

Reigate DFAS Annual Report 2009-2010

Chairman's Report

Heather Gardner

The past year for Reigate DFAS has been one of innovation and imagination. We have moved forward on the technical front – starting with the setting up of our own website (www.rdfas.net). This is invaluable if you have mislaid your programme card, and an easy way of finding out about us for non-members. We have replaced most of our equipment, bought a laptop and donated a large drop-down screen to St. Mark's. We are now ready for the new age as lecturers increasingly use digital projection.

Our lecture programme has diversified into subjects not explored before. Our Study Days have broken new ground and our Visits and Tour programme has been imaginative and well planned.

Church Recording and Heritage Volunteering have maintained RDFAS's involvement in the community, and we are taking up a new idea from NADFAS by working on a Church Trail for young people at St. Mark's Church.

Our Heritage Volunteers have been involved in the work of the Priory Museum for over 20 years and as part of our Anniversary celebrations we have made a substantial gift (£1,000) for the purchase of two mannequins, a male with adjustable height and a shorter figure which can be a child or woman, to display costumes. The Museum will display an acknowledgement of the Reigate DFAS involvement with the Museum.

Our plans for our 25th Anniversary year in 2010, organised by our past Chairmen, start with a Visit and Reception by the Mayor at the Town Hall on 20th March, a Lunch at Wotton House on 16th May when the speaker will be David Battie, and cake and a glass of wine after the meeting in September which was the inaugural month in 1985.

As an acknowledgement of the leadership by our early Committee members we have invited Jean Mair (Chairman 1988-91) to be our Guest Chairman for our anniversary year and are delighted that she has accepted.

For my term of office I have been fortunate that the Committee has been at full strength. I could not have asked for a more competent or cheerful team and I am more than grateful for their support.

Treasurer's Report

Frank Power

The Society improved its equipment this year. A large electronically operated screen was installed at St Mark's Church Hall for lectures, and a digital projector, laptop computer, new sound system and microphone have added to the facilities.

The Society loaned £5,000 to the NADFAS Patricia Faye Fund, making our total investment £7,000. Interest from this money is used for causes such as providing grants for young artists and designers.

Low interest rates this year have meant that returns on our balances have been very modest, but we have been able to maintain the subscription at £30, and take a healthy financial position into 2010.

A website www.rdfas.net was launched to publicise the work of the Society. Visits made a small profit against a background of lower ticket sales. The two Special Interest Days were well attended and very profitable.

Grateful thanks go to Desmond Gwynne for preparing the accounts.

Visit Secretary's Report

Frank Power

A bracing start was made with a March trip to Hastings Old Town, which most vowed to revisit quite soon. Then the De La Warr Pavilion, a recently restored Art Deco icon in Bexhill, was both interesting and warm.

Spring visits took us to the Henry Moore Foundation and to Kew Gardens, where the microscopic detail of the paintings in the new Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanic Art was breathtaking, as was the Treetop Walkway.

A warm early summer's day was divided between Brighton's eclectic collections at the town museum and the tranquillity of the little known treasure of Highdown Gardens on the Downs at Worthing.

The year's longest journey found us at Waterperry Gardens admiring the impressive herbaceous borders before dodging showers in Oxford city centre to take in centuries of history at the Bodleian Library.

Visits to Rye and the South Bank finished off our year.

In common with many other organisations, our ticket sales dropped this year, but the visits broke even financially. We hope this is a temporary dip and that you will continue to support these enjoyable and sociable days out.

Programme Secretary's Report

Vivien Armstrong

Our 2009 programme began in April with an illuminating lecture by Peter Darty on the design features of Regency and Empire Furniture, followed in May by Jane Kelsall's trail of the history of a royal necklace and its fortunate inheritors.

In June "Moghuls of India" took us on an exotic foray, followed the next month by a talk on Ocean Liners. Valerie Woodgate's emotive pictures of the "Art of the Great War" included descriptions of harrowing trench conditions and of the bravery, which inspired war poems of enduring poignancy.

We were thus in the mood for Anthea Streeter's lighter and brighter recollections of "The Fifties" which concluded with a recording of Max Bygraves' hit song "Fings Ain't Wot They Used To Be".

Charles Beauclerk's "Who Wrote Shakespeare?" was a thought-provoking lecture, which stimulated discussion amongst members.

"Is Christmas in Good Taste?" with David Phillips kept us in this light-hearted state for our Christmas lecture and lunch party, whilst Jo Walton's "Bernini and Baroque Rome" focused us once more on sculpting, painting and architecture.

Study Days

Michael Beach

For "The Magic of Carpets" Study Day, Michael Woodman from The Rug Centre in Dorking transformed St Marks Hall into an Aladdin's cave of carpets from Turkey, Kashmir, India, Persia, China and elsewhere. Michael explained how carpet making techniques and traditions had evolved.

After lunch we had the opportunity to examine closely the many carpets on display. This was a fascinating day and was much enjoyed by the 44 members who came to it.

Our second Study Day was held in a beautifully restored 15th century barn. Fifty-seven members attended "Ellen Terry and the Aesthetes", which was led by Frances Hughes along with actor Adrian McLoughlin. With no formal education, Ellen Terry became the finest British actress of the 19th century and a friend of many of the best minds of the day.

Frances led us through Ellen's early years and then she and Adrian read an anthology of pieces by people who knew her and wrote of her charm, talent and beauty. Finally, after lunch, Frances gave the story of her later years as the greatest actress of her generation.

2009 Overseas Trip

Michael Beach

Our destination was Istanbul and for the first time as a Society we travelled by plane. Thirty of us gathered almost before dawn for a smooth journey via Heathrow.

The next morning we saw the English Church and then took the cable car to a point above Eyup cemetery, where we had fabulous views of the city, an excellent lunch followed by the opportunity to look at Eyup, one of the holiest sites of Islam, with its famous headstones and Mosque.

We visited the amazing Hagia Sophia, the Archaeological Museum with its wonderful statues and artefacts before driving along the Bosphorus to see two private museums in lovely settings, one with a spellbinding display of calligraphy.

Morning coffee on the Camlica Hill and then a trip to the Beylerbeyi Palace set on the side of the Bosphorus were thoroughly enjoyed. The delayed visit to Chora with its stunning mosaics was worth the wait. A fascinating shopping spree in the Spice Market ended a busy day.

Two enjoyable dinners were taken in local restaurants to give us a flavour of life in Istanbul.

Saturday brought us to the Blue Mosque and the Topkapi Palace to see the jewels and the Sacred Collection displayed in fabulously tiled rooms and containing many Christian and

Islamic relics. The hundreds of vaulted arches of the underground Roman Cistern, which originally supplied water to the City, delighted us all.

We sailed down the Bosphorus to visit the Dolmabahce Palace, an extraordinary building of the Victorian era with many dazzling chandeliers, one of which was given by Queen Victoria and weighing 40 tons.

To add to our understanding, Heritage Travel sponsored an additional lecture on Istanbul by Jane Angelini.

Heritage Volunteers' Report

Jean Power

In early 2009 a new exhibition was put together entitled "From Rationing to Rock 'n' Roll", about post war life in Britain in the 1950s. This has proved very popular with those who can recall that era vividly. Children are equally fascinated and several school parties from around Surrey have come to see it.

Heritage Weekend in September was highly successful, with a record number of visitors. Especially popular was an exhibition of 1950s Wedding Dresses and Ball Gowns. The volunteers' guiding was much appreciated.

Heritage Volunteers await the arrival of two new mannequin models donated by the RDFAS committee on behalf of the Society. They will be a valuable addition to resources.

Church Recorders' Report

Janet Dick

Following the 2009 AGM three new members joined our church recorders' team. They provided invaluable assistance with two areas of the record that were lagging behind, through not having enough recorders to cover all the sections. One member has been proofreading all the record to ensure consistency. The section leaders met during the last 3 months to plan the compilation of the record and to agree formats for consistency with photographs and printing. I am indebted to them for their commitment to the church recorders' group.