# London Art History Society

affiliated to Birkbeck History of Art Society

# Newsletter 2017

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Member,

Happy New Year! Bookings for the wide range of events we have arranged for the New Year are going well. We still have some vacancies on the second Italian Villas Course, and for the Study Days and Visits during the spring. In our Summer Programme of Study Days we are beginning a series of sessions on The Italian City States and on the great art movements ("isms") of the early 20th century, alongside a Study Day on Caravaggio. There will also be visits to Leighton House and Lambeth Palace and another walk exploring Docklands with Andrew Davies. Tours to Munich, Italian Villas and a new tour to Marseille have been announced. You will also find a preview of the programme we are constructing for later 2017 and 2018 in *Look Ahead* on page 5.

Over 50 new members have joined our Society since May. This means that we now have about 400 paid up members which is more than enough to sustain the Society. It also means that new members are outnumbering the 45 members who did not renew when their annual subscriptions were due. These people have been reminded a couple of times and we will not be sending communications to them in future.

We have a new Committee in place following the AGM in November. As members we rely on the dedicated work of the Committee members who arrange our events and administer the Society and we cannot thank them enough. Please remember this and offer a kind word of support when you get a chance.

This year the Committee said goodbye to several stalwart friends who have been lynchpins of the Committee's work over many years. I particularly would mention Lois Garnier, who managed the membership files for 17 years; Daphne Taylor, who looked after Short Course Bookings since we started the Courses in 2010; and, especially, Anne Scott who served on the Committee for 16 years, was our Chairman for 4 years and has been a wise counsellor to all since then. A big THANK YOU to all those who have helped us in any way in the past.

**John Dunlop**
**chairman@londonarthistorysociety.org.uk**

Conservation work on the portrait of Vita Sackville-West by William Strang RA has been supported by a gift from The London Art History Society. *See report on Page 3*. (Image © CSG CIC Glasgow Museum's Collection)

# London Art History Society supporting learning and the arts

ROBERT GWYNNE, DONATIONS ADMINISTRATOR, REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES DURING 2016

During 2016 The London Art History Society made gifts totalling £17,000 to support the work of students in the Department of History of Art at Birkbeck and other arts-related projects in the London area.

## BIRKBECK RESEARCH FUND £5,000

Sue Stern, responsible for Birkbeck Liaison, reports on how MA, MPhil and PhD students have been supported with their research on page 4.

## JOHN SOANE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT £3,000

In spring 2017, the education department at the John Soane Museum, will run a project to help young people who are at risk of falling out of education and/or employment. The London Art History Society is supporting the Bronze Award which is the equivalent of a D grade GCSE or Music/Drama grade 1-3. This award would be focused on architecture and provide participants with a valuable qualification and work experience, in addition to helping them express themselves creatively, raising their self-esteem and enhancing their soft skills, such as communication and team working abilities.

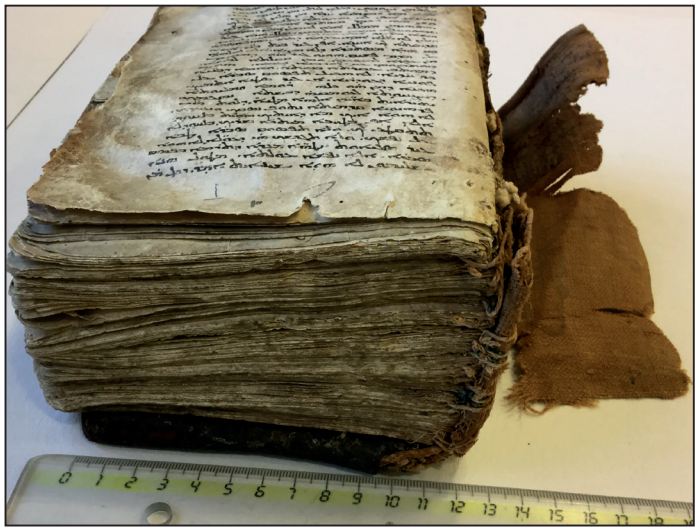
## THE LEVANTINE FOUNDATION £3,000

The London-based Levantine Foundation was established in 2002; its aim is to record and preserve the cultural heritage on paper and related materials in the Near East through expertise, education, and dissemination of knowledge. Support from The London Art History Society has enabled two conservators from London to go to the monastery of Deir al-Surian in Egypt where they will be assessing and conserving two manuscripts housed in the library there. The Deir al-Surian library holds the earliest dated biblical manuscript in any language, Isaiah, (AD 459/60), and the oldest dated Gospel manuscript in any language (AD 510).

[*It is hoped that a lecture will be arranged for members to hear more about the work of the Levantine Foundation. Ed*]

The two manuscripts are:

Deir al-Surian, Syr. 10. Four Gospels, 510 AD, Parchment. Dimensions: 26.1 x 15.7 cm. The manuscript consists of 157 folios. Folios 1-2 and 156-157 are later additions and act as protective endleaves. The covers are missing.
(Image © Levantine Foundation)



Deir al-Surian, Syr. 20. John Chrysostom, Two Homilies and Memra on Faith, Parchment. Fls. 194. Dimensions: 21 x 13 cm. This composite manuscript consists of three manuscripts bound together. The first two may belong to the 6th-7th century; the third may be slightly later, 7th or 8th century. Binding is incomplete; upper board is missing; the lower board consists of leather on wood.
(Image © Levantine Foundation)

## VITA SACKVILLE-WEST PAINTED BY WILLIAM STRANG RA £3,000

Royal Academician, William Strang's portrait of Vita Sackville-West, *Lady in a Red Hat*, painted in 1918, and normally on display in Glasgow, has recently received some much needed conservation prior to it being exhibited in London. The picture will be displayed in the *Queer British Art* exhibition at Tate Britain from 5th April-1st October 2017.

## THE QUEEN ELIZABETH SCHOLARSHIP TRUST £3,000

The Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (affectionately known as QEST) is an art and craft education trust created to sustain traditional British craftsmanship. It was established in 1990 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Royal Warrant Holders Association and the 90th birthday of Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother. In 2016, QEST welcomed Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II as Patron in her 90th birthday year.

QEST funds the study of 130 crafts, including horology, fine metalwork, bookbinding, woodwork, stonemasonry, leatherworking, silversmithing, cordwaining, textile design and making, sculpting, basketweaving and tapestry.

QEST offers two forms of grant giving:

1. The QEST Scholarships aim to help those who already have a significant degree of skill in their chosen craft to develop those skills to a very high level. Grants range from £2,000 to £15,000, and are often given to cover tuition fees and living costs during an individual's training.

2. The QEST Apprenticeships are for individuals wishing to begin their career in a practical art to enter into on-the-job-learning with a Master Craftsperson. These collaborative grants are awarded to both parties, to fund the tuition and employment of an Apprentice during the duration of their three-year Apprenticeship. Grants range from £6,000 to £18,000 and are often given to fund material costs and supplement the individual's wage.

# Do you know of an arts project which would benefit from our support?

Each year we take this opportunity to ask members if they know of any arts-related scheme they feel is worthy and needful of our support during the next year should we generate a sufficient surplus. We know you will understand that we have to make some conditions before the Committee can consider your suggestions.

1. We only offer to help in small scale projects where our donation will make a material difference. You can see from the text opposite and the donations page on our website the kinds of activity we support. The Committee will consider the suggestion, check the organisation and, after discussion, will decide whether to offer support.

2. The member cannot have any official connection, such as being on a society or gallery committee of the proposed organisation. This does not preclude being a member of a society which supports the organisation, such as being a Friend of the Dulwich Gallery. If you are unsure of your status please ask.

3. The member must never inform anyone in the organisation which they propose for support of their intention to do so, and the Committee will not consider any direct application from an organisation.

4. Since we are a London society we help organisations based within the orbit of the M25.

If you have any suggestions please send them, by email or post, to:

**Robert Gwynne**
**44 Montague Mansions**
**London W1U 1LB**

**Robertgwynne049@gmail.com**

**www.londonarthistorysociety.org.uk/donations**

# Birkbeck News

## SUE STERN, BIRKBECK LIAISON, REPORTS

43 Gordon Square (Image © Sue Stern)

Our relationship with the History of Art Department at Birkbeck continues to go from strength to strength.

In 2015-16, we established The London Art History Society Research Fund with £2,000 to assist postgraduate students with expenses relating to their research. MA students were invited to apply for a maximum of £150 each, whilst MPhil/PhD students could apply for sums up to £300 each. Students were informed that any expenses related to research were potentially eligible, including travel, accommodation, photography and photocopying. Applicants were required to provide a full breakdown of the monies requested with a detailed application. There was an enthusiastic response and the fund was completely used up by January 2016.

Each successful applicant had to provide a report to explain in full how they had used the money. One student used the grant to part-fund a trip to Beijing essential for doctoral research into contemporary Chinese documentary photography. He wrote that as well as the usual travel and accommodation costs 'the funding has provided great help with the costs of interpreters, transcription of interviews and the purchase of original source material, such as relatively rare exhibition catalogues and old copies of state magazines from the 1976-1986 period'.

Another student wrote that the funding 'has been enormously helpful in researching the imagery found in the Late-Medieval English parish church. Most of the churches I am looking at contain patches of wall paintings of c.1300-1500. They have been neglected for centuries and are generally in very poor condition. . . . The grant money enabled me to buy an infra-red adapted camera which can . . . enhance the appearance of these important survivals of popular art.' The camera has proved to be an essential tool in her research and for recording these deteriorating images for posterity.

During the year Birkbeck has enabled us to use the Keynes library for nothing for several Study Days that were organised by Sue Anstruther. Topics included Botticelli, Wren and Pugin. Our profits from these enabled us to increase the Research Fund grant to £4,000 for 2016-17. This is an example of how our cooperation has been of mutual benefit to the Society and Birkbeck students.

The academic staff have also continued to contribute to our events and provide advice to the Review Panel. In 2018, the History of Art Department will celebrate its Golden Anniversary and this will include an alumni event and party to be part-funded by the Society. We hope that many of our members will be able to attend this special event.

We attended induction sessions for new students, provided leaflets for recent graduates and circulated the Higher Certificate of Education students with information about the Society to encourage membership. We look forward to working together in the coming year.

## 2016 WINNERS OF THE LONDON ART HISTORY SOCIETY AWARDS

Dr Kate Retford, Head of the Department of History of Art, reported in her November blog on the award of the London Art History Society Prize for the best MA dissertation on a modern topic. The prize was split between two students who scored equally highly. The winners were Anna Jamieson for her dissertation on *Dark Tourists at Bedlam: madness and spectacle in eighteenth century London* and Wil Roberts for *'Life Itself', Victoria and Albert as Living Statues*.

## THE PELTZ GALLERY

The Gallery presents exhibitions of interdisciplinary and experimental research produced by Birkbeck School of Arts academic staff and postgraduate students. It is located in Gordon Square. The next event is a photographic exhibition: *Decolonising witchcraft: Portraits of traditional healers in Bolivia*, which portrays the women whose livelihoods involve the traditional rituals, artefacts and medicines that play a central role in culture and health in Bolivia. It will run from 4th-24th March.
**www.bbk.ac.uk/arts/research/peltz-gallery**

# Look Ahead

Details of our future programme have not yet been finalised, but here's a taster of what you can look forward to later in 2017 and 2018. A new format will be included – a series of four weekly seminars on *The Nude*, which will consist of a smaller number of participants and will be more interactive than our usual Study Days. Two topics, Italian City States and 20th Century "isms", will incorporate a series of Study Days on each subject. More information will be available in future mailings.

# Autumn 2017-2018

## Co-ordinator: Maggie Stockton

### STUDY DAYS

Russian Art and Music
Mexican Muralists
Italian City States (part of a series)
20th Century "isms" (part of a series)
Edward Hopper
Eduardo Paolozzi
Mucha
The Nude – four weekly seminars

### STUDY VISITS

Whitechapel Bell Foundry
Fan Museum, Greenwich
Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art
Sands Films
The Design Museum

### STUDY WALKS

More walks with Andrew Davies

# Short Courses 2017-2018

## Co-ordinator: Jacqueline Leigh

Hellenic Art
Early Renaissance Art (10-week course)
Sites and Context of the Great English Cathedrals
Mughal Art and Architecture

# Art Update

## UCL Art Museum

**www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/uclart**
The UCL Museum's collection consists of over 10,000 works of art dating from 1490 to the present day, a selection of which are on display. The museum hosts two exhibitions a year in its main space, plus a series of pop-up displays and events. You can also download a self-guided tour of its top ten objects. The museum is open 1-5pm on weekdays during term time, and is located in the Wilkins Building off the main quad on Gower Street.

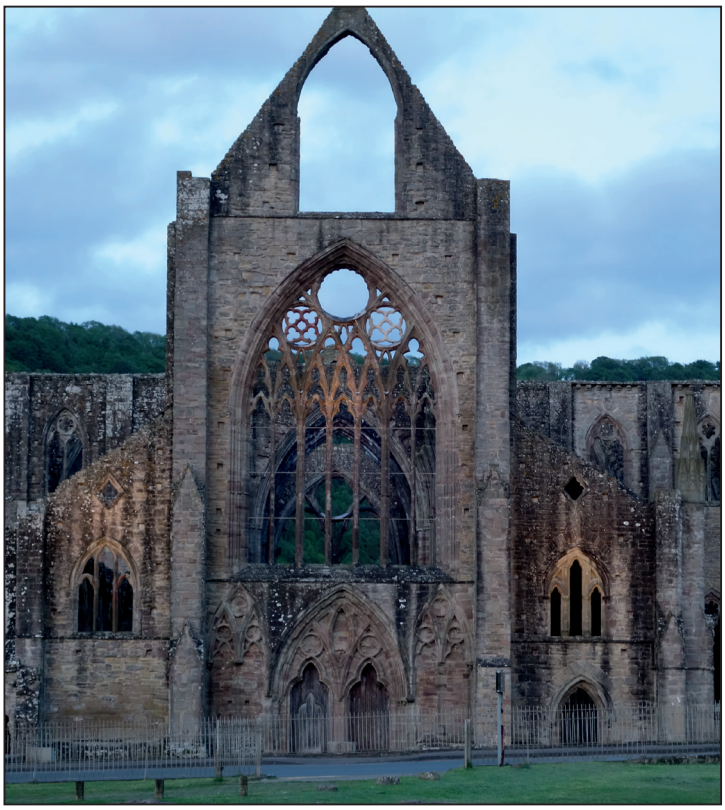
# London Art History Society Tours 2016

MICHAEL PEARSON, STUDY TOURS COORDINATOR REPORTS

We organised two highly successful and over-subscribed tours in 2016. Planning as ever happens months if not years ahead, and the outcome is always unpredictable. By total coincidence, both of the Society's Vice-Presidents led tours focused on their favoured subjects.

## Southern Welsh Marches Tour May 2016

In May, we went to the Southern Welsh Marches, ably guided by John McNeill, for a tour of medieval castles, abbeys and parish churches. Not just any old castle or church, of course, but a series of major sites with Romanesque remains whilst dropping in at minor but extremely important sites to see extant terrific pieces of sculpture, or quite unexpected houses such as Tretower Court which took most people's breath away.



Tintern Abbey (Image © Michael Pearson)

The Welsh tour came as an adjunct to the intended Scottish Borders tour which should have run in summer 2015 and it must have been eighteen months before that when John and I had sat in a small Italian (or Spanish, I forget where) café for lunch and planned the whole idea. The tour started in Gloucester and participants had to get there under their own steam – it was delightful that nobody was deterred by this.

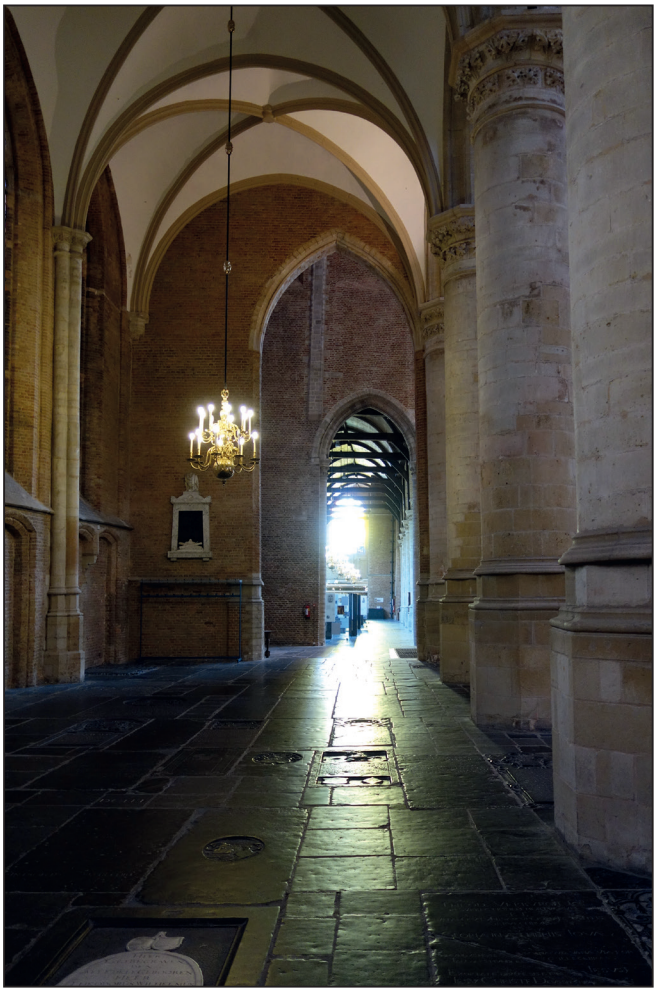
The tour was four nights and five fairly full days. An excellent hotel in Abergavenny provided the base and group dinners on two evenings, all of which seems to have been much appreciated and generated most favourable comments.

Members will recollect being organised into two regiments for entry to Cadw sites for those with or without EH membership cards, something that became *de rigueur* each day. Of the tour surprises, Esther de Waal, Edmund's mother, talking to us about Rowlstone, was an unintended extra item of the kind which often gets thrown in when visiting small parish churches. The completeness of Goodrich Castle was a wonderful surprise to many, appearing as a sudden and dramatic statement in the countryside after a pleasant walk up the track from the car park, and then to find something well outside the itinerary – a Radar Research Squadron memorial window in the chapel was fascinating. My personal highlight was discovering during our visit to Chepstow Castle and then Tintern Abbey that David Robinson (author of the Abbey guidebook and some of our recommended reading) was to lead a candlelit tour of the Abbey that same evening, and, having our car to hand, four of us ventured back for the walk which started around 10pm. It lasted until almost midnight, and was a special treat, particularly atmospheric, which had extraordinary support, and as an 'event' was a sell-out.

## Dutch Cities and Artists Tour September 2016

The autumn tour took us to Holland with Clare Ford-Wille for *Cities and Artists of the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Golden Age*. We stayed in a delightful hotel in the centre of Haarlem, a town that I think all found to be most agreeable; so convenient for travel to other parts of the country or for access to Amsterdam.

Visit to Leiden Botanic Gardens
(Image © Michael Pearson)



Nieuwe Kerk, Delft (Image © Michael Pearson)

One member commented, 'a most picturesque and vibrant town that was a pleasure to be in – balmy evenings, a beautiful square with a cathedral next door!' Again, four nights and five packed days touring to Amsterdam, The Hague, Leiden, Gouda and Delft. All the museums and galleries went out of their way to be helpful. We dined on three nights in some excellent Haarlem restaurants; the first evening being particularly memorable for the quality of food, imagination and welcome – it must come at the top of the list for any restaurant that we have ever visited.

There was a memorable moment circling Sint Janskerk in Gouda to try and find the entrance and finding instead an example of 'youth culture well under the influence', retracing our steps once we had discovered the street blocked by roadworks and eventually finding the entrance under the west tower.

Everywhere we went the group enjoyed the friendliness of the locals and the aggressive behaviour of cyclists. Our finale was the visit to a remarkable house church, Amstelkring or *Our Lord in the Attic* from where Clare, at last, had the chance to sit quietly in the café and relax.

We were blessed with comfortable coaches and excellent drivers, something too easily taken for granted but much appreciated.

# The Querini Stampalia in London

## SUE ANSTRUTHER, LECTURE PROGRAMME ORGANISER REPORTS ON A SPECIAL VISIT

In May we held a new type of event – an evening in association with a museum. The Querini Stampalia Foundation in Venice had approached us as a possible London partner to help raise its profile in London. It was keen to make students of Art History outside of Italy aware of its collection and study facilities. Together we decided to hold an evening celebrating its fascinating home and collection with added Venetian glamour. It provided two of its curators, Elisabetta dal Carlo and Dora de Diana, to talk about the collection and the Cipriani provided Bellini cocktails and canapés after the lecture to continue the Venetian theme of the evening.

The event was held at Lettsom House which, like many venues, has good points and bad points, but is very conveniently placed for public transport and an elegant setting for both lecture and after-lecture refreshments. The major disadvantage was the fact that the venue had forgotten to rig up the microphone, which was a problem with speakers whose first language was not English, but it has assured us that this would not happen again if we hold another event there.

The curators took it in turns to tell us about the collection and the building which houses it; well known to some of our members but an undiscovered gem for others. The building itself is of great architectural interest dating from the 18th century with 20th century additions by the highly regarded Italian architect, Carlo Scarpa. The paintings collection includes a Bellini, *The Presentation at the Temple*, and a very informative collection of 18th century scenes of high and low Venetian life by Gabriele Bella.

We were given a very good overview of the many riches of the building and the collection by the two curators, and all of us – both those who have already been there and those who haven't yet – felt that we would want to visit soon.

The Curators and guests (Image © Maxine Webster)

# Noticeboard

## WEBCOLLECT

We introduced our new online booking system, WebCollect, in May 2016, and it seems to have been very well received. Any problems that we have encountered have been minor. The new system enables much easier administration of the Society and we hope that members are also finding the new approach helpful. In the first six months, over 700 payments have been made to purchase subscriptions or to book a course or an event. More and more members are choosing to make their bookings using the new system. Even if members choose to pay by cheque, it helps to reduce our administrative costs if they first make their booking online.

55% of payments have been made using one of the online options – bank transfer, PayPal or Direct Debit, but 45% are still made by cheque. We will always offer the cheque option but we want to encourage members to use online payment options as this is much easier and more cost-effective for the Society.

At least we no longer have to ask volunteer members of the Committee to handle the subscriptions and bookings. This was a massive task under our old manual approach and we will always be very grateful to the three key people – Malcolm Armstrong, Lois Garnier and Daphne Taylor – who did this work for us. We have now outsourced the reduced task to a professional secretary who can work with our new computer system. While this costs us some money, it greatly reduces the burden on the Committee and it means that we have all our membership and booking information in one place.

## VOLUNTEERS

The Society could not provide members with the current full and varied programme of lectures, courses and events without the dedicated support of our team of volunteers. Several members have come forward recently, but we are always looking for additional help with the running of the Society. There are many different roles, from recording attendance at events or helping with refreshments; to providing administrative back-up for event organisers, such as booking rooms/catering; to taking responsibility for organising lectures, courses or events from beginning to end. It is not necessary to join the Committee to perform many roles. Or if you have a particular skill or experience which you think might be useful to the Society on an ad hoc basis, please do contact us. Volunteers will receive appropriate training and plenty of support for their roles. If you do have some spare time your help would be greatly appreciated. Please contact John Dunlop: chairman@londonarthistorysociety.org.uk.

## VENUES

We are always interested in hearing about any venues in Central London you have visited which might suit our needs. As well as being centrally located, they need to have audio-visual equipment, comfortable seating, good sight lines, and catering facilities. Please email any suggestions to: communications@londonarthistorysociety.org.uk.

## FEEDBACK

If you have any suggestions about how we can improve the way we run the Society, please contact: communications@londonarthistorysociety.org.uk.

# London Art History Society Committee

Chairman and Treasurer: ..... John Dunlop

Secretary: ..... Rosemary Clarke
Membership Secretary: ..... Edward Cox
Assistant Treasurer: ..... Moira Creak
Lecture Programme Organiser: ..... Sue Anstruther
Short Courses Coordinator: ..... Jacqueline Leigh
Study Events Coordinator: ..... Maggie Stockton
Study Tours Coordinator: ..... Michael Pearson
Communications Coordinator: ..... Rae Richardson
Donations Administrator: ..... Robert Gwynne
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**Members:** ..... Malcolm Armstrong
..... Prue Keely-Davies
..... Susan Nettle

**Editorial Panel:** ..... Rae Richardson
..... Susan Nettle

**Designer:** ..... Pat Burtenshaw
Fredd Design
www.info@fredd.co.uk

**Contact:**
Rae Richardson, Communications Co-ordinator:
communications@londonarthistorysociety.org.uk

**www.londonarthistorysociety.org.uk**