.

As with all open submission exhibitions there was a lot of variety from photo-realistic styles to a more painterly and expressive handling of paint. Each person has their own favourite, which again is an ingredient for the success and popularity of this exhibition wherever it goes. For me, it was the more expressive use of paint that caught my eye, in particular the work by Paul Benney, a portrait of Paul Getty III in his wheelchair. What was apparent in all the paintings was a level of skill and craftsmanship which I think for many people restored their faith in the contemporary artist. Portraiture is and will remain an important genre for artists, it is really only the skill of an artist that can really capture the essence of the human spirit so enduringly in all its forms from birth and to death (in this instance, the overall winner Daphne Todd who painted her dead mothers portrait). We look forward to working with the Portrait Gallery in the future and hope to be able take other touring shows.

Jeremy Webster

OUR TRIP TO BRISTOL

Priests in Sewers, Wine Sledges, Aircraft, Sculpture, Gardens – if you like variety in a holiday, come with the Friends! In September we visited Bristol, taking in Baddesley Clinton on the way and Hanbury Hall on the way back. How did it go? This is what some of us wrote:-

Undoubtedly Bristol is one of the great cities of Europe. It has a unique spirit that combines the classic with the contemporary whilst reflecting its heritage. In this city the past lives in the future. "Ship Safe and Bristol Blue" motto of the Bristolians.
Liz Morgan

A jam-packed weekend with the friends! It started with priests hiding in sewers at Baddesley Clinton and culminated with a visit to the SS Great Britain. In between we learnt much about Bristol during a variety of excellent tours and guided walks.
Lesley and David Kennedy

There was a superb display of aircraft in the Bristol museum. The Brabazon, a huge plane commissioned in 1953, was far ahead of its time. My father worked on it, and the photos brought to life his memories.
Sylvia Woodhurst

PS In case you're wondering - the priests in sewers refers to the priest's hiding place at Baddesley Clinton, which was in a sewer. YES! It DID get used!



In Bristol Cathedral there was a canopied wall tomb with effigy and offspring carved round the base. The inscription began "HERE LYETH THE BODIES OF SIR JOHN YOUNG AND DAME JOAN HIS WYFE" It ended "AND SHE DEPARTED THIS MORTAL LIFE THE 14TH OF JUNE 1603 AGED 70 YEERES." But what attracted my attention was that the effigy was of dame Joan, and her husband was nowhere to be seen. A case of feminism at the beginning of the seventeenth century?
Mary Gibson

I was particularly interested in many quirky little bits of information, such as the metal edges of Bristol pavements, designed to help the wine-bearing sledges run smoothly and avoid disturbance to the precious (liquid) cargo! I also learnt the origin of "paying on the nail" and "ship shape and Bristol fashion". It was such an enjoyable holiday - thanks to Hugh and Janet for organising such a varied and interesting programme.
Dot Willis

The highlight for me came on the last afternoon, when we visited Hanbury Hall and saw the parterre garden in warm sunshine.
Barbara Chapman

VISIT TO THE ARCHIVES

January saw the Friends visit the Lincoln Archives and Conservation for a splendid insight behind the scenes. Did you know there are six miles of brown boxes in the repository? Fortunately we didn't have to walk that far before we were shown the contents of some of them; a letter from Florence Nightingale, a church warden's record from 1700 mentioning the church cleaners, Bishop Sutton's register from 1215, beautifully written with drawn hands in the margin, pointing out errors. We saw an example of "cross-writing" – she wasn't angry, just saving paper by turning the page at right angles and writing across it. (The recipient may have been cross, because the letter was ending a relationship!)

After a refreshing cuppa, we moved on to see fossils 360million years old, church fonts, and shelves full of Roman stones, including the first milestone out of Lincoln. We had a preview of the Mantua, a beautiful court dress made in 1735 for a Lincolnshire woman. The Friends contributed towards its conservation, and we hope that before long it will be exhibited for all to see.

We then looked at armour, crossbows, swords, pots, butterflies, albino birds, a mammoth's tooth and tiny bees. What an interesting and diverse collection of papers and objects to view! A great 2 hours.

LB

THE PLOUGH, THE PLOUGHMAN, AND A PLOUGHMAN'S SUPPER

First, our Chairman, Hugh Cooke, told us about the plough-making company founded by his great-grandfather, who was a far-sighted man with a gift for recognising an opportunity and seizing it. At the 1854 Royal Agricultural Society meeting in Lincoln his wooden plough performed excellently even in competition with metal ploughs. Lincolnshire then was an agricultural county with little industry, no unions, but with the huge advantage of a railway network to move goods swiftly across the country. From small beginnings, and with an admirable advertising catalogue, the company expanded into an international market, becoming a successful firm, casting its own ploughshares and, by the 1860's employing 60 – 70 skilled and semi-skilled men. Hugh traced the decline of the business to a failure to innovate, but showed, against a backdrop of national and world events, how representative the entrepreneurial spirit of his great-grandfather had been.

Sara Basquil brought several examples of smocks from the MLL collection, and it was interesting to see how much they varied. Originally worn by wagoners, shepherds and ploughmen, they often had embroidery showing the trade of their owners, though the main purpose of the garment was utilitarian. A wide collar could keep a man's shoulders dry; the smocking across the chest could expand if his size changed. We were particularly taken with one smock which was exactly the same back and front, and could therefore be turned round if the front got dirty or worn. Eventually the smock's demise came about as it was obviously dangerous to wear in factories. But even so, some were still being worn in remote parts of the county as late as the 1920's. Not much later, as an example of the whirligig of fashion, smocking was being used in garments for the middle classes.

Brian Dawson then entertained us with some songs extolling the happy ploughman, some poetry and an extract from a farm labourer's reminiscences. George had a hard life, started work young, and was subjected to some harsh treatment, thinly disguised as a practical joke, from which, happily, he was rescued by a kind-hearted immediate superior on the farm.

Next, it was time for an ample traditional supper and the raffle. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to an excellent evening, and especially to Linda Benson, chief mover and shaker!

MG

JONATHAN BROWN'S TALK 7 OCTOBER 2010

Lincolnshire entered the agricultural revolution late, after Norfolk's crop rotation, and driven by the Napoleonic blockade and Parliamentary Enclosure of the commons. The increased demand for agricultural implements provided the opportunity for craft based companies like John Cooke's. Horse drawn vehicles were predominant until the first war; the market for road going sprung carts and lorries developed from the heavy agricultural wagons. The annual demand for ploughs in the second half of C19 was about 20,000 of which Cooke's supplied about 2,000; Ransomes, Howards and Hornsby being their biggest rivals.

The industrial revolution also came late to the county, when the possibility of the application of steam power to agriculture was pioneered and by Lincolnshire manufacturers, Tuxford, Clayton & Shuttleworth, Hornsby, Ruston and Marshall. These manufacturers dominated the market and their engines and threshing machines created the wealth of Lincoln, Grantham and Gainsborough.

The repeal of the Corn Laws and the arrival of bulk produce from North America contributed to an agricultural depression in the second half of C19 during which rural population numbers halved. The urban population doubled over that period as export markets for farm machinery flourished, employing many thousands in the engineering companies and in supporting businesses.

Jonathan Brown's well illustrated talk gave a full and fascinating introduction to the transformation of Lincolnshire by the Agricultural and Industrial revolutions.

HC

THE EXHIBITION AT THE FERENS

Sue and I were very pleased to be invited to the 'Open Exhibition' at the Ferens Art Gallery in Hull on behalf of FLMAG at the invitation of the Friends of the Ferens. We were impressed by the number of entries (around 500) spread over three large galleries including a great range of media and styles, and we found the evening entertaining and very interesting. The ample space allowed the works to be well displayed and well lit. There was a strong representative element from landscapes through to portraits both human and animal from austere to almost sentimental. We were struck by a colourful salamander on a Moorish background all worked in glass beads. There were also many works in modern styles and a large number of sculptures and ceramic.

TM

FRIENDS OF YORK ART GALLERY

John Staples, Chairman of The Friends of York Art Gallery, invited representatives of FLMAG to attend a Preview evening at York Art Gallery on 11th February 2011 for the launch of Art in Yorkshire – supported by the Tate. We assembled in the beautifully refurbished Burton Gallery and were pleased to meet John, Gaby Lees (who we met on our visit last October) and many more Friends. Janet Barnes, Director of York Museum and Gallery Trust, welcomed us all and Caroline Collier, Director of Tate National, told of the initiative which will involve Galleries across the county during the coming year. Then we went down to the main ground floor gallery where we saw David Hockney's magnificent Bigger Trees Near Warter, which will remain in York until June.

Find out more about Art in Yorkshire on www.yorkartgallery.org.uk

HC

FLMAG WEBSITE

We are working hard to complete the work on the FLMAG website at:

www.lincolnmuseums.org.uk

It has excellent pictures of the museums, lists our events, and has our newsletters, as well as an application form for membership. Please have a look at it, and make use of it, but excuse any teething problems as we feel our way.



THE AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION IN LANDSCAPE PAINTING C1740-1850

Dr Ian Waites, Senior Lecturer in Art and Design at the University of Lincoln, gave us an interesting lecture on this subject.

"The law doth punish man or woman That steals the goose from off the common, But lets the greater felon loose That steals the common from the goose."

This, in essence, was the theme of Dr Waite's examination of landscape painting at the time of the Enclosure Acts, when farm labourers lost their independence along with their age-old rights on the common land. However small, these rights had played a significant part in the labourers' ability to feed and clothe their families.

One of the first paintings we looked at was Mr and Mrs Andrews by Gainsborough. Dr Waites compared their splendid apparel with the wide, fertile acres which provided their wealth, but which was the result of intense labour – the labourers themselves deemed too insignificant to be represented.

Later, Dr Waites suggested that Constable's vision of the countryside was probably coloured by a fear of innovation, coupled with nostalgia for a bygone, idyllic way of life, which in reality existed only in his imagination. The lives of those who worked the land were nasty, brutish and short.

Towards the middle of the 19th century the countryside began to be seen not so much as a place of toil and a source of wealth but also a place of recreation and amusement for a new breed – the middle classes, who had in a small way taken advantage of the Enclosure Acts to expand their land and property holdings. Their new relative financial ease meant also that there was a wider market for the works of artists such as Constable.

This was an informative and entertaining look at the period, which we very much enjoyed.

LOOKING AHEAD

A brief look at some of the events planned for the Spring and Summer. In this 40th Anniversary year the Committee wanted to look more closely at our own County, home to many superb artists and craftsmen, and some unique locations.

Wednesday 13th April at 1.30pm. Our AGM.

After the business meeting, Jeremy Webster will talk about forthcoming exhibitions at the Usher Gallery.

20th to 25th May – Holiday in Paris.

Mid-June (date tba) A visit to the Restoration and Conservation departments at the Lincoln School of Art.

Saturday 9th July. (NB this IS a SATURDAY visit) we shall be visiting Barton on Humber, a small town with a long history, and a community who are proud of it. Our visit will include the Ropewalk, the Wilderspin school, a Saxon church, and on the way home, the best preserved Abbey Gatehouse in the country. This will be a great opportunity to explore a place that we frequently pass and wonder about!

Saturday 6th August. Our Garden Party at Lindum House. Come and have fun, and meet your friends over a cup of tea in a beautiful garden.

August – September. The Usher Gallery will be displaying the purchases supported by the Friends over 40 years. We also hope that this will include a new and exciting exhibition which is still in the pipeline. Fingers crossed!

Thursday 25th August. We visit Spalding, heart of the fens, a unique area of England, and make the acquaintance of the Gentleman's Society.

16 -19 September. A long weekend in London.

JAZZ NIGHT

February means just one thing for the Friends – JAZZ NIGHT! We rolled up eagerly, most of us in our places long before the official starting time of 7pm, and we were not disappointed.

New Orleans Heat – 5 this year, not just 4 as previously – blew, strummed and sang their hearts out. Georgia Brown, Basin Street Blues, Shine – all the old favourites were there. Great stuff! As usual, we were regaled with delicious food and wine – produced by a team of experts, and served with charm and grace. And we talked and laughed, the Museum's walls echoing with the happy sounds of people having a splendid time. What an evening!

Thank you so much to Inge and her wonderful team, who surprise and delight us every year.



FUTURE EVENTS AT THE MLL

9th May – 31 August 2011

This is Lincolnshire
An exhibition of photographs by the RB camera club

12th September – 18th December 2011

An exhibition to celebrate 150 years of the Lincolnshire Co-operative Society.

EVENTS – on specified days only
(Ring 01522 528448 for details)

11th – 15th April

Spring In History
Fun for all the family exploring Spring through the Museum and its fascinating collections.

10th and 11th September 2011

Victorian Lincolnshire
A living history event.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

Many thanks to everyone who has sent in their membership subs promptly – it makes my job so much easier. We are no longer sending out membership cards – as the museums and gallery are free to all it seemed pointless. However, I will send a reminder to those few who have not yet renewed. We really value all our Friends, and we don't want to lose anyone.

WELCOME TO THESE NEW FRIENDS, WHO HAVE JOINED US DURING THE PAST YEAR

Mrs Lesley Lusher
Miss Linda Richardson
Miss S B Maskell
Miss F Wallace
Mr & Mrs L Nicholas
Miss Janet Collins
Alan and Margaret Campion
Philip and Christine Doorbar
Miss Cassandra Wilkinson
Linda Wells
Liz and Steve Diver
Lilian and Keith Baker
Ian Smart
Jane and Morris Caplan
Linda and Roger Honey
Roger Ellis