

THE NEWSLETTER

Issue No.5 – May-August 2008

An Introduction

Dear Members,

Another season is over, and I'm sure you will agree with me that we've had an interesting and varied programme of lectures. Further on in this Newsletter you can read about how lecturers and their subjects are chosen; and I would like to remind you that if there is any subject on which you would like to hear a lecture, do just let any of the committee know and we'll find the right expert for you!

Before the summer holidays really start, we have one more outing, a day out to the Abbey in Tongerlo. Tongerlo lies a little way off the motorway about halfway between Antwerp and Hasselt; we have decided to hire a coach so that no one has to worry about finding their way there or parking on arrival, and we can spend the whole day together from the moment we leave Antwerp until we return. It's not too late to join the party; Gilberte's contact details are on the right of this page.

So see you on the way to Tongerlo; if you are not going to be with us that day, enjoy the summer, and we will be back with another Newsletter in September.

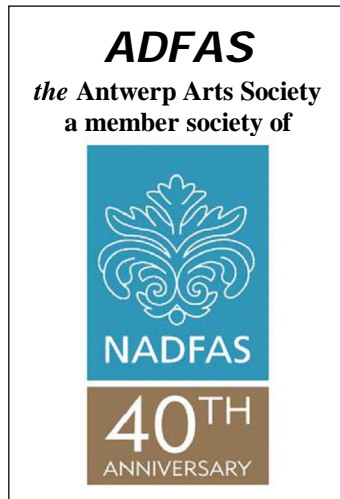
Angela Dodds

Thank you

ADFAS is a very small society and sometimes it seems as if each one of us has to undertake many tasks. All the work is done willingly, not just by Committee members but by many of our ordinary members too. Particular thanks must go to the following for their input during the last season:

Lecturer hosts:

Martine Baines, Annelies & Dirk van Leeuwen, Andrew Wagstaff.



Looking after lecturers:

Gilberte Du Bois, Peter Fletcher

Raffle prize donors:

Gilberte Du Bois, Shirley & Peter Fletcher, Michael & Maureen Smith, Jill Oortmans Gerling.

Outing organisers:

Gilberte Du Bois, Shirley Fletcher.

Church Hall arrangements:

Edgard Hubert, Michael & Maureen Smith.

Heritage Volunteers:

Martine Baines, Liliane Blommaert, Moira Dames-Alloo, Gilberte Du Bois, Ada Hellings, Myriam Lahou.

Interesting Websites

Two interesting websites have come to our notice recently and we thought you might like to have a look at them.

www.vlaamsekunstcollectie.be - This online collection allows you to browse through the patrimony of Flanders' three main museums of fine arts. There are four different ways by which you can discover this collection. Artist, title, period, subject. It is a joint project between the KMSKA, the Groeninge Museum in Brugge and the Museum of Fine Arts in Gent.

www.photo.rmn.fr – RMN stands for Réunion des Musées Nationaux, and it allows you to access 200,000 art works from museums across France, ranging from Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* to masks from Oceania and simple lesser-known sketches. You can search the database by artist, title, artistic style or museum. What is more the service is backed up by a specialist team of art historians who will answer your questions by e-mail, fax, telephone or post.

ADFAS event

Saturday 21 June 2008 LAST ACTIVITY OF THE SEASON Outing to the Abbey at Tongerlo

Founded in 1130, the Abbey was dissolved in 1796 but returned to the Premonstratensian monks in 1840 and it is flourishing again.

9.15: Meet at Crowne Plaza, departure by Van Mullem coaches.

10.30: Start of our guided tour of the Abbey from the Entrance Gate (+/- 2 hours).

12.30: Lunch in a nearby restaurant "Geerts in Westerlo" (3 course menu for € 30, coffee included)

15.00: Guided tour of the Da Vinci Museum

The museum contains a copy of Leonardo Da Vinci's Last Supper, painted in 1506 by Da Vinci's pupil, Andrea del Solario, and purchased by the Abbey in 1545.

Price: € 50 p.p.: €20 for both guided tours and bus transfer and € 30 for lunch. Please make the correct payment directly to Gilberte Du Bois, see below.

Call or mail : Gilberte Du Bois

GSM : 0477 530 501

e-mail : gilberte.dubois@belgacom.net

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Notes on our last lectures of the season

Oliver Everett on the Royal Library at Windsor (April 2008)

Our speaker arrived late in Antwerp, due to a bomb-alarm in St.Pancras Station in London. It must have been a very tiring and nerve-racking journey for him but none of those present at his lecture regretted the waiting because it turned out to be one of the best lectures of the season.

Mr Everett, who was the Librarian of the Royal Library at Windsor Castle for 17 years, gave us, by way of slides, a private tour through the rooms, the changes that have occurred over the years and the contents. This visit is very exceptional as the Royal Library is not open to the public. Only scholars can be admitted for research, otherwise you need to be invited by Her Majesty the Queen!

The Royal Library is held in trust by the Queen as Sovereign for her successors and the Nation, and is not owned by her as a private individual. Responsibility for it is taken by the Royal Collection Department, part of the Royal Household. (The Royal Household includes those who from time to time assist members of the Royal Family with their private and public duties.)

The first Royal Library, formed in medieval times, was presented by King George II to the new British Museum in the 18th century, as was the second by his successor, George III. The present collection, the larger part of which contains printed books from the 18th to 20th centuries, was started in the 1830s; it does, however, possess a few important illuminated manuscripts and incunabula, the earliest and rarest printed books, dating from earlier times.

One important book is the Mainz Psalter, published in 1457, which is the second book ever to have been printed with movable metal type. (Following the ADFAS visit to the Plantin Moretus Museum later in May, we received a better understanding of the work involved in its production.)

The Librarian, who has oversight of the Windsor's Royal Library and the Print Room (which contains the Royal collections of drawings and

engravings), organizes exhibitions and loans, recommends purchases, and advises on publications on the Royal Library, Print Room and on the history of Windsor Castle.

In 1992 fire destroyed or damaged more than 100 rooms at Windsor Castle. By good fortune the rooms worst affected were empty at the time, and as a result, few of the Castle's artistic treasures were destroyed. In the library no books were damaged, but they had to be cleaned and a group of NADFAS volunteers helped with this.

During question time Mr Everett explained how he chooses what books or artefacts from the Royal Library to present to the private guests of the Queen, who after an official dinner are always invited to the Library.

If you want to know more about Oliver Everett's subject, check the following website:

<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/default.asp?action=article&ID=21>.



The Sobieski Book of Hours, c.1420-5

*The Royal Collection © 2008,
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
RCIN 1142248*

GDB

John Ericson on wine-related antiques (May 2008)

The last lecture of the 2007-2008 season, which was preceded by the Annual General Meeting, found only a small audience. Was this due to the subject: Wine-related Antiques, or the idea of having to go through an AGM? Anyway, our speaker was the kindest person, patient during the AGM and helpful at the end of the lecture with reorganising the lecture room. His lecture was very well structured, the digital slideshow was of perfect quality, his knowledge on the subject

was immense and with a lot of humoristic details and side stories!

Starting the lecture from amphora's and barrels to wine bottles, to bin labels in wine cellars and on bottles, on to glasses, decanters and punch bowls, one could see the sparkling in our speaker's eye, he was in his mind already enjoying the glass of wine to come!

"Description of a corkscrew: the winelover's best friend and the rarest of tools." – Anonymous

Further on we were introduced to the world of collectible silver funnels, tasters or tastevin in different styles and their hallmarks, to arrive to the core of lecture: the corkscrew. Our speaker showed us a few corkscrews from his personal collection, which he had brought along.

"During one of my treks through Afghanistan, we lost our corkscrew. We were compelled to live on food and water for several days." W. C. Fields, American comedian, (1880-1946) in 'My Little Chickadee'

I had no idea that corkscrews could be such collectable items. Take a look at: www.corkscrewcentral.com/.

Some interesting facts: more patents have been taken out on corkscrews than on any other single item – there are 3,000 patents worldwide. There are societies for people who collect wine labels, and others for those who collect wine tickets. And if you aren't interested in labels, tickets, corkscrews, funnels, tastevin – then you could consider collecting bottles, coasters, wine holders, coolers, champagne taps, pourers, filters



Corkscrews can be amusing as well as useful

It was a very good lecture, although it was not really my subject.

Other items of interest

Please send us your contributions and we will publish them. Thank you.

How our lecturers are chosen

Several of you have asked recently how our lectures, and just as importantly our lecturers, are chosen.

It's a long process. Most of our lecturers, apart from the occasional local one, come to us with the recommendation of our parent society in the UK, NADFAS. They are not employed by NADFAS in any way, but still have to go through a rigorous interview and selection process before NADFAS agrees to include them in the Directory of Lecturers, and more fail this process than succeed.

A prospective lecturer must be knowledgeable about and enthusiastic for his or her chosen subject. To quote from the criteria for assessing candidate lecturers on the NADFAS website he or she must have:

- a related academic qualification(s) or experience;
- a range of suitable decorative and / or fine arts lectures;
- a studied interest in, and proven experience of, the subjects offered;
- a minimum 3 years' experience of lecturing to an adult audience, preferably to a variety of audiences.

In addition, the candidate must, among other things, be articulate, able to achieve a rapport with the audience, confident at using technical equipment, and able to produce lectures that are informative, educational, well constructed and well illustrated.

If our lecturer qualifies on the above criteria, he will then have to go through a selection procedure. NADFAS applies for 2 references from professional people who have heard him lecture in the last 18 months. A NADFAS representative then observes one of his lectures, which must include slides and be to an audience of 50 or more. If the subsequent report is positive, our lecturer is invited to NADFAS House where he gives a 20 minute mini-lecture to a selection panel, followed by 10 minutes of questioning on his lecturing experience and other relevant matters. Finally, if he passes this last hurdle he will be invited to join the Directory of Lecturers.

But how does he arrive in Antwerp? Once a year NADFAS holds a Directory meeting in London's Kensington Town Hall to which all NADFAS programme secretaries and assistants are invited – there were 700 people there this March, ready to book speakers for the 2009-2010 season. We listen to presentations from new lecturers (each has 2 minutes to present himself and his subject or subjects); then existing lecturers with new lectures talk for 1 minute. About half the 290-odd lecturers in the Directory also have a table at the meeting, and the presentations are followed by several hours of going from one table to another, talking to lecturers whose style or subject has caught our attention, and discussing vital matters such as fee, availability etc.

As you know, Antwerp DFAS shares lecturers with the DFAS societies in The Hague and Brussels; after the Directory meeting representatives of the three societies meet and discuss the lecturers we have seen in London, and agree a draft programme for the season two years ahead. Then those speakers are contacted, and after discussion we eventually come to an agreement on both fee and dates. In addition to their fee we offer our speakers accommodation and travel costs from London, as well as the possibility to visit a museum here in Antwerp, and a look at the city.

At the end of all this? A lecturer, very nearly always not only an expert in his or her chosen field but a charming and interesting person; and a lecture, sometimes on a well-known and well-tried subject, sometimes on something new, but always with a lot to teach us which always, we hope, is of interest to you, our members.

AMD

The Plantin-Moretus Museum May 2008

Nearly three years ago the Plantin-Moretus Museum was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site under the name "Plantin-Moretus house, workshop and museum complex". It is the only printers and publishers from the second half of the 16th century, complete with fully-furnished residence, equipment, company

archives and library, to have been preserved anywhere in the world.

Our guide, Key Minnebo, took the 15 ADFAS participants up to the first floor, starting with the Plantin room with anonymous family portraits and display cases which give an overview of Christophe Plantin's career, including his first printed work (1555). We then saw the 36-line Gutenberg Bible, printed no later than 1461. In front of the Biblia Polyglotta in 8 folio volumes, Key compared the Plantin printing house to what we would today call a multinational enterprise, with scholars from all over the world working on the premises and discussing the content of the books printed. She also emphasized the difficult balance between Catholicism and heresy or Protestantism, with intriguing side stories. We received more information about the most monumental publication: *Graduale Romanum* (1599), the oldest known drawing of a potato plant (1588), etc.

Coming down to the ground floor with the small and large drawing rooms with plenty of portraits painted by Rubens and others, the bookshop, with the list of un-authorized books, the inner court in which one can see the different styles and times of the buildings, the correctors' room, the Justus Lipsius room, the humanists room, we arrived finally in the type store and the printing room with different kind of printing presses, the heart of the Plantin House.

Thank you, Key, once again you made our visit into something very special.



The relaxed lunch at the Vlaamse Vereniging voor Watersporten on the Linkeroever, following a walk by some of us through the Pedestrian Tunnel, was a good way to conclude the morning visit. The food was excellent and so was the view.

GDB

What To Do this Summer

Lambermontmartre is back! Every last Sunday of the month until the end of September, the area round the Lambermontplaats, near the Fine Arts Museum, is being taken over by artists and their work. Go along and have a look, encourage and support the artists, and if you see anything you like, then buy it – who knows, you might become the owner of a very early Magritte or Picasso!

Open on 29 June, 27 July, 31 August and 28 September from 12 noon to 5 pm.

Going to Brussels? Then why not drop in at the Fine Arts Museum on the Rue de la Régence, where **The British Royal Collection** is being shown until 21 September (no, not the whole Collection – but a very valuable and interesting part of it). Some of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's collection of Flemish and Dutch paintings will be on display in mainland Europe for the first time, including works by Memling, Metsys, Bruegel the Elder, Rubens, Van Dyck and Teniers, and they will be displayed next to works by the same artists from the Museum's own collection. For information call 02/508 32 11, or go to www.expo-royalcollection.be.

DATES TO REMEMBER

19 June 2008	ADFAS Committee Meeting (If you have anything you would like brought up at the Committee meeting, please get in touch with Michael Smith)	
21 June 2008	Annual outing: Abbey of Tongerlo, lunch, and guided tour of the Da Vinci Museum at Tongerlo	See Page 1 of this Newsletter
7 October 2008	<i>London's National Gallery: every painting has a story to tell</i> Lecturer: Linda Collins	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
3 November 2008	<i>Beautiful Houses – Frank Lloyd Wright, America's Greatest Architect</i> Lecturer: Ann Anderson	Church Hall, Grétrystraat as from 7 pm Lecture at 8 pm
1 December 2008	<i>Is Christmas in Good Taste?</i> Lecturer: David Phillips	[Venue to be announced] Lecture at 8 pm

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ADFAS website – <http://www.ADFAS.org>

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