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: Friends AGM: CHAIRMAN'S REPORT :

The Chair of The Friends of 78, Rob Kendall, opened the AGM at Northampton Guildhall on 17 November by welcoming those present in particular Keith Barwell, Chairman of the Trustees, and acknowledged apologies from Trustees Patricia Douglas, Ros Harwood and Secretary to the Trust, Les Patterson, and other members of the Friends.

In his report the Chair was very pleased to see that membership was steadily increasing since the opening of the house and that we were now nearly up to 400 subscriptions many of which were joint, or family memberships which would increase the number by a third.

The events organised over the last year by the Friends had proved to be very popular, in particular the residential trips to Barcelona and Glasgow administered respectively by Peter Stiling and Ann Mayhew for which they were both thanked. The range of day trips to places such as Red House proved very popular too for which Joy Saville was also thanked. The return of Maggie Angeloglou as guest lecturer on *The Fauves* was also very well received. Friends were also asked to suggest other visits or talks for the coming year.

Particularly successful was the improved public profile of the Friends over the last year. This was achieved by having a stand again at Northampton Festival for three days in August that was staffed by members of the Friends, where we were able to give out brochures and flyers both about the Friends and 78. This year we also were able to show the short video about the restoration of the house to members of the public. Peter MacIntosh was thanked for his work in organising the event as well as those members who collected the presentation material together. The Friends also took part in the Discovery Fair at Olympia for three days in February on the Glasgow stand where we worked alongside the CRM Society promoting the work of Mackintosh, and obviously providing our own leaflets too. Also as part of our general publicity we have distributed over 5,000 of the Friends brochures which includes details about membership. The bi-monthly newsletter also forms part of our publicity drive and is delivered to a number of museum and art galleries, including the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, the CRM Society, Glasgow School of Art, The Lighthouse and local outlets.

The Trustees also invite Rob Kendall, as Chair, to represent the Friends at their meetings and

keep the Trustees up to date with the activities and interests of the association.

The Friends have also continued to be active in their fund raising and have put together a business plan to try and raise the money for their annual pledge to the Trust. So far this year this has included the evening specially for members of the Friends at 78 to meet Honorary Member Janet Bassett-Lowke; paying for the reprint publication of some of the 78 Derrigate flyers; purchasing at auction a Bassett-Lowke train set; illustrated talks and, more recently, the sale of Friends' lapel badges in the shop at 78. The accumulative total of the fund raising for this year is approximately £1,500 (which is in addition to the £8,000 raised by the Friends for the hall-lounge light fitting which was announced at the 2003 AGM). As part of our 2005 fundraising Margaret Elgood and Chris Murdin addressed the members about a proposed Dance and Charity Auction in May (details of which are in this newsletter).

After the Chair's remarks Treasurer, Bill Turner, gave his annual report in detail about the expenditure and income of the Friends and this was accepted by the AGM. Bill was also thanked for his on-going work as Treasurer.

Honorary Secretary, Barbara Floyer, also spoke briefly to the AGM about the overall increase in administration of the society and it was put to the AGM that annual subscription fees should rise by £1 across the membership from April 2005. This was proposed and seconded by the AGM membership and agreed unanimously. Membership from April 1st will be £13 single, £16 joint, and £10 concessionary.

The revised date for the 2005 AGM is Thursday 26 November.

At the close of the meeting Keith Barwell, Chair of the Trustees, briefly addressed the Friends on behalf of himself and other Trustees giving their general thanks for all of the support that the Friends have shown for the project and wishing the Friends continued success.

The evening concluded with Dr. Sylvia Pinches as the keynote speaker. Her address forms part of the curator's report in this newsletter.

The informal part of the evening with Mackintosh inspired craft and rare book tables proved a popular addition to the AGM from which the Friends were able to receive 10% of the profits. Thanks go to those who provided art and craftwork, Ryland Books and the Primrose Gallery.

78 DERRIGATE NEWS

■ CURATOR'S PIECE ■

DR. SYLVIA PINCHES

A year ago we were feeling very pleased with ourselves that the major work of the restoration had been completed, but a little apprehensive about the future. How many people would come? What would they think? Would our systems for moving them around work? Were there going to be enough volunteers? Round and round it all went in my head.

I need not have worried. We have had a very successful year. The initial trial opening last November/December went quite smoothly and a few bits of tweaking meant we were ready for the opening in March. We knew that it was an important house and a well-accomplished restoration, but I do not think that we were prepared for just what a lot of interest it was going to generate. There has been print and television and radio coverage, not just locally, but nationally and, indeed, internationally. Only within the last month there have been major articles in significant American and Russian journals, and one is being prepared for a German magazine. All the articles have been full of praise for both the original Mackintosh designs and for our restoration and the innovative use of number 80. The coverage has contributed to the high number of visitors we have had – 16,000 between March 1st and November 28th.

The publicity no doubt had its part to play in the number of critical awards we have received. The Royal Fine Arts Commission gave us a special award for the restoration and The Royal Institute of British Architects both nationally and at East Midlands level have given the project architectural and conservation awards.

However, the praise which I have most appreciated is the happy faces of visitors as they come out (one advantage of having my office in reception – I do see and hear the parting comments of visitors). Even without the Visitors' Book or the survey we have been conducting, it would be apparent that people really had enjoyed their visit. If I ever need cheering up, I flick through the Visitors' Book and my eye falls on phrases such as 'Simply stunning with eloquent and friendly commentary. Thank you' or 'I love it. I love it. Fantastic! Well done!' and my heart lifts and I know that all the hard work was worthwhile.

A more rigorous assessment of visitors' opinions has been made through the exit questionnaire that we have conducted since August. Many people have completed it, indicating where they first heard about us, whether they think the

experience was worth the money, what they thought of the tour and of the quality and range of items in the shop. Interestingly, 25% cite television as being where they first heard of us, most of them naming the Discovery Home and Leisure channel documentary with Eric Knowles. Best of all, though, is that 33% say 'word of mouth' – this can only come from satisfied customers and should grow and grow. As for value for money, 80% have said 'Excellent' and 20% 'Good'. Similar proportions have answered with regard to the quality of the tour. As for the shop, only 30% have rated it as 'Excellent', with 70% 'Good', though it is apparent from the comments box that this relates to the range of items, not their quality. We expected this, as we started from scratch, with very few items for sale, and have been adding lines as we go along. There will be an even greater selection next year including the Guide Book.

None of this success would have been possible without the willing band of volunteers. A year ago there were 80; now there are 118. Some come every week, others every month, or at odd times as suits them and us. All their efforts are appreciated by me, Barbara Floyer and the Trustees, whether it is as a guide, receptionist or shop assistant or helping with odd jobs and gardening.

However, we are not resting on our laurels. Apart from the daily and weekly care for the property, there is obviously more major work to be done from time to time. In December, William Anelay's men will be back to deal with defects, i.e. the odd bit of cracking plaster and peeling paint which has occurred over the year. They will also, I am glad to say, finally build the copper in the kitchen. The stained glass panels for the front door are getting closer to being achieved as well.

And then there is number 82. I cannot say anything too specific about it now, only to say that the Trustees are determined to get it refurbished and that things are moving forward. We have agreed a new set of plans with John McAslan and Partners and a revised budget. It still comes out at about £1 million! Nearly half that sum has been pledged already, and the Trustees are confident that some work can begin in January 2005. How much can be achieved before March 23 when we intend to open again, I do not know. By the next *Newsletter* I should be able to give a much clearer report.

We are going to change the pattern of opening next year. In future we will be closed Mondays and Tuesdays, except Bank Holidays, open Wednesday through to Sunday. We will open at 10.30a.m. with the last entrance, as now, at 3.45p.m. Prior booking will still be necessary, by telephoning, 01604 603407.



■ 7 HAMMERSMITH TERRACE. London W6. ■

It was on a late summer day that Dr. Sylvia Pinches and myself were invited to 7 Hammersmith Terrace, which is only a little way down river from Morris' Kelmscott House, to visit this Georgian property not that dissimilar in size to 78.

Its real importance is though its association with the Arts and Crafts Movement. Number 7 became a fine example of an Arts and Crafts interior when it was the home of typographer and antiquary Emery Walker in 1903 and subsequently his daughter Dorothy until her death in 1963 when the house and contents were bequeathed to her companion, Elizabeth De Haas, who lived there until her death in 1999. The Emery Walker Trust then took on the management of the property.

The object of the Trust is the 'advancement of the education of the public in arts and crafts design and architecture...by promoting...the study and appreciation of artists, craftsmen, designers and architects of the 19c and early 20c...conserving, maintaining and displaying 7 Hammersmith Terrace and its contents'. Hence Dr. Pinches' invitation to give advice on how this might be managed and my representation from the Friends to suggest how such an organisation may help to promote and facilitate opening the house to the public.



Morris wallpaper and photographs of William Morris taken by Emery Walker. Dining room 7 Hammersmith Terrace.

Unlike 78 with its associated houses 80/82, the Emery Walker house has no other access other than its own front door so public entry, however limited, would be problematic. The Trust also saw as its first priority the need to safeguard the actual structure of the building and to record and conserve the contents. Fortunately the house was essentially sound but the services were in a poor state of repair and remedial work was carried out by architects Martin Ashley in 2002 and house

curator, Dr. Aileen Reid, catalogued the entire contents. Not an easy task given that the house was stuffed full of Arts and Crafts artefacts and the eclectic detritus of three peoples' lives from 1903 to 1999.

The dining room alone is a treasure trove of original William Morris wallpaper and the Morris 'Bird hangings' from Kelmscott House, as well as Morris personal memorabilia and also some Philip Webb furniture. Stashed in a desk drawer and hand corrected is the typescript of G.B. Shaw's first play *Widowers' Houses* – Walker being a close friend of the playwright. Other rooms in the house have jewels such as Burne-Jones' work and proof prints from the Kelmscott Press. The Trust has yet to decide how best they can open the house, however restricted, to the public. Perhaps its value and importance as a house may be summed up by this extract from a letter by John Betjeman to Lord Euston after he saw the house in 1964. "There is no other Morris interior in London to equal it, nor was there ever a Morris interior to retain so many relics of the Morris movement...the twinkling light from the Thames at the bottom of the garden shines on the blues and greens of Morris papers and fabrics and old brown hand made furniture, leads one into a kingdom that can never be created again".

Rob Kendall.

■ International ARTS AND CRAFTS ■

17 March –24 July 2005.

The Victoria and Albert Museum will be the first to explore the Arts and Crafts Movement from a truly international perspective. It looks at the early flourish in Britain of the 1880s through the wide-spread espousal of Arts and Crafts ideals and their interpretation and their development as a movement in American and Europe and its later manifestation as the folk craft movement, Mingei, in Japan from 1925 to 45.

The exhibition will consider the pioneering work of Morris and others and the new generation of artists and designers. How Arts and Crafts was championed as a unity of the arts and was broadly defined by the common aims of social and industrial reform and the improvement of art for everyday life. The exhibition will also challenge the view that Arts and Crafts expanded mainly in the countryside, and will explore how the movement developed in major cities such as London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Booking details 0870 906 3883 or on line.

Barbara Floyer.

Tom Osborne Robinson CENTENARY EXHIBITION



One of Tom Robinson's personally designed Christmas cards

Many of the Friends local to the Northampton area will still remember the work of the late Tom Osborne Robinson who was scenic designer at the Royal Theatre (or more fondly known as the 'Rep' in his day) and champion of the arts until the early seventies. There is a centenary exhibition celebrating his birth at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery during December and January. Tom was awarded an OBE for his services to theatre as well as locally being a moving force in building up the Italian collection at the Central Museum to name but one of his interests and talents. His passion for the theatre, and for Venice, were legendary, on both of which one could engage Tom in conversation for hours. He made many personal donations to the town, one of which being a large Italian canvas by Giovanni Antonio Fumiani given to the museum for 'the children of Northampton always' as well as his collection of posters given to University College (some of which were on recent display). He also recorded Northampton's architectural buildings and history, both in his own paintings and also the panels that were at one time on display in the Grosvenor Centre and now it seems in store.

For the Friends of 78 there is a clear connection in that W.J. Bassett-Lowke got

Tom his job as scenic designer in the early twenties when Bassett-Lowke was one of the inaugural members of the Repertory Theatre board. Tom was also given one of the Mackintosh clocks from 78 by Mrs. Bassett-Lowke after WJ's death - (which is now sadly in America). He was also instrumental in getting 78 listed in 1965 as well as persuading Victoria Wines, when they had 78 as offices, to allow him to do a pastiche of the yellow and black CRM scheme in the hall-lounge. Some of Tom's pastiche still existed under the wall paper when restoration on 78 started. This was subsequently photographed and removed by the conservators, hopefully for future display in 82.

I do have a personal interest too in that Tom and my father were at art school together (along with other local luminaries such as G. B. Holland and Henry Bird) and that it was Tom who inspired in me in 1960 a knowledge of the Charles Rennie Mackintosh house a few doors up from his own in Derngate. Tom would be proud for Northampton that the house is now open and one of the reasons why I, too, am proud to be associated with it.

Rob Kendall

LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

On a recent visit to the 9th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice (Sept 12-7 Nov) I was struck with how different the theme of *Metamorph* set by the biennale director, Kurt W. Foster, was interpreted by the architects involved. It is impossible to go into the detail of the futurist architectural designs on display from the twenty-seven countries involved, as well as the more fluid interpretations of light and space that were artists exhibitions in their own right in the redundant boat sheds of the Arsenale.



Hungarian Pavilion c1914, Venice biennale park.

But a pavilion that has always struck me of particular decorative design is the Hungarian one that has been solidly in place since the 1914 art biennale – art nouveau rules ok! RK.

Friends Committee 2004-5.

Rob Kendall: Chair / George Fenning: Vice-chair / Bill Turner: Treasurer / Barbara Floyer: Hon. Secretary / Linda Austin / James Basset / Peter MacIntosh / Chris Sherlock / Joy Saville / Sabine Schaebitz / Ken Simpson / Peter Stiling / David Thomas.

Retiring members, Connie Bailey, Ann Mayhew and Alan Riley were thanked by the Chair.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2004/2005

Textiles as Fashion
Glasgow School of Art
December 14 - 18

78 Re-opens
March 23.

Membership due
April 1

Dance & Charity Auction
Saturday 14 May. 7.30pm.
Great Doddington, Northants.
Tickets £10. inc. supper.
Details 01933 224347
Or 01933 359163.

AGM
Thur 26 November.

NEWSLETTER COPY

Should you wish to contribute to the newsletter articles and/or photographs re 78 please contact:

Rob Kendall
on **01604 711317**.

You may also like to check the Trust web site
www.78derngate.org.uk