

GRDM FRIENDS NEWSLETTER No 17 September 2020

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I'm sure you have seen Verity's message of 1st September telling us "It's great to be back", and indeed it is. We are all delighted that the Museum re-opened on Thursday 20th August 2020. This was the culmination of many months of online Zoom meetings between the Trustees and Verity, with considerable assistance from Philippa Wakelin, who represented the the interest of the Volunteers.

A comprehensive Covid risk assessment has been produced and is available on the website, together with an updated Volunteer guide and a new Visitor guide. Particular thanks go to the Treasurer Anthony Gleave, who undertook the necessary physical alterations to the museum to enable the re-opening and to Jonathan Russell for his leadership throughout this process. The new system is working well. The Visitor numbers are encouraging and it is noticeable that they are keen to spend money in the museum shop. The opening days and hours are being kept under careful review.

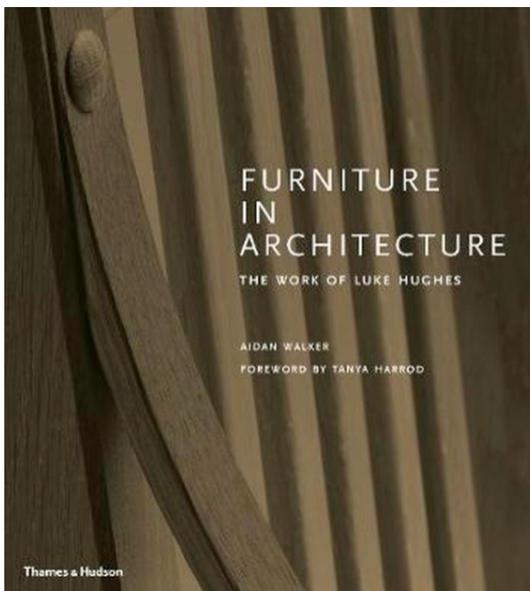
Regrettably I have had to cancel the talk that Maurice Collins was due to give to the Friends on Friday 6th November. Although he was still willing to give his presentation I have been unable to secure a suitable venue. The Edinburgh Room at the Lygon is only Covid secure for a maximum of 20 people. I investigated the Lifford Hall in Broadway as an alternative but, for a variety of reasons which I will happily relate in person to anyone who wants the details, this proved unsuitable. Clearly a talk attended by only 20 people is not viable financially, nor is it fair to the Speaker who would have travelled a considerable distance for the occasion.

Rest assured that I am continuing to work on rearranging this year's programme to take place in 2021. We will visit Rousham House and Gardens on the 23rd June next year, and it is likely that we will be able to go to St Catherine' College next July - on a date yet to be settled. I am also in contact with Sezincote and hope to arrange for our Friends Garden Party to be held there in July next year.

LUKE HUGHES

Those of you who enjoyed the talk by Luke Hughes on the topic of 'Arts and Crafts in the Digital Age' may be interested to know that a book has just been published about his work, *Furniture in Architecture: The work of Luke Hughes* by Aidan Walker, with a foreword by Tanya Harrod.

Luke Hughes & Company's enduring and meticulously engineered furniture, an eloquent response both to the architecture it inhabits and to the true Arts and Crafts spirit, has been placed at the forefront of the 'craft-led renaissance in British manufacturing.' Flexible in use, commercially viable and environmentally sustainable, the work furnishes many of the world's most distinguished buildings, from Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London and most of the Oxford and Cambridge University colleges to the Keystone Academy in Beijing and one of New York City's most vibrant synagogues.



Through an introduction to the studio and 25 case studies, *Furniture in Architecture* explores the company's place in the Arts and Crafts tradition and examines the philosophy and work of founder Luke Hughes. Aidan Walker sheds light on how the studio balances modern manufacturing technologies with abiding craft values, rendering the small furniture workshop a relevant and profitable proposition even when fulfilling large-scale commissions. This fascinating survey defines the elements of successful design and addresses the meaning of craft and craftsmanship in the digital age

The book is available at this link, <https://agreatread.co.uk/furniture-in-architecture-the-work-of-luke-hughes-9780500022542/> at a significant discount with free postage.



THE EDSTONE AQUEDUCT

In the absence of Trips and Talks to write about I continue to search for anything linked to design which might be of interest. This quarter I am looking at industrial design.

Many of you will be familiar with Thomas Telford's famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct which carries the Llangollen Canal over the River Dee at a height of 126 feet for a distance of 336 yards – the longest aqueduct in the UK and the highest in the world: (<https://www.pontcysyllte-aqueduct.co.uk/>)

Much less well known is the Edstone Aqueduct which at 475 feet is the longest cast iron aqueduct in England. It is to be found just a few miles north of Stratford upon Avon on the Stratford Canal – one of

three aqueducts in a 4 mile stretch of the canal from the Edstone to Yarningale Common. All three are unusual in that the towpath is level with the bottom of the aqueduct and boats pass you at shoulder height. The southern end of the canal was constructed between 1812 and 1816 under the leadership of William James of Stratford and the link to the River Avon was completed in June of 1816.



The Canal was used mainly to transport coal from Dudley in the Black Country avoiding the Grand Union Canal and from Stratford was transported either to Evesham along the River Severn or to Moreton-in-Marsh via the Tramway that ran from Stratford. A short, surviving section of the tramway bed lies behind the Tramway Public House on the Shipston Road in Stratford.

Beneath the Edstone Aqueduct ran two railway lines. The first connected the nearby station at Bearley the 6 ¼ miles to Alcester. That line opened in 1876 and closed finally in 1951. The track bed is still visible and marked on Ordnance Survey maps. The second was the Birmingham and North Worcester Railway which ran from Birmingham Snow Hill to Stratford, the section to Stratford being completed in 1907/8.



There was a pipe [still visible] from the side of the canal which enabled steam engines to refill with water.

All the bridges across the canal are constructed in two halves with a gap of a few inches in the middle which enabled the tow rope from the barge to the horse to pass straight through the bridge. A simple but highly effective design feature.

If you are tempted to visit the Edstone Aqueduct, leave Stratford on the A3400, cross the northern bypass towards Birmingham and after a couple of miles pass under the railway bridge at Bearley station and immediately turn left towards Little Alne. After half a mile, pass under the railway bridge and a further 200yds on is the aqueduct with a small parking area for half a dozen cars and a steep flight of steps to its southern end. At the northern end of the aqueduct is a steep path which will take you underneath the aqueduct. You can walk along the canal to Wootton Wawen [about 45 minutes] or back to Stratford [100 minutes or so].

Christopher Hotten
September 2020



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