

BAFM

British Association of Friends of Museums
Journal

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WELCOME TO LORD REAY

British Association of Friends of Museums



It is a pleasure to take on the reins as President of the Association following the untimely death of Lord Cormack, a colleague of mine in the House of Lords for whom I had the greatest respect. Patrick was an exemplary public servant over the course of several decades. When Daniel Calley asked me to pick up the mantle I was delighted to agree to his request.

My career background has been in the financial services sector as an investment banker in New York and London for institutions such as Robert Fleming & Co. and JP Morgan. Subsequently, I founded a boutique corporate finance firm, Montrose Partners which focussed on finding investment for international growth businesses. Following a thirty-year career in finance, I took the opportunity to become an active working hereditary peer in the House of Lords in 2019.

My interest in museums derived as a child whilst staying at our family home in the Netherlands and frequently visiting the marvellous Dutch masters and post impressionists in the Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, as well as the Mauritshuis in The Hague.

Our family moved back to the UK over 50 years ago and culture and heritage has played a significant role in my life. As Chief of the Mackay clan, whose historical base is in Sutherland on the North coast of Scotland, I recognise that maintaining the traditions of the Clan and keeping its legacy going are important for its members. The Strathnaver Museum in Bettyhill, Sutherland plays a valuable role in reinforcing historical traditions, as do museums up and down the British Isles.

I very much look forward to meeting you at the Conference later in the year.

With best wishes,

Aeneas Reay

Chair's Report



Dear fellow Friends,

At the most recent meeting of the European group of the World Federation of Friends of Museums in Paris we welcomed a new member, Nadine Panayot of the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut. After a long absence it was delightful to once more have a representative from Lebanon. This is part of a wider effort to engage with Friends groups throughout the Middle East. What Dr Panayot shared with us was something of the challenges that museums in parts of the world that do not enjoy our stability encounter. Several years ago a major explosion in the Port of Beirut caused significant damage to the old centre of the city, including the University Archaeological Museum. One particular cabinet containing ancient glass toppled with its contents smashed into thousands of minute shards. What followed was a heroic international effort to repair the seemingly unrepairable. In this case, Humpty Dumpty was put together again. It reminded me of all the tiny efforts of Friends throughout the UK and the world which when combined create, preserve and have a massive impact.

Elsewhere in this journal you will find a review of Ann Denham's Tolson Memorial Museum. It is also a timely reminder of how individuals and communities have created and sustained our museums.

There is somewhat a universal appeal of such histories, as the history of an individual museum is part of the history of all of our museums. We are more alike than different. Without the individuals and without the groups which support them British museums will not have a future. If you have a history of your own museum, or of your Friends group, we would love to have a copy. It is time that the history of Friends groups started to be recorded and memorialised.

The World Federation of Friends of Museums is holding its 2026 General Assembly in Athens 23-27 April. This is an opportunity to meet fellow Friends from all corners of the world and to share our successes, challenges, inspirations and solutions. You are most welcome to come to Athens for the conference and there will be a full program for both participants and for those just interested in the cultural visit. I can promise that you will return inspired and with new friendships.

Sincerely,

Daniel Calley

Chairman

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Our cover image

*Bargate
Southampton*



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

BAFM Annual Conference 2025 in Bristol

The Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives turned out in force to welcome delegates from across the country to the 2025 BAFM Annual Conference at M Shed, Bristol's dynamic dockside museum dedicated to the city's rich and complex history.

The day centred on a theme that felt well matched to Bristol's character: Who do we represent? Diversity and inclusion in Friends groups and in the heritage we support.

The conference opened with a welcome from Dan Calley, BAFM Chairman, followed by an inspiring address from The Lord-Lieutenant of the City and County of Bristol, Mrs Peaches Golding OBE, His Majesty's representative in the city. Speaking with warmth and conviction, she highlighted the essential role of diversity and inclusion in shaping cultural life and community well-being, and the vital contribution of voluntary groups like museum Friends in championing these values.

Philip Walker, Head of Culture and Creative Industries for Bristol City Council, then welcomed delegates to M Shed — a venue he described as uniquely suited to the conference theme, given its focus on the stories of Bristol and its diverse population. He also emphasised the indispensable role of volunteers in animating the museum's work and expressed deep appreciation for their dedication across the heritage sector.

The first formal presentation, Displaying Contentious History: What Can We Learn from Colston's Statue?, was led by Linda Coode, Head of Collections at Bristol Museums, and Professor Shawn Sobers of UWE Bristol. Together, they offered a compelling behind-the-scenes look at the creation of M Shed's acclaimed Protest Display, shortlisted for the 2025 Museums + Heritage Award for Permanent Exhibition of the Year. The session explored the toppling of the Colston statue during a 2020 Black Lives Matter protest and its subsequent acquisition by the museum. Linda reflected on the collaborative processes required to navigate such sensitive material, while

Shawn drew on his research into the legacies of slavery and his experience as a documentary producer and photographer to illuminate the power of personal narratives in shaping public understanding.

The second session, Embedded Inclusion: How the RWA Transformed Its Core Community, was presented by Alison Bevan, former Director of the Royal West of England Academy of Art (RWA). Alison shared the story of a decade-long transformation at Bristol's first public art gallery and the UK's only regional Royal Academy. She described how the RWA opened itself up — quite literally — by creating a welcoming street-facing café and installing a new lift that also provided access to a previously hidden basement space. That space was reimagined as a free, inclusive play area for under-fives, removing barriers for families. Alison also outlined how the RWA broadened the appeal of its exhibitions and built strong relationships with diverse community groups, including refugees and care-home residents, through targeted workshops and consultation.

Since many of these initiatives were still taking root when Alison stepped down, delegates were pleased to hear from her successor, Ren Renwick, who shared encouraging updates on how the changes are flourishing and how the Academy's commitment to inclusivity continues to evolve.

After a welcome coffee break, Claire Byfield, Head of Supporter Engagement at the British Museum, delivered an energising session titled Forever Friends – Engaging Supporters of All Ages. Claire offered practical insights into how her team reimagines engagement, including the simple but effective idea of adapting children's activities for

adults — often with nothing more than a shift in tone. Her memorable observation that “there's often little difference between activities for children and those for adults other than a glass of wine” sparked lively lunchtime conversations. Claire also discussed the British Museum's focus on Families, Young Friends, and what she termed the Core Audience of older adults. Between these groups lies what she jokingly called “The Dead Zone,” where engagement drops sharply due to limited time and resources — a challenge that resonated with many delegates. Her advice: stay visible to this demographic but concentrate efforts where they have the greatest impact.

An extended lunch break offered delegates a chance to explore M Shed and the quayside. The conference coincided with the annual Docks Heritage Weekend, complete with demonstrations

of 1950s cargo handling using one of the original electric cranes. Visitors could also experience the museum's other working exhibits, including four additional cranes, three historic boats, and a fully operational steam railway.

After lunch, Kate Newnham, Senior Curator of Visual Arts at Bristol Museums, spoke about her team's long-standing collaborations with Chinese communities. Bristol Museum & Art Gallery hosts the Southwest's largest Lunar New Year celebration, co-created with local residents and university students. Kate shared how these partnerships have grown into meaningful, year-round cultural exchanges that enrich both the museum and the wider community.

A lively and thought-provoking panel discussion brought the speakers' contributions to a close. The presentation of the BAFM awards then followed, with Dan Calley, our Chair doing the honours.



Dan Calley presenting the BAFM Awards



Dan Calley and Jean Knight present a bouquet to Dr Liz Mackenzie to mark her long service to BAFM.

In the evening, delegates gathered at the Bristol Hotel for a drinks reception and dinner. After the meal, Marc Allum — antiques expert and long-standing specialist on BBC's Antiques Roadshow — entertained guests with stories from his eclectic collecting adventures and his talent for uncovering the unexpected.

The annual conference remains a highlight of the BAFM calendar, offering members the chance to

connect, exchange ideas, and draw inspiration from both speakers and fellow Friends groups. BAFM was able to break even on the cost of the conference and dinner thanks to the generous support of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives and several individual members, to whom we extend our sincere gratitude.

Sue Thurlow
Chair, Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives

Submitting an article to the editor

BAFM are keen to include as many reports from our member groups as possible. To submit an article, please send it as an attachment addressed to the e-mail nrwspeard@outlook.com. The font to be used is Times New Roman

with a font size of 12. Any photographs should be submitted as separate attachments in the same way as the body of the article.

Dave Adgar
Journal Editor

53rd BAFM Annual Conference Southampton 3rd October 2026

The Friends of Southampton's Museums Archives & Galleries look forward to welcoming you to Southampton at the beginning of October for BAFM's annual conference.

Southampton, a major port city and gateway to the world is steeped in history and home to a beautiful and internationally renowned public art gallery.

Many have passed through Southampton on their way overseas unaware that a stay would be unexpectedly

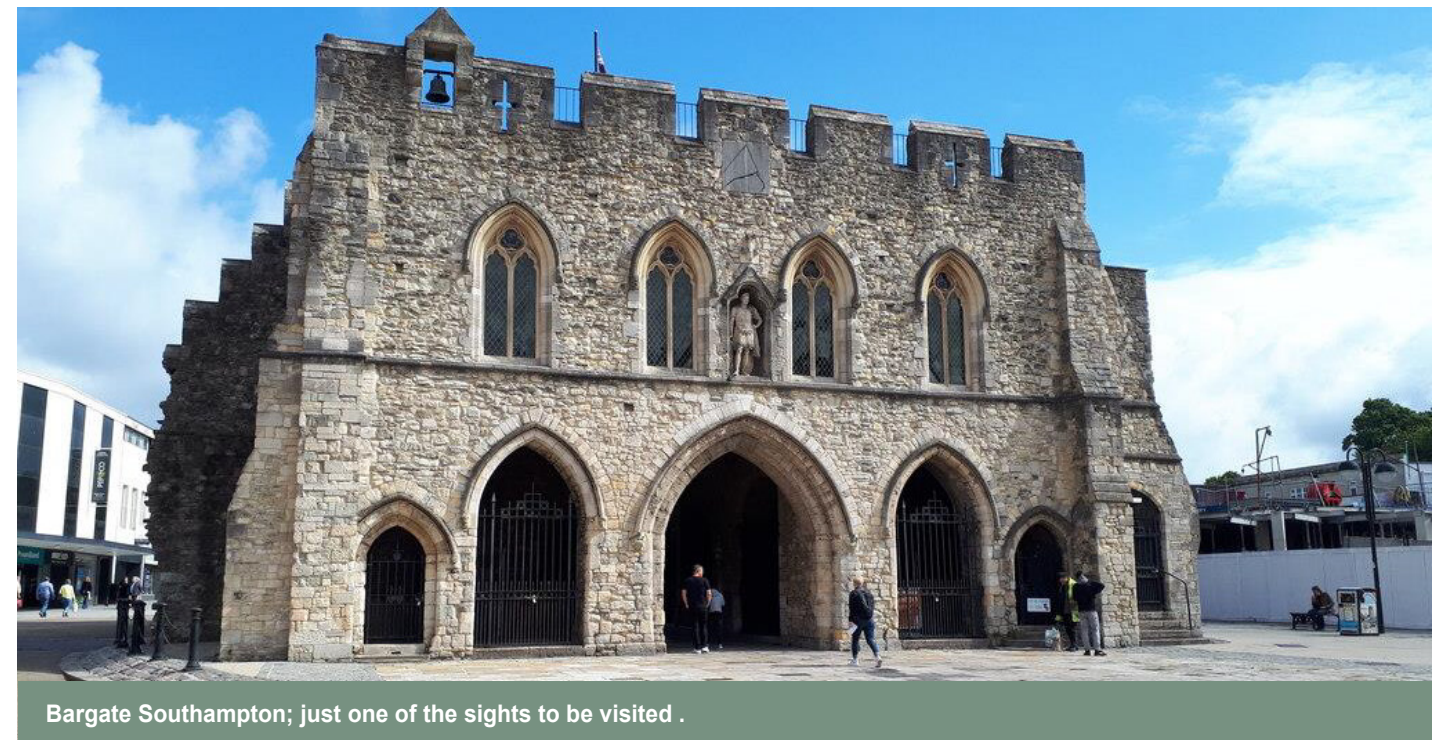
and richly rewarded. Such famous national stories as the RMS Titanic tragedy, the Pilgrim Fathers and the Mayflower, the age of the great liners, the notorious French raid of 1338, spark of the 100 years war, the Earl of Cambridge plot of 1415 (Shakespeare's Henry V), birthplace of the Supermarine Spitfire, the American HQ for the D Day landings in 1944, and

the first arrival of the Windrush generation are all associated with Southampton.

The conference will be staged in the recently refurbished City Art Gallery's lecture theatre in the heart of the cultural quarter that includes the SeaCity Museum, the University of Southampton's John Hansard Gallery, the Mayflower Theatre and the Guildhall. The City Art Gallery's collection is Designated as possessing pre-eminent national significance (as is the Archaeology collection). It can tell the story of western art from the Renaissance to the present. The smaller old master collection gives context to the major element of British 20th century and contemporary progressive art, which is particularly strong in Post-Impressionism,

Surrealism, post-war St Ives art and the Turner Prize.

The theme for the conference is 'partnership working'. Presentations and discussions will demonstrate that the sum is greater than the parts and that organisations of different aims and cultures working together to realise a shared objective can greatly enrich projects through new ideas, knowledge and expertise as well as being a hugely satisfying experience for all parties. Speakers will include Carolyn Abel, Culture and Tourism Manager, Sarah Newman, Director, The Russell-Cotes Museum & Art Gallery, Mia Delve, Curator and Programme Manager, aspace arts and Gods House Tower, and Wendy Stokes and Ally Hayes of Southampton



Bargate Southampton; just one of the sights to be visited .

Heritage Network. We will also incorporate a breakout session where delegates in groups can discuss experiences of partnership working successes, innovation and challenges which will be shared with the conference. Now a major container port, Southampton is home to 2 universities, the National Oceanographic Centre, the Ordnance Survey, the Maritime Coastguard Agency and is a vibrant, progressive

and multicultural city. Associated events will include a drinks reception at Gods House Tower on Friday evening, a guided tour of collection displays in the Art Gallery (above the lecture theatre) after the conference and a tour of the historic city on Sunday morning. As well as Gods House Tower other museums well worth a visit are Tudor House, English Heritage's Medieval Merchants House and Solent Skies. As a

bonus, nearby there are other significant cultural centres such as Winchester, Salisbury, Portsmouth and Chichester as well as the wonderful and scenic New Forest.

Tim Craven
The Friends of Southampton's
Museums, Archives and
Galleries

Introducing BAFM's new Youth Ambassador

Members who were able to attend the BAFM Conference in Wisbech in 2024, may remember the concerns voiced about the lack of presence on social media platforms of our organisation. I'm pleased to announce that we have been fortunate enough to recruit a young student who will be fulfilling this role for BAFM. Theone Chan has kindly sent me a short biography to introduce herself, together with a photograph illustrating her involvement in a project to highlight the dangers of throat cancer which she completed in partnership with the local NHS.

I am Theone, BAFM's new Youth Ambassador. I am 20 years old, a young artist, and deeply passionate about art and creativity. I am also a crochet master, bringing patience, precision, and a love of making to everything I do. I am committed to making museums more inclusive, relevant, and engaging for younger generations. In my role, I will represent young people's perspectives and encourage participation in museum spaces. I am particularly focused on enhancing BAFM's digital presence through social media, using these platforms to broaden engagement, support community connections, and ensure museums remain accessible and inspiring for all.



Theone Chan

In Celebration of the European Day of Friends of Museums.

This year to celebrate the European Day of the Friends of Museums I visited the Fan Museum at Greenwich in South London.

The Friends had arranged a lecture, reception and private view of the latest Fan Museum's exhibition, Fans in the Age of Jane Austen.

The Exhibition, not only commemorates the 250 years since Jane Austen's birth, which of course is extremely topical this year and displays many fans of the period between 1775 to 1817, the years of Jane's life, but the fans offer so much more. They bear witness to those years of remarkable change in society, a period of wars and revolution. The American War of Independence commenced during the year of her birth, followed by the French Revolution which in turn was swiftly followed by the Napoleonic Wars.

At home Jane was experiencing the Industrial Revolution. Trees were being replaced by tall menacing chimneys, the hedge rows by rows of crowded tenement blocks and the cottage industries by vast factories. The design of fans and the pattern on fan leaves reflect these changes and there was a shift in the fan-makers use of materials, vellum was increasingly replaced by paper for the folding fan leaves, and for the supporting sticks, bone and wood often replaced ivory.

The Exhibition, so interestingly devised by Vidita Gupta, the Museum Assistant, and aided by the museum team, was very informatively introduced by Vidita. It is divided into various topics. The design



Fan; Hussar Kissing, England, c. 1810, photograph courtesy of the Fan Museum

on the earlier period fans portray patriotism, for example the Kings and Queens of England, George III's return to Health, and the Marriage of Louis XVI to Marie Antoinette. There is the sense of nostalgia as the period progresses for the pastoral scenes, with a family group set in a landscape with the villa in the background, and in the far distant the city skyline. Also county houses and places such as Bath where Jane took the waters are portrayed. War is also depicted, typically that of The Victor; The Duke of Wellington fan, and the ivory guard of the brisé fan which is fashion to look like a Flintlock Gun. Britain's place in world trade at this time is also not forgotten., which both display, a view of the Canton Hong on the leaf, and our imports, such as the beautiful Chinese ivory cockade and the brisé fans are also exhibited.

But where would the exhibition be without the portrayal of tension between romance and financial considerations during the period and in Jane's novels. Herself choosing to sacrifice an extremely comfortable married life for her own independence. We see the depiction of a Hussar kissing a young lady on a fan, and the Hand Screen, wittily portraying the characters from Jane's novels.

The lecture given by Mary Kitson, a fan historian, focused on the relationship between the changing styles in the design of fans to compliment the changing fashion in dress during the period. At the beginning the dress of the wealthy clearly defined them. Opulence in the amazing amount of rich material needed for a lady's gown which constructed their figure. But as the period progresses woman's natural form is clearly on

display, much to the delight of the cartoonists, with the Regency dress in soft muslins imported from India. The fans decrease in size to reflect this shift in fashion.

This event at the Fan Museum brought together so many Friends and was an extremely pleasant and informative way to celebrate the Friends' European Heritage Day.

For the Jane Austen aficionados, and those who are interested, the British Association of Friends of Museums are holding their national annual conference in Southampton in early October 2026, a city very well known to Jane.

Just before the Conference, our Chairman, Dan Calley will be organising a sojourn, from Tuesday 29th September until 2nd October, during which time the area will be explored and there will be a City Walk led by a Blue Badge tour guide, who will certainly not miss an Austen abode.

Contact details:

Dan Calley's are on the back cover of this Journal, and the Conference Organiser and Coordinator for the SE Western Counties,

Tim Craven's details, although the Conference theme is not directly linked to Jane Austen's story, are also on the back cover of this Journal.

Jean Knight
National C-Ordinator BAFM

Tolson Memorial Museum: How Ravensknowle House became the Museum of Huddersfield

Britain is one of the most important progenitors of the modern museum. Many of these started out as 18th century private collections, such as that of Sir Hans Sloane which became the basis of the British Museum, and those from country houses.

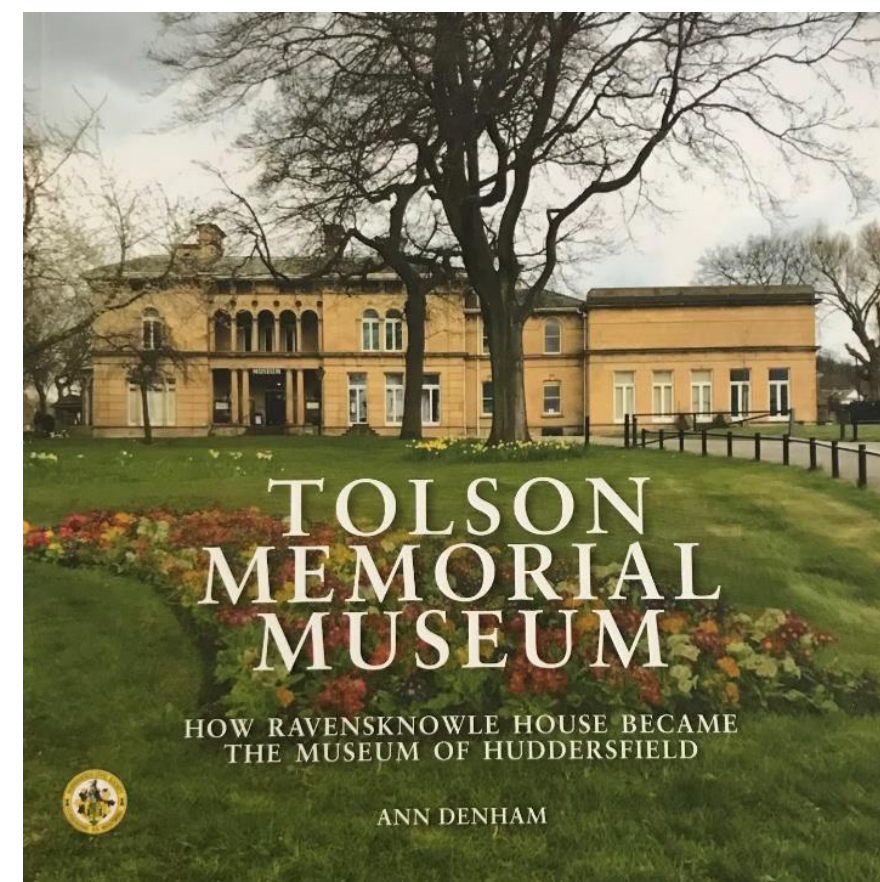
In the 19th and continuing into the early years of the 20th century private philanthropy and collections combined with public philanthropy, civic pride, self-help and an energetic sense of national progressiveness helped to create scores of museums and educational establishments throughout the British Isles. Each of these creations are now part of our history and progress. It is a great source of pride and achievement that so many of these still exist, often with the existential assistance of Friends groups. Any recording of this history is most welcome and adds one more thread to our knowledge of the whole.

Ann Denham has written an excellent history of the Tolson Memorial Museum, Huddersfield which is a fine example of private and public philanthropy. It is of interest as the specific history of this particular museum and as such will be of importance to those living in and around Huddersfield. However, it is of much greater interest as much of its history is similar to that of museums throughout the country. In this it touches on the general development towards municipal museums throughout the nation and as such is a useful volume for anyone who wants to understand

the 19th and early 20th museum movement in Britain. There is also included the rise of the textile industry in the English midlands, specifically that centred on Huddersfield and a number of the individuals involved, railway development, the political impetus for local museums and the individuals who were responsible for the founding, designing and gathering of the collections for the Tolson Memorial Museum. From the perspective of the BAFM it is

most pleasing to see the work of the Friends of Tolson and Ravensknowle recognised. For such a concise book it covers much ground.

It is the pleasure of this book in that it combines the specific with the general. Therefore, it should be read far beyond the confines of those interested in the Museum of Huddersfield. There is a bit of the history of all of our museums in this fine book.



Travels with BAFM

Our most recent BAFM outing has been a visit to London in January where we had the opportunity to visit four diverse and important cultural sites.

We began with the Garden Museum, a fairly recent and dynamic arrival on the UK cultural scene; and so appropriate for a nation of gardeners. We have some of the finest gardens in the world and it is wonderful to have a national museum devoted to this art form. Next door is a very different national institution, Lambeth Palace the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Here we were after the new library, which is of world significance. Our visit to the Order of St John reminded us of the thousand year history of pilgrimages to the Holy Land and the modern role which the Order has in keeping us safe through St John Ambulance. The Order's Grand Prior is our Royal Patron, HRH Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Our visit ended with another venerable organisation, the Charterhouse. One of its many activities is to still offer alms houses to the needy. From one of the most recent additions to the nation's cultural life, to three of the most venerable, it was a welcome reminder of the richness of our history.

Last October we visited Bristol and the south Cotswolds. Here was another heady mix of history, art, architecture, culture, and some good food. Bristol is an easy to get to welcoming city with a number of museums and a vibrant cultural life. Nearby Bath was a nice contrast with a pleasantly sedate pace of life. We enjoyed visiting the wonderfully preserved Arts and Crafts Rodmarton Manor and will long remember the

Lowsley-Williams siblings of Chavenage House. They show that the English eccentric is alive and well and living in Gloucestershire.

Our next trip is to Verona, Mantua and Lake Garda in May. Here we will visit one of the earliest Grand Tour museums which the British did so much to foster. We will spend time in two of the most storied cities of the Italian Renaissance and some of the surrounding Veneto villas. If in Gloucestershire we found English eccentrics we will certainly come across the vestiges of one of the most famous Italian ones, Gabriele D'Annunzio and his Il Vittoriale degli Italiani.

At the end of September we will head to Southampton, where we will be holding our annual conference, to explore this great port city. We will also discover some of the surrounding neighbourhood in history rich Hampshire. This is an opportunity to discover another part of the United Kingdom, which you may not be familiar with. Details of the trip will be sent out nearer the time.

Dan Calley
BAFM Chair



BAFM in Bath, The Royal Crescent

Journal Design

Readers may remember that in a former edition of the BAFM Journal, I explained the choices I made on becoming editor as to how the publication was presented. The font size recommended by The Royal National Institute for the Blind is that a minimum of size 12 should be used to ensure that readers with restricted vision are more able to access the information included in each edition of the Journal. It is for a similar reason that most of each publication is presented using bold characters to make the characters more likely to stand out against the white background.

A reader has contacted me to discuss the use of Times New Roman as the standard font used throughout the magazine unless a group specifically asks for a variation on this for say titles and captions of photographs. It seems that there has been some research published that suggests that people with dyslexia may find that font difficult to decipher. I am exploring the issue to see what adaptations may be available to ensure the Journal is accessible to as many people as possible. Please feel free to let me know your thoughts by contacting me by e-mail at nrwspeaxard@outlook.com

From Dunhuang to Doncaster

Given that the theme of the BAFM Conference in Bristol was 'Inclusion and Diversity', it is appropriate to report on a joint project to promote that exact theme in this edition of the Journal.

Over two years ago, as BAFM Co-Ordinator for Yorkshire and the Humber, I began working with the Friends of Doncaster Museums and local community groups to develop a project highlighting the diaspora of the Chinese community from Northern China to the UK, in particular to Doncaster. This followed on from a member of the Friends, a professional artist named Olivia Pang being invited for the second time to work in China to record the images to be seen in the caves of Dunhuang on the edge of the Gobi Desert.

The caves were decorated with Buddhist images many centuries ago and are at risk of damage from

environmental factors facing their preservation. Readers may remember the article which appeared in a previous Journal outlining the work progressing on this vital conservation work undertaken by Olivia and her colleagues.

After much discussion and many planning sessions, it was decided to proceed on a project to display some of the images Olivia had produced, using the same methods currently being used by the National Academy of Arts in China. These would then be displayed in the Danum Gallery, Library and Museum, alongside other aspects of the local Chinese community. Olivia has recently been granted a visa to stay and work in the UK under the



Olivia examining one of the paintings in the caves she visited

'Global Talent' scheme administered by Arts Council England; it was deemed that her continued stay in Britain would enable her to develop her skills in the western tradition of arts practise whilst sharing her knowledge of traditional Chinese artistic endeavours with others already resident in the UK.

For her work on the images derived from the Dunhuang Caves, Olivia first prepared a board covered with hessian which was then layered with a clay mixture to give an impression of the textured surface of the original caves. This was finally completed with a layer of fine kaolin on which the images would be painted.

The pigments used were identical to those used in the original caves; powdered lapis lazuli for example, originating in Afghanistan is an extremely expensive material to use and has been ever since it was first used by artists in both China and the West. This seems a very appropriate material to highlight since it would have been one of the items traded along the 'Silk Road' beside which the Dunhuang caves can be found.



Olivia working on the images which will be distributed to museums across China and below with The Deputy Lord Lieutenant of South Yorkshire Bill McHugh MBE who opened the exhibition in Doncaster

The whole project was sponsored by King Asia Foods, a local firm which produces Chinese foods and employs over one and hundred and fifty local people. Kin Him Fong, the Chairman of the Board of the business is a member of The Friends of Doncaster Museums and he was able to produce information panels which explained the movement of the Hakka people from Northern China until they arrived in Doncaster just over one hundred years ago. Kin arranged for King Asia Foods to provide the refreshments for the opening event to launch the exhibition of 8th November. This was well attended by members of the Friends Group and a number of local dignitaries and opened by Bill McHugh, newly appointed Deputy Lord Lieutenant of South Yorkshire.

I opened this article by referring back to the theme of the BAFM Conference in Bristol. It seems appropriate to use this article to reflect on the theme of the upcoming conference in Southampton. There the theme will be 'Collaboration' or 'Partnership working'; this project serves as a model for what a Friends, working with partners, can achieve.

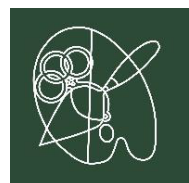
David Adgar FRSA
Regional Co-Ordinator
(Yorkshire and Humber)

Project Partners

With kind assistance from Neil McGregor Head of Exhibitions Heritage Doncaster



CHINESE ARTS
& HERITAGE



BAFM Young Museum Professional of the Year Award.

Kieran Foley-Hall is the 2025 recipient of the BAFM Young Museum Professional of the Year Award.

He works for Dundee Heritage Trust at the Verdant Works Museum. Dr Richard Irvine, Regional Coordinator for Scotland recently chatted with him about his background and ambitions for the future...



Kieran being presented with his award

'For my first birthday I was given an electric train set, a small tank engine and some wagons. I've been told even at one year old I could carefully start and stop the train, taking great pleasure in watching the little marvel operate. That love of steam and mechanisms has never left me, growing steadily throughout my youth. Some people bring stray animals home and beg to look after them, for me it was small steam toys, clockwork tinplate and large heavy lumps of iron!

I had a very forgiving mother! Inspired by Mark William's and Fred Dibnah's documentaries, the latter of which I was lucky enough to meet in my youth, I joined a model engineering club in my teens, the Scottish Model Engineering Trust. There I restored, built and drove all things steam, electric or diesel. I also developed my skills in machining and gathered quite a collection of antiquated machines in my mother's shed, as I said she was very forgiving!

During high school it was a beloved tech teacher who told me about a local aerospace company. To keep a long story short, I completed a 5-year apprenticeship with them, rotating throughout all the different departments including sheet metal, machining, non-destructive testing, plating and servicing. In my personal life, I kept pursuing heritage interests, working on everything from clockwork gramophones to vintage fountain pens. I then took a break from engineering, having achieved everything I wanted in the industry and explored the artistic and digital side of technology at Abertay University. It was during this time that I stumbled upon a job advertisement for the Verdant Works as a maintenance and technical support officer. That was back in 2022, and I have now been with the museum almost 4 years. During my time I have undertaken several large projects, such as reinstating the jute mill's steam whistle or "bummer" (now air operated), designing and building new exhibition spaces and maintaining and operating our 1801 Boulton and Watt steam engine (now run with an electric motor). During this time, I have also been involved in various ways with the Friends of Dundee Heritage Trust. From setting up their events, speaking at their Burns Suppers, and attending their excellent jazz concerts. Earlier this year, I was approached by the Friends to apply for the BAFM Young Museum Professional Award 2025. I was told in October that I was successful in my application. With the generous funds, I am planning to visit two museums and shadow various staff members to learn and build upon my skills in the heritage sector. One of the projects is to hopefully re-build a miniature steam engine which I am greatly looking forward to. I would like to thank the Friends of Dundee Heritage Trust and the British Association of Friends of Museums for helping deepen my knowledge and build my skills, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity and I am very grateful.'

Dundee Heritage Trust

Members may recall that in 2022, Dundee Heritage Trust hosted the BAFM Conference and attendees were able to visit the two sites the Trust cares for. Dundee is famous for the Jute industry which thrived during the nineteenth century, and the Verdant Works preserves this part of the city's history. Dundee also had close links to the whaling industry in the same period and was renowned for the ability to produce sturdy ships which were used in voyages of discovery, especially in the polar regions. It is appropriate that the ship used by Captain Robert Scott on his first Antarctic, The Discovery, is preserved next to the V & A Dundee. Naturally the site is named Discovery Point!

The British Association of Friends of Museums 2025 Awards.

In the last edition of the Journal, the results of the 'BAFM Newsletter of the Year' were announced' and I was pleased to welcome representatives of the joint winners to the Conference in Bristol to receive their Certificates of Merit from our Chair, Dan Calley. Both The Friends of the London Transport Museum and The Friends of Bristol Museums Galleries and Archives were worthy winners; as usual the standard of entries was very high!

In 2025, we continued to develop our partnership with the Marsh Charitable Trust to recognise the work of Friends Group overall. Last year, you may remember that Friends at Oakwell Hall and Park and Birmingham Museum were jointly recognised for their efforts and the award of £500 was split between them. Again, this year, it proved impossible to choose an outright winner and a number of entries were forwarded on to Brian Marsh OBE for him to make the final choice.

In the end, two joint winners were chosen:

The Friends of Blackburn Museum and The Friends of Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery operate to support their site in an area of social and economic decline. The town has a number of issues in terms of inclusion and the professional staff is small and as below, it would be unlikely to operate without the support of the Friends- they do support new acquisitions their emphasis is about the volunteering initiatives they undertake.

- Blackburn do this by arranging regular activities including;
- An annual programme of monthly meetings, October to June.

- fund-raising activities, e.g. coffee mornings and garden party.
- Activities such as visits to other museums and heritage sites.
- Promoting a free annual public lecture.
- A periodic newsletter which is also available free to the public. - runners up in the Newsletter of the Year Award 2025

The Friends also help the Museum by supporting purchases, conservation and display and providing information to visitors in the Museum.

Friends also help in several ways supporting visitor engagement with the collections, running a "Please Touch" table and leading museum tours. Two volunteers have given short lunchtime talks about specific items on display and are keen to continue and expand the project. The idea is to have a 20-minute talk during lunchtime enlarging on an item's significance beyond that possible with a label.

There is scope here to develop the audience: Blackburn is home to many people of South Asian heritage, and its collections contains

items relevant to that community; 30% of the population comes from this community the important collection of Orthodox icons is significant to refugees from, for example Ukraine.

An important part of the application process is obtaining a letter of support from a museum professional. In this case the letter indicated as below.

At the museum we are a small team and we see the Friends as an extension of the team that keep the museum running. They work with us in the variety of ways in which they support us to reach a wide audience and continue to develop both our collections and community engagement. This is visible in numerous ways from fundraising and supporting developments in the building financially by purchasing equipment and artworks. Each year the Friends purchase a piece from the Art Open for the collection which allows us to grow our contemporary collection as well as contributing to larger restoration projects.

Alongside this they are invaluable in volunteering their time and support whether it being a presence in a gallery, running handling tables, helping with the administration and installation of the annual Art Open or running talks and tours all of which is part of the reason that we have increased our visitor numbers by 20% in the last 2 years. For example, one volunteer who is found weekly in the art gallery, not only does he talk to visitors but has also provided knowledge and information on the collection which we did not previously have. Recently they have been part of the development of our Gallery of Sanctuary work, running tours and holding conversation with refugee and asylum seeker groups and individuals.

I hope any group considering entering the BAFM Awards Scheme will find this useful. I could wax lyrical about the other winners, Fordingbridge but there was a review of their history in the last Journal. Suffice to say the Brian Marsh was so impressed with both winners that he decided to award them £500 each rather than split the monetary ward. Please consider entering the 2026 Awards programme about which there are details later in this edition of the Journal.

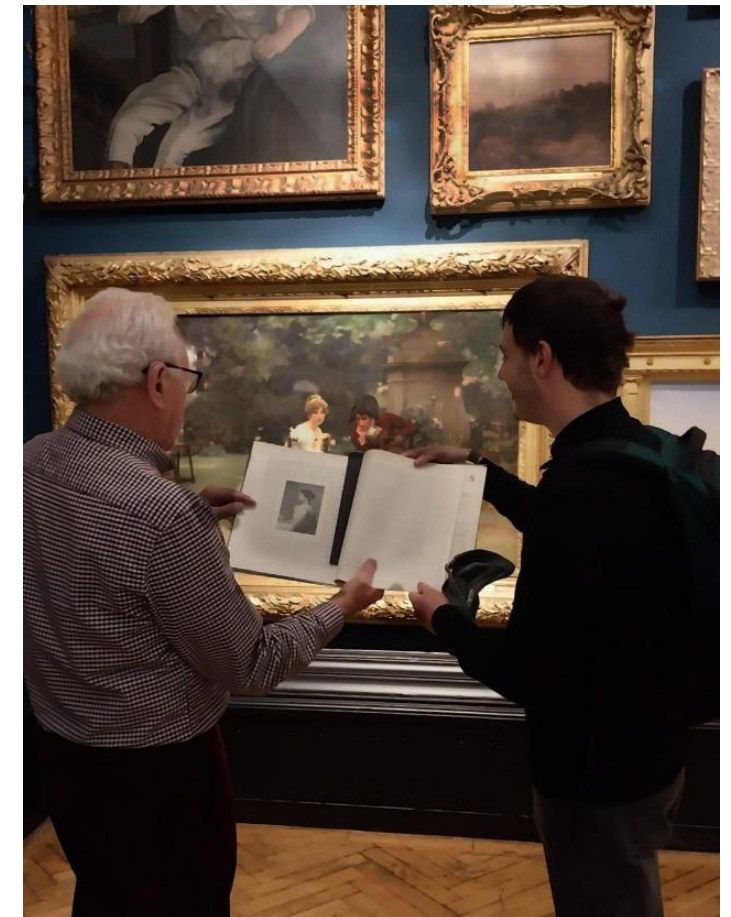
The Friends of Blackburn Museum and Gallery; From our perspective

The Friends of Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery is a moderately sized group of about 120 members. Founded in 1982, we are a registered charity which aims “to educate the public by promoting and supporting the Museum.”

We do so through a programme of monthly talks, a periodic newsletter, promoting a public lecture and volunteering to help the Museum serve the public. We also give financial support for purchases, conservation and display, organize fund-raising activities and arrange visits to other museums and heritage sites.

Having been runners up in the 2025 BAFTA newsletter award, we were encouraged to apply for the Friends of the Year award for the first time. Our application concentrated on volunteer activities aimed at increasing public awareness of the Museum and its collections and we were astonished and delighted to be joint winners.

Our monthly meetings on a variety of topics are open to anyone for a small charge; the newsletter, which includes coverage of Museum collections and activities, is available free to museum visitors and on our website. Volunteer Friends help with the administration of entries to the annual Art Open exhibition. Since 2016 we have sponsored the annual David Shipway public lecture, free and open to all, in memory of a much-valued past member.



Museum Friends' volunteer explaining the finer points of one of the pictures on show in the Victorian Gallery



A Museum tour with the Community Harmony group of refugees and asylum seekers.

The Friends’ website has events, news, articles and downloadable current and past newsletters. It has a prominent link to the Museum’s own website and a live feed from it.

We help in a number of ways to support visitor engagement with the collections. One of our members spends an afternoon most weeks talking to visitors about the paintings on show. His knowledge has grown into a valuable resource for the Gallery and visitors. He contributes well-researched articles to the newsletter about pictures in the collection. Friends lead museum tours and give lunchtime talks about specific items on display. We would like to expand the last activity, giving

30-minute talks during lunchtime enlarging on displayed items’ beyond the possibilities of a label. Apart from the value of increasing appreciation of the collections, there is scope here to grow the audience: the museum houses an important collection of Orthodox icons which are significant to refugees from, for example Ukraine; the town is home to many people of South Asian heritage and the Museum contains significant material relevant to that community, including 18th century illuminated Islamic manuscripts.

We know we can help to attract a new audience and positively improve people’s appreciation of their museum and surroundings. In a recent encouraging

experience, a support group for refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants had a successful museum tour with a volunteer and requested a follow-up town centre tour. A closer relationship resulted between volunteer and support group which promises to bear fruit in future, while also supporting the Museum’s contribution to Blackburn with Darwen’s application for ‘Council of Sanctuary’ status for its long record of welcoming asylum seekers.

During the past couple of years, our efforts have directly connected with perhaps two or three hundred visitors. While this might not seem like very many, I have always believed that museum

visitors should be evaluated not by how many of them there are, but how long they spend with the exhibits.

Many thanks to BAFM and the Marsh Charitable Trust for this award. The recognition is gratifying, and we hope and anticipate that as a result, the Museum and the Friends will be encouraged to maintain and increase these activities.

Mike Millward
The Friends of Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery

World Federation of Friends of Museums

The WFFM General Assembly for 2026 will be held in Athens, from April 23rd to 27th. Athens has increasingly become a tourist destination and so provides an excellent based to examine the pressures on museums. The Assembly will start on Thursday morning with a colloquium on the general topic of challenges thmuseums are meeting in an ever-changing world. The colloquium will be open to all participants and local museum professionals.

Meetings will then run from Thursday to Sunday, requiring four nights’ accommodation. On Friday and Saturday, there will be Council meetings, combined with visits to local museums. A program for non-participating companions will be organised.

BAFM Newsletter of the Year Award 2026

One of the great pleasures of volunteering for BAFM is receiving the entries for the annual 'Newsletter of the Year'. In 2026, we are slightly altering the rules of entry to reflect developments in the digital world. Usually, BAFM has requested a hard copy version of any entry to the Newsletter of the Year; this year, either hard copies or digital versions are acceptable.

The cut-off date for receiving entries will be 30th June by post to

David Adgar,
6 Winnery Close
Tickhill
Doncaster
DN11 9JT

Digital versions need to be sent to nrwspeard@outlook.com and MUST arrive by 4pm on the 30 June.

The judging panel will consist of Richard Irvine, our Regional Coordinator for Scotland and myself.

As usual , the winning entry will receive 2 free tickets of attend the British Association of Friends of Museums, to be held in Southampton in the autumn (each ticket worth £75). In the event of a tie for the winner each of the two groups will receive one ticket each.

Criteria for judging

- I have asked recently about the criteria used to judge the individual entries to the awards. Judgement on these types of competitions can be quite subjective, but the following are always taken into account
- The variety of material included in the Newsletter; does it reflect the programmes run by the group, both past and future?
 - Presentation: larger groups may have access to greater funds to have professional print runs despatched whilst smaller groups may have a more homespun approach. Both approaches have their merits and are considered
 - Mention of BAFM; we are keen for our member groups to spread information about BAFM and the benefits of being a member; we always like to see a mention of our Conferences and also any awards which a group may have earned
 - 'Learned articles'; the judges are always happy to see articles produced on subjects related to the site the group supports; these articles may be by members of the group or members of the staff who work at the institution supported by the members of the BAFM affiliated group

PLEASE CONSIDER ENTERING THIS AWARD IN 2026; PREVIOUS WINNERS HAVE BEEN PROUD TO BE RECOGNISED FOR THEIR EFFORTS AND THERE IS THE ADDED BONUS OF ATTENDING AN INFORMATIVE AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

Dave Adgar
Vice Chair BAFM



Newsletter of the Year Award 2026

Please complete this form and return with copies of your Newsletter submissions either by post or digitally to arrive by 30th June 2026

David Adgar, 6 Winnery Close Tickhill Doncaster DN11 9JT

Or digitally nrwspeard@outlook.com

Name and Address (and e-mail if possible) of the person submitting the entry

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Name and location of your group.....

Outline of the reasons for your submission

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The letter of support is from

Signed..... Date.....

Individual Volunteer of the Year Award 2026

This year sees the introduction of a new award to be made by The British Association of Friends of Museums. We are all aware of the immense contributions made by members of our affiliated groups to the development and smooth running of their Friends Group. The Marsh Charitable Trust are especially keen to recognise the work of individuals and have agreed to award a cheque for £250 to the person deemed to have offered the most during their membership of BAFM or one of its affiliated groups. We have in mind a range of roles which could be recognised. It may be for someone who has for many years acted in an official capacity or simply someone who has provided tea/coffee and biscuits at meetings for their group. Alternatively, it may be someone who has made a significant input over a shorter period. Members may recall a few years ago when BAFM awarded an ‘Impact Award’ for groups. In a way, this new award seeks to replicate this type of award but this time for an individual.

There are three sources of recommendations for this award;

- It may be that someone who volunteers directly for BAFM may be recommended by anyone associated with BAFM or its affiliated groups
- A member of an affiliated group may be recommended by either another member/s
- A member of a volunteering programme run by a museum with a Friends Group affiliated to BAFM (The recommendation must come from the Friends Group)

To submit a recommendation for this award, the judges will accept a simple letter of recommendation (of no more than 2 sides of A4). Please include details of the person you are nominating and why they would make worthy winners. Also complete the form which goes along with the submission

Please complete this submission either by post or digitally by 30th June 2026

David Adgar, 6 Winnery Close Tickhill Doncaster DN11 9JT

Or digitally nnewspeard@outlook.com



In association with the Marsh Charitable Trust

Individual Volunteer of the Year Award

Name and Address of the person submitting the recommendation

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Name of the volunteer being recommended.....

.....

Name of the group the volunteer is associated with.....

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Signed..... Date.....

NB This form can be downloaded from the BAFM Website

BAFM Friends of the Year Award 2026

Guidance Notes for applicants

BAFM wants to recognise the exceptional work that Friends Groups are doing through our latest BAFM Friends of the Year Award 2026. We are proud to announce their continuing partnership with The Marsh Charitable Trust who will help select the winners of the competition

- Award winners will receive £500 kindly provided by The Marsh Charitable Trust and each shortlisted organisation will receive a Certificate of Merit.
- A follow up article in the BAFM Journal will be published, promoting your group, showcasing your work, and sharing your ideas and best practice.

The Award, in association with The Marsh Charitable Trust is open to all groups of Friends affiliated to BAFM. There are several criteria applicant groups must fulfil:

- Applicants must be members of BAFM.
- Friends’ Groups can apply themselves or be nominated by the museum or heritage site they support.
- Applicants can be Friends Groups of any size as it is the impact of the work that is considered, not simply the scale or number of pounds raised. Examples of work recognised by the Award have included: fundraising, engaging new audiences at the museum, Filling gaps in museum provision or service and preserving local heritage or the environment

The Award application form is available to download from our website: www.bafm.co.uk

Applications are accepted from 1st March 2026 to 30th June 2026

You will need to send your application form, a letter of support from the museum your groups supports and one supporting document or photograph that is relevant to the application.

The Award short list will be announced in the September edition of the BAFM Journal, and the winner and runners up will be notified privately before the public announcement at the 53rd BAFM Conference and AGM in Southampton

Although applications will generally be submitted by digital means, if your group would prefer to submit by hard copy, please contact nrwspeard@outlook.com .When completing the application form be concise and to the point but make sure you give us some facts and figures and tell us why this activity is important. Together with your application form, groups must submit a letter of support written by a staff member of the museum or heritage site they support. The name and role of person writing the letter with brief details of the museum or heritage organisation should be included. Again, this letter should be clear and concise.



In Association with the Marsh Charitable Trust

Friends of the Year Award 2026

Please complete this form and return with copies of your Newsletter submissions either by post or digitally to arrive by 30th June 2026

David Adgar, 6 Winnery Close Tickhill Doncaster DN11 9JT

Or digitally nrwspeard@outlook.com

Name and Address (and e-mail if possible) of the person submitting the entry

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Name and location of your group

Outline of the reasons for your submission

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The letter of support is from.....

Signed..... Date.....



The friends of Gallery Oldham.

The story so far – from inception to First Birthday... and beyond.

The Friends of Gallery Oldham are a group of volunteers who aim to share their passion, enjoyment and appreciation for local heritage, art and culture with the wider community in Oldham.

The group support Gallery Oldham in its mission to inspire, educate, and entertain the public, as well as assisting the Gallery with publicising and promoting their events and exhibitions, as they believe that art can have a positive impact on people's wellbeing.

Sean Baggaley, Principal Arts & Heritage Officer at Gallery

Oldham, said "On several occasions in the history of Gallery Oldham, staff had talked about a Friends Group, but nobody had grasped the nettle to get things moving. It was through a conversation in the summer of 2023 with Action Together that we realised they could offer the support we needed to get things moving. They had the experience and the enthusiasm to take it to the next step."

Action Together are the infrastructure organisation for the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sectors in Oldham and Jane Glaysher-White is their Community Development Officer who drove the Friends idea forward. She said "Gallery Oldham sought my assistance in establishing a Friends group. We hosted a number of community consultation events,

where it became evident there was a strong desire for such an organisation. By listening to the community's desires and working closely with a dedicated group of members, we were able to develop a clear vision and goals. I'm incredibly proud to have contributed to the creation of The Friends of Gallery Oldham which is already contributing to the gallery's success. Witnessing the community's enthusiasm for the project and seeing the group come together has been truly rewarding. I look forward to supporting their future endeavours."

During September and October 2023, four consultation events were held and almost 50 Oldham residents answered the call by showing an interest in creating a Friends group for Gallery Oldham.

Chairman of the Friends group, Roger Hindle, said "Following the initial discussions, a small working group met a number of times to bring the idea forward which resulted in the creation and adoption of a constitution, appointment of a Management Committee and, with the help of our friends at Action Together, created a logo for the group."

The Friends of Gallery Oldham were formally launched at a special event at the Gallery on 14th March 2024.

Roger said, "A lot of time and hard work went into getting us to the stage where we were officially launched. It was a very exciting time, both for the Gallery and the new Friends Group".

Everyone who attended the consultation events received an invitation to the launch and over a dozen attended, with all of them signing up for membership on the night.

Local artist, Steve Whitworth was in attendance and created a sketched record of the evening. These sketches were later framed and went on display at Gallery Oldham as part of their "Oldham Open" exhibition which ran from September to November 2024.

Membership of the Friends group for the first year was only £5 and open to anyone over the age of 18. It was decided to have a small membership fee to entice people to the group. Also, during the first year we knew we would not have too many overheads and costs.

Very soon after the launch, the group created a presence on both Facebook and Instagram, and Gallery Oldham gave them a dedicated page on their website.



Steve's Sketches framed and ready for display



Friends Chairman Roger Hindle and BAFM's Margaret Stebbing looking at the "One Seven Five" exhibition

In July 2024, Roger and Sean hosted a visit to Gallery Oldham from the former BAFM Northwest Regional Coordinator, Margaret Stebbing. Margaret said, "It was a very enjoyable, informative and useful visit".

In November 2024, Roger hosted a visit by a number of members from The Friends of Rochdale Ary Gallery and in the Summer of 2025, we arranged a tour for the first-year art students from Oldham College.

Regular newsletters have been produced and distributed to members advising what both the Friends and Gallery Oldham have been doing as well as what is coming up. Gallery Oldham have also offered a 10% discount to members from their shop.

A number of "member only" events have been held with more arranged for future months. The idea for these special events is they are things which normally would not be available to the public. A number have been connected to Gallery exhibitions, including presentations about how the exhibition was created and the decisions that were made in the exhibition planning. Others have included talks and presentations from local artists or have just been an informal event giving an opportunity for members to meet and socialise with each other.

The first of these evenings was held in August 2024 where Sean Baggaley gave members a more detailed insight into some of the items on display in the "One Seven Five" exhibition which was "an incomplete history of

Oldham in 175 objects" and celebrated the 175th anniversary of the granting of the charter creating the Borough of Oldham in 1849. Following the tour of the exhibition, Sean then took the group to the art store where they looked at some of the items and artefacts currently not on display.

One of the main objectives for The Friends of Gallery Oldham is to raise funds, through events and grant applications, to support the Gallery's projects and initiatives, such as acquiring new artworks, restoring existing artefacts and supporting local artists.

Every other year Gallery Oldham hosts an "Open" exhibition where anyone who works, lives or studies in Oldham are invited to display their artwork, whatever form that may take. The Gallery always aims to purchase a piece of work from this extremely popular event and in this instance The Friends Group were happy and available to help. The painting has been on permanent display at the Gallery since its acquisition.

This acquisition was funded from two main sources, those being from general donations, a "Made by Members" sale and raffle and a "Go Fund Me" page which was created and remains live ready for future projects.

The group also joined "Easyfundraising" which, as the name suggests is an easy way to raise funds for free every time you shop online. Signing up to Easyfundraising is simple and quick, it only takes two minutes. As soon as you are signed up you can purchase from thousands of online retailers at no extra cost to the individual. The retailer makes a donation directly to your chosen cause. Many popular companies are part of the scheme. It is easy to check to see if retailers you buy from are on the list.

In December 2024, thanks to a local business, Inclusive Bytes, we launched our own website which gives information about The Friends and Gallery Oldham as well as all our newsletters and details of upcoming

events. There is also the option to make a donation via our GoFundMe account, sign up to Easyfundraising or become a member.

Early in 2025, Anne Bardsley, one of our members and a local artist, approached the Management

Committee with the idea of holding an art fair which, as well as raising funds for the group, would also be a great platform for a number of local entrepreneurs who don't normally have an opportunity to exhibit and sell their products locally.



"The Coliseum" by Cliff Murphy on display at Gallery Oldham

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Early in 2025, Anne Bardsley, one of our members and a local artist, approached the Management Committee with the idea of holding an art fair which, as well as raising funds for the group, would also be a great platform for a number of local entrepreneurs who don't normally have an opportunity to exhibit and sell their products locally.

The committee thought this was a great idea and so planning started to hold the first GO! Artists Oldham Art Fair on 15th November 2025.

An "open call" was issued and almost 30 local talented individuals showed an interest in being offered the opportunity to hire a stall. Due to constraints on the space available, we shortlisted the applicants and 18 were chosen to be the inaugural participants. Oldham Community Radio helped massively with publicising the fair, including broadcasting an interview with Chairman Roger Hindle and committee member and local artist Linda Edwards. Ian Wolstenholme from Oldham Community Radio also came down on the day and interviewed several of the stall holders, organisers and volunteers.



Ian Wolstenholme from Oldham Community Radio interviews Anne Barsdsley

After the event, we had very positive feedback, not only from stallholders, but Gallery staff and a number of members of the public who visited the event. This made the decision easy to hold another art fair next year.

In conclusion, Chairman Roger Hindle said "This has been an exhilarating journey so far and personally I have learned a lot and look forward to our continued efforts with taking the group forward to more success. I would like to say a huge "Thank-You" to everyone who has been involved in any way in getting The Friends of Gallery Oldham to where we are today."

If you want to know more about The Friends of Gallery Oldham, or are willing or able to offer any help and advice, please check out our Facebook or Instagram pages, our website www.gofriends.org.uk or email Roger at fogoldham@aol.com

HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO



KENSINGTON PALACE
LONDON W8 4PU

It gives me great pleasure to send my warmest greetings to all those attending the Annual Conference of the British Association of Friends of Museums.

This year's gathering in Bristol, so ably hosted by the Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives, provides a valuable opportunity to come together, to share experience, and to celebrate the vital contribution that Friends groups make to the life of our museums, galleries and cultural institutions.

Museums are guardians of our shared heritage, places of discovery, and centres of lifelong learning. Friends groups play an indispensable role in sustaining this mission: offering practical support, encouraging wider appreciation of collections, and championing the importance of cultural life in their communities.

As the Association continues to flourish, it is most encouraging to see the creative ways in which you are strengthening engagement and widening participation. From the recruitment of Youth Ambassadors, to forging partnerships with communities both at home and abroad, BAFM is ensuring that museums remain places of inspiration and welcome for people of all ages and backgrounds. Such initiatives not only enrich the work of our museums but also help to secure their relevance and vitality for future generations.

I am deeply grateful to all those whose dedication, imagination and generosity of spirit make this possible. I wish you a most enjoyable and stimulating conference, and every success with your endeavours in the year ahead.

Patron

HRH The Duke of Gloucester
KG, GCVO, GCStJ

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Tjschan02@gmail.com

Vacancies

Regional Co-Ordinators form the backbone of BAFM. We currently have vacancies in the following areas; the North East, West Midlands, London and Wales. 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