



NEWSletter 102

NUMBER

SPRING 2011

Wonderful News...

Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum has won the £750,000 funding bid for redevelopment scheme.

A funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for £750,000 to redevelop Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum has been successful. This positive news means that the redevelopment scheme can now move forward to the next stage.

The exciting and ambitious plans for the new development will provide additional galleries, new open access stores and study facilities as well as dedicated spaces for lifelong learning, education, outreach services and arts development programmes. There will also be an expanded events or performance space, and a new larger ground floor café and shop.



The scheme also provides a more prominent entrance to the Art Gallery & Museum, and creates a new footpath to

1 April, for the collections to be decanted into storage. Contractors are scheduled to be on site from early July 2011 and it is hoped that the new building will open in late 2012 or early 2013.

A total of £5.4 million has now been raised out of the £6.3 million target and the outstanding amount of £919k



has been underwritten by Cheltenham Borough Council. However, the trustees from the Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum Development Trust are still actively seeking to raise funds to cover the

Cheltenham's oldest building, medieval St. Mary's Church, from Clarence Street through to Chester Walk.

The Art Gallery & Museum closed to the public on

underwriting, through various applications to other charitable trusts and foundations and the launch of a public fund-raising campaign from May 2011.

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Our Work Commences

The Museum's building project has begun, but the work to secure the remaining funding goes on. This month sees the launch of the public appeal, seeking to involve as many of us as possible in the development of a new and better Art Gallery & Museum. We'll be seeing and hearing a lot more about the project as the appeal reaches out.

This is where we as Friends can play a vital part. By becoming a Friend, you have indicated your interest in the arts in general and the Museum in particular. Now is the time to show your support, by attending events, volunteering to help out, spreading the word, and recruiting new friends.

Donations, of course, are always more than welcome and you can send a cheque made out to the FCAGM to:

FCAGM,
Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum,
Clarence Street,
Cheltenham,
GL50 3JT.

(Please ask for a gift aid form.)
Donations of any amount are welcome.

Gina Wilson

Leaving A Legacy

If the Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum is important to you, please do consider remembering us in your Will. Bequests can be of money or a special item such as a painting or piece of furniture.

Ask for our *Leaving a Legacy* brochure or speak to the Friends' Legacy Officer (our Treasurer) so we can discuss the most advantageous way of proceeding.

John Turney

From the Chair

I couldn't have chosen a more exciting moment than now to take up my Chairman's duties again with the wonderful news of the Heritage Lottery Grant. It is a great pleasure to be back in the saddle (or is that the chair?) and I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all who have been so supportive over the last few months. The committee has functioned with efficiency and flair – possibly indicating that I wasn't missed at all – and my thanks go to them and particularly to John Turney who has performed so effectively as Acting Chairman.

Now that the realisation of the ambitious plans for the extension of the Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum is secured, fund-raising for the project is essential. As Friends we will have many opportunities to do our part. By supporting the many initiatives planned over the closure period we will not only help the Museum, but we will also experience some very interesting, enjoyable and informative events. Amongst our plans for the future are more of the popular lunch-time talks and coffee mornings, trips out for exclusive access to some fascinating places, a day out at Highnam Court (see next article), a lecture series centring on items from the Museum and, of course, social events where we can meet and get to know our fellow Friends.

Volunteering is an important part of the success of the Museum. Your committee is, of course, made up of volunteers, who gladly give their time and expertise. But we will need more volunteers to help us achieve our ambitious plans for the closure period. Please read the plea on page 3 for details.

Spring is most decidedly here, bringing with it a new beginning for the Museum and for the Friends. It's going to be a very exciting year and one that we can all contribute to, take part in and, most importantly, enjoy.

Gina Wilson

Friends Summer Fete at Highnam Court 21 August 2011

A DAY OUT FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Friends are urged to put this important date in their diaries. It will be the Friends' major public event this year to raise funds for the Extension to the Art Gallery & Museum for which a sum of £900k is still needed.



Highnam Court - the summer event will be held in the grounds on 21 August

Roger Head, the owner of Highnam Court, has most generously agreed to allow the Friends to organise a real Family Fun Day on Sunday, 21 August. The Working Party involved with the planning has already booked the Cheltenham Silver Band and there will be a Pig Roast for Friends to feast on. Highnam Church, with its unique painted interior, will be open for visits. There will be a variety of things for children to take part in such as a sculpture trail, face painting and 'plant potting'. Apart from the glorious and extensive gardens there will be attractions for visitors to enjoy along with afternoon tea, various stalls and of course listening to the Silver Band.

Friends will appreciate that to arrange this enjoyable day for everybody a good deal of organisation is involved and it would be appreciated if as many Friends as possible could offer their help on the day – men in particular! Willing helpers please contact Jenny Ogle (01242 231011), Marjorie Imlah (01242 526311) or Gina Wilson (01242 580333)

Jenny Ogle

What Are Friends For...

The Museum will be closed for quite a while now, but the Friends will continue to offer great events, days out, and entertainments for our members. But we will need some help. A gala day out at Highnam Court will take place on 21 August will require at least 30 to 40 helpers to organise parking, man the gate, serve teas and generally guide visitors around the magnificent garden.

The quilt, which you can read about in the next column, will be shown at a series of weekends in the Regent's Arcade throughout the summer and we will need volunteers to help us sell raffle tickets there.

Next year, the Friends will have a week-long exhibition in the Gardens Gallery in Montpellier Square and, again, we will need help manning the desk and selling the artwork.

If you feel you could help in any of these events – if only for a short period – please do get in touch with Gina Wilson on email at: gina@manuscripts.co.uk, or phone 01242 580333, or write to Gina at
Painswick Lawn,
7 Painswick Road,
Cheltenham
GL50 2EZ.



Above: The quilt
Above right: the other side of the quilt, with quilters and our Chairman

Our Beautiful Quilt

Montpellier Quilters have set their nimble fingers to making a glorious quilt to be raffled for the benefit of the Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum. The quilt, worth well over £500 on the open market, will go to some lucky purchaser of a £2 ticket. Tickets will be available at several Friends' events or by contacting gina@manuscripts.co.uk (01242 580333).



Rare and beautiful Japanese materials, many of them gifts, were brought back from Japan by Montpellier Quilters' founding member, Rita Humphry, who represented Britain in an international exhibition of quilt-making in that country. Sadly, Rita died before she was able to make use of them. The women of Montpellier Quilters pooled their expertise to make this magnificent quilt in her memory and have offered it to the Friends of the Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum to go towards the plans for the new building work. Part of the proceeds from the raffle will be donated to Japanese tsunami relief.

Keen and talented quilters Janet White, Margaret Steventon and others worked for three months to complete the work. A striking design in blues and aquas lends a fresh modern look to the design. The generous size – approximate 5 x 5 feet – means that the quilt can be used as a bed cover or a sofa throw. Most dramatically, however, would be to use it as a striking wall hanging.

The draw will be on Sunday, 21 August at Highnam Court.

Gina Wilson

A Neglected Picture



Some Friends may have noticed the large oil painting, illustrated above, which hangs in a corridor in the Town Hall, opposite the entrance to the Pillar room. It is by Sir David Murray RA, and entitled *A view of the Orwell from Woolverstone Park*. Over the years I've been mildly intrigued by this picture, and how it came to be there – it is rather hard to see well.

In 2009 we went over to Suffolk for the Aldeburgh Festival, and I happened to mention this picture to John Blatchly, a local historian who was giving a talk about houses along the Orwell. He was intrigued, and on our return to Cheltenham I asked Helen Brown if she would send him a copy of the picture (which, conveniently, had just been properly photographed on behalf of the Public Catalogue Foundation); which she kindly did.

John subsequently wrote an article about this and other pictures for the *East Anglian Daily Times*, in August last year. He tells us that Murray was born in Glasgow in 1849 (but was not one of the 'Glasgow Boys'). He considers the picture to be "a masterpiece of composition, the balustrade leading the eye (caught by the large red hat and open book) past the stone hunter and dog on a plinth towards a patch of sunlight near the river on which a craft is in full sail. Looking across the Orwell, the lowering dark clouds might almost be read by those unfamiliar with the topography as land to the north rising sharply".

The picture probably dates from 1903, and came to Cheltenham from the estate of the artist, who died in 1933; his executors apparently offered it to several regional galleries. It has been in the Borough Council's collections since 1939.

Richard Smith

De Ferrieres Lecture



Andrea Wulf, Michael Storm (who organised the event) and P J Crook before the lecture

Andrea Wulf was the guest speaker at this year's De Ferrieres Lecture on 23 March. She was warmly welcomed by a full house of Friends, patrons and guests. P.J.Crook, in her introduction, said that Andrea would shortly be leaving for a 40 venue lecture tour of America to talk about her latest book, *The Founding Gardeners – Revolutions, Politics and Gardens*.

We were then treated to an excellent and enthusiastic exploration of the relationship between Britain and America in the eighteenth century – through the prism of plants, gardens – and politics.

The British may be seen as obsessive about their gardens (they spent £4billion on them in 2008) an obsession which, we learned, owes much to an enduring trade and 40-year relationship between John Bartram of Philadelphia and Peter Collinson of London – a trade that brought a great variety of American trees such as dogwoods, magnolias and witch hazel into this country in the mid eighteenth century.

The main theme of Andrea's presentation concerned the four great Founding Fathers of America, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and James Madison and how their garden designs and estate management proved not only to be an escape from the pressures of politics and military campaigns but also a sincere reflection of their beliefs in

the values of honest agrarian toil to a developing nation.

We heard, too, about their wonderful estates such as Mount Vernon, Peacefield, Montpelier – and above all, Jefferson's masterpiece, Monticello.

This was a fascinating and very human insight into "the first four presidents of the U.S. (who) saw themselves first and foremost as farmers and gardeners". John Adams's enthusiasm for gardening even led him to jump into a steaming manure heap beside the Edgware Road, before pronouncing that the pile was "not equal to mine"!

Marjorie Imlah



Some introductions from the USA in the 1700s
Above: Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
Above right, top to bottom:
Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)
Umbrella tree flower (*Magnolia tripetala*)
Umbrella tree fruit
(photos by Mike Westgate)



Norman Jewson and Owlpen

There were three attractions in the Luncheon Club meeting on Thursday 30 March, and an exceptional number of Friends asked to go. Ann Tilley deserved her round of applause for arranging that no fewer than 150 Friends could be accommodated.



A talk about Norman Jewson (left) was of particular interest because of the local importance of the Arts and Crafts movement. Jewson (1884-1975) continued the work of the first exponents, but is less well-known nationally, although he did 'repair' work outside the county, for example on Magdalen College, Oxford.



Also attractive was the subject of the fascinating medieval Owlpen Manor house on which Jewson worked for many years. It was near-derelict when Jewson started to restore ancient woodwork, plasterwork and decorations, also taking care over details like the window irons and the nails in the doors. He was "the magician of this resuscitated dream-place".

Sir Nicholas Mander himself was the third cause of the event's popularity. Sir Nicholas is well-known in the county. His home since 1974 has been Owlpen Manor, and his passion for the house was clear from his knowledge of all that concerned it, especially the work of Jewson, because of his own family's patronage of the Arts and Crafts movement. Jewson left him a plaster mould and a chisel – a gentle hint to continue the work on Owlpen, as he has done.

Anthea Jones

The Museum's Past

No 51 Clarence Street

No 51 Clarence Street is the westernmost of a terrace of four early 19th century houses originally known as 1-4 Bedford Buildings. It is a 4-storey Grade II listed building of Regency style with extensions to the rear. The terrace was built on part of a piece of land known as Great House Close, named after the *Great House*, an early 18th century property that stood on the site of the present St Matthew's church, located opposite the Art Gallery & Museum in Clarence Street.

In the first years of the 19th century, the Great House Close appears to have been the property of a local solicitor and landowner named Theodore Gwinnett, who went bankrupt in 1811. Certainly the site of the 1899 building was sold by his assignees in bankruptcy to a builder named John Whitmore in March 1815. The land was occupied by buildings erected by Whitmore and the 1855-7 map shows a total of 13 houses on this site, in Chester Walk and St George's Place. Many of these houses were demolished to make way for the Library in 1887-89.

The terrace was originally residential but after the library opened they were converted into shops and business premises. An auctioneers notice from 1886 advertises No 4 Bedford buildings (No 51) as a Dwelling house with Shop and Business Premises. This was acquired circa 1891 by Mr D George who was the founder of George's Cheltenham Model Bakery. The premises remained a bakery shop from 1891 onwards until the business closed in 1940.

No 51 Clarence Street is now owned by the Art Gallery and Museum and is used for storage and other ancillary functions. Berman Guedes Stretton are proposing that the ground floor of No 51 be reinstated into its original function as a commercial premises as part of their conservation strategy. The space will be refurbished as a new shop for the Art Gallery and Museum.

Taken from the Gallery 13 Exhibition

Forgotten Heritage

Friends might be interested to know of a website (compiled by an old university friend of mine, Prof. Mark Bannister) that lists and describes emblems associated with the traditions of the classical world and Christianity, to be found in many of the great master paintings and sculptures as well as literature. With the decline in Christian and classical education, the modern reader, art-lover or student has less opportunity to build up this knowledge, but without it their enjoyment and understanding of art, poetry or drama will be limited. The website, *Forgotten Heritage*, brings it all back to you. You can, for instance, do a rapid check on a reference to Phaëthon in Shakespeare, find out the context of Milton's *Samson*, identify the saints on an altarpiece by Bellini or follow through the whole of the *Odyssey* narrative, as you wish.

<http://www.textes17.org/FH/> is the address of the site.

Eric Miller



George's Model Bakery, Bedford Buildings, 1891 - 1940



George's Model Bakery, Bedford Buildings, around 1900

The above images are by Berman Guedes Stretton, reproduced with permission.

The Gordon Russell Museum elegance and utility



The Gordon Russell Museum celebrates the work of the renowned twentieth century furniture designer, Sir Gordon Russell (1892-1980), and that of his company, which operated for over sixty years in Broadway, Worcestershire.

The Museum is located in the original Grade II listed drawing office and workshop and was opened by Sir Terence Conran in April 2008.



History

Following his experiences during the First World War Gordon Russell returned to Worcestershire determined to create work of lasting quality for future generations. Throughout his life he was greatly influenced by the design ideas promoted by the Arts & Crafts Movement, but took a different view about the role of machines, believing that, given proper management, their use could help to reach wider markets. Over the years the firm he founded grew to employ over two hundred highly skilled craftsmen in the Broadway workshops.

Gordon Russell took on a national role when he was engaged as chairman of the design panel for the Utility Furniture Programme during World War Two. By 1941, a severe shortage of timber created huge demand for all sorts of basic furniture. The Board of Trade produced Utility specifications outlining the amount and quality of materials for everyday goods, which the furniture industry had to

follow. This control over design was unprecedented and the opportunity to promote 'good design' was grasped enthusiastically by design reformers. The *Utility Furniture Catalogue* of 1943 was divided into five sections: Living room, Bedroom, Kitchen, Nursery and Miscellaneous. Each piece used minimal material, usually oak or mahogany, with mortised and pegged joints. In the absence of plywood, veneered hardboard was used for panelling and most cabinet furniture stood on plinths rather than legs. Handles and knobs were wood, as metals and plastics were needed for the war effort, although metal screws were specified for strength.

Gordon Russell then played a major part in the Festival of Britain Exhibition in 1951 before becoming director of the Design Council, promoting British industry and design worldwide. Gordon Russell Ltd. became recognised, both nationally and internationally, as a major contributor to twentieth century design and many prominent latter-day designers cite him as a major influence on their design careers.



Lloyd George Chest 1928, in holly

The Museum

The development was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and private sponsors and the Museum is run by volunteers, many of whom are ex-employees and very keen to share their knowledge and

expertise with designers and makers of the future. In 2010, additional Heritage Lottery funding enabled an Education Volunteer Group to be set up to develop new resources and a workshop for secondary design and technology pupils. The volunteers are from the company and from primary, secondary and higher education backgrounds.

A visit to the Museum will include:

- an introduction to Gordon Russell and his company's work
- access to an interactive resource – 'museum in a box' – exploring product design, materials and joints
- a highlight tour of the collection of furniture and an opportunity to examine the work, take photographs and make sketches
- access to some of the thousand Gordon Russell design sketches held in the archive
- an opportunity to ask ex-Gordon Russell employees about their designing and manufacturing experiences.

Ideally a visit will last around an hour and a half, with some time for self-directed study and observation. The Museum is a small but very comfortable environment to explore elements of twentieth century design, from Arts & Crafts to Post-Modernism.

The volunteer team is also able to provide outreach sessions in schools within a reasonable travelling distance of the Museum to share the 'museum in a box' resources. A Teachers' Resource Pack with a wealth of information about the Museum collection and archive can be downloaded at

www.gordonrussellmuseum.org

Opening Times 2011:

11am - 4pm Tues - Sun Nov - Feb
11am - 5 pm Tues - Sun March - Oct

Words and pictures from Richard Paice, Chair of the Gordon Russell Museum

Sandy Heaven on Michelangelo

Sandy Heaven returned in style on 18 January to talk about Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475 – 1564), towering genius of the Italian High Renaissance. Gombrich says of Genius: “One cannot explain the existence of Genius...it is better to enjoy it” and with the aid of Sandy’s beautifully illustrated talk, we did just that.



Michelangelo's *The Deposition* (1547-1553). Said by Vasari to have been made to decorate the tomb of Michelangelo and to carry his self portrait.

At the age of fourteen Michelangelo was apprenticed for three years to the busy workshop of the Florentine painter Domenico Ghirlandaio, but he was not happy there. He preferred to study the work of the great masters of the past, Giotto, Masaccio, Donatello and the Greek and Roman sculptors, whose work was accessible to him in the Medici collections. His real love was sculpture and he set out to perfect his ability to recreate the human male form by studying anatomy, the nude, perspective and all the tricks of the sculptor's trade. By the age of thirty he was acknowledged to be one of the outstanding masters of the age; he had become a true *uomo universale* of the Renaissance.

For the student of Art History today his life seems to be a series of anecdotes about his relationships, frequently confrontational, with

everyone he came into contact with – the Medici family in Florence, the Sforzas in Milan, the Popes in Rome and endless tensions with family, friends and lovers.

Julius the Second was determined that Michelangelo would be given the commission to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo refused, arguing that he was a sculptor not a painter. Julius demanded that he do it anyway. After a preliminary attempt to start the project Michelangelo downed tools and left Rome for Florence. Julius demanded that the City fathers of Florence hand him over to the Papacy. Eventually Michelangelo succumbed to the wishes of Julius, locked himself in the Sistine Chapel and for four years, lying on his back high up on the scaffolding he painted the ceiling. When it was unveiled in 1512 the world was stunned and it was acknowledged as a supreme work of art.

As an Architect, too, Michelangelo was responsible for the New Sacristy in San Lorenzo, Florence, together with its Grand Stairway and Library. In Rome he designed the Campidoglio Square and, his towering achievement, the Dome of St Peter's Basilica.

His genius embraced all the fine arts – painting, drawing, sculpture and architecture. In later life, as he became more and more melancholic in response to fame and fortune, he began to write poetry and sonnets. Sandy's talk was interspersed with some of his most beautiful writings. His was an extraordinary talent and Gombrich was right, we do not have to understand Genius in order to enjoy it.

John Turney



Portrait of Michelangelo at the age of 60 by Jacopino del Conte (after 1535)

Tom Beaumont James on Mary Seacole

The Friends met for what promised to be a very interesting talk by Prof. Tom Beaumont James, who lives in Cheltenham. After the usual delicious buffet lunch, we settled down to hear about Mary Seacole, who was a Jamaican nurse who set up establishments firstly at Balaklava in the Crimea, called the British Hotel, in 1854-6 and subsequently in Panama in 1859. She must have been a very feisty lady indeed with many friends in high places including a nephew of Queen Victoria, who sculpted a bust of her which was to prove invaluable in identifying her portrait. This really is where Prof. James' story takes off. Whilst looking through family papers he found a letter from Mary Seacole, which is believed to be the only example of her handwriting, except for a signature beneath a photograph in an album held by Winchester College. This letter was addressed to Miss Matilda Cullen and made



reference to a portrait being painted by Miss Cullen's brother Albert, then aged 22. This painting had turned up in a car

boot sale in 2003 and is now in the National Portrait Gallery, having been identified as Mary Seacole by the medals she was wearing both in the portrait and the sculpted bust. Prof. James then followed the fortunes of Albert Cullen, who had received assistance from various members of his family, and from friends who were either members of the Pre-Raphaelite movement or on the peripheries of it, or were rich industrialists, but to date no other paintings by him have been found. It was very interesting and I for one thought how lucky Prof. James was to have such a talented and diverse family to research.

Jenny Jackson

New Friends

We are pleased to welcome to following new Friends:

Mr A Barlow and Lady C M Cayley

Mrs I E Finlayson

Mrs B Gregory

Mr & Mrs M D Jenkinson

Mrs N Mann

Dr and Mrs A Moliver

Dr Lynne O'Farrell

Prof & Mrs H Perkins

Mr and Mrs P Walden and family

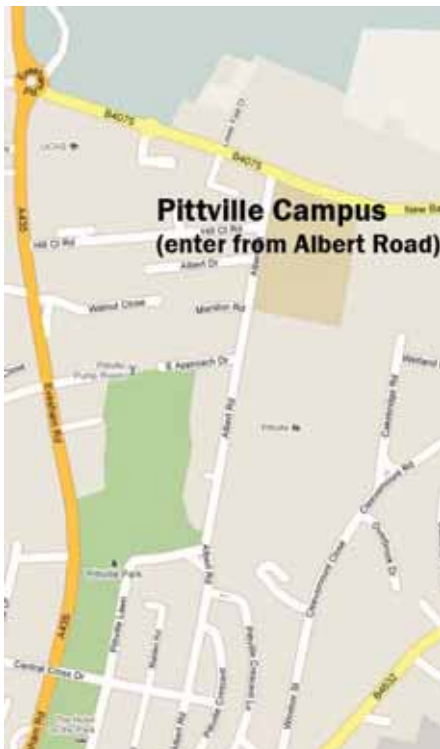
Mr K Woodman

2011 AGM

This year's Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 7 June at the Pittville Campus of the University of Gloucestershire.

The meeting will start at 6pm in the Lecture Theatre and be followed by a talk by Dr Ben Calvert, Faculty Dean of Media, Arts and Technology at the University.

After his talk, we will move to the Summerfield Galleries for refreshments and to view the Arts Department Degree show. This will be the last such show in this venue.



Diary Dates

- 7 June, 6pm AGM
Pittville Campus
The University of Gloucestershire
Albert Road
Please note change of venue
- 15 June Coffee Morning
St Matthew's Church
Helen Brown
Chinese Museums
- 21 June Outing
Whitmore Hall,
Staffordshire
- 26 July Outing
Compton Verney:
Stanley Spencer/
Capability Brown
- 21 August Summer Fete
Hingham Court



Technician Wanted

One of the problems that is a continual worry for the organisers of Friends' events, particularly talks, is our increasing reliance on technology. The most obvious example is getting digital projectors and laptops to work when they are wanted (and not 10 minutes or an hour later!); but there are plenty of others, such as microphone systems, automatic screens and blinds, room lights, dishwashers, alarm systems, etc.

The Committee therefore feel that it would be a good thing if we could identify a technically literate and competent person, who could be tasked with understanding all this and ensuring that it works as needed. The only real other requirement is a willingness to attend the majority of those Friends' events which use this sort of kit, which are of course usually in Cheltenham.

If you think you can help please contact either Richard Smith, whose details are above, right, or any Committee member.

Committee Who's Who

President	P. J. Crook
Chairman	Gina Wilson 01242 580333 gina@manuscripts.co.uk
Vice-Chairman	John Turney 01242 257497 turney332@btinternet.com
Hon. Secretary	Richard Smith 01242 578172 r.j.smith.70@cantab.net
Hon. Treasurer	Andrew Ellis 01242 237589
Events Organiser	Jenny Ogle 01242 231011 oglewelly@waitrose.com
Luncheon Club	Ann Tilley 01242 520649
Recruitment & Marketing and de Ferrieres lecture	Michael Storm 01242 263135 mjstorm@hotmail.co.uk
Membership Secretary	Mike Westgate 01242 697588 mike.westgate@blueyonder.co.uk
Newsletter Editor	Val Gower 01242 521533 val@gowers.name
Committee members	Anne Davis 01242 525939 anne.davis127@btinternet.com
	Marjorie Imlah 01242 526311 marjorie.imlah@virgin.net
	Keith Woodman 01242 679301 kpwoodman@tiscali.co.uk
Ex Officio	Jane Lillystone 01242 237431 jane.lillystone@cheltenham.gov.uk

Deadline for Next Issue

8 August for September issue.

Please send articles, illustrations, letters, news and reports to:

Val Gower, at val@gowers.name or by post to:

9 Kings Road
Cheltenham
GL52 6BH