

From the Chairman - Elizabeth Poskitt:

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum takes place at 7.30pm on Wednesday June 5th in the Coach House at the Museum. It will be followed by the talk on *William Marshal: The Greatest Knight that ever Lived* from Nigel Bryant. Whilst the AGM may not be enormously exciting it is usually very short and the talk that follows, if it is any part as good as the book, will certainly be exciting. So do try to attend. And, please, if you would like to join the Friends' Committee or know those who might, make the names known to any member of the Committee so we can take relevant action.

With this newsletter there should be my report to the AGM; an agenda; the minutes of the previous AGM in June 2018; a summary of the accounts; and a list of Committee members continuing, retiring or up for election. The Full Friends' Accounts will be available at the AGM.

New Exhibit for 2019 - The Epwell Seal Carol Anderson, Museum Director



The Museums Service is very grateful to the Friends for their generous donation which has enabled it to acquire this unique object. The purchase was also made possible with very generous support from the Headley Trust, the Art Fund and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

This complete gold medieval seal matrix of 13th century date, in exceptionally good condition, oval in shape and measuring 18.7mm x 16.3mm, was found in the village of Epwell in north west Oxfordshire, not far from Banbury.

The centre of the seal matrix contains an oval dark green jasper intaglio, which has been intricately carved with a female head in profile. The female is wearing a long veil around her head with either pearls or curls of hair on her forehead.

The matrix has a personal legend in Latin around the outer edge beginning with a six-pointed star and reads '*SIGILVM : SECRETI : hEN :', translated as the 'Secret seal of Hen'. The 'h' is the only lowercase letter in the inscription. The identity of the owner of the matrix is uncertain. Although 'hEN' is often assumed to be an abbreviation of the name Henry, in the context of the subject of this intaglio, it has been suggested that 'hEN' may refer to a female.

The back of the matrix has a suspension, which would have been attached to a chain that could be fastened to a belt or worn round the neck for security. The quality and design would have been a symbol of the wealth, status and power of its owner.

The seal matrix is of the highest quality and is likely to have belonged to someone of considerable wealth. Professor Martin Henig of the University of Oxford comments that the intaglio is a contemporary product and not a reused Roman gem and was probably carved in either Paris or London. The subject of the intaglio is a veiled female, the style probably imitating Hellenistic depictions of Ptolemaic queens, similar to an example from Hereford.

During the High Middle Ages (12th-14th centuries) ancient gems were frequently re-set for use in personal seals, otherwise known as *secreti* or secret seals.

These seals were used for securing letters where the owner also had a public or official seal. The shortening of the owner's name on the seal suggests its use for sending personal correspondence.

The discovery of the seal was reported to the Oxfordshire Finds Liaison Officer and was later declared Treasure by the coroner which then enabled the Museums Service to apply for grants to support the cost of its purchase.

The seal will go on display in The Oxfordshire Museum later in the year.

FRIENDS' PROGRAMME

Friends' evening talks – 1st Wednesday of each month. Start 19.30; doors open 19.00
Friends: free. Visitors: £4 on the door

05 June

AGM

Nigel Bryant, Lecturer and translator
'William Marshal: The Greatest Knight who ever lived'

03 July

Tony Hadland, Local Historian and retired building surveyor
'My last Ag-Lab: Talks on agricultural labourers'

AUGUST - NO MEETING

04 September

Nick Millea, Bodleian Library
'Talking Maps: Cartographic conversations from the Bodleian Library's current exhibition'

02 October

Stephen Barker, Heritage Advisor
'Saints, Soldiers and Sinners: the Civil Wars in Oxfordshire 1642 - 1651'

06 November

Roy Cox, Estates Manager, Blenheim Palace
'The Blenheim Palace Lake dredge and Bridge repair'

04 December

Jude Barrett, Ashmolean Museum
'Last supper in Pompeii'

2020

08 January

Victoria Bentata Azaz, Oxford Guild of Guides
'History of Medicine in Oxford'

05 February

Damian Robinson, Director, The Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology
'Further finding of shipwrecks and sunken cities in the Red Sea'

04 March

Woodstock Buildings Group
'Woodstock - Its buildings and people'

TRIPS

Secret Gardens of Burford - Saturday 22nd June



Garden tours of medieval houses on Burford's High Street.

Two hours in the gardens, followed by time in the Burford Tolsey Museum.

Finishing the day with tea in one of the gardens.

Donation £10 and proceeds to the

Burford and Woodstock Museums

Oxford University Herbaria – Wednesday 20th November

An afternoon trip to the Oxford University Herbaria located in the Plant Sciences building in South Parks Road. The Herbaria have three main collections of botanical specimens, approximately one million in total, with the oldest dating back to 1606.

There will be a guided tour of some of these collections lasting 90 minutes. Optional tea in Mansfield College afterwards. Details to be confirmed.

Donation £10, proceeds to the Friends.

Trips organised by Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum.

For further details or to reserve a place in the group, contact:

**David Wharton on 01993 813108 or
contact@FriendsOfTom.org.uk**

Razz-ma-Tazz 2019

Saturday 8 June 10-4pm



The Friends of the Oxfordshire Museum are one of the charities designated as beneficiaries by the organisers of this year's RAZZ-ma-TAZZ, Woodstock wide table-top sale. Also, the Friends will be holding their own table-top sale outside the Museum and welcome objects for sale and/or volunteer support on the day. Come along and support your museum.

From the 4th June, the Museum will accept donations for the sale at the Reception desk. On the day, parking will be available at Blenheim Palace for £3 which also goes to the charities.

If you would like to participate in the Friends' Table-Top, please e-mail contact@FriendsOfTom.org.uk

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS, TALKS AND EVENTS 2019

Matisse, Drawing with Scissors, late works 1950-1954

Saturday 4 May to Sunday 2 June - Garden Gallery

The French painter, sculptor and designer, Henri Matisse (1869-1954) was one of the 20th century's most influential artists. He continued creating highly original works well into his eighties. This exhibition features 35 lithographic prints of the artist's famous cut-outs. These works were produced in the last four years of his life, when the artist was confined to his bed, and includes many of his iconic images, such as The Snail and the Blue Nudes.



For his cut-outs he used paper that had been hand-painted with gouache and said of the process that 'the paper cut-out allows me to...draw straight into the colour.'

Courtesy of the Southbank and HLF **SOUTHBANK CENTRE**

Wonderland - A wander through the world of Alice

Saturday 15 June to Sunday 8 September – Garden Gallery



One golden afternoon on 4 July 1862, Charles Dodgson, an Oxford don, took the 10 year old Alice Liddell and her sisters on a boating picnic up the River Thames from Folly Bridge in Oxford.

To amuse the children, he told them a story about a little girl, sitting bored by a riverbank, who finds herself tumbling down a rabbit hole into a topsy-turvy world called Wonderland.

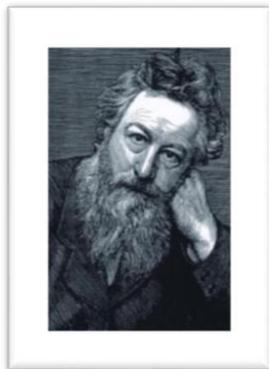
Enter the magical world of Alice, join the Mad Hatter's tea party, play croquet with flamingos and escape the Queen of Hearts in this family friendly interactive exhibition.

In collaboration with The Story Museum, Oxford



An Earthly Paradise: William Morris

Saturday 14 September to Sunday 10 November – Garden Gallery



William Morris (24 March 1834 – 3 October 1896) Born in Walthamstow, East London in March 1834, William Morris was a poet, artist, philosopher, typographer, political theorist, and arguably the most celebrated designer of the Arts & Crafts movement.

He was a major contributor to the revival of traditional British textile arts and methods of production. An exhibition exploring how the River Thames flowed through William Morris' life and work and can be identified in several of his most famous designs. Featuring loans from national collections.

Courtesy of the River & Rowing Museum Henley



TALKS

Museum Talk: Evolution of Smocks

Saturday 18 May - 2pm - 3pm – Coach House

£8 available from the museum reception on 01993 814106

The evolution of smocks through the eye of the county collections.



EVENTS

Painting with Scissors: adult drop in

Friday 31 May - 10.30am - 12pm – FREE – Coach House



Explore the Museum's Matisse exhibition using our adult creative trail.

Then drop in to the Coach House and discover your creativity with paint, paper and scissors to create your own masterpiece

Part of [Age of creativity](#)



Helpful Information

Friends Contact details

Email: contact@FriendsofTom.org.uk

Website: <http://www.friendsoftom.org.uk>

To keep up-to-date with Museum Events and Exhibitions - Simply sign up to the e-newsletter - <http://eepurl.com/ker5P>

Museum Contact details:

The Oxfordshire Museum Fletchers House, Park Street Woodstock OX20 1SN. Tel: 01993 814106

Website: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshiremuseum>