

FRIENDS OF THE NORWICH MUSEUMS REPORT

Norwich Area Museums Committee

Tuesday 6th December, 2022

Since our very successful Luncheon at Houghton Hall in May, the Friends Council has been involved in a number of activities as well as Talks in the TCA, arranged by Janet Cogman. There was a good number who attended the visit to the Gunton Estate, where we were hosted by Kit Martin. Our main focus was on the Water Powered Sawmill, which is still in full working order after nearly 200 years. In these times of great concern for the environment, it was a very salutary reminder that wind and water power are still our natural form of power and that early 19th century technology still has a useful place in the 21st Century. It was a fascinating to learn about it. We also visited the Chapel which is a very handsome building in the Classical style.

Later Kit Martin invited us to his home and spoke about the part he has played in the restoration of many great Country Houses, some of which are in East Anglia.

The latest FNM Talk was given by Sir Henry Paston-Bedingfeld, of Oxburgh Hall, in which he looked back on his life as a Herald. A very interesting subject, which most people don't know much about.

In my last report I mentioned that I had been invited, as Representative of the Friends on the Norwich Area Museums Committee, to go on a tour of the Keep and be shown the developments that have been made since last year. It was very impressive, as there are now in place enormous steels, fitted into the walls of the Keep, which show the different floor levels that will transform the building into its final layout. One could visualise how it will look as a Royal Palace in the reign of Henry I, and, of course, we all look forward to seeing the Friends' Tapestry on display, alongside all the other beautiful objects and fixtures and fittings.

At present, there is a wonderful exhibition in the main gallery at the Castle, entitled 'the Singh Twins, Slaves of Fashion'. Esther Morgan wanted to get together as many of the sponsors as possible of this exhibition for the Press coverage and invited Press photographers to take pictures of the Singh sisters, the work on show and the sponsors who contributed to the mounting of the show. The Friends of the Norwich Museums gave funds for a large piece of work which is prominently displayed in the gallery., and I went to represent the Friends. The sheer beauty and colour of the pieces are quite stunning, but the message embedded in the show is very hard hitting politically, and makes this juxtaposition of beauty and the cruelty which occurred during the Colonial period very challenging, and deliberately so.

Esther Morgan contacted Charles Bingham Newland, our Chairman, to let him know that there would shortly be some interesting coverage in the Press about the pietre dure table top, which had been owned by the Paston Family, for which the Friends, together with other sponsors, gave a substantial sum, in order to keep this very important piece not only in the UK but actually in Norfolk, as part of the NMS collection. We look forward to the Media coverage on this.

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