

BAFM

British Association of Friends of Museums
Journal

Issue 132 / Spring - Summer 2024

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Decorative arts section

A new approach to
volunteering with the
London Transport
Museum



LORD CORMACK

It was very good to be able to attend some of the Conference in Doncaster last autumn and I do warmly congratulate Dave Adgar on all the arrangements he made for a very stimulating series of sessions in the most remarkable and impressive of settings. It was my first visit to the Mansion House and it more than came up to expectations.

What has become more and more apparent to me, even since I accepted the honour of becoming President of our Association, is the absolutely crucial role played by volunteers in the heritage world. I live in the remarkable cathedral city of Lincoln, and indeed as I write this, I am looking towards the Judgement Porch of what I consider to be the most magnificent of our great English cathedrals. But then I would, wouldn't I? What is not in question is that it is in the first division of English Cathedrals and what is equally indisputable is the fact that without the army of willing volunteers and guides it would, of course, be open for worship, but it could not possibly cater for the large number of visitors we have throughout the year. They give of their time and their talents and expertise and there is a fine system of training for new guides which ensures a steady flow of additions to their number. So it is in every cathedral in the country, in every country house and in all of our provincial museums. To every one of you



reading this short piece I offer my heartfelt thanks and much look forward to meeting more of you at the Conference planned for Wisbech in the coming autumn.

With warmest good wishes to you all,

Patrick Cormack

Sad News of the Death of our President

I was very saddened to learn of the passing of Lord Cormack, the President of BAFM, on the 24th February. Although he had only been with us a short time, his energy and wisdom reflected the leading role he had played in the struggle to preserve and enhance our cultural heritage. Truly a man of the people, whose values reflected his deep Christian faith.

Dave Adgar Journal Editor





On the Sunday following our Doncaster Conference I had the long drive to Stranraer to embark on the ferry back to Northern Ireland. It gave me plenty of time to reflect on the conference and the week I had spent in and about Doncaster.

I thought of what I most enjoyed and what could be improved. I had had a warm welcome and met new people and was especially pleased with how well our new President had so quickly become an integral part of our family of Friends. I had enjoyed our speakers, especially learning about how a love of fossils and the support and involvement of Friends lead to an important and rewarding career as a scientist. Like teachers, our work with our Friends groups can lead to great and unexpected long-term results. It suggests that the work we do for our Friends groups cannot always be measured simply in things like funds raised or hours volunteered.

The speaker my mind kept returning to was Halina Kasperowicz of the Red House, Yorkshire. With its connections with John Wesley and Charlotte Brontë, the Red House sounded like a place of interest. Like most conference talks hers was to be one of success and achievement; how a local Friends group had helped to save an important site of our cultural history. It was not be, as the local Council, under great financial stress, has decided to sell the property. The Friends of the Red House have been given to the end of May to come up with a business plan and find funding. It is a near insurmountable obstacle and all their many years of work may come to naught, but they will continue to persevere. So why did I find her talk so inspiring? It was that sense of quiet determined perseverance that our culture and history are worth fighting for. No matter how many obstacles and failures we endure, with Friends like Halina Kasperowicz we are in good hands. If you want to know more about Red House or want to help with Halina's and her group's work, you can contact her at hjk.rhyht@gmail.com.

On my drive to Scotland, I stopped at Hadrian's Wall and before doing so I visited Durham, a place I have heard about for 25 years as it is my wife's alma mater. I visited her college and was just in time for Choral Evensong. If ever there is a place in England that is sacred, sitting in the quire stalls of this great cathedral, participating in the Holy service enveloped by beautiful music voiced so exquisitely, this was it. It was a peaceful way to end an uplifting week spent with Friends.

Daniel Calley / Chairman

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Our cover image

The Wisbech & Fenland Museum



Membership of BAFM



Friends Group

Under 100 Members	£60
101 – 500 Members	£100
501– 1,000 Members	£130
1,000+ Members	£200
Individuals	£30
Corporate/Institutional	£100
Individual Membership	£30
Individual Membership (Under 25)	£15

For more information about Membership and our group insurance scheme, please contact our Administrator *Jayne Selwood* at jayneselwood@hotmail.co.uk tel 01179777435

50th Anniversary Conference; Doncaster Mansion House

During the afternoon of 29th September, delegates attending the Annual Conference began arriving in Doncaster. That afternoon, tours of both the art collection and the railway heritage centre was delivered, open to early arrival delegates and members of The Friends of Doncaster Museum. The response was very pleasing, with a number of visitors being surprised by the quality of both collections.

'I was lucky enough to be able to show some of the delegates around our wonderful art collection on Friday afternoon, and there were people there from as far afield as Southampton, Maidstone, Dundee and Northern Ireland, all of whom were visiting Doncaster for the first time, but all of whom were impressed with the collections and facilities at the Danum Gallery, Library and Museum.' Neil McGregor Collections and Exhibitions Officer (Heritage Doncaster)

Whilst the tour of the art collection was taking place, twenty-four delegates and members of the Friends of Doncaster Museums took part in the 'Talk and Tour' led by Chris Barron

of the Grammar School Collection.

The day of the Conference began with a breakfast buffet followed by the opening by Mayor Ros Jones and Damian Allan (Chief Executive of City of Doncaster Council) outlined the purpose of the Conference, with Damian Allan outlining the objectives which have prompted the Community Regeneration aspects of the plan and design of cultural buildings in the town centre. The presentation by the CEO was very well received and BAFM have received several requests for copies of his text.



Damian Allen (CEO of the City of Doncaster Council) explaining his vision for culture.



The Gala Dinner followed the Conference in the palatial surroundings of the Mansion House

‘... I was very impressed by the commitment of the city and its councillors to supporting the conference. I was particularly impressed by Damien Allen’s welcome and his enthusiasm for culture and creativity and his understanding of the role that the arts can play in regenerating and building a city, and in improving health and wellbeing.’
Delegate from The Friends of Birmingham Museums

The following talk by Dr Dean Lomax emphasised the role that museums in general, and Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery in particular, had had a transformative effect on his career. After a disappointing educational experience, the volunteering role he completed at the museum, together with his input with The Friends Group made a huge difference to his career and led to him becoming a Research Fellow at Bristol University and Visiting Tutor at Manchester University. Dean is now recognised worldwide as the expert on ichthyosaurs, a kind of marine reptile from the Age of the Dinosaurs. The thrust of the talk was the way in which museums can provide alternative pathways to educational achievement as well as supplementing the mainstream of educational pathways.

Professor Joann Fletcher was the second keynote

speaker; Joann was born in Barnsley and came from a disadvantaged community. Despite this, she has become a significant, nationally important Egyptologist. She emphasised the way that museums can co-operate with each other to access ‘forgotten’ corners of their collection to design exhibitions which can attract large numbers of visitors. She also made the case that examining the context in which objects were collected could be made a part of a local studies project, an integral part of the National Curriculum. Both Dean and Joann were well received. As one delegate commented,

‘The keynote speakers were excellent and inspiring. There was a clear link between their presentations and the theme of the conference. Delegate from Dundee Heritage Association.

Three case studies from Yorkshire Friends groups opened the afternoon session whilst the final session was the presentation given by James Wignall and Bradley Moore who talked on the ‘Win an architect’ competition. This provides £10,000 pro bono design work for organisations operating in the heritage sector, provided they are located outside London.

Speech by Damian Allen CEO City of Doncaster Council, for the British Association of the Friends of Museums National Conference, Mansion House 30th September 2023

As the proud Chief Executive of the City of Doncaster Council, I passionately believe that all action, and I would argue, Culture, is socially situated, and social embedded in its place: it is rooted. We all need a sense of identity, we all seek an origin, and we all feel a sense of belonging in our place. Museums are the curators of culture, they reveal the past, illuminate the present and create the future. They connect people through creativity, and to each other and their place, and to other places. If this isn't regeneration, I don't know what is – ask yourself isn't this one of the reasons you became a friend of the museum in your place?

My connection to this place, was through its museum. Let me share a personal anecdote to explain. In 1988, whilst conducting research into the evolutionary significance of swarming in flies – admittedly a niche interest! I had cause to send a sample of 'robber flies' that were predated on swarms of 'non-biting midges' to Doncaster Museum for formal identification as I was about to publish an article. I sent them to Dr Roy Crossley, the curator of entomology and famed robber fly expert. After a couple of weeks, he returned my samples having kept some type specimens (which are still in the museum's collection) and a covering letter which I still have. With punishing precision and

lyrical resonance, he identified the Latin names of robber flies as *Empis tessalata* and the midges as *Bryophaenocladus vernalis*. Apart from illustrating that identity matters when you are naming flies, what is the connection with this story to today's talk. Well, the answer is me, who'd have through I'd be here now in this position talking about this subject – the serendipity of such encounters and moments matter, museums matter to the culture of the place and the unleashing of it's potential. In other words; regeneration.

"The role of cities in people's arts and creative cultural life is well understood. Creativity brings joy to the identity of cities and helps them thrive. All the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing cities, require creativity if we are to build equity and a thriving future for citizens".

This is a quote by Polly McKenzie (Chief Purpose Officer UAL) University of Arts London, who is one of the commissioners of the report by the Royal Society of Arts, entitled 'Unleashing the potential of the UK's cities', which I attended on Thursday in Sheffield.

The RSA's Design for Life mission is working to improve the resilience of our interconnected and interdependent natural, social, and economic systems. This new paradigm moves us from the 'do no harm'

principle at the heart of 'sustainability', to the 'do more good' principle of regeneration.

This regenerative approach is embodied in the Mayor's Borough Strategy; 'Doncaster Delivering Together 2030', which has wellbeing at its heart and sees the City of Doncaster's Mission as 'Thriving People, Places & Planet'. It is underpinned by 4 key delivery strategies, Education & Skills, Environment & Sustainability, Regenerative Economy, and The Culture Strategy 2030, which was published on 1st February 2023 and has a series of main elements, each characterised by a headline statement:

1. Listen, Learn, Adapt, and Improve

'Doncaster's cultural activity is shaped by the voices of people who live, work, learn and visit our borough'.

2. Place of Places, Culture of Cultures

'Doncaster's communities have the skills, investment, infrastructure and connections to sustain powerful shared cultural activity'.

3. Creative Wellbeing

'Doncaster makes the most of the potential taking part in arts, culture and creative activity has to transform people's health and wellbeing'.

4. City of Culture, Home of Creativity

'Doncaster is a home for learning, mentoring and skills development in the arts, culture, and creative industries.'

5. Collaborative Culture

'Doncaster places collaboration at the heart of our cultural activity; our local, regional, national and global partnerships drive development'.

6. Thriving Culture, Regenerative Economy

'By inspiring Creativity and boosting Cultural diversity, Doncaster helps to regenerate local economies, attracts visitors and places Culture at the heart of its wider economic development strategies'.

Regeneration is more than growing the economy of the place, it seeks to regenerate the people in the place. We can change people's perspectives on the world – equipping them to learn new skills, enhance their knowledge and raise their aspirations. In short, to thrive by living happier and more fulfilled lives. The work of organisations such as yours, we know can make a deep impact on individuals and their communities.

The City of Doncaster Council is committed to making full use of its cultural and heritage offer to improve the lives of our residents, staff, and visitors. We recognise the vital part groups such as the Friends of the Museum, locally led by David Adgar, make, enhancing our heritage and cultural services. No doubt many of you in this room sponsor and support many initiatives in your own areas to improve the lives of local communities. This event, I hope, will regenerate, and reinvigorate your determination to show that what you do; makes a difference.

Longitudinal studies from organisations such as UNESCO and English Heritage, alongside a growing body of literature within medical, psychological, and social work fields, evidences the positive association between better health, and wellbeing and time spent engaging in creative and expressive activities. Resulting in:

The NHS now uses activities you provide as part of their prescribing regimes.

Social prescribing is used in the management and support of healthier and happier lifestyles through in-community activities such as arts on prescription, cultural trips, museum, and library based learning and befriending services. It is becoming increasingly evident that where such provision is available, people experience lower rates of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression and lower rates of physical ill-health such as obesity, chronic pain, and diabetes. So, it's not an exaggeration to say that what you do can save lives!

The early exposure of children and young people to heritage and cultural services, is shown to have a positive impact on pupil learning, attitudes, and behaviours. Again, studies from bodies such as Historic England and Arts Council England, indicate that improved educational attainment, social skills and enhanced emotional intelligence is gained from participation in activities that relate to a young person's environment. The links we have forged locally for schools to make use of our Danum Gallery Library and Museum (DGLAM) has been a great success and evidences the benefits I have just shared with you.

Indeed, the next speaker unlike is specimens, is living proof of this - Dr Dean Lomax the internationally renowned palaeontologist, author and presenter whose 'ground-breaking' work on dinosaurs (see what I did there?!), features in our exhibits. He started his early career as a volunteer in the Doncaster Museum service – the source of his inspiration. I for one am looking forward to his speech.

I realise that there is much more I could say about the outcomes of your work, but I am sure you will

spend the rest of your day exploring and sharing ideas. The passion you show is contagious, and inspires the regenerative potential of individuals, and their communities to be realised.

Inspiration is after all a mystical, intangible thing that grasps the artist, the writer, the inventor, and even the scientist. In Greek mythology, the nine muses were deemed to be the source of that inspiration. It is from "muse" of course that we get the word "museum", which is fittingly a place where creativity is gloriously displayed. In museums, people are further stimulated, and so the regenerative cycle of ingenuity continues; aided by a coalition of committed, passionate volunteers like yourselves, who are the stewards and keepers of the work of latter-day muses.

I'll end with a favourite quote of mine by the 19th century polymath John Ruskin, who was a reformer, artist, future thinker, advocator of free schools, museums, and libraries, and promoted education for the working class. He said:

"None of us yet know, for none of us have yet been taught in early youth, what fairy palaces we may build of beautiful thought – proof against adversity; bright fancies, satisfied memories, noble histories, faithful sayings, treasure-houses of precious and restful thoughts, which care cannot disturb, nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us – houses built without hands, for our souls to live in."

In short, our cultural and heritage assets are the 'heart and soul of Doncaster and each of your places.

Thank You for the work you do – enjoy the conference.

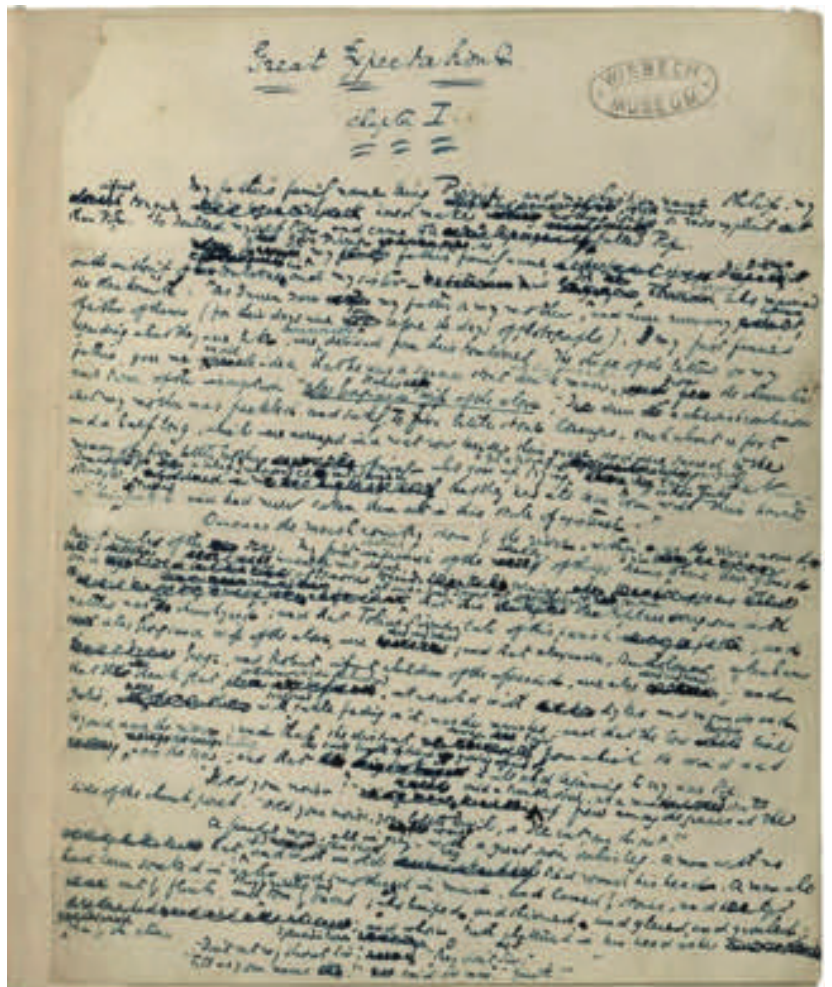
51st Annual Conference and AGM; hosted by The Friends of Wisbech and Fenland Museum 'Great Expectations'

Wisbech, the Capital of the Fens welcomes BAfM delegates to the historic Isle of Ely.

Our event starts with tours of the town and a viewing and talk on the replica of the Bayeux Tapestry. This is single-handedly being embroidered by Wisbech resident Mia Hansson and is already over 38 metres long. Members may remember the Reading replica of the Bayeux Tapestry which was on display during the 2018 BAFM Conference. This was bought for that town by another former Wisbech resident, Arthur Hill, half-brother to Octavia Hill. Octavia, a National Trust co-founder, was born in Wisbech and her former home, Octavia Hill Birthplace House, will be open for visits on our town tours on the Friday of the Conference weekend. On an upper floor of the house is the National Army Cadet Force Museum, another organization associated with her work.

The tour continues to an infant's school Octavia's parents built which now acts as the box office and bar for the Georgian Angles Theatre, where Georgian residents saw Macready perform and Madame Tussaud's waxworks on tour. Crossing the River Nene is Peckover House, the home of a Quaker banking family, and whose bank was one of those merging to form Barclays.

On Friday evening an informal dinner is on offer at The Red Lion. Delegates are invited to join the BAFM Council to relax and socialise before the Conference opens next day.



The original manuscript of Dickens' Great Expectations; on view at the Wisbech and Fenland Museum

This is just one of the hundreds of pubs featured in *Wisbech Inns, Taverns and Beer houses: Past and Present*. The seven-volume series, written by our treasurer Andy Ketley, received a silver award and £500 cheque from the British Guild of Beer Writers. The cover pictures and print files were created by a member and illustrator, Gareth Monger. He will be giving a presentation on publishing books by Friends' groups and has helped the Wisbech Friends earn over £15,000 from the sale of these booklets.

The Thomas Clarkson Memorial, his former home and his school will be on the tour, as will The Magwitch public house, named after a character from *Great Expectations*, the original manuscript of which is housed in Wisbech Museum, as well as the Clarkson chest of items used in his anti-slavery campaign. These can be viewed on Friday and Saturday.

The BAFM Conference will open at 10.30am in the Luxe Cinema. Our external speakers will talk on the theme 'Friends supporting museums in these financially challenging times' or, as Dickens might have said rather more succinctly - *Hard Times!*

Alison Giles, from GEM (the Group for Education in Museums) and Whipple Museum of the History of Science will be discussing fundraising events. Publishing for profit with Gareth Monger, illustrator, and writer, has already been mentioned. Dawn Bainbridge of the National Heritage Lottery Fund will speak on the theme of accessing funds. Finally, Justin Coomb of the Upminster Windmill restoration project (a former winner of the BAFM Impact Award) will outline the successful project which has been underway for several years. These presentations should provide delegates to share their own experiences of fundraising.

The annual conference is also an opportunity to enjoy each other's company and Wisbech will be no exception. It is now the Isle of Ely and Cambridgeshire's only port and we celebrate this heritage with a shanty evening on Friday at the Luxe Cinema. *Isle 'ave a Shanty* is a local six-piece a cappella male harmony group and performs to sell-out audiences. Saturday night will see the traditional celebratory meal after the Conference.

We look forward to welcoming members to the Conference and AGM and enclose a booking form in this Journal.

Front cover; a view of The Wisbech and Feland Museum, the Friends of which are hosting the 2024 British Association of Friends of Museums 51st Annual Conference and Annual General Meeting. The Conference weekend runs from Friday 4th to Sunday 6th October.



BAFM Young Professional of the Year Award 2023

The British Association of Friends of Museums are pleased to announce the winner of the BAFM Young Professional of the Year Award for 2023.

The British Association of Friends of Museums are pleased to announce the winner of the BAFM Young Professional of the Year Award for 2023. Heather Stracey, aged 28, is the Senior Collections Officer at the Amelia Scott, Tunbridge Wells. Seen above being presented with her award by Anne Stobo, who accepted it on her behalf at the BAFM Conference in Doncaster, Heather has worked at the Amelia Scott for over four years and can explain in her own words her passion for the collection in her care and how this award of £1000 will help her to develop her skills in the area of costume conservation.

'With BAFM support, The Amelia Scott (The Amelia) can display costume that hasn't been exhibited for 20+ years. Being awarded £1,000, I can now work towards becoming a historic costume specialist – a huge passion of mine. The Amelia has over 8,000 pieces of costume in its collection, but

there is not a costume specialist on site, and there hasn't been for a while. When displayed, at times the costume collection has looked tired and dull. I am very passionate about historic costume, and I am keen to learn the best ways of handling and displaying costume. This would include learning how to mount mannequins appropriately, and how to exhibit costume in interesting/impactful ways. The Amelia is planning on hosting an in-house exhibition called 'Dark Decadence', which will focus on the darker side of Georgian history (specifically local history).

In this exhibition, we are hoping to feature pieces from our costume collection, which is the biggest costume collection in the Southeast of England. The BAFM's funding will help us/me display costume to the best of our ability, not only for our Georgian exhibition, but in general.'



Heather Stracey. The Amelia Scott Tunbridge Wells

The Amelia has a close relationship with The Textile Conservancy in Rye, who have kindly offered to teach me/us how to handle and mount costume as related to the exhibition which comes with costs as do the courses offered by the V&A (and other institutions). These courses guide young curators to develop interesting ways to display costume. These courses

also touch on interpretation and advise how to make object labels engaging to audiences.'

Heather Stracey

The Amelia Scott Tunbridge Wells

Heather has agreed to join the BAFM Council as our 'Youth Ambassador', giving advice on how best to engage with a younger audience. BAFM is delighted to support young professionals such as Heather, as they develop their skills to ensure excellence in their professional careers. We would

like to acknowledge the help and support of the judging panel, ably led by Tim Craven. Please consider if the museum or gallery you support has a young professional who could benefit from this programme. The next award will take place in 2025.

British Association of Friends of Museums Friends of the Year Award 2023

The winner of the Friends of the Year Award was announced at the Doncaster Conference on 30th September 2023. The award, which supersedes the previous 'Impact Award' was this year won by Wisbech and Fenland Museum. The criteria for the award was widened in 2023 to include long term projects, as well as specific initiatives which had happened during the previous calendar year, an approach which will be continued in future year. Wisbech and Fenland Museum is entirely run by volunteers and is responsible for raising much of the funding which enables the museum to operate. In the September 2023 edition of The BAFM Journal, the Secretary, Garry Monger explained in some detail both the context of how they operate and several of the successes they have enjoyed. The supporting letter from Wisbech amply summarizes the reasons

for this selection as winner.

'The Friends have always been of great assistance not only financially but also by providing volunteers to assist the day to day running of the museums but also in manning stalls at fairs and helping with fundraising concerts.... The contribution of The Friends is vital. We always seek to engage with the local population and their input allows us to do so.'

During 2023, The Friends of Wisbech and Fenland Museum also began a series of publications on local topics which have proved very popular; the proceeds of sales has gone to support outreach activities in the locality and the purchase of equipment.

BAFM are pleased to recognize these efforts and look forward to the group hosting the 2024 Conference in October of this year. The

Conference Weekend runs from 4th October to the 6th October.

The British Association of Friends of Museums Awards 2024

This year, BAFM will be launching two awards for our members. The Newsletter of the Year Award is open to all member groups and involves groups submitting examples of their regular Newsletters in hard copy form so that the judging panel can make the decision as to the Newsletter which demonstrates the highest quality. The second award which will run in 2024 will be The BAFM 'Friends of the Year Award' which superseded the Impact Award in 2023. The

Young Professional of the Year Award which was run in 2023 will be available again in 2025 as it is a bi-annual award (although groups may wish to discuss with their staff during 2023 to be ready to submit applications in the spring of next year). Details of the two awards running this year are below and full details and application forms where applicable can be seen on the BAFM website or by contacting daveadgar@gmail.com.

Newsletter of the Year Award

There was a strong field of candidates for this award in 2023, of which six were shortlisted. The judges are looking for a publication which will attract interest by its variety and readability. Appearance, layout, and use of illustrations is an important factor in deciding the shortlist and mention of BAFM is always a plus factor. To enter, please send two

hard copies of a recent newsletter by the cut off date of 30th June to Dave Adgar, 6 Winnery Close, Tickhill, Doncaster DN11 9JT. All shortlisted groups will receive a Certificate of Merit and the winners will be allocated two tickets for the BAFM Annual Conference, held this year in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.

BAFM Friends of the Year Award 2024, in association with The Marsh Charitable Trust

BAFM is pleased to announce our partnership with The Marsh Charitable Trust in launching the BAFM Friends of the Year Award. The criteria associated with this award remain like 2023, in that we are looking for groups who have made a real difference by supporting the organisation they are linked to and enhanced the life of the community. By applying, groups can highlight a specific project which has been delivered recently or long-term support to the museum or other heritage site which they are associated to. This support could be fundraising, or volunteering or even running an entirely volunteer led museum. All shortlisted groups will be awarded a Certificate of Merit, and the winner of the award will additionally be presented with a cheque for

£500 to help them continue their work going forward. The funding for this award has been provided by The Marsh Charitable Trust and staff from the Trust will join BAFM in selecting the winner. The cut off for entries is 31st July 2024 and shortlisted entries will be informed in early August. The winner will be informed confidentially at the end of August in order for them to make arrangements to receive their award at the BAFM Conference at Wisbech.

Full details can be found on the BAFM website, including application forms and guidance notes. If groups need advice, please contact daveadgar@gmail.com. Entries would be preferred to be received digitally, although hard copy entries can be accepted.

Introducing our new Coordinator for Scotland Gillian Ferguson BAFM Regional Coordinator Scotland Profile

'Although raised in London, I have lived in Scotland for 56 years. I live in the historic and vibrant city of Edinburgh. I have been the Chair of the Friends of City Art Centre and Museums of Edinburgh since 2018. We support and purchase acquisitions for an art gallery, five museums, two monuments, a collection centre, a travelling gallery and a castle, all administered by Edinburgh Council. We have been a member of BAFM since 1994.

In the 1980s, my Line Manager and I were responsible for setting up the Oil Museum in Livingston during the embryonic stages of growth. Later, I became a civil servant employed by the Ministry of Defence (Army) until my retirement. During my MoD employment, I was chair of the PCS union responsible for the many tri-service military establishments in the East of Scotland.

Since retirement, the earth has not stood still, enabling me to pursue my interests. I ran the local Macular Degeneration support group. I am an amateur artist and the winner of thirteen painting awards. A keen hillwalker, I have 'bagged' 63 Munros which are Scottish mountains over 3'000 ft. My book 'The History of Sandy Bells', a famous Edinburgh folk pub, sold well. Following five years of research, I am editing my book 'An A to Z of Edinburgh Old Town Characters: From the Famous and Talented to the Interesting and Odd'. I am also writing a children's book of short stories. I often wonder how I found the time to work ...

Hopefully, my life experiences will serve me well as the new BAFM Regional Coordinator for Scotland. I look forward to meeting some of the groups on my 'patch.' My contact details are fergusongillian3@gmail.com or 0131 623 1668'.



Gillian Ferguson

First Grand Charity Jazz Concert in Dundee

Over 85 Craftspeople, Friends of Dundee Heritage Trust, supporters, and members of the public enjoyed an evening of world-class jazz at Discovery Point, Dundee with award-winning gypsy jazz band, Rose Room from Glasgow on Friday 8 September.

Organised as a fundraising event by newly elected Deacon of the Weaver Craft, Richard Irvine and Past Deacon, Alastair Scott to raise monies for both the Weaver Incorporation and the Friends of Trust Heritage Trust, the evening proved to be a great success with a total of over £1100 raised from ticket sales, a raffle and donations. This was split equally between both groups for their community activities.

Rose Room formed over a decade ago is led by violinist, vocalist, and arranger, Seonaid Aitkin who is also a well-known BBC radio broadcaster. She was joined by Conor Smith on lead and rhythm guitar, Ross Baird on rhythm and lead guitar and Jimmy Moon (“Guitar maker to the

Stars”) on string bass. They took the audience to the quaint back streets and café culture of pre-war Paris with their brand of gypsy jazz or manouche, made famous by guitarist Django Reinhardt, violinist Stephane Grappelli and their Quintet of the Hot Club of France. In addition, some classic vintage swing sounds from the 1940’s were added to the programme.

Richard remarked, “It was fantastic to see so many people enjoying themselves and getting immersed in the wonderful music. I would like to start a series of jazz and vintage music events over the coming months to promote the work of the Trades with the local community.”



Rose Room Seonaid Aitkin, Conor Smith, Ross Baird, Jimmy Moon

National Mining Museum Scotland

The National Mining Museum Scotland (NMMS) is in the restored former Lady Victoria Colliery, Newtongrange, Midlothian.

The museum has been described as a national treasure where the story of coal is kept alive for present and future generations. The Lady Victoria Colliery ceased production in 1981 and the surface area was established as a museum in 1984. Around this time the Newtongrange Conservation area was created and incorporated the Lady Victoria Colliery (a category A listed building). The museum spreads across a 20 acre site and offers a wonderful range of industrial architecture. Newtongrange is viewed as a model mining village, built up from Victorian times into the twentieth century. An iconic feature in the village is the rows, from First to Tenth Street, of brick cottages. The Welfare Park is almost 100 years old and remains the pride of the village.

NMMS tells the story of coal through exhibitions and guided tours of the pithead and the recreated underground. There is also opportunity to explore social history to experience what life was like for the miners and their families. A highlight for real insights is to take part in an ex-miner's guided tour. Importantly, the museum offers displays on the energy transition from fossil fuels into alternative energy sources.

A special feature at the museum, known as the 'jewel in the crown' is the winding engine. The winding engine was manufactured and installed by Grant, Ritchie, and Co of Kilmarnock in 1894. It has two horizontal cylinders, each 3ft 6in (1.07m), in diameter, with a stroke of 7ft (2.13m), complete with Cornish valves and variable expansion gear. The engine drives a winding



Dr Gael Robertson with her colleagues at the National Mining Museum for Scotland

drum 20ft (6.10m) in diameter and 10ft 6in (3.20m) wide, round which is wound the wire rope to the two cages in the shaft. Each cage counterbalances the other. On a tour, of the museum, with an ex-miner guide, who was experienced being lowered in the cage to the coal face, shared that bungy jumping has nothing on the bouncing cage! His story was a powerful one and one that I will never forget. Alas, the 'jewel in the crown' needs attention to restore it to its

former glory, at least in part, and currently the Friends are exploring ways to achieve this.

The museum is situated around 8 miles south of Edinburgh and is accessible by car and bus with a train station linked to the museum.

Gael Robertson PhD

Honorary Fellow, University of Edinburgh

Art aficionados in Scotland mourn the passing of artist, John Byrne

A light went out in Scotland on 14th December 2023 when Scotland's foremost contemporary artist, designer and playwright John Byrne sadly died age 83.

John was an acclaimed polymath, working in the visual arts, theatre, set design, illustration, film and TV, who entered the realm of popular culture with two acclaimed drama series on television. *Tutti Frutti* (1987) was a hilarious six-part BBC series about a chaotic touring rock band. Throughout the 1980s, Byrne contributed to BBC Scotland's long-running sketch show *Scotch and Rye*. Other BBC Scotland contributions included a six-part series, *Your Cheatin' Heart* (1990), starring Tilda Swinton. Byrne also wrote for the theatre. His first play, *Writer's Cramp* (1977) was followed by *The Slab Boys Trilogy* (1978) taken from his experience working in a Paisley carpet-factory. Kevin Bacon, Sean Penn, and Val Kilmer were among the cast when the play was performed on Broadway. *Candy Kisses* (1984) was shown at the Bush theatre in London. More recently, there were three Scottish versions of *Chekhov*. Byrne's productions are too numerous to mention.

In 2013 John painted a magnificent roundel in the ceiling of the King's Theatre, Edinburgh,

depicting flying figures, Harlequin and tragedy and comedy masks. All the major Scottish Galleries have examples of John Byrne's work.

John and I were members of the same church congregation where he accompanied the hymns on his guitar and mouth organ. The last time I saw him was autumn when we shared a pew. Despite looking frail, John remained dapper wearing his trademark tweed suit, silk handkerchief and hair gelled to perfection.

I attended John's Requiem Mass on 14th December 2023. He was buried in Dean Cemetery Edinburgh and the whole of the Gallery of Modern Art was hired for the reception. John Byrne was a colourful man in all aspects and an equally colourful artist. He leaves behind a legacy of his work for posterity, but I feel some colour has drained out of our lives.

Gillian Ferguson

Chair Friends of City Art Centre and Museums of Edinburgh

The inaugural Scottish Landscape Awards at the City Art Centre Edinburgh

The City Art Centre was thrilled to host Scotland's newest open call-in contemporary art – The Scottish Landscape Awards. It was the biggest and most ambitious survey of contemporary landscape art in Scotland today which included emerging artists alongside established professionals.

The awards were the latest initiative of the Scottish Arts Trust, a charity established in 2014 to support and promote innovation and creativity in the arts in Scotland through voluntary action. The awards were open to artists born, living or studying in Scotland working in any media with a first prize of £10,000. The prize-winners were chosen by a distinguished panel of judges including Ade Adesina RSA, Marian Leven RSA, David Mach RA HRSA, Chair; Barbara Rae RA CBE RA RSA RSW and Jane and Louise Wilson RA.



Sarah Cameron McBean-Scottish Arts Trust, Lindsay Robertson-Winner Photographic prize, Barbara Rae RA CBE RA RSA RSW, Gillian Ferguson-Chair of the Friends of the City Art Centre and Museums of Edinburgh. Photo credit: Greg Macvean



Lindsay Robertson with his winning entry Dialbeag- Isle of Lewis. Photo credit: Greg Macvean

In celebration of our fiftieth anniversary, the Friends of City Art Centre and Museums of Edinburgh were delighted to sponsor a £1,000 photography award. Lindsay Robertson was the winner for his dramatic work Dialbeag – Isle of Lewis which was photographed in homage to his father who lived in Stowaway.

The £10,000 winning prize was won by Kate Davis and David Moore whose entry, Bass Rock was made by weaving musical scores selected from Songs of the North Vol 1. The 18th century collection of Scottish traditional folk songs describes landscape, love and death. Selected titles legible in the artwork include *Drown'd*, *The Weaving Song* and *The Twa Corbies*. No photograph can do justice to this stunning exhibit which needs to be seen.

Displaying 133 artworks, the exhibition showcasing the diversity of innovative contemporary creativity in Scotland runs from 4th November 2023 to 3rd March 2024. A biennial event, the 2025 Scottish Landscape Awards will be held at the Kirkcudbright Galleries in Dumfries and Galloway.



Bass Rock. Kate Davis and David Moore

News from the World Federation of Friends of Museums

In May of this year, The World Federation of Friends of Museums will be holding its General Assembly in Luxemburg. This is a chance to meet up with other groups from across the globe to share knowledge and experiences. The Assembly will open on Friday 2nd May in the presence of Princess Stephanie of Luxemburg and will continue throughout the weekend with a packed programme of visits to museums and cultural sites in this beautiful city, as well as a series of special meals. All BAFM members are entitled to visit the Assembly. More details can be found on the WFFM website www.thewffm.org

The European Federation of WFFM are organising a special day for Friends Groups throughout Europe to publicise the vital work they do. The date selected for this series of events is Sunday 13th October. Under the title of 'Your Museums, our Passion'. Groups can run a special event for the public or simply set up a table designed to highlight the work they do. If any group is interested in taking part in this 2nd European Friends of Museums Day, please let me know and (if possible) it could form the basis of several articles in the BAFM Journal next year. Contact daveadgar@gmail.com for more details.

A Consuming Passion: Novel Opportunities for Jute Museum Volunteers

Tackling TB: Dundee Scientists Fighting the Killer Cough, the new exhibition at the Verdant Works in collaboration with Wellcome Centre for Anti-Infectives Research at the University of Dundee highlights the impact tuberculosis (TB) had on 19th and early 20th Century Dundee while showcasing the incredible work of the city's contemporary life scientists to conquer this global disease. This exciting exhibition has only been possible because of the help of a number Friends of Dundee Heritage Trust. Retired civil servant, Ian Findlay typically spends his Wednesdays demonstrating the historic working jute processing machinery at the museum but jumped at the chance to challenge himself with the opportunity to carry out some research and interpretation of the extensive archival materials held by the University of Dundee.

“As part of my research, I discovered Robertson’s Land. While most tenements built in Dundee during the building boom of the late 1800s were three or four

storeys high, Robertson’s Land of 1870 was nine, and was just a stone’s throw away from Verdant Works.”

“On each landing there were ten single room dwellings but only one WC which was shared by all residents living on that landing. Unusually for that era each apartment had its own supply of running water. Each apartment measured 12 feet by 12 feet providing around 1150 cubic feet but given that it was estimated that the 150 rooms were shared by more than 500 residents living space was woefully inadequate.”

“Such overcrowding and inadequate living conditions meant that the Robertson’s Land was a hotbed for the spread of infectious diseases including TB. The property was finally condemned in the early 1950’s as unfit for human habitation, albeit that some people continued to live in the ground and first floor for some time thereafter. The top three floors were never officially occupied because the fire department considered it too dangerous. Robertson’s Land was demolished in 1965.”



Ian Findlay

A new vision for volunteering

Sam Clift, LTM Volunteer Resource Manager

In the Summer of 2023, we hit an important milestone in volunteering at London Transport Museum, as a new five-year volunteering strategy received the seal of approval from the LTM Board.



Sam Clift

Kindly funded by the LTM Friends, this year-long piece of work brought volunteer management consultant Laura Hamilton on board to work with Sam Clift to run a top-to-bottom consultation with Museum staff and volunteers. This was the first major piece of visionary work for volunteering since the pandemic; and, after working through the recovery period to a point of normality, it was a good time to start looking to the future. As part of the consultation, we ran a series of online and in-person workshops with 40+ volunteers and staff to understand current challenges, ideas, and aspirations. These were an effective way to bring people together (many volunteers met for the first time post-Covid) and show how important the voice of volunteers can be in strategic work. We received a vast amount of input from volunteers in the workshops, capturing current thoughts and experiences and identifying what volunteers would like to see from the Museum in the future. These findings were then put to managers and to senior leadership staff for fine-tuning. This resulted in six

primary objectives:

1. Increase staff capacity and skills in volunteer management.
2. Support creativity and innovation in volunteer roles and activities
3. Reimagine volunteer engagement, reward, and recognition.
4. Create an inclusive and welcoming culture within our volunteer teams.
5. Reach new audiences.
6. Create opportunities for inter-generational work and knowledge transfer.

We recognised the importance of this strategy being realistic and achievable, to provide integrity and tailored investment through annual planning and reviews. So, in addition to improving volunteering further, these objectives will support the delivery of the Museum's five-year strategy and plan for 2023-28; and they will

tie in current funding commitments with Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund for volunteering, so the objectives build on much of the good work that is already happening.



Volunteers working on restoring an Underground train.

A new vision for volunteering at LTM was also introduced, which by 2028 looks to:

- Provide a welcoming, inclusive volunteering experience which all staff and volunteers are equally proud of
- Our staff to be confident and highly skilled in volunteer management practice.
- All volunteers to be supported, heard, listened to, and valued.
- LTM to be a place where inter-generational volunteering provides meaning and a legacy for knowledge transfer.
- Volunteering opportunities to be truly accessible to all audiences.
- Volunteering achievements and best practice to be actively recognised and shared both internally and across the heritage sector.



Friends' Sales Team

At the time of writing, we are two-thirds the way through year one of the strategy. Despite unforeseen staffing and capacity challenges, so far this year (2023/4), we have achieved the following:

- Introduced and recruited a new part-time Volunteer Resource Coordinator to support the delivery of the strategy.
- Introduced coaching sessions for staff managing volunteer teams.
- Introduced on-line social events for remote volunteers.
- Delivered compassionate leadership training for staff managing volunteers.
- Formulated an Access Advisory Group for Volunteering and recruited a chairperson to lead the group in 2024.

All the investments made through this volunteering strategy are also benefitting Friends volunteers, whether directly or indirectly, as we make improvements to our resilience, staff training and commitment to new and accessible volunteering opportunities for all.



'Tickets please' demonstration

Finally, some thoughts on the distinctions in volunteering between the London Transport Museum and the LTM Friends:

Both LTM and the Friends are separate charities, with their own Governance and Board of Trustees. Therefore, for example, the Investing in Volunteers Award for volunteering standards sits with LTM only, as the Friends have separate charity status.

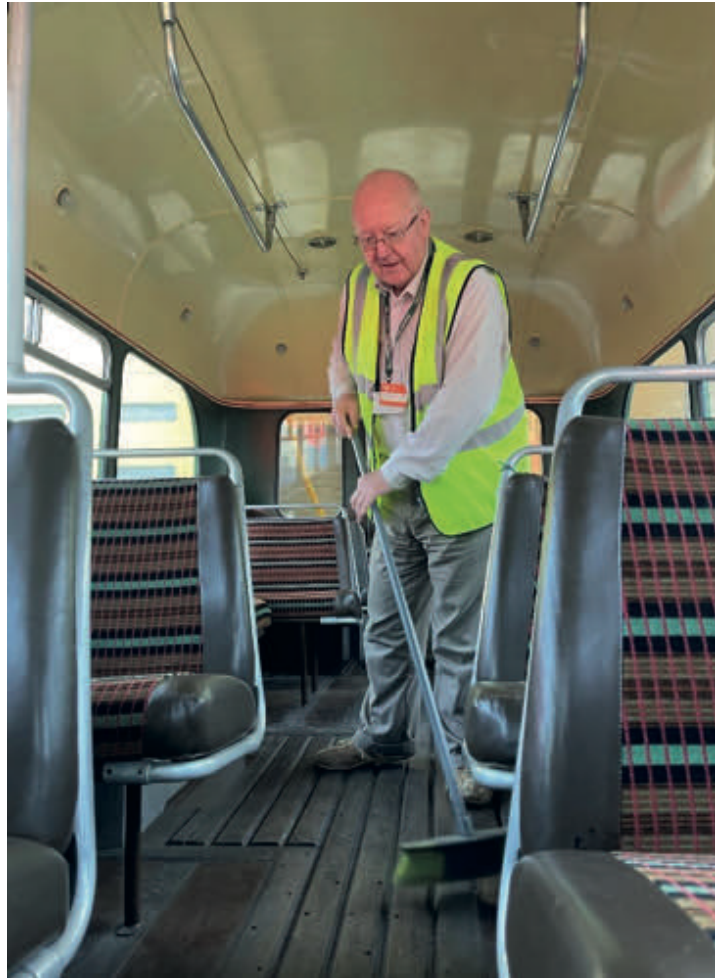
LTM has a large team of paid staff employed by TfL and all Museum volunteers are directly recruited and managed by paid staff. Volunteers help to deliver activities on site for visitors and undertake behind the scenes vehicle maintenance/restoration work amongst many other activities.

The Friends are a volunteer-run charity with their own management structure and specific volunteer roles to support the functions of the Friends, primarily including membership administration, fundraising through the sale of donated items and delivery of the events programme for members. Only members can volunteer for the Friends.

Friends' members can apply to volunteer with LTM, and many do alternate their time between the Museum and the Friends. Friends tend to be in the higher age range and bring a wealth of experience to their volunteering roles. Not all volunteers are Friends. The wider recruitment of Museum volunteers ensures a good variety of ages and backgrounds.

LTM and the Friends have separate policies and procedures around volunteering (eg for safeguarding), to cater to the different activity needs; but generally, Friends' volunteering policies reflect the key elements of the Museum's own policies.

Those who volunteer for the Friends also access LTM's Better Impact volunteer management system to provide access to internal communications and to identify opportunities and cohesion between both LTM and LTMF volunteers.



Sam Clift was named the Heritage Volunteering Group's Volunteer Leader of the Year 2023. The award recognises innovative and outstanding volunteer leadership in the heritage sector.

ARTscapades Endeavours

Regular readers of the BAFM Journal may recall the articles which have been published outlining the fascinating events programme which the group organises each year. The programme helps the group to raise money which they can use to support exhibitions and publications around the country.

Since they are London based, many of these grants are naturally in the London area but they also support initiatives elsewhere. As a small , with no paid staff, they do not accept unsolicited applications for funds but prefer to identify projects they think could benefit from their support and then contact the institutions involved to begin a dialogue about their support might enhance the project they have identified. Below, I have outlined several of the grants they have made over the last two years.

The Hepworth Wakefield were supplied with a grant to support the exhibition of the British photographer Hannah Starkey. Entitled *Hannah Starkey; In Real life*, the exhibition ran from 21st October 2022 to 30th April 2023. The images, described by the Guardian as 'painterly, focussed on women and how they were portrayed and proved a great success.

The Garden Museum in London has received several grants to support the publication of catalogues linked to exhibitions such as that of the works shown in *Lucien Freud: Plant Portraits* which ran from October 2022 to March 2023. A final example of their innovative support is the funding of a picture researcher for the upcoming publication *Canaletto and Guardi, Views of Venice at the Wallace Collection*.

ARTscapades is an example of the wide range of groups who are members of BAFM. Whether a group is linked to a specific museum or are a special interest group such as the Chippendale Society, BAFM strives to support its members as they devote their time and energy to develop the cultural sector.



Naima Sagna, World Federation of Friends of Museums Youth coordinator (left) meets Heather Tracey, our new Youth Ambassador on a recent visit to the UK

The Silver Swan at the Bowes Museum



Celebrating its 250th birthday in 2023, The Bowes Museum's Silver Swan was the inspiration for a six-month exhibition that looked at art and science of automata. Alas, the star of the show was unable to perform as major repair and conservation work was required.

For three years she (a life size female mute swan) had been a static display. Located in a special gallery, she was surrounded by associated artefacts and information which attempted to explain the unique appeal of one of the finest examples of 18th century automata in the world. A short specially commissioned film, financed by the Friends, played on a loop on a big screen, which explained a little about her history, workings and showing her rather magical 35-second performance.

Once wound up, three clockwork motors power a music box to play one of six different tunes; rotate 131 twisted glass rods – to give the effect of shimmering water – with seven swimming silver fish; and also animate her head and neck so that she appears to preen her glittering feathers before catching and eating a fish. There are more than 2,000 moving parts.... it's more than remarkable to see her in action. It's spellbinding.

The Silver Swan was built in the workshop of James Cox

and exhibited in his Museum of Mechanical Marvels in London 1773. One hundred years later museum founders Josephine and John Bowes bought her (for £200) five years after seeing her perform at the Paris International Exhibition of 1867. She has lived in the museum in Barnard Castle, County Durham, ever since, apart from a six-week sojourn to the Science Museum, London, in 2017 for an exhibition about robots.

The Silver Swan has been worked almost continuously since she was made. So, perhaps inevitably, her age plus wear and tear, finally caught up with her. In 2008, each of the Swan's hundreds of parts were cleaned, inspected, condition-checked, measured, photographed, and given a unique accession number. In 2021, the museum carried out an investigation into the Swan's mechanism to identify what future action was needed to preserve her operation and eliminate faults that could lead to breakdown.

Thanks to a grant of £146,324 from the National Heritage Lottery Fund and a Crowdfunding campaign in conjunction with Art Fund Art Happens, sufficient money was raised to pay for major repair and conservation work by the Cumbria Clock Company costing close to £200k. The Crowdfunding appeal aimed to raise £18,000 in 40 days. It exceeded that by £2,000 thanks in part to the emotional connections it has for a great many people who remember seeing the Swan perform when they were children. The Friends of The Bowes Museum also gave a substantial contribution.

Museum volunteers, including several Friends, were on hand during the conservation project to explain to visitors in the Swan Gallery what was happening (some of the conservation work took place under public gaze) and many visitors' stories were recorded about their precious memories made and still cherished from watching the Swan perform.

Conservators dismantled and removed the neck/head assembly, as 12 silver neck rings needed attention. The drive units were fully disassembled and serviced, and the operating mechanisms were dismantled and cleaned before repairs, lubrication, and re-assembly. From early February, the Silver Swan was expected to be able to again perform and delight all who see her.



Description automatically generatedThe Bowes Museum's Director of Programmes and Collections, Vicky Sturrs said: "It is only fitting that as an automaton, we should ensure that it continues to operate otherwise we risk it becoming just another object – albeit a very beautiful one but not the kind it was intended to be. We also must be mindful that as a delicate, fragile, and old machine we had to ensure the work was carried out sympathetically and sustainably so that future generations can enjoy it operating for another 250 years."

Dorothy Brenkley



Pixels and threads

Digitising Chinese Minority Ethnic Textiles

Back in March 2023, the Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives, generously supported the digitisation of 103 objects from two large and beautiful collections of 267 Chinese textiles the museum recently acquired.

Following the recent retirement of our in-house photographer, we commissioned the services of Jamie Woodley Photography for the project. Although we had funds for four days of photography, it quickly became apparent that this would not be enough time to digitise the whole collection. Thus, we turned to the Friends to support an additional four days of work and generously the Friends obliged. I am delighted to share a selection of the high resolution photographs the Friends helped fund and to introduce you to several objects from the collection.

The two collections primarily represent the fashion and textiles of Miao people in southwest China, but also of Dong, Sui, and Bouyei ethnic groups. Miao people

are one of the largest minorities in China and are recognised by the government of China as one of the 56 official ethnic groups. (Miao is a Chinese term that is widely used but does not reflect the self-designation of all the peoples within this cluster, many of whom prefer Hmong or Hmu).

Textiles and embroidery are particularly significant to Miao people. Traditionally they have no written language, and the stories of their ancestors are encapsulated in the fabric of their clothing. Embroidery designs and techniques are imbued with deep symbolism and have been passed down from mother to daughter for generations.



Close-up of satin- stitched details on sleeve cuff.



Pleated skirt from Maoping village, Guizhou province, 1997. Miao ethnic group.

There is a saying: 'When you meet one hundred Miao people, you will see one hundred types of traditional costumes.' This is because the geographical distance between mountainous villages have resulted in distinct styles forming over the centuries. Common aspects in the fashion are the use of indigo dye, wax-resist decoration, and embroidery.

The pieces now in Bristol's collection were acquired by two Bristol-based embroiderers, Sally Sparks and Vivien Young, during their trips to China in 1997, 1999 and 2006. With their eye for embroidery, their collections include a wide range of examples illustrating different techniques, patterns, and designs from villages in Guizhou and Guangx Provinces in southwest China. Star pieces include a complete woman's outfit from Machang village, a panel from a baby carrier from Shidong, and a skirt with applied designs from Yarong village.

Particularly stunning are the examples of the folded silk technique, where thin, tiny rectangles of silk are starched with tree sap, folded into triangles,

layered, and stitched into place. This creates thick textured patterns with detailed and intricate designs, often featuring birds, dragons, fish, faces, and other talismanic symbols which offer the wearer protection from mishaps and evil spirits.

Pleated skirts are also a distinctive feature of Miao dress. Pleats are made by hand, by draping the cloth over the curve of a barrel and carefully folding tight and even pleats from one end until all the fabric is used up. The pleats are tied into place with rope, treated with rice starch and left to set. The skirt in Bristol's collection is made from 8 metres (26 feet) of hand-woven fabric!

There are also wonderful examples of satin-stitch work. Here, stitches are made over a paper-cut stencil that is glued to the fabric. For split-thread embroidery, a strand of silk thread is split into thinner threads and softened with a lubricant of honey locust tree seeds to make the threads smooth and to give the threads a silky finish.

The complete collections are available to view on our Collections Online webpage by searching the terms 'Sally Sparks Collection', and 'Vivien Young Collection' (<http://museums.bristol.gov.uk/>).

Thank you to the Friends for your support. We are

delighted that work like this enables us to share such large and beautiful collections with a global audience.

Amy Raphael

Project Curator



Documentation assistant, Roisin Daly assigning temporary numbers to objects and Jamie Woodley photographing larger objects.



Photos (left) Baby carrier with folded silk embroidery from Wengxiang village, Guizhou province, 1997. Miao ethnic group. (right) Close-up of baby carrier. The thickness of the folded layers can be seen.

Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives, Registered Charity no. 276777

All textiles pictured were donated in 2022 by Sally Sparks and Vivien Young.

Images © Bristol Culture

The Friends of Salford Museums' Association donate funds to support the purchase of "Flora's Train", a rare set of Pilkington tiles to add to the museum's collection

Last October, thanks to the Friends excellent links with Pilkington's Lancastrian Pottery Society we were informed that a rare set of tiles known as "Flora's Train" were coming up for auction. Eager to acquire the tiles to add to the museum's extensive collection of Pilkington's Lancastrian pottery, the Friends agreed to donate funds to purchase the tiles.

Rare and unusual Pilkington pottery often attract international attention and high prices, and a year earlier we were outbid at auction for a plaque. So we were delighted to hear that with our financial support and a grant from the Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund the Museum had made the successful bid.

The decorative earthenware tiles (circa 1900-1902) designed by Walter Crane, an eminent artist at the forefront of the Arts and Crafts movement, illustrate cornflower, blue-bell, columbine, anemone, poppy and daffodil. Walter Crane worked for Pilkington's Tile and Pottery Company Ltd (founded 1891) at Clifton Junction, Salford. As a major employer in Salford many members of the Friends have close links and memories of the factory and they are always keen to enhance the Pilkington collection housed at the museum.

In 2010, the Friends supported the acquisition of the Pilkington Company Archive when the company closed. In 2001, they funded the purchase and restoration of a fireplace complete with rare Pilkington's "Persian" style tiles dating from 1908 rescued from a house in Manchester. Interestingly, the newly acquired "Flora's Train" tiles also once adorned the cheeks of a fireplace.



As the pottery collection is displayed behind glass, the Friends have agreed to fund a local potter to make a range of textured tiles for installation in the museums

Pilkingtons' Gallery that children and adults will be able to touch. The primary aim of the installation is to improve the experience of visitors with additional needs, including those who are visually impaired, neurodiverse and wheelchair users. Museum staff will work closely with the Arts Council England Project: Unlocking the Collections, Henshaw's Society for the Blind and Manchester Deaf Centre.

In October, the Friends were contacted by Historic England and invited to add our support to Peel Park, a large public park named in honour of Sir Robert Peel being added to a National Heritage list, as

part of a project to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. The grand windows at the back of the museum's café directly overlook the park. In December we were pleased to hear it been added to the Register and is now Grade II listed. We look forward to a guided tour and talk on the park in the summer months as we resume our programme of visits to place of interest.

Email enquiries@fsma.uk



Supporting our Museums and Art Galleries as their requirements shift and change.

Melissa Hughes, Administrator for the Friends of Birmingham Museums

In the Winter 2023 edition of the BAFM Journal I wrote an article about the Friends of Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery's new Acquisitions Database. Following on from this, and using the information from this database, I wanted to highlight the different ways in which our Friends organisation has supported Birmingham's Museums and Art Gallery over the last 90+ years.

Whilst historically our Friends have predominantly added to Birmingham's collections by supporting the purchase of acquisitions, we have also engaged in other ways to adhere to our Constitution's objects which are 'to support and assist Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery and to promote their use and enjoyment by the public'. I have picked out several examples which represent the diverse variety of ways in which Friends organisations might be able to offer support to their Museums and Art Galleries.

The Staffordshire Hoard is the largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold and silver metalwork yet found and consists of almost 4,600 items and metal fragments. The Hoard had been discovered in Staffordshire in 2009 and was jointly acquired by the Stoke-on-Trent City Council and

Birmingham City Council. In 2011, Birmingham's Friends were asked to purchase a 3-volume set of reference books: 'Photoatlas of Inclusions in Gemstones' by Dr. Eduard J. Gübelin & John I. Koivula. The Hoard contained 5,000 individual garnets and these books contained detailed photography and analysis of precious and semi-precious stones. Birmingham's Conservation and Curatorial teams used the books not only to research the Hoard, but also to provide research and reference material for other items within Birmingham's collection. In addition to this, the Friends' fundraising efforts raised £26,000 for the Staffordshire Hoard Appeal. A couple of years earlier, in 2009, the Friends were asked to fund the replanting of the Long Border at Blakesley Hall, a timber-framed farmhouse built in 1590 and one of Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT)'s Historic Properties. The Friends purchased plants from the Jacobean period and paid for new seating around a tree. Shortly afterwards, in June 2011, a hawthorn tree was planted by Stanley Sellers, the Friends' Honorary Vice President, to commemorate the Friends' 80th anniversary and a plaque was produced to celebrate



Images Left to right, Gold pyramid-fitting, Cross Pendant and Eye-shaped mount in gold and garnet cloisonné; the Staffordshire Hoard

© Birmingham Museums Trust.

this event. In both these examples, the Friends provided a horticultural contribution which improved the landscape and grounds of this Historic Property. In 2006-07, the Friends supported the refurbishment of The Orange Chamber as part of the Development Programme for Aston Hall, a Grade I listed Jacobean house and another of BMT's Historic Properties. This demonstrated the Friends' support for capital projects, as part of a major refurbishment which was taking place at the Hall. In 1992-93, the Friends supported the refurbishment of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery's Gas Hall; and between 2008-11, the Friends supported the refurbishment of Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery's History Galleries. Such funding for these important capital projects was vital in leveraging financial support from other funders.

Currently, we are very excited to be supporting the cost of a Thinktank Heritage Engineering Apprentice, who started in September 2023 and is working towards an Engineering Technician Standard Level 3 Mechatronics. BMT feel that the skills and knowledge in Heritage Engineering in the museums sector are dwindling fast and without further investment in an emerging workforce they envisage a situation where these skills could be lost

forever. BMT hopes to reverse this, enabling this apprentice to join the existing technical team based at Thinktank to assist with the maintenance and care of the heritage machinery and the day to day running of the museum and the galleries within it. We are delighted to be able to support this role due to a very generous Legacy left to us by a former member, Graham Underhill.

Over many years our Friends have supported acquisitions to enhance Birmingham's collections and horticultural additions to improve the landscaping and visitor experience at the Historic Properties, the purchase of research and reference materials to enable staff to expand their knowledge about the collections, the support of capital projects to improve the buildings which house the collections, and providing training for staff to enable them to gain the skills required to look after Birmingham's collections. Over the years, our Trustees have taken a holistic and an open-minded approach to supporting requests for funding by the staff at Birmingham Museums and, given the financial pressure the museums and galleries we support are currently under, we are determined to continue to be as flexible with our support as possible.



(Left) Deborah de Haes (Chair) and Stanley Sellers (Friends' Honorary Vice President), planting a Hawthorn Tree at Blakesley Hall in 2011 to celebrate the Friends' 80th Birthday. (Right) The Friends' border at Blakesley Hall

Mildenhall To Melbourne Air Race

90th Anniversary October 20th 2024

The history of this race is celebrated in several displays within Mildenhall Museum and draws much attention from visitors, many of whom had no prior knowledge of the race's existence.

At the time it was an event that brought worldwide interest to this small market town. In the early 1930s the world economy was suffering from a severe depression. To counter the mood, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne decided to plan a grand celebration to mark the centenary of that city; an international air race! Then as now sponsorship was needed. He went to Sir Macpherson Robertson, a millionaire sweet manufacturer, for this sponsorship; he fitted the part perfectly as a self-made millionaire. There had been previous air races, at least one between England and Australia in 1919, which had ended in tragedy for several aircraft and Sir Macpherson agreed on condition that everything should be done to reduce the risk of further accidents. The Royal Aero Club of the United Kingdom agreed to supervise the race and a date was chosen for the start. 20th October 1934. The idea was beset with problems from the beginning, and it began to look at one point like the race would never happen; it wasn't until June of 1934 that serious consideration was even given to the actual starting place. Eventually Mildenhall was considered. The inspection team were impressed with the size of the take-off area and the extent of the hanger accommodation but not by the lack of amenities and the remote location. Thought was given to improve the



hanger accommodation at, Hatfield, but possible costs made Mildenhall the committee's reluctant choice. The competition would comprise sections; a speed race and a handicap section.

To ensure safety, very strict regulations were enforced. At one point the UK were unlikely to have suitable aircraft to compete. However, in January the de Havilland Aircraft Company announced it was building a new racing monoplane. This was The Comet, built in record time, and three were purchased for entry in the race. Although 63 competitors initially registered eventually there were only 20 starters.



When the Race committee arrived in Mildenhall on 14th October they were met with a scene of utter chaos. The acting Chief Marshal, a Flt Lt Christopher Clarkson, reported that crowd control had utterly broken down and competitors were complaining about damage to their aircraft.



Local hotel accommodation was inadequate and, as the station had not yet been equipped by the RAF, many essential items were lacking. A potato sack was used as a windsock, later replaced by two pillowcases sewn together replaced on the day of the race by a more impressive blue and crimson item lent by the Household Brigade Flying Club. The organisers were thrown into a frenzy when they found out a morning visit by the Prince of Wales would be followed by a surprise afternoon visit of the King and Queen. An exhibition of low-level aerobatics was quickly arranged.

The night of the 19th of October will never be forgotten by those living in the district. The race had caught the public imagination and 60,000 people came to witness the start. Dinner jackets and flimsy dresses were much in evidence and the area resembled a gigantic fair. By dawn every road within miles was choked with cars. Some had left their vehicles and crossed farmland on foot whilst others were held up miles from the town and simply couldn't make it in time. Some local farmers opened their fields as car parks although Mr Leonard of Folly Road was most disconcerted when he found that two strangers were charging 2/6d for visitors to park on his land. Also reported is the story that the land lady of the B&B where Amy (Johnson) stayed said her "guest" had left without paying and wanted the 7/6d owed.

The race was started at 6 30am. by the acting Lord Mayor of London, Sir Alfred Bower, and first to take off was the DH Comet flown by Amy and Jim Mollinson followed every 45 seconds by the next in line. Everyone had to follow roughly the same route with official check points at Baghdad, Allahabad, Singapore, Darwin, and Charleville before Melbourne, 11,300 miles.

The first to finish was the DH Comet "Grosvenor House" piloted by C.W.A Scott and T. Campbell-Black. A gold cup and £10,000 was theirs. They had won both the speed and handicap race but, abiding by the rules, gave up the handicap prize to the KLM entrants, Moll and Parmentier, who piloted a DC2 into second place carrying 3 passengers and mail bags, proving that an air service to Australia was possible. More competitors arrived before the race officially ended on 5th November whilst, a Fairey Fox flown by Hemsworth and Parer limped home on 13th February 1935. Sir Macpherson presented them with gold medals. One fatal accident marred the race, another Fairey Fox flown by New Zealanders Gilman and Baines.

Lloyd Hughes (With thanks to the late Dr Colin Dring for much of this information.)



BAFM Tours

At the end of September, we enjoyed the seemingly timeless beauty that is Wentworth Woodhouse during our Yorkshire expedition. Within its austere and hauntingly elegant empty rooms, the feeling of a lost world was all pervasive. This melancholia was relieved afterwards by drippings on toast served to us in the village church by very welcoming volunteers. In complete contrast, Temple Newsom was crammed with treasures, so much so that the architecture was very secondary.

We had a great guide at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park which makes incredible use of its 18th parkland setting. Another beautiful setting was a new garden set in an old walled garden outside of York where we had a delicious lunch served by the dynamic owners, Mr and Mrs York of York. The Friends of the Mansion House welcomed us to the city of Doncaster, and one of the warmest welcomes we received was at Oakwell Manor. One of the pleasures of being welcomed by these Friends groups is that we were instantly amongst old friends. Friends indeed do look after Friends. Our pre-conference trips are an excellent way to be introduced to an area of the UK you may not be familiar with and to enjoy a journey with fellow BAFM members. This coming autumn, before our conference at Wisbech, we will have a few days to explore this culturally



and architecturally rich part of East Anglia, a land of great houses, gardens, churches and much more. Details of the trip will be sent in early summer.

Before we head to the Fenlands of East Anglia we are headed to Lisbon in April and London in June. In Lisbon we will visit some of the city's internationally great museums, including the Gulbenkian, churches and cultural sites. We will also visit the nearby towns of Sintra, the former Royal summer capital, and the old fishing port of Cascais. We will be welcomed by the Portuguese Association of Friends of Museums. Our London visit will have a garden theme with visits to the Chelsea Physic Garden and Kew Gardens. At Kew we will have the chance to admire the work of

the great 19th century architect Decimus Burton whilst in Chelsea we will have the opportunity to visit the home of the high Victorian man of letters Thomas Carlyle. As always, our trips are a way to support and meet other members of BAFM in a congenial atmosphere. For further details or queries regarding these trips please contact Daniel Calley at djcalley@talk21.com.



The Rockingham Mausoleum and Wentworth Woodhouse

Regional event, 30th November 2023; Southeast/Western Counties

BAFM's Southeast, Western Region's group staged their annual get-together at the Willis Museum & Sainsbury Gallery, Basingstoke on 30th November 2023.

Friends from Alton's Curtis Museum and Allen Gallery, Fordingbridge Museum, Reading Museum, the Willis Museum and Southampton's Museums, Archives and Galleries enjoyed a few hours informally sharing news and refreshments, project presentations and discussing mutually relevant issues, finishing with an informed guided tour of the museum.

Jenny Stevens, Willis Museum's Manager, welcomed the group and set the scene with an illustrated talk on the history of the museum and future plans. Tim Craven, SE/W's Co-ordinator gave a report on the proceedings of the recent, Doncaster national conference and recommended attending the 2024 conference at Wisbech.

Each friends' group gave short presentations on a subject of their choice and these included Fordingbridge's complex manoeuvrings of combining their 2 charitable trusts, the museum governance which is entirely volunteer run with the friends group, in order to streamline operations and avoid resource-consuming duplication; Reading's website issues and their publishing initiatives to help with museum shop income; Alton's Friends' history

leaflets that have been disseminated for many years on a host of local subjects and which enrich the museum shop content; Basingstoke's substantial and ring-fenced special fund for the future refurbishment of the Story of Basingstoke collection display; and Southampton's student event initiative in partnership with Cultural Services and local universities and colleges on careers in the sector and volunteering.

If the idea of the day was to pinch and adapt the good ideas of others and give and take advice for shared problems, as well as meet and network with new friends - and share a joke, then the day was a great success and is to be recommended to others.

Tim Craven
Regional Co-ordinator Southeast/West





It was with great sadness that we heard of the recent death of Nigel Hudson, long term editor of the Newsletter of The Friends of Oakwell Hall and Park. Nigel and his wife Lesley had regularly produced an interesting, informative, and entertaining publication which allowed the members of the group to keep up to date with developments. Winners of the Newsletter of the Year Award on several times, their publication was awarded a Certificate of Commendation in the Newsletter of the Year Competition 2023. Our thoughts are with Lesley and the rest of Nigel's family and friends at this difficult time.

Dave Adgar



Join us!

Are you friendly? Want to meet like minded people and make new friends? Can you use your skills to champion the place of volunteering in the cultural sector?

If you can answer 'Yes!' to all these questions, then BAFM is the place for you. We have several Regional Coordinators roles vacant. The role is the backbone of BAFM and the people who fill these roles act as a first point of contact between BAFM and its members. If you would like more details, contact Jean Knight , National Coordinator by e-mail Irvineknight@btinternet.com

Micro Volunteering:

We always have roles available to those who cannot commit on a regular basis. If you are a student at University or a career changer who wishes to get an insight into the cultural sector, then BAFM could be for you!

BAFM
British Association of Friends of Museums

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Vacancies

Regional Co-Ordinators form the backbone of BAFM. We currently have vacancies in the following areas; the North East and West Midlands. If you would like more information about the roles available please contact *Jean Knight* our National Co-Ordinator on irvineknight@btinternet.com.

We still require a Treasurer for BAFM. If you are interested in this role, please contact *Dan Calley*, our Chair, on djcalley@talk21.com

