

# GRDM FRIENDS NEWSLETTER 8

## VISIT TO OWLPEN MANOR AND GARDEN

On 16th May we visited Owlpen Manor at Uley in Gloucestershire. Twenty-four Friends were richly entertained by the current owner, Sir Nicholas Mander, who took the group on a tour of his family home with its unique painted textiles and representative collection of Arts & Crafts furniture and fittings. Blessed with a fine day the Friends also had an opportunity to explore the gardens which had been much admired by some of the foremost garden designers. The recently released film *Phantom Thread*, starring Daniel Day Lewis, had been filmed partly on location at Owlpen Manor.



### NEXT OUTING

**Tuesday 18th September 2018**

### VISIT TO WIGHTWICK MANOR



Built for the successful 19th century industrialist Theodore Mander this is a rare surviving example of a house influenced by the Aesthetic and Arts & Crafts movements. Mander was inspired to decorate the interior of the manor with wallpapers and fabrics designed by William Morris, tiles by William De Morgan and glass by Charles Kempe, after he heard a lecture by Oscar Wilde in Wolverhampton in 1884 on 'The House Beautiful'. We will also have an opportunity to see paintings by the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, including a temporary exhibition of work by Lizzie Siddall, the ill-fated wife of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The visit will include a one hour guided tour of the house, an opportunity for a self-guided visit to the permanent William and Evelyn de Morgan exhibition, and an opportunity to investigate the wonderful gardens created by the Arts & Crafts garden designer Thomas Mawson. In 1937 Wightwick Manor passed into the care of the National Trust. For more information on Wightwick Manor [click here](#)

Cost: **£15 payable in advance** to cover coach hire cost

Entry to House and Gardens: **FREE for NT members** and **£10.50 for non-members** payable in person on the day. **£9.25** for savoury buffet lunch payable in person on the day.

Only 25 places available [Click here for booking form](#)

## FORTHCOMING TALKS

### A HISTORY OF LEATHER AND THE NATIONAL LEATHER COLLECTION

Wednesday 21st November 2018 at 6pm

by Philip Warner MA  
Curator



The use of leather is so ubiquitous that it is often taken for granted. In his talk Philip Warner MA, Curator will consider the worldwide story of leather which spans 4,500 years., From early Theban garments, the Dead Sea scrolls, Samuel Pepys wallet and the belts used to drive the industrial revolution, right through to the work of contemporary designers and craftspeople today. Over 70 years ago John Waterer RDI (a friend of Gordon Russell) co-founded the Museum of Leathercraft to collect, curate and share the world story of this remarkable material. In 2014 the collection was 're-discovered' in storerooms in Northampton and thanks to grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers, the National Leather Collection was established to preserve this legacy and present this remarkable resource in a way that delights, serves and educates on 'all things leather' for everyone, forever.

About the lecturer: Philip Warner is an experienced professional of twenty years standing. He developed his career working ostensibly for the National Trust and has managed some of their finest collections; Waddesdon Manor, Anglesey Abbey and Claydon Abbey to name but three. He has a Masters Degree in Decorative Arts and specialises in the interiors and decorative arts of France and England from the mid-17th century to the mid-19th centuries. Philip was appointed Curator of the National Leather Collection in May 2014.

**Date for your diary: FRIDAY 5th April 2019** at 6pm in Edinburgh Room, Lygon Arms

#### Talk on Ernest Gimson and the Barnsleys

Freelance curator, lecturer and writer Mary Greensted was for many years responsible for the internationally important Arts & Crafts Movement collection held at Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum. She contributed to the V&A's major exhibition on International Arts and Crafts held and has written extensively on craft and design. She is a Trustee of Court Barn and has served as Chairman of the Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsmen. Mary Greensted, an authority on Ernest Gimson, will talk to the Friends about this English architect-designer, who moved to Sapperton and set up workshops with the Barnsley brothers, and his influence on the young Gordon Russell.

#### GORDON'S WAR

On the 100th anniversary of the Armistice we should recall that Gordon enlisted with the 8th Worcesters on 22nd September 1914 and served with his regiment throughout the Great War, returning to England in 1918 with a bullet wound to his left arm.

Gordon described his war service in his biography, *Designer's Trade* and the extensive archive held by the Gordon Russell Design Museum contains a number of documents which further illuminate his war service.

We also have Gordon's typed notes, prepared in 1967/68 when he wrote the first 15 chapters of his book, in which he describes going with his father in July 1914 to Norton Barracks of the Worcestershire Regiment to enquire about a

*I filled in a form and waited. Then I was taken to an officer who looked at me as if I had crept out of the brickwork. I had no public school education. I had never been in the OTC. I wore glasses. I had described myself as a dealer in antiques. To him I suppose a dealer was a person who hawked rags and bones on a cart. It was a pretty severe indictment. Perhaps my appearance did not belie his worse suspicions. He said I had little chance of getting a commission and had better join the ranks.*

That is what Gordon did and in his biography he said it stood him in good stead, "to understand the ordinary man's point of view as I could not have done had I remained at Broadway or if I had not had a long period in the ranks..."

The archive also contains letters written by Gordon during the Great War, the most poignant is one that he wrote but never sent. Dated the 23rd June 1916 it reads:

*My darling Mother*

*If this letter ever reaches you –and I hopefully believe it never will – it will be after I have fallen on the field. I know quite well what your feelings would be in that event – it is in the hope that it will induce you to put your personal troubles to one side and again show a smiling face to the world that it is written.*



*There is every likelihood that within a few weeks – possibly even in a few days – a great offensive will be launched on this front [in fact the Battle of the Somme began on the 1st July]. What our part will be, I cannot attempt to say, but whatever*

*it may be, you know we shall put forth our greatest efforts, so that we may if possible achieve a decision. We are all in great spirits and willing to take any risks in the open rather than face another winter in the trenches.*

*Altho' there have been times, both in England and France, when I have longed so much to see the Cotswolds again, never once have I regretted joining and I am ready and willing to sacrifice all in the finest cause a man ever fought for. If my time has come to join Ray and Ernest I shall go cheerfully, knowing that I have done my little bit to help forward the victory which is so surely coming. These are my innermost thoughts and my dearest wish is that, knowing that I died content, you will not mourn for me, but rather thank God that you had two sons to offer your Country in these great times. Don't think of me as a hero, for I am nothing of the kind, and have only done my plain duty to the best of my ability, and I wish nothing better than a little plate of cast brass, oak or stone, with fine Roman lettering, in Broadway Old Church.*

*Bear in mind what I say, comfort everyone as only you can, and let your pride of face be so great that you won't need to shed one tear over.*

*Your ever loving son  
Gordon*

On the 1st July 1916 the British forces suffered 57,470 casualties including 19,240 fatalities. In the days that followed many, many letters such as that written by Gordon were delivered to letter boxes throughout the United Kingdom.

During the course of the war Gordon's father wrote to his son seeking advice about the house and garden that he was renovating at Snowhill. Gordon replied in a letter written on the 26th November 1917 as follows:-

*Thanks so much for sending me the garden plans, etc., which I have been most interested to see. 'Fraid I can't make any brainy suggestion – it seems such a long long way to Tower Close from this beastly place, and I find it positively impossible to do any serious thinking. I have such a lot to do now, as we are very short of officers that I get little time to myself [Gordon was by now a non-commissioned officer]. With any sort of luck, I ought to be home within a month. Can you leave anything that isn't really urgent till then and will have a long jaw about it?'*

He cannot then resist offering some thoughts about the plans. The implications behind the reference by Gordon to a lack of officers is all too obvious.

Christopher Hotten  
Friends Organiser