MUSEUM news

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Children's museum closed

Britain's first hands-on children's museum has been closed by a local authority, to save £140,000 a year.

Opened by the Poet Laureate, Sir John Betjeman, in 1974 the Livesey Museum in South London's Old Kent Road offered a new kind of children's facility that combined education with play. It has no collections and has created its hands-on exhibitions around themes using objects borrowed from other museums.

The museum was closed within days of the full council deciding to sacrifice it, despite a hastily launched national campaign during which an online petition accumulated more than 2,000 names. The building, given by a local magnate to "the people of Southwark" 100 years ago as a library, is to be auctioned and is expected to raise as much as £1 million.

Dea Birkett, the director of the charity Kids in Museums, said: "The Livesey achieved what many other museums only dream of – involving the local community to such an extent that they feel, quite rightly, that the museum belongs to them. It's work is so pioneering that this small, local museum has been recognised on a national level, shortlisted for the Guardian Family Friendly Museum Award. To lose it and sell it is like selling off a generation's cultural assets, in an area of south east London which is acknowledged as disadvantaged. Instead of shutting it down, we should be supporting it and celebrating its success."

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Final ten for the first £100,000 Art Fund Prize

Judges led by broadcaster Sue MacGregor have whittled down the contenders for the 2008 Art Fund Prize for Museum and Galleries to ten. The prize, formerly the Gulkbenkian Prize, has a single award of £100,000 for the winner, and this is the first year of the Art Fund's sponsorship.

Four museums and galleries will be short-listed and announced in early April, and the winner will be announced on May 22. The long-listed museums are:

- **The British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol,** for Breaking the Chains, a commemoration of the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade.
- **The British Library, London,** for Sacred – Discover What We Share, which brought together the world's greatest collection of holy texts.
- **International Slavery Museum, Liverpool.** Opened in August 2007, to tell the largely hidden story of the transatlantic slave trade.
- **The Lightbox gallery and museum, Woking.** An innovative approach to presenting local history and modern art.
- **London Transport Museum, London.** A £22 million transformation exploring the links between transport and London's culture and society.
- **The National Army Museum, London,** for Helmand: The Soldiers' Story, exploring the British army's campaign in Afghanistan's Taliban heartland.
- **The Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney**. The redesigned collection of 20th Century British art.
- **Shetland Museum and Archives, Lerwick, Shetland.** Set within a restored 19th century dock to tell the story of Britain's most northerly group of islands.
- **Topsham Museum, Exeter,** for the River Gallery Project, creating a new gallery to house historic local boats and the local history of the Exe Estuary.
- **Wellcome Collection, London.** Devoted to exploring the connections between medicine, life and art, and our changing relationship with our bodies.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Unstuffing our museums

Once more the vexed question has been raised of what to do with museum and gallery objects which take up valuable storage space and seem surplus to requirements. This time, as is reported in the article on this page, it is the Museums Assocation that has brought the issue to the fore. In the past the association has rather tip-toed round the problem of space, declaring simply that it was against deaccessioning (as the process of getting rid of unwanted stuff is described) and ignoring the pleas of some curators that their premises were over-full and needed to be slimmed down.

The MA's new policy is that disposals can and should be made, if the objects are unused, first by offering them to other museums and galleries or, in the last resort, by putting them up for sale. There are several problems about putting objects up for sale.

What all museums show most effectively is how lives and fashions change from one half century to another, and it will be difficult for any curator to be sure that an object in his collection which currently seems of little interest, and therefore can be put up for sale, will not become of greater significance to future generations (just as, no doubt, some objects now bought for millions of pounds will end up locked away in some museum or gallery basement). The second problem is that of the original acquisition. If it was a gift the interests of the benefactor need to be taken into account (and future benefactors may be put off by the knowledge that their gift might one day be sold). The third issue must be that of the public collections, where objects and works of art have been bought with public money and thus in effect belong to the public.

I should emphasise that we at National Heritage do not have a better solution than that now offered by the Museums Association, whose director, Mark Taylor, has been quoted as saying that it is the museum professionals who must make these decisions. All we can ask, in the interests of museum and gallery visitors, is that these decision are made with care and do not get out of hand.

James Bishop

Empire Museum to forsake Bristol for a London future

The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, which opened in Temple Meads Station, Bristol, five years ago, is to move to London.

Gareth Griffiths, the director, said the move is in line with long term plans for the museum to become an international learning centre for Britain's colonial past.

He said the award-winning museum – which has been shortlisted for this year's £100,000 Art Fund Prize (see page 1) - was in negotiations over a number of London sites, including the former Commonwealth Institute building in Kensington. It already has a commercially run archive store at King's Cross. He hopes to have a new home established in 2010, and next year will mount an exhibition in London about the Palestine Mandate.

"Relocation to London presents a major opportunity for the Museum to widen its reach and engage new audiences with this important and formative part of our shared past" said Dr Griffiths. "We have enjoyed great success over the last five years of operation and are extremely grateful to the people of Bristol and all those who have supported us. We hope that Bristolians will take the opportunity to catch our acclaimed exhibitions over the coming year and support our transition to this next exciting stage."

The museum, the brainchild of National Heritage founder John Letts and owned and administered by a charitable trust set up by him, was opened in October 2002 by Princess Anne, and since then has completed the £7m restoration of its present Grade I Listed home, built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The freehold of the building is to be retained and the leasehold is for sale and is expected to attract bids starting at around £8.5m. He hopes that with the right partnerships relocation costs will be minimal to the trust.

"We have been walking a financial tightrope since we opened, and we intend to create an endowment fund to ensure that those worries are behind us" Dr Griffiths said.

The Prime Minister's proposal for a museum of the British had been coincidental, he said, but with the idea now passed to the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council to examine its feasibility, the Empire and Commonwealth Museum is part of the discussions.

Children's museum closed

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But in a statement Southwark Council's leader Nick Stanton said: "Southwark has received its worst financial settlement from the government in a decade because of flaws in the government's funding formula, which undercounts the borough's population. The council has been forced to make some very tough decisions to bridge a £35 million funding shortfall. We have made £30 million of efficiency and back office savings to reduce the impact of this cut on frontline services, but there is still a £5 million gap.

"When the council looked at culture and leisure, there was a stark choice between museums, libraries and leisure centres. The simple fact is that keeping the Livesey museum open would mean closing a leisure centre or two libraries instead. This is a terrible decision to have to make."

Councillor Andrew Pakes, who represents Livesey Ward, said that the decision to close has been based on wrong information that the museum attracted only 10,000 visitors a year, whereas it was used by 20,000.

The museum, which closed exactly a month after the possibility was first mentioned to staff, has been credited with directly influencing such developments as Eureka! in Bradford and Launch Pad at the Science Museum.

Southwark's other museum, the Cuming in Walworth Road, is so far unaffected by the budgetry decisions.

Regional offices to be wound down

Drastic redesign for MLA includes move to Birmingham

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council is to move its main office to Birmingham and effectively choke off its nine regional agencies in a major streamlining of the MLA as a response to a 25% cut in core funding.

The new set-up will save the MLA a third of costs a year, said Roy Clare, the chief executive, with funding decisions reverting to the main board and a "rear link" office being maintained in London.

The nine regional agencies are each individual charities whose future they will decide themselves, but with no direct funding the expectation is that they will be wound down by the end of the next financial year.

There will be a loss of posts, details of which are not yet known but the Museums Association estimates that 15 posts in each of the agencies will be reduced to three.

Mr Clare said there will instead be regional advisory groups drawn from local government, businesses and communities to "ensure its work is targeted at improvement and delivery for consumers". There are to be research and innovation programmes for museums; wider collaboration, including with partners in education; and a promotion of self-generated income, including match-funding and fund-raising.

Mr Clare, who took up the post last summer, said the aim was to strengthen support for scholarship and curatorship and have a centrally co-ordinated. "We will continue to work closely with the nine independently-constituted agencies and with local government and regional development agencies to plan for a unified MLA" he said. "Our vision is for a renewed and stronger MLA."

There is to be an enhancement of the Renaissance in the Regions programme, however, in line with provisos in last October's Comprehensive Spending Review, and a report on the scheme's progress so far by a team led by Professor Sara Selwood is due in the coming summer.

"The new MLA is shaping up to deliver a full and balanced contribution to the country's cultural life" Mr Clare said. "MLA is intent on putting culture at the heart of new communities, helping schools ensure every child has a right to experience a variety of high-quality culture; leading our sector for the Cultural Olympiad; advancing Museums' and Libraries' Strategies for improvement; finding new ways to share information in a digital age; and ensuring that services exceed public expectations."

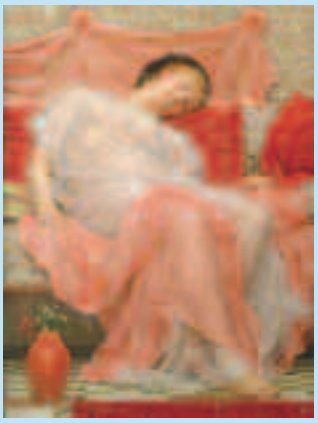
But Mark Taylor, director of the Museums Association, said there was a danger that knowledge and expertise could be lost to museums and galleries. "All the sector would like" he said "is a degree of credibility and sustainability. The reduction in scale and scope of the regional agencies must have some impact on strategic work in the regions, and it does mean that the review of Renaissance needs to ensure that those museums in the regions."

Art theme for MGM 2008

Museums and Galleries Month, running through May, will have a new programme this year, designed to encourage museums and artists to work together in innovative ways, and will include seminars thr4oughout the country about making art in museums contexts and commissioning new work.

A welcome weekend at museums will take place between May 2 and 5, and the Museum at Night weekend will be two weeks later, as with museums throughout Europe, with International Museums Day falling on May 18.

MA changes mind on disposals as Watts Gallery decides to sell



The Museums Association (MA), the curators' professional body, is urging museums to "unburden themselves" of stored collections, and have launched a "disposal tool kit" to help institutions get rid of unshown objects responsibly.

"Museums must use their collections for the benefit of today's public, while ensuring they are well-managed and sustainable for the future" said Sandy Nairne, vice-president of the MA and director of the National Portrait Gallery. "Occasional responsible disposal of items will be increasingly important".

Disposal normally means transfer of items to more suitable museums, the MA says, but in exceptional circumstances may mean sale, and the association is urging museums to make their collections more dynamic and to make disposal as well as acquisition a routine part of collections development.

The recommendation comes from the MA's ethics committee, the convenor of which is Vanessa Trevelyan, head of Norfolk Museum and Arhcaoelogy Service. "Museums are trusted institutions and need to consider disposal carefully to maintain public confidence" she said. "Although disposal of items is not without risk, it is preferable to transfer items to an alternative home where they will be treasured, rather than retain material that is not supporting a museum's research, display or interpretation functions."

The new policy turns round the MA's previously held position which was ethically against deaccessioning, and brings the MA in line with the National Museums Directors Conference which, in a 2003 paper called "Too Much Stuff" written by the director the V&A Mark Jones, called for museums and galleries not only to be prepared to dispose of elements of their collections, but to plan to do so.

That report followed the disposal by the National Maritime Museum of a large vessel which was a duplicate, taking up storage space and costing £200,000 a year to keep, which was seen as "intelligent rationalisation", according to its then director Roy Clare, now chief executive of the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council, who also instituted a policy of sharing objects with other maritime museums.

The decision coincides with the announcement by the Watts Gallery near Guildfrord in Surrey that it is to sell two paintings from its collection to enable the gallery to carry out essential fabric repairs.

The pictures are the *Triumph of Love* by Edward Burne-Jones and *Jasmine* by Albert Moore (above), which together the gallery hopes will raise £1.4 million. Perdita Hunt, director of the Watts, said: "I hope this difficult decision will give some comfort to all those who support the Gallery that for the foreseeable future its internationally important core collection will be cherished, conserved and enjoyed by more people".

MUSEUM PROFILE ALEC COLES

The Great North museum director

By Patrick Kelly

Alec Coles is a busy man. Besides running 11 museums under the banner of Tyne & Wear Museums, overseeing the creation of the Great North Museum, and looking after the accounts of the Museums Association where he is treasurer, he also sits on the board of Culture North East and is in charge of the north east hub of MLA's Renaissance in the Region, and he has just been elected to the elite group of the National Museums Directors Conference.

"Tyne & Wear Museums is the largest cultural institution in the north east, and part of my job is about influencing people and demonstrating that there are many links that can be made between our work and what others are doing generating jobs, social welfare and so on " he says.

It seems to be working. Besides securing the funding for the £25m Great North Museum which will be one of the largest cultural attractions in the region when it opens in 2009, 48-year-old Coles is also credited in large part with the successful lobbying campaign which secured the future of the Renaissance in the Regions programme.

It's something he learned from his first boss, Jane Evans who ran the then Woodspring Museum in Weston-super-Mare. Jane, he says, "had a completely passionate commitment to the museum and to the community. She put the museum at the centre of cultural life in Weston-super-Mare getting involved with local societies and archaeological digs, making contacts at all levels."

But it is an unexpected turn for the country boy who learned to love nature at his grandparents' smallholding near Craven Arms, Shropshire. He turned his delight into a degree in biological sciences, but it was a holiday job at Preston Hall Museum near Stockton-on-Tees that introduced him to museum life, as a combination of playscheme leader and woodland walks organiser. From there he went on to cataloguing birds' eggs at the Dorman Museum in Middlesbrough - which has one of the best collections in the country, he says proudly.

It was at his first permanent post, as assistant curator at Woodspring in North Somerset, that he learned his craft, doing a bit of everything and "learning the business from one of the most inspirational bosses", Jane Evans. "She was ahead of her time in many ways - I learned a lot about leadership from her and from David Fleming (his boss at Tyne & Wear whom he succeeded). I have been very lucky in that."

He became deputy curator at Woodspring, and then and moved a back north to take up a job as natural history curator in Sunderland museum. But his break came when he was appointed manager of the Hancock Museum in Newcastle. It was not an auspicious time to start. The Hancock, though owned by the Natural History Society of Northumbria, had been managed by Newcastle University or many years. Now, as part of a reorganisation, it was to be managed as part of the Tyne & Wear museums group, a joint service of six northeast local authorities. It meant a number of posts had to go and the newly installed Coles took the flak.

But if people were smarting after the reorganisation, the howls of pain were louder when he began to put on blockbuster exhibitions, in the hallowed halls. Coles is unapologetic about this radical change in direction. The exhibitions were immensely popular with the public, generated a massive amount of extra income and increased the profile of the museum in the city and the region. More than 270,000 people trooped through doors that were used to admitting a maximum of 70,000.

In 2000 he decamped from museum life to head the Northumberland Wildlife Trust, but it was entirely characteristic of the man to return to his roots, in many ways his dream job. But the foot and mouth crisis was biting, closing a number of the trust's nature reserves within a month of his arrival, yet within a few years he had expanded the staff, doubled the membership and increased the profile of the trust.

He left, though, when Fleming swapped his Tyneside fiefdom for National Museums Liverpool. "It was the only job in the world that I would have left the trust for" Coles says.

Since then, he has turned Newcastle's Discovery Museum into one of the most popular tourist attractions in the north east and together with colleagues at Tullie House Museum in Carlisle has persuaded the British Museum to allow its treasured bust of the Emperor Hadrian to leave Russell Street and "come home". The exhibition that will accompany Hadrian promises to be one of the must seen experiences of 2008.

Coles firmly believes that it is experiences like these which make people's lives all the better. "I have never felt that museum curation is about sitting in a room cataloguing. I have always felt we were there for a purpose, one we should share with the public. The days of the hobbyist curator are gone and there are now lots of people who are as absolutely passionate about going out and telling people what they are doing as they are about doing it. Sure, collections are our core business, but we need to use them for a greater good."

Where exploring starts at home

Torquay Museum is one of the Victorian generation that was set up by volunteers to inform and educate local residents and visitors, and is one of the few still to be in the charge of the learned society that created it.

Despite its history the museum, the oldest in Devon, has moved forward with the times, and last year opened a new gallery at a cost of £1.4m, which includes a Heritage Lottery Fund contribution of almost £1m, to reassert its place as an educational resource and tourist attraction at the heart of the Torbay district.

The Torquay Museum Society was, in 1844, the Torquay Natural History Society, when it first met to decide on establishing somewhere to tell the story of Devon's natural history. One of the founders was the geologist William Pengelly who pioneered the study of caverns, and his most famous exploration, of Kent's Cavern in Torquay in 1865, provided over 3,000 specimens.

A purpose-built museum was clearly needed, and the current building was opened in 1876, only five years after a fund to create it was established. Its Venetian-Gothic façade with its terracotta figures by John Philip, the sculptor of the Albert Memorial in Hyde Park, designed by William Harvey of the family of architects responsible for much of early 19th century Torquay, makes it a key feature of the town. When Pengelly died in 1894 the Pengelly Lecture Theatre was added in his memory

"We're an important part of the community, but the community changes gradually and we change with it" said the curator, Ros Palmer. "Our remit has been to give an understanding of human history as well as the natural environment, and that hasn't changed."

So for over 160 years the museum has collected the finds and prized possessions of people connected with Torquay, and by 2005 the stories they have to tell were badly in need of modern interpretation.

The museum wanted to do four things, said Ros Palmer: to change the perception of the museum and of heritage, nurturing existing users and attracting new audiences; to have a new gallery of distinction which could showcase the interdisciplinary and multi-cultural collections; to create a flexible space for education and heritage programmes both for the interest of visitors to Devon and for local people, and in particular working with the Torquay community; and providing the best care of these significant collections.

The Explorers Gallery is the key, using a broad concept to bring together items which hadn't been accessible before and allowing a lot of stories to be told for the first time. But as well as being object rich it has integrated hands-on activities and interpretation that fit with the curriculum, covering aspects not available in other museums and collections.

While the new gallery, designed by Mick Orr of Bremner and Orr Design, makes much use of modern technology, it's modernity is faithful to the museum's original vision. It happens that the locality has been wealthy in internationally known explorers, collectors and scientists – Pengelly was one, but Sir Richard Burton, who brought back the stories of the Arabian Nights and translated them, was alocal man; so was Colonel Percy Fawcett, said to be the inspiration for the Indiana Jones character who disappeared mysteriously on an expedition in Brazil in the 1920s. Others, like the Royal Navy ethnographer Charles Paget-Blake, retired to Torquay.

It means that while the Torquay Museum has a unique local story to tell, it can also cover world history such as the First Opium War with China, the ceding if Fiji to Britain, Antarctic exploration and the lost civilisations of South America. Pengelly Hall has also been given a new job to do, transformed from a lecture theatre to an exhibition venue and learning space, with new multi-functional facilities.

The proof of museum up-dating, however, has always been in the visitor figures. The new Pengelly Hall opened 18 months ago, and the Explorers Galley in July last year. Admission numbers have risen 44% since August, and in the first three months after July they were up by 24%.

Mary Rose to get her home

The Mary Rose, Henry VIII's flagship which sank in The Solent in 1545, is to get its museum at last, thanks to a £21m grant from English Heritage for a greatly upgraded scheme from the failed bid for lottery funding of two years ago.

The new scheme, costing £35m instead of the previous £23m plan, is for a 20% larger development in Portsmouth Harbour, next to HMS Victory, and rather than 25% of the 19,000 found objects going on display, 70% will be put out.

The project now includes a conservation programme, the didactic will contain more detail and context, and the new museum will have two teaching rooms and a café.

The Mary Rose was famously raised by a team of archaeologists led by Dr Margaret Rule from the Solent before a worldwide TV audience of some 60 million in 1982 after it had been located by sonar in 1967.

Named, it is thought, after Henry's favourite sister and the rose of the Tudor badge, the Mary Rose was effectively the first true warship built for the English navy. Launched in 1511, it had a long and distinguished career as Henry VIII strove for mastery of the seas with the French king and his allies. The French fleet was threatening to invade the Isle of Wight when the ship sank in July 1545 as it was preparing to leave the Solent to engage the invasion, apparently overloaded and swamped as she heeled over in a strong wind, because the gunports were open and too close to the water surface. All 500 on board lost their lives.

In 1545 the Mary Rose is recorded as having a crew of 200 sailors, 185 soldiers and 30 gunners, a figure that seems to have remained fairly constant throughout her career, and there may have been supercargo for this last mission. The remains of around 200 individuals were found on the wreck, and have been studied. They were mostly fit young men, although there were a few boys and men in their 40s, and their average height was five feet seven and a half inches.

We know the names of only three of the crew: the vice-admiral, Sir George Carew; the captain, Roger Grenville; and a John Reade. Carew was made vice-admiral at the last minute with the French Fleet almost in sight, and received a gold whistle on a chain from Henry VIII as his badge of office.

Conditions for the crew must have been cramped and overcrowded, but for the period the men were comparatively well paid and looked after. Many of the artefacts found on the ship were their personal possessions, and gambling appears to have been popular with dice found in chests and leather pouches and a splendid backgammon set discovered in the carpenter's cabin.

There are letters written by the Mary Rose's commanders held in historical archives, and quill pens and inkwells of the type used to write them were found on the wreck. Leather book covers survived in the silt, but the pages have deteriorated. Illiterate members of the crew often marked their possessions with graffiti.

It is hoped that the museum can be opened in time for the 500th anniversary of its launching in 2011, and it will be built around the hull of the ship, which wil have to continue to be sprayed with polyethylene glycol, a water-based wax solution, until then.

The hull will be carefully dried within the new museum until she can be displayed fully in 2016 when galleries will allow visitors to see both the outside and inside of the conserved hull.

For the first time since the wreck was located the wealth of objects are to be reunited with the hull. "It will allow the public to see for the first time in its proper context the most extraordinary collection of Tudor times anywhere in the world" said John Lippiatt, chief executive of the Mary Rose Trust. "The finds brought up from the sea bottom include the personal items the sailors would have had with them for day to day life, as well as the professional items such as the carpenter's chest."

at last

Designers Wilkinson Eyre, supported by Pringle Brandon and Land Design, will construct an oval, wooden-clad building over the dry dock in which the Mary Rose is being conserved next to Nelson's flagship, Victory.

Three levels of galleries will tell the story not only of the warship but of the Tudor navy and life on board in the 16th century, and juxtaposed to the half of the wooden hull which has been salvaged will be a virtual other half with the cabins recreated with the relevant objects arranged in them.

The Ides of March

Beware the Ides of March. It is that time of the year when Local Authorities set their Budgets for the year to come (beginning in April). It is also therefore that time of the year when rumours of cuts circulate in the museums world. Some museums are allegedly going to be 'decimated' while others face closure. When the dust has settled and the Budgets have been agreed, there are few if any complete losses but many more museums with less to spend than last year and in some cases a great deal less. The picture is always mixed but the trend for many small and medium sized public museums often feels downward driven.

The warnings about the future of the smaller museums have been around for a while. This year there has already been one high profile casualty, the Livesey Museum in Southwark (see page 1). For many years this museum has had a very good reputation for delivering innovative exhibitions and activities focused on children. It has been a "learning centre for children" long before such places became fashionably on the government agenda or possible to attract large sums of money from the lottery or Renaissance in the Regions. It is unusual in that it has no permanent exhibition and is open to the public only for exhibitions and events. That has, however, enhanced its specialness and its determination to deliver focused services to its identified audiences. All which is something most museum professionals would sign up to but hesitate to actually enable.

But its reputation has not spared it from the consequences of what Southwark Elected Members and Officers describe as "a bad settlement". In other words, the local authority is not getting as much financial support from central government as it feels it deserves or is entitled to and as a result the cost of services, especially statutory services which the authority is legally obliged to deliver to a specified standard, will exceed the Budget unless cuts are made. Southwark was left facing a £35m shortfall and although they found all but £6m of this through "efficiency savings", some services still had to be cut and they felt that the Livesey Museum was marginally less crucial to keep than libraries or a leisure centre, given the levels of child literacy and obesity in the borough.

It is not just tough London boroughs that are facing difficult decisions. Take Worcestershire, for example. This is still a two-tier county, with a county council and district councils. Both the County Museum (based at Hartlebury Castle in the north of the county) and Worcester City Museum are having to make cuts. One response is to bring in consultants to look at the possibilities of partnerships between the two. Partnership working is – once again – flavour of the month in local authorities, following the recommendations of the 2006 White Paper.

Yet both museum services have problems which perhaps transcend partnership. The Worcestershire County Museum has been housed in one wing of Hartlebury Castle, the Bishop of Worcester's residence, since it opened in 1964. This seemed as safe and as good a place as any to house the important craft tool, wheeled vehicle and costume collections which make up the core. However, the bishop has decided he does not need a country residence, and the castle is to be sold putting the Museum's tenure at risk. Hopefully the County Council will purchase the building and save both the Museum and the renowned 18th century Bishop Hurd's Library.

Down in Worcester City, things have been challenging for a while. The social and industrial history museum – the Tudor House, in Friar Street - was closed only a few years ago and its collections are in store. The art gallery and museum over the city library in Foregate Street struggles on to cover art, natural sciences, regimental history and other odds and ends, but is in limbo because there is a scheme to move the library to a new building on the university campus. No one seems to know what will happen to the building – or the art gallery. Meanwhile, the city's third museum, the fabulous fifteenth century courtyard house, the Commandery, has been restored with lottery money and reopened to the public. But as a virtually empty space. Apparently this is to allow the architecture to be seen and the visitor to use his or her imagination with the assistance of an audio guide. Strange.

Worcestershire's problems (and let's not discuss the county's other nine serious museums' problems – that would take up the whole of this magazine) will not make as many headlines as the Livesey but they are probably far more typical. Small cuts chew away at the lifeblood of the museum, severely restricting the staff's ability to do imaginative things with their collections that will attract greater audiences. But larger changes, totally beyond their control, may bring either a new era or possibly closure altogether (not that this is something suggested in Worcestershire at present). This lack of stability has rarely been documented, never mind measured and assessed. But its role in denying the public full value from their museums cannot be overestimated.

Stuart Davies

From before the Crusades to the first aiders of today, a refurbished museum in the heart of London will tell the story of the Order of St John

Knights to remember

The Knights of St John have a history which goes beyond record, to a time in the mid 11th century when pilgrims made the journey of a lifetime to worship at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and often fell ill. The order, part monk and part warrior, was created to care for devout travellers, decades before the first Crusade brought their role to the fore. They took their name from the church next to the Holy Sepulchre, devoted to St John the Baptist according to tradition, where they built their first hospital.

Later they established a headquarters priory in England, a large estate in what is now Clerkenwell, and only part of the priory church, with its Norman crypt, and the grand St John's Gate of 1504 remain.

Next to the Gate is a museum which tells their extraordinary story, from the distant days of Edward the Confessor to the 200,000 volunteers of the St John Ambulance Brigade today, and it is about to have a £3.3m remake to include more scholarly knowledge of the history of this extraordinary order, and make it more readable to a general public.

There is much mythology surrounding the long history of the order, but much of it is wrong, according to the order's official librarian, the former director the Victoria & Albert Museum Dr Alan Borg. "They were not the Templars, they were a quite different order set up to protect Crusaders, and there is no connection whatever with the Freemasons; the Hospitallers were wholly devoted to healing and care, as their descendents still are today" he says.

As the Templars were, the Hospitallers were expelled from Jerusalem by Saladin in the 12th century, and they established themselves first in Rhodes, from where they took their distinctive cross badge and where their warrior instincts were brought into service as they withstood a ferocious siege at the end of the 15th century by the Ottoman forces, and later in Malta.

When the Knights Templar were disbanded early in the 14th century, the Pope gave their property to the Hospitallers, making the order fabulously wealthy. In England, it owned buildings all over the countryside, many of which still stand and bear the distinctive emblem in their masonry. St John's Wood in London takes its name from them.

Their wealth allowed the Hospitallers to build a magnificent London priory. "Imagine a great Oxford or Cambridge college with a central courtyard with ranges of buildings around, and the church at the far end" says Dr Borg. "It was all destroyed by 1960s architecture, and by Clerkenwell Road punched through in late 1880s".

The church, which had been a replica of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and a larger one than the Templars built off Fleet Street to the same pattern and has survived intact, and it had become a parish church when it was badly bombed in the second world war. A new façade was put on it in the 1950s "so that no-one knows it's a church" says Dr Borg.

The church, which has reverted to being the priory church used only two or three times a year for ceremonial occasions, is to be opened to the public, with pictures and banners festooning the walls, and the 12th century crypt – "one of the finest Norman buildings left in London" says Dr Borg – also viewable.

Despite a brief resurgence during the reign of Mary I, the Knights Hospitallers of the Order of St John went into abeyance, until the 1880s when they were revived by Queen Victoria as a corps of voluntary trained first aiders, who gave valiant service in both world wars and spread throughout the empire, so that today they are in most parts of the world and in some, such as New Zealand, provide the only ambulance service.

When Victoria made the Knights of St John an "order of chivalry of the British Crown" – rather than an order of state, so that its members do not carry any titles – the Gate had had a chequered career, and at one time was the offices of the Gentleman's Magazine, so that its parliamentary reporter, Samuel Johnson, worked on his articles in the room above the arch that is now the main meeting room. Since then the Gatehouse had been a pub, but it was reacquired by the order in the 1880s to be its headquarters.

Now the museum is to be remodelled, with a new entrance directly from the iconic Gate (the present entrance is in the area where the horses for the first ambulances were stabled). With the help of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, it is hoped that the new museum, in a flowing narrative throughout the ground floor, will open in 2009, and the order is appealing for £1.7m to meet the £3.3m costs – no money is to be taken from the funds allocated to buying ambulances. The objects to be seen are a wonderful mixture from the order's history, from the two panels of the late 15th century Weston Triptych discovered in a domestic attic in the last century, to the 17th century souvenir models of the Holy Sepulchre, to the cope designed for the order by Sir Ninian Comper at the end of the 19th century and worn both by Pope John Paul II during his visit here and Archbishop Carey, to the armour of the 1480s found hidden in the Rhodes fortifications the order had built. And it will include, of course, the heroic story of the St John Ambulance of the 20th century, the largest voluntary aid organisation in the world.

Quarry Bank Mill, Cheshire

In this feature in each issue we look at past winners of National Heritage's Museum of the Year Award and what has happened to them since.

Quarry Bank Mill on the River Bollin at Styal near Wilmslow in Cheshire is a living part of Manchester's industrial revolution, yet it is in the countryside on the fringe of the great metropolis. One of the finest surviving cotton spinning mills of the first generation, it was built by an Irishman called Samuel Greg in 1784 and was prosperous during his lifetime. Although it was overtaken by new technology in the second half of he 19th century, somehow it was kept running until 1959.

By now on land belonging to the National Trust, in the 1960s Quarry Bank Mill's buildings needed urgent repair which would be expensive, and there were several options: it could become a trading warehouse, a hotel or possibly a crafts centre, but they were all discarded in favour of it becoming a museum.

The National Trust leased it to the new Quarry Bank Mill Trust, and in 1977 they opened it as a museum of the pre-urban era, when cotton mills dotted the countryside and there was space to give reasonable accommodation for workforces.

Under the first director, David Sekers, Quarry Bank Mill launched the Power Project in 1981, which was effectively to restore the original power supplies to the mill as far as possible, and it struck a chord with the public which won it the award from the judges for 1984, the mill's bicentenary. "People are thirsty for involvement in a way they weren't a decade ago" Sekers said then. "New museums are aware that there is a great public interest which is not being harnessed if you are lecturing to people, talking down to them and making them feel small. The barriers are being pulled down".

A working water wheel was installed in 1986 – inspected and approved by the Queen Mother - along with other authentic pumping equipment, and the power galleries were created in the mill, with the engine house itself was refurbished.

The Apprentice House five minutes walk from the mill was home to about 60 boys and girls, brought from local workhouses or from parents who could not afford to keep them. In 1988 it was restored and turned into a museum, conducted by an originally costumed superintendent, to show how working children as young as seven lived in the most primitive and basic accommodation by modern standards, alhtough compared to other mills their treatment would have been regarded as decent and humane by the standards of the day.

A doctor and school was provided for them, where they learned to read and write, though their main purpose was to provide readily available, trained and cheap millworkers. Now, 30 children a day could feel life as working children of the Industrial Revolution did, while in the mill visitors of all ages could learn how to weave cloth, an early hands-on approach for visitors for which they proved enthusiastic.

In 1998 a main beam engine from the 1830s was installed, brought from nearby Macclesfield, and new power galleries were opened by Quarry Bank Mill's patron, Princess Anne. A horizontal engine was installed in 2000, and a main turbine three years later.

This spring a new feature was being added, with the completion of the restoration of the gardens at Quarry Bank House at a cost of £350,000, with most of the work carried out over the last year by 60 volunteers. In the 1790s Greg decided to build his family home next to the mill, and in 2006 Quarry Bank House and gardens were acquired by the National Trust, making it one of the most complete restored mill estates in the UK.

In the mid 19th century Samuel's son Robert Hyde Greg was a passionate gardener, who created the garden and commissioned local nurseries to hybridise rhododendrons, giving them names associated with the Greg family and the locality. These unique hybrids to Quarry Bank are being researched and reinstated with the help of the Cheshire Rural Recovery fund and a generous private benefactor who has helped acquire the garden.

A Victorian rustic bridge across the Bollin has been restored, to reflect the post Samuel Greg era when the gardens came into their own, and appropriate painting and planting schemes have been created around it.

But have David Sekers's prophetic words of two decades ago about drawing a modern public to a 200-year-old monument to the Industrial Revolution proved true? Visitor numbers bear him out – they have gradually grown to over 100,000 a year, more than twice original estimates, and the gardens are expected to add another 30,000. "It's immersion in history" Sekers said. "It's about much more than monuments now, much more than machines, it's about people and the monuments are a backdrop."

NATIONAL HERITAGE GUIDE

A selective list of current & forthcoming museum & gallery exhibitions.

ABERDEEN ART GALLERY

Schoolhill, Aberdeen AB10 1FQ
Tel: 01224 523700
www.aagm.co.uk
Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 2-5. Closed 21 Mar. Admission free.

Modern Masters of Printmaking
(until 12 Apr 2008)
A selection of works by 20th-century masters, including Victor Pasmore, Kathe Kollowitz, Ben Nicholson, Paul Nash & Serge Poliakoff.

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM IN BRITAIN

Claverton Manor, Bath BA2 7BD
Tel: 01225 460503
www.americanmuseum.org
Exhibition area: Tues-Sun & bank-holiday Mons 12-5. Admission £7.50 (includes museum), concessions £6.50, children £4; family (2+2) £20.

Titanic: The Ship that Shook America *(15 Mar-2 Nov 2008)*
A collection of Titanic memorabilia–including testimonies from survivors heard during the United States Senate Enquiry of 1912–illustrates the impact of this tragedy on America. Among the dead were many prominent US citizens: John Jacob Astor IV; Benjamin Guggenheim; Isidore Strauss, founder of Macy's department store; & streetcar magnate George Widener.

BARBICAN ART GALLERY

Barbican Centre, Silk St, London EC2Y 8DS
Tel: 0845 1207550
www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery
Daily 11-6 (Wed, & Fri-Mon, until 8). Admission £8, concessions £6.

From the Barbican Art Gallery:
Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art

Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art
(6 Mar-18 May 2008)
Playful & irreverent presentation of contemporary art in an exhibition supposedly conceived by extra-terrestrials, & viewing the works from an alien's standpoint.

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Chamberlain Sq, Birmingham B3 3DH
Tel: 0121 303 2834
www.bmag.org.uk
Mon-Sat 10-5 (Fri from 10.30), Sun 12.30-5. Admission to museum free.

Lely to Turner: British Drawings & **Watercolours** *(16 Feb-27 Apr 2008)*
First of a two-part exhibition from the Nordic Watercolour Museum, in Sweden, showing the development of an independent watercolour medium, illustrated with the work of Francis Towne, J R Cozens, Thomas Girtin & others.

Camera in Canton: Photographs by Felice Beato
(3 May-10 Aug 2008)
Photographs of the Chinese city of Canton (Guangzhou), taken by Beato when with English forces in 1860, at the end of the Second Opium War. The images are shown alongside lithographs, engravings & other photographic material from the collections at Birmingham Central Library.

BLACKWELL, THE ARTS & CRAFTS HOUSE

Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria LA23 3JT
Tel: 015394 46139
www.blackwell.org.uk
Daily 10.30-4 (from 1 Apr 10.30-5). Admission £6, students & children £3.50, family (2+4) £16.

Michael Cardew: Ceramics from the Winchcombe Period, 1926-39
(until 8 June 2008)
A rare opportunity to explore a private collection of ceramics that has never been on public view before. Michael Cardew, regarded as one of the 20th century's foremost studio potters, set up the Winchcombe Pottery in 1926 after leaving St Ives.

BRIGHTON MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Royal Pavilion Gardens, Brighton BN1 1EE
Tel: 01273 290900
www.virtualmuseum.info
Tues-Sat & bank holidays 10-5 (Tues until 7pm), Sun 2-5. Admission free.

Little Black Dress
(until 1 June 2008)
The timeless glamour of the Little Black Dress–worn by Wallis Simpson, Coco Chanel, Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Hurley & countless other women–has the power to make the wearer feel special. Using examples from haute couture to the high street, the exhibition charts its history & celebrates the contribution this garment has made to women's lives.

BRITISH LIBRARY

96 Euston Rd, London NW1 2DB
Tel: 0870 4441500
www.bl.uk
Mon-Fri 9.30-6 (Tues until 8), Sat 9.30-5, Sun & bank holidays 11-5. Admission free.

Breaking the Rules: The Printed Face of the European Avant Garde 1900-1937
(until 30 Mar 2008)
Major exhibition exploring the creative transformation that took place in Europe in the first 40 years of the 20th century encompassing visual art, design, photography, literature, theatre, music & architecture. It brings together Cubism, Expressionism, Dadaism, Constructivism & Surrealism, & explores the continuing impact of the Avant Garde on contemporary culture.

His Own Domain–Harold Pinter, A Life In The Theatre
(until 13 Apr 2008)
A small display from the recently-acquired Harold Pinter archive charts Pinter's life in the theatre as an actor & director, & as the writer of some of the 20th century's most significant plays.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Great Russell St, London WC1B 3DG
Tel: 020 7323 8000
www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk
Daily 10-5.30 (Thurs, Fri until 8.30). Closed 21 Mar (except to ticket-holders for Terracotta Army). Admission to museum free.

The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army
(until 6 Apr 2008)
Last chance to catch the world-famous terracotta warriors from Xi'an, buried in their hundreds alongside China's First Emperor Qin Shihuangdi in readiness for the afterlife. Admission £12, concessions & children £10; accompanied children under 16 free. Advance booking on 020 7323 8181, or via website.

BRUNEI GALLERY

School of Oriental & African Studies, Thornhaugh St, London WC1H 0XG, Tel: 020 7898 4046 www.soas.ac.uk/gallery Tues-Sat 10.30-5. Closed 21 Mar. Admission free.

An Image of Nagaland: A photographic exhibition by Pól Ó Géibheannaigh

(until 22 Mar 2008)

Photographs taken in & around Kohima, the capital of Nagaland in India. Subjects include the annual Hornbill Festival, at which local tribes celebrate a sense of identity & honour the sacred bird of the Naga peoples.

CARTOON MUSEUM

35 Little Russell St, London WC1A 2HH Tel: 020 7580 8155 www.cartoonmuseum.org Tues-Sat 10.30-5.30, Sun 12-5.30. Admission £4, concessions £3, students & children free.

Robert Dighton: Georgian caricaturist, actor & thief

(until 20 Apr 2008)

Dighton–a colourful character who combined a career as an actor with that of artist & printseller–achieved notoriety for stealing & selling prints he had stolen from the British Museum. Eighty of his original caricatures of both celebrities & nonentities provide an insight into the life of Georgian London.

CEREDIGION MUSEUM

Coliseum, Terrace Rd, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 2AQ Tel: 01970 633088 http://museum.ceredigion.gov.uk Mon-Sat 10-5. Closed 21 Mar. Admission free.

Hidden Treasures from Aberystwyth Yesterday

(until 19 Apr 2008)

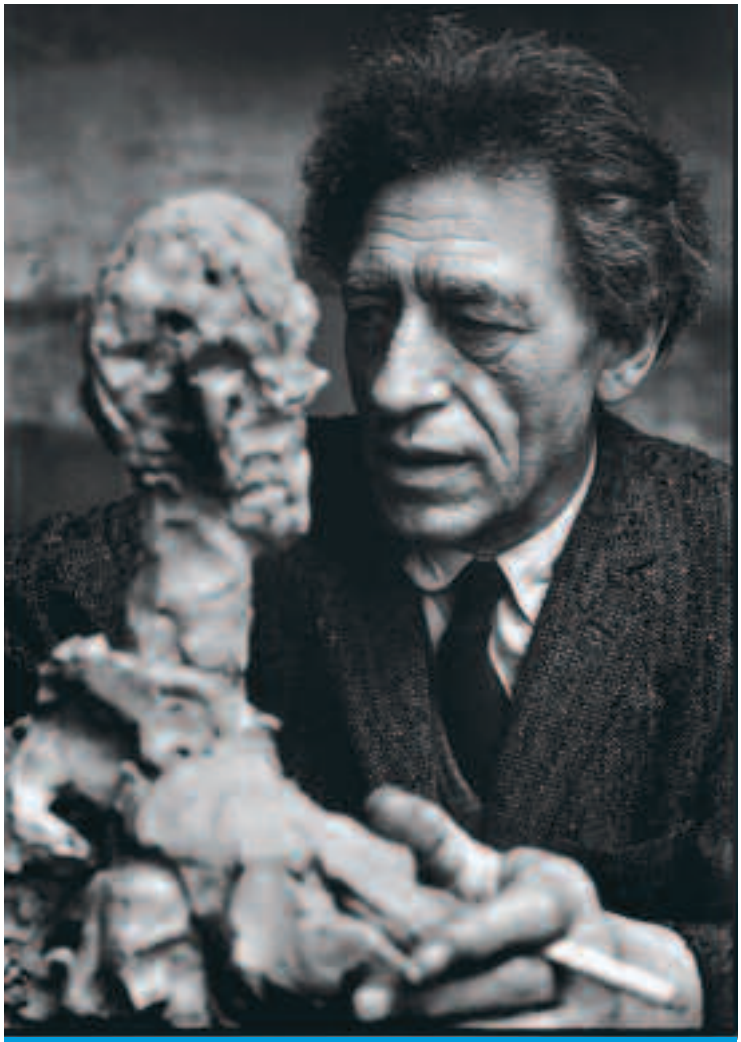
A variety of items selected by museum staff from the wide-ranging collection of local memorabilia built up by the late Margaret Evans.

CHELTENHAM ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

Clarence St, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 3JT Tel: 01242 237431 www.cheltenhammuseum.org.uk Mon-Sat 10-5.20 (first Thurs of month 11-5.20). Closed 5 May. Admission free.

Vaulting Ambition: The Adam Brothers, contractors to the metropolis in the reign of George III *(19 Apr-24 May 2008)*

This touring exhibition from the John Soane Museum in London tells the story of the four Adam brothers who, from 1768, made a name for themselves with the Adelphi development, in London's Strand. It uses watercolours, illustrations & other material to demonstrate the splendour of Georgian architecture.



From Compton Verney: **Alberto Giacometti**

COMPTON VERNEY

Kineton, near Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwicks CV35 9HZ Tel: 01926 645500 www.comptonverney.org.uk Tues-Sun & bank-holiday Mons 11-5. Admission £7, seniors £5, students £4, children £2; family (2+4) £16.

Alberto Giacometti

(15 Mar-1 June 2008)

Sculptures, paintings & drawings created from 1946 to 1957–a period during which the Swiss-born artist was working towards a new perception of reality governed by the figure in space. Sculptures on view include The Forest, Four Figurines on a Stand, & Standing Nude on a Cubic Base; subjects of Giacometti's paintings & drawings include his wife, Annette, & brother, Diego.

COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART

Strand, London WC2R 0RN Tel: 020 7848 2526 www.courtauld.ac.uk Daily 10-6. Admission £5, concessions £4; students & children under 18 free; all admission free Mon 10-2 (except bank holidays).

Renoir at the Theatre

(until 25 May 2008)

An exhibition built around the Courtauld's famous painting La Loge features more works by Renoir depicting the theatre, & others by early Impressionist contemporaries such as Mary Cassatt & Edgar Degas.

DERBY MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

The Strand, Derby, DE1 1BS Tel: 01332 716659 www.derby.gov.uk/museums Mon 11-5, Tues-Sat 10-5, Sun & bank holidays 1-4. Admission free.

Gaze: Portraits from the Museum's Collection

(until 1 June 2008)

Historic portraits from the Derby & Leicester museums' collections, accompanied by a contemporary selection from the Arts Council.

GRUNDY ART GALLERY

Queen St, Blackpool, Lancs FY1 1PX Tel: 01253 478170 www.blackpool.gov.uk Mon-Sat 10-5. Closed 24 Mar & 5 & 26 May. Admission free.

Utagawa Hiroshige: The Moon Reflected

(8 Mar-26 Apr 2008)

A selection of Hiroshige's later woodblock prints from the British Museum's collection features three series, including One Hundred Famous Views of Edo (1856-58), plus sketchbooks & the famous Snow, Moon & Flowers triptychs.

John Gay: Blackpool 1949

(until June 2008)

Evocative photographs from the English Heritage National Monuments Record capturing Blackpool holidaymakers during the summer of 1949. Gay, a German émigré, was renowned for his work in advertising campaigns, magazines & books.

GUILDFORD HOUSE GALLERY

155 High St, Guildford, Surrey GU1 3AJ Tel: 01483 444742 www.guildfordhouse.co.uk Tues-Sat 10-4.45. Closed 21 Mar. Admission free.

To Visit Britain's Landmarks with Shell

(23 Feb-22 Mar 2008)

Posters from the Shell campaign from the 1920s & 30s, shown alongside many original oils & watercolours from the Shell Archives that were used in their creation.

HAMPSTEAD MUSEUM

Burgh House, New End Sq, London NW3 1LT Tel: 020 7431 0144 www.burghhouse.org.uk Wed-Fri & Sun 12-5. Admission free.

Lifelong Impressions–Paintings, Prints & Drawings by Milein Cosman

(9 Apr-23 June 2008)

A retrospective for this German-born artist, spanning more than 60 years of prolific output. Cosman's work ranges from prints & drawings to oil paintings & watercolours, & includes portraits of Henry Moore, Francis Bacon, TS Eliot, Iris Murdoch & Martin Buber.

HOLBURNE MUSEUM OF ART

Great Pulteney St, Bath, Somerset BA2 4DB Tel: 01225 466669 www.bath.ac.uk/holburne

Tues-Sat 10-6; Sun & bank holidays 11-5. Admission £4.50, concessions £3.50, students & children free.

Seventy Years of Penguin Design
(until 24 March 2008)
The history of the Penguin book cover, tracing its design from the iconic triple-banded early versions to the multifarious covers of today. The exhibition includes original artwork & early proofs, & looks at the development of the Penguin logo as well as the introduction of illustration & photography.

HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY MUSEUM

Horse Guards, Whitehall, London SW1A 2AX
Tel: 020 7930 3070
www.householdcavalrymuseum.org.uk
Daily 10-6. Closed 21 Mar. Admission £6, concessions & children £4; family (2+3) £18.

Household Cavalry Collection
(opened 2007)
Ceremonial uniforms, royal standards & gallantry awards are on permanent display in this museum that offers a "behind the scenes" look at the ceremonial duties & operational roles of the Household Cavalry. Visitors can watch troopers working with the horses in the 18th-century stables; children are provided with a dressing-up area, trails & interactive displays.

JERSEY MUSEUM

The Weighbridge, St Helier, Jersey, Channel Islands JE2 3NF
Tel: 01534 633300
www.jerseyheritagetrust.org
Daily 9.30-4. Admission £7, concessions £6.40, students & children £4; family (2+2 or 1+3) £20.

Romantics in the Channel Islands
(until 7 Dec 2008)
The Channel Islands' rugged coastlines, extreme weather, atmospheric light & lush interiors were perfect ingredients for the early 19th-century Romantics. This exhibition brings together the work of many of these artists, such as John Le Capelain, Peter Le Lievre & Sarah Louise Kilpack, who were inspired by local scenes. It also explores Romanticism in other art forms & includes the work of one of the Channel Islands' most famous exiles, Victor Hugo.

KETTLE'S YARD

Castle St, Cambridge CB3 0AQ
Tel: 01223 352124
www.kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk
Tues-Sun & bank-holiday Mons 11.30-5. Closed 21 Mar. Admission free.

Momentary Momentum: Animated Drawings
(Part 2, until 30 Mar 2008)
Installations & films make up this international survey of animated drawing. Artists include Francis Alÿs, William Kentridge, Kara Walker & David Shrigley; programmes of short films feature the work of Robert Breer, Susanne Jirkuff, Arthur de Pins, Georges Schwizgebel & Takashi Ishida.

From the National Gallery: **Pompeo Batoni**

THE LOWRY

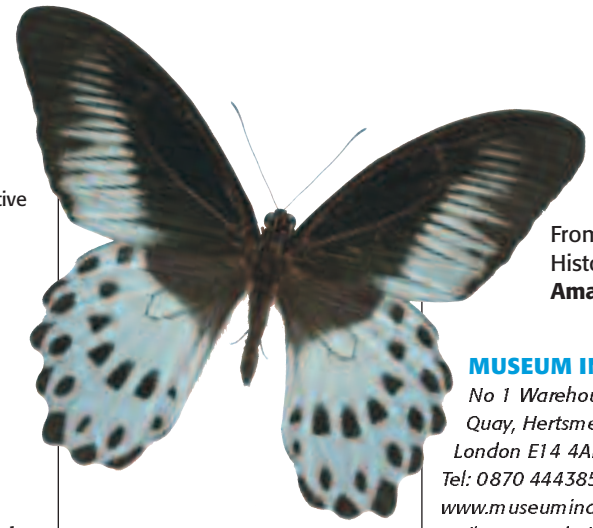
Pier 8, Salford Quays, nr Manchester M50 3AZ
Tel: 0870 7875780
www.thelowry.com
Sun-Fri 11-5, Sat 10-5. Admission free.

Laura Knight at the Theatre
(22 Mar-6 July 2008)
Works on loan from UK public & private collections by an artist who achieved early recognition as a key member of the Newlyn colony. In 1919 she obtained permission to work behind the scenes at Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, conveying not only the splendour of costume & scenery but also quiet moments backstage.

MIMA

Centre Square, Middlesbrough TS1 2AZ
Tel: 01642 726720
www.visitmima.org.uk
Tues-Sat 10-5, Sun & bank-holiday Mons 12-4. Admission free.

Based on Paper
(until 11 May 2008)
A collection of western avant-garde art from the 1960s & early 1970s, with drawing, painting, collage, video work & sculpture from the Marzona collection & examples of Minimal Art, Conceptual Art, Arte Povera, Performance Art & Land Art. The exhibition has been organised in partnership with the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin.



From the Natural History Museum: **Amazing Butterflies**

MUSEUM IN DOCKLANDS

No 1 Warehouse, West India Quay, Hertsmere Rd, London E14 4AL
Tel: 0870 4443857
www.museumindocklands.org.uk
Daily 10-6. Admission £5 (valid for one year), concessions £3, students & children under 16 free.

Jack the Ripper & the East End
(15 May-9 Oct 2008)
The human stories behind the sensationalised accounts of the 1888 serial killings are unfolded through original documents that include police files, newspaper accounts & photographs giving a greater understanding of the victims, witnesses & suspects & of the world they inhabited.

MUSEUM OF COSTUME SCOTLAND

Shambellie House, New Abbey, Dumfriesshire DG2 8HQ
Tel: 01387 850375
www.nms.ac.uk
Daily 10-5. Admission £3, concessions £2, children under 12 free.

Hip Knits *(21 Mar-31 Oct 2008)*
A century of Scottish knitwear, from traditional Fair Isle sweaters to the latest creations, including examples by Queene & Belle, Pringle of Scotland, Ingrid Tait & other international fashion firms. The exhibition looks at the versatility of wool & encourages visitors to try out knitting techniques.

MUSEUM OF LONDON

London Wall, London EC2Y 5HN
Tel: 0870 4443852
www.museumoflondon.org.uk
Mon-Sat 10-5.50, Sun 12-5.50. Admission to museum free.

London's Burning: The Great Fire of London 1666
(until 2009)
Focusing on eye-witness accounts, such as Samuel Pepys' description of rescuing his bars of gold, the exhibition reveals the personal side of a catastrophic event that left only one-fifth of the buildings in the City of London standing.

MUSEUM OF READING

Town Hall, Blagrave St, Reading RG1 1QH
Tel: 0118 939 9800
www.readingmuseum.org.uk

Tues-Sat & bank-holiday Mons 10-4, Sun 11-4. Closed 23 Mar. Admission free.

Ancient Egypt: Reading's Egyptology Collection
(until 20 Apr 2008)
To illustrate aspects of life & death in Ancient Egypt, the exhibition features mummified cats, hieroglyphic inscriptions from Memphis & Abydos, & watercolours from the collection of the Egypt Exploration Society–including some by Howard Carter, discoverer of Tutankhamun's tomb.

In the footsteps of Henry Taunt
(until 26 Apr 2008)
Images by one of England's most prolific photographers whose pictures of the Thames played a major role in developing the Victorians' love of the river. Alongside them are modern digital images by Jeff Robins & Graham Diprose, who have revisited many of Taunt's finest locations & give "then & now" views spanning 125 years.

NATIONAL CONSERVATION CENTRE

Whitechapel, Liverpool L1 6HZ
Tel: 0151 478 4999
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/conservation
Daily 10-5. Admission free.

Metropolis–capturing modern Liverpool
(21 Mar-10 Aug 2008)
Photographs from the collection of Stewart Bale Ltd spanning a period of great change in the city from the 1920s to the 1970s. Taken to celebrate, promote & record great events, they show landmark buildings, cutting-edge developments & half a century of city life.

NATIONAL GALLERY

Trafalgar Sq, London WC2N 5DN
Tel: 020 7747 2885
www.nationalgallery.org.uk
Daily 10-6 (Wed until 9). Admission to gallery free.

Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787)
(until 18 May 2008)
Once the most celebrated painter in Rome, Pompeo Batoni created religious & mythological works & also recorded the visits to Italy of international travellers on the Grand Tour. This comprehensive presentation of Batoni's paintings has examples from public & private collections of Europe & America. Sainsbury Wing. Admission £8, concessions £7 (Tues from 2.30pm, concessions £4), students & children £4, under-12s free. Advance booking on 0870 9063891, or via website.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND

Merrion Sq West & Clare St, Dublin 2, Irish Republic
Tel: +353 1 661 5133
www.nationalgallery.ie
Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs until 8.30), Sun 12-5.30. Closed 21 Mar. Admission to gallery free.

Jack B Yeats: Highlights from the Model Arts & Niland Gallery, Sligo
(until 30 Nov 2008)
Eleven works by Jack Yeats include two early oil paintings depicting scenes of the civil war: The Funeral of Harry Boland (1923), & Communicating with Prisoners (c.1924).

Impressionist Interiors
(10 May-10 Aug 2008)
More than 40 paintings & works on paper drawn from the Gallery's collection, shown alongside loans from important European & US collections, highlight a rarely-seen side of Impressionism. Examples by Manet, Renoir, Degas, Monet, Signac & Cassat reveal how the artists used interior spaces as social metaphors & show the importance of the motif of the window for Impressionist artists. Millennium Wing. Admission charge to be arranged.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF SCOTLAND

The Mound, Edinburgh EH2 2EL
Tel: 0131 624 6200
www.natgalscot.ac.uk
Daily 10-5 (Thurs until 7). Admission to gallery free.

Reunited: Rubens–Ribera
(until 31 Mar 2008)
On loan from the Capodimonte Museum in Naples, the mythological painting of Drunken Silenus by Spanish-born artist Jusepe de Ribera is displayed alongside the Gallery's Feast of Herod by Peter Paul Rubens. In the mid-17th century the two works were the highlights of a huge collection in Naples amassed by wealthy Flemish merchant & financier Gaspare Roomer.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND

Chambers St, Edinburgh EH1 1JF
Tel: 0131 225 7534
www.nms.ac.uk
Daily 10-5. Admission free.

Silver: Made in Scotland
(until 27 Apr 2008)
This versatile precious metal has long symbolised wealth, power, status & success. Among more than 350 examples of Scottish silversmithing spanning seven centuries are a solid silver model of the Scott Monument, the first known coin minted for a Scottish king, & a silver suit fashioned for a flamboyant 17th-century duke, plus contemporary silver created for international celebrities, including Ewan MacGregor, Sean Connery & Alexander McQueen.

From the British Library: **Breaking the Rules: The Printed Face of European Avant Garde 1900-1937**

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

St Martin's Place, London WC2H 0HE
Tel: 020 7306 0055
www.npg.org.uk
Daily 10-6 (Thurs, Fri until 9). Admission to gallery free.

Vanity Fair Portraits: Photographs 1913-2008
(until 26 May 2008)
Portraits of Albert Einstein, Charlie Chaplin, Jean Harlow, Louis Armstrong & Josephine Baker are among classic images by legendary photographers, from Edward Steichen & Cecil Beaton to Annie Leibovitz & Mario Testino. Admission £10, seniors £9, children £8,children under 12 free (advance booking via website or on 0870 013 0703).

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Cromwell Rd, London SW7 5BD
Tel: 020 7942 5000/5011
www.nhm.ac.uk
Mon-Sat 10-5.50 (Fri until 9), Sun 11-5.50. Admission to museum free.

Amazing Butterflies
(5 Apr-17 Aug 2008)
Visitors negotiate an outdoor maze on the East Lawn, full of the typical hazards that face caterpillars, to emerge in a tropical house among hundreds of brightly-coloured free-flying butterflies. Admission £5, concessions & children £3.50; family (2+3 or 1+4) £14.

NEW ART GALLERY WALSALL

Gallery Square, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 8LG
Tel: 01922 654400
www.artatwalsall.org.uk
Tues-Sat & bank-holiday Mons 10-5, Sun 11-4. Admission free.

Hard Labour: Work in the West Midlands *(until 11 May 2008)*
Photographs & paintings show industrial landscapes, working people & home environments of England's "Black Country". Scenes include factories, foundries, workshops, markets, farms, back gardens & kitchens. Visitors are invited to add personal memories of their own working life in the area.

NORWICH CASTLE MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Castle Meadow, Norwich NR1 3JU
Tel: 01603 493625
www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk
Mon-Fri 10-4.30; Sat 10-5 (school holiday periods Mon-Sat 10-5.30); Sun 1-5. Admission £4.45, concessions £3.80, children £3.25.

Pre-Raphaelite Drawings
(until 6 Apr 2008)
Delicate drawings in pencil, charcoal, chalk, ink & watercolour from the collection held by the National Museums Liverpool give an insight into the working methods of the Pre-Raphaelites. On show are works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Ford Madox Brown & Edward Burne-Jones

ORIEL DAVIES GALLERY

The Park, Newtown, Powys SY16 2NZ
Tel: 01686 625041
www.orieldavies.org
Mon-Sat 10-5. Admission free.

Becoming Modern: New paintings on the occasion of Gwendolyn & Margaret Davies' visit to Italy, Spring 1909
(until 12 Apr 2008)
Eleven specially-commissioned paintings by Simon Grennan & Christopher Sperandio accompany six major works by Paul Cézanne, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot & Camille Pissarro from the collection bequeathed by the Davies sisters to the National Museum Wales.

PETWORTH HOUSE

Petworth, W Sussex GU28 0AE
Tel: 01798 343929
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
Sat-Wed 11-5. Admission to grounds (including gallery) £3.80, children £1.90; National Trust members free.

David Tress: Chasing Sublime Light
(17 May-29 July 2008)
The result of a six-year project, for which contemporary artist Tress retraced the steps of earlier artists such as Turner, Girtin & Sandby through the mountainous landscapes of northern Britain, & records new versions of their views two centuries on. Part 1, until 25 June: Scotland, Northumberland & North Yorkshire; Part 2, from 28 June: Cumbria & South Wales. Admission free to Part 2 for ticket-holders to Part 1.

RECORD OFFICE FOR LEICESTERSHIRE, LEICESTER & RUTLAND

Long St, Wigston Magna, Leicester LE18 2AH
Tel: 0116 2571080
www.leics.gov.uk/record_office
Mon, Tues, Thurs 9.15-5, Wed 9.15-7.30, Fri 9.15-4.45, Sat 9.15-12.15. Closed 21-25 Mar. Admission free.

The Lacemakers' Story: Loughborough, Luddites & Long Journeys
(10 Mar-30 Apr 2008)
The story of pioneering inventor John Heathcoat & his lacemaking machine. It tells the story of the Luddites who attacked his Loughborough factory in 1816, of the smuggling of machines to Calais, & of the lacemakers who sailed to new lives in France & Australia.

RIFLEMAKER SOHO SQUARE

1 Greek St, London W1D 4NQ
Tel: 020 7439 0000
www.riflemaker.org
Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 11-6. Closed 5 & 26 May. Admission free.

Liliane Lijn: Stardust
(1 Apr-31 May 2008)
American kinetic artist Liliane Lijn hung out with the Surrealists in the 1950s, worked alongside the Beatles in the 60s, & inspired Issey Miyake in the 80s. Her glowing installation is made from silicon-based aerogel–more commonly known as 'stardust'–developed by NASA & the Stardust mission to capture interstellar & comet particles.

ROYAL ACADEMY

Piccadilly, London W1J 0BD
Tel: 020 7300 8000
www.royalacademy.org.uk
Daily 10-6 (Fri until 10). Admission charges vary.

From Russia: French & Russian Master Paintings 1870-1925 from Moscow & St Petersburg
(until 18 Apr 2008)
More than 120 paintings by Russian & French artists illustrate the main directions of modern art from Realism & Impressionism to Non-Objective painting. It includes Matisse's Dance, commissioned by textile merchant Sergei Shchukin, & Kandinsky's combinations of Russian fairy tales with Fauvist colour. Admission £11, concessions £9, students £7.50, children £4 & £3. Advance booking on 0870 8488484, or via website.

Cranach *(until 8 June 2008)*
Louis Cranach the Elder's Altarpiece of the Holy Kinship is the centrepiece of a major exhibition devoted to this 16th-century German painter, printmaker & book illustrator, which also features paintings, drawings & prints from the Stadel Museum, Frankfurt. £8, concessions £7, students £6, children £4 & £3. Advance booking on 0870 8488484, or via website.

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS

Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AB
Tel: 020 8332 5655
www.kew.org.uk
Daily 9.30-5.30 (from 30 Mar, 9.30-6.30). Admission £12.25 (after 5pm, £10.25), concessions £10.25, children under 17 free.

Henry Moore at Kew
(until 30 Mar 2008)
Last chance to see Moore's 28 monumental works that are displayed out of doors throughout the 300-acre site.

Highlights from the Kew & Sherwood Collections
(17 Apr-Oct 2008)
Inaugural exhibition for the new Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art, showing some of the 200,000 works held by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew–some dating from about 1700. It also shows highlights of the comprehensive collection of modern botanical painters from more than 30 countries, made by Dr Shirley Sherwood, evidence of a new wave of botanical painters & the renaissance of this art form.

ROYAL CORNWALL MUSEUM

River St, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2SJ
Tel: 01872 272205
www.royalcornwallmuseum.org.uk
Mon-Sat 10-5. Closed 21 & 24 Mar. Admission free.

Searching for a Bigger Subject: Tony Foster
(until 25 Apr 2008)
The Grand Canyon & Mount Everest are among wild landscapes depicted by Tony Foster, who hikes around the world to paint his watercolours on site in front of awe-inspiring natural subjects. Works on show range from small studies to 6-foot panoramic vistas.

SCIENCE MUSEUM

Exhibition Rd, London SW7 2DD
Tel: 0870 8704868
www.sciencemuseum.org.uk
Daily 10-6. Admission to museum free.

The Science of Survival
(opens 5 Apr 2008)
This hands-on exhibition explores how the way we live will change in response to climate change. Five interactive areas–Drinking, Eating, Enjoying, Moving & Building–demonstrate why the future will be different & suggest some possible technological responses. Admission £6; family (1+2, 2+2 etc) £5 per person.

From the National Portrait Gallery: **Vanity Fair Portraits 1913-2008**

SOUTHAMPTON CITY ART GALLERY

Civic Centre, Commercial Rd, Southampton SO14 7LP
Tel: 023 8083 2277
www.southampton.gov.uk/art
Tues-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-4.
Admission free.

Ancient Landscapes–Pastoral Visions: Samuel Palmer to the Ruralists
(18 Apr-22 June 2008)
Beginning with etchings by Samuel Palmer, the exhibition examines the development of landscape painting in the post-World War I era, examining the Romantic response to the British countryside & the impact of man on the landscape. Palmer depicted village life & a sense of community, while John Nash & the Ruralists were drawn to the mystery of ancient sites imbued with a spiritual aura.

SUNDERLAND MUSEUM & WINTER GARDENS

Burdon Rd, Sunderland, Tyne-&-Wear SR1 1PP
Tel: 0191 553 2323
www.twmuseums.org.uk/sunderland
Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 2-5.
Admission free.

Whatever the Weather
(until 13 Apr 2008)
The importance of climate, explaining how the weather works, showing its significance to different cultures around the world & recalling unusual weather events in history. Exhibits include historic instruments, & information on reactions to weather in the natural world–on spiders, canaries, crickets & butterflies that are said to 'forecast' impending weather.

TATE BRITAIN

Millbank, London SW1P 4RG
Tel: 020 7887 8008
www.tate.org.uk/britain
Daily 10-5.50 (first Fri of month until 10). Admission to gallery free.

Modern Painters: The Camden Town Group
(until 4 May 2008)
Inspired by the work of Van Gogh & Gauguin, the Camden Town Group, introduced Post-Impressionism to Britain in the early 20th century. The exhibition focuses on key themes in their work: life in the city, people, style, & the infamous Camden Town murder. Spencer Gore, Harold Gilman, Robert Bevan, Charles Ginner & Walter Sickert were fascinated by the changing ways of life & sexual attitudes at this transitional period in British history.

From the Courtauld Institute of Art: **Renoir at the Theatre**

Admission £9, concessions £7, children under 12 free.

TATE LIVERPOOL

Albert Dock, Liverpool L3 4BB
Tel: 0151 702 7400
www.tate.org.uk/liverpool
Tues-Sun & bank-holiday Mons 10-5.50 (from 1 Apr, daily 10-5.50). Admission free.

Niki de Saint Phalle
(until 5 May 2008)
Sculptural works–including her acclaimed Shooting Pictures–by this French artist, who first came to prominence in the 1960s & is remembered as flamboyant, provocative & fiercely independent.

TATE MODERN

Bankside, London SE1 9TG
Tel: 020 7887 8008
www.tate.org.uk/modern
Daily 10-6 (Fri, Sat until 10). Admission to gallery free.

Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia
(until 26 May 2008)
Creators of the Dada movement, Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray & Francis Picabia changed the course of art. Their shared outlook on life emerges in their works via jokes, a sense of irony, & a pronounced interest in eroticism. The 400 works on show explore the affinities & parallels between their work, showing how the three responded to each others' ideas. Admission £11, seniors £10, concessions £9, children under 12 free.

TULLIE HOUSE MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Castle St, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 8TP
Tel: 01228 534781
www.tulliehouse.co.uk
Mon-Sat 10-4, Sun 12-4 (from 1 Apr, Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 12-5). Admission £5.20, concessions £3.60, children free.

The Face of an Emperor: Hadrian inspects the wall
(until 13 Apr 2008)
Lent by the British Museum, a fine bronze head of the Roman Emperor (discovered in the River Thames in 1834) is exhibited in Tullie House's Roman gallery. After being on view here, at the western end of Hadrian's Wall, it moves to the eastern end & will be on show at Segedunum Roman Fort & Museum, Buddle Street, Wallsend, Tyne-&-Wear NE28 6HR (16 Apr-8 June 2008).

Body Space *(15 Mar-4 May 2008)*
Exploring the use & representation of clothing in contemporary art, the exhibition investigates the relationship between dress & personal identity, including ideas of gender, sexuality, culture, status & revelation, as well as dress used as an extension of the body or of the psyche.

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

Cromwell Rd, London SW7 2RL
Tel: 020 7942 2000
www.vam.ac.uk
Daily 10-5.45 (Fri until 10). Admission to museum free.

China Design Now: Photography by John Ross
(15 Mar-13 July 2008)
As China opens up to global influences, the exhibition takes a look at the explosion of new design in China, from the 2008 Olympic stadium to the latest fashion & graphics, & at developments in three rapidly-expanding cities: Beijing, Shanghai & Shenzhen. Admission £9.40, concessions £7.20, students & children £4.75, under-12s free. Advance booking on 0870 906 3883.

WALLACE COLLECTION

Hertford House, Manchester Sq, London W1U 3BN
Tel: 020 7563 9500
www.wallacecollection.org
Daily 10-5. Admission free.

Masterpieces from the Louvre: The Collection of Louis La Caze
(until 18 May 2008)
Pictures from the greatest bequest of paintings ever received by the Paris museum, collected by Louis La Caze (1798-1869), a Parisian doctor. Among 18th-century French paintings are works by Watteau, Chardin, Boucher & Fragonard, & Ribera's 1642 masterpiece, Le Pied-Bot (The Boy with a Club Foot).

YORK CASTLE MUSEUM

Eye of York, York YO1 9RY
Tel: 01904 687687
www.yorkcastlemuseum.org.uk
Daily 9.30-5 (Fri from 10). Admission £6.50 (valid for one year), concessions £5.50, children £4; family (2+1) £15.50; (2+2) £19.

Chinese Reflections
(until 31 Dec 2008)
Three centuries of Chinese influence on everyday life in Britain, illustrated through Chinese & Chinoiserie items from the museum's collection. The exhibition looks at contemporary influences expressed by today's Chinese community in York–the city's largest ethnic group whose presence in York goes back to the 1920s.

The details in this guide were correct at the time of going to press, but may be subject to change.
For a more comprehensive guide visit our website - www.nationalheritage.org.uk
Material for possible inclusion in the next listings (June-September 2008) may be sent to museumnews@angelabird.plus.com

EVENTS

SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, LONDON, WC2A 3BP

Thursday 17th April, 3.30pm

The architect Sir John Soane's house, museum and library at No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields has been a public museum since the early 19th century. Soane demolished and rebuilt three houses in succession on the north side of Lincoln's Inn Fields, beginning with No. 12 between 1792 and 1794, moving on to No. 13, re-built in two phases in 1808-9 and 1812, and concluding with No. 14, rebuilt in 1823-24. ??On his appointment as professor of architecture at the Royal Academy in 1806 Soane began to arrange the books, casts and models so that the students could have easy access to them, and proposed opening his house for the use of the Royal Academy students the day before and the day after each of his lectures. By 1827, when John Britton published the first description of the museum, Soane's collection was being referred to as an "Academy of Architecture".?

In 1833 Soane negotiated an Act of Parliament to settle and preserve the house and collection for the benefit of "amateurs and students" in architecture, painting and sculpture. On his death in 1837 the Act came into force, vesting the museum in a board of trustees who were to continue to uphold Soane's own aims and objectives. A crucial part of their brief was to maintain the fabric of the museum, keeping it "as nearly as circumstances will admit in the state" in which it was left at the time of Soane's death in 1837, and to allow free access for students and the public to "consult, inspect and benefit" from the collections. Since then, each successive curator has sought to preserve and maintain Soane's arrangements as he wished.

However, over the years changes have been made and the recent five year restoration programme sought to restore Soane's arrangements and effects where they had been lost. The collection is exclectic, from sculpture to the paintings of William Hogarth to an Egyptian sarcophagus to fine Georgian furniture, all as much as possible as Soane left them 170 years ago.

The current exhibition, sponsored by Apax Partners, drawn from Sir John's own encyclopaedic collection of drawings painstakingly gathered together over nearly 40 years, looks at the neo-classical vision of England 200 years ago through the work of Soane himself, Robert Adam, Sir William Chambers, James Wyatt and George Dance the Younge, and the European architects that influenced them, Giovanni-Battista Piranesi and Charles-Louis Clérisseau.

Look out for details of the next visit to the Museum of Garden History, Lambeth, in June.

SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM, April 17th

I am a member of National Heritage, Please send me one free ticket and ……. tickets at £10 each for the visit to Sir John Soane's Museum on Thursday, April 17th at 3.30pm. I enclose remittance and stamped addressed envelope.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Telephone number .....

To: **Liz Moore**
National Heritage Administration Centre
Rye Road, Hawkhurst, Kent TN18 5DW
(01580 752 052)

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