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**Registered Charity No: 529709 An affiliated society of the British Science Association**

## **NEWSLETTER**

AUGUST 2011

**Welcome to our August Newsletter. It hardly seems possible, but already the nights are beginning to lengthen ever so slightly and the start of our 2011-12 lecture season is on the horizon. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in the Tempest Anderson Hall on September 27<sup>th</sup> and hope you will enjoy the full and varied programme outlined in the enclosed card.**

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You should find the following with your Newsletter. If anything is missing, please contact Frances at The Lodge.

- Programme Card
- Advance notice of a visit to the Observatory

### **A bit of almost everything**

The lecture programme for 2011-2012 has, through accident rather than intent, a less thematic content but an even broader range of topics than usual. There is some “hardish” science with, for example, a mini series on Lasers which includes everything from science at a fundamental level to paying in a supermarket. We will be sampling Green Chemistry and learning that bacteria are not all bad. There is a more biographical emphasis than usual with one of York’s most influential figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century John Bowes Morrell accompanying Captain Oates, who was more than an Antarctic hero. As usual there is some Yorkshire archaeology and two Family lectures, one with spectacular magnetic demonstrations, the other with an Olympic theme. We will also be taking part in a celebration of the years 1944-1945 in which the French Air Force mounted its attacks from near York: some veterans of that campaign will be present (see below).

And a whole lot more!

Jim Matthew

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### **The French in York**

Many people will be unaware that in World War II over 2000 young French airmen were based at Elvington near York, from where they flew bombing missions, often to their own country, and suffered heavy casualties. To commemorate their sacrifice, the French Air Force Memorial will be inaugurated in York Minster on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2011.

To mark the occasion, from 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October there will be a series of events, parades and exhibitions taking place in York and Elvington, of which our lecture is a part. We hope you will join us in remembering this period of our history and honouring those who were a part of it.

Please note that, exceptionally, this lecture is on a Wednesday evening and starts at 6.30 pm.

## Christmas Social

A date for your diary - this year's Christmas Social will be held on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, and the venue will once again be St Olave's Hall, off Marygate, the scene of several very enjoyable events in the past. Full details and booking information will follow in our October Newsletter.

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## President's Evening 2012

In view of the severe weather we have experienced over the last two winters, it has been decided to move President's Evening back to its traditional October date, to avoid any risk of a last-minute cancellation, as we had with last year's Christmas Social. We will therefore not be holding this event in January but in October 2012, when we plan to return to the Churchill Hotel. The date and details will be sent out next summer.

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## YAT Archaeology & History Fair

The York Archaeological Trust will be holding its annual Archaeology & History Fair in the Guildhall on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2011. There will be book stalls, displays, talks and information about local societies.

As usual we will have a stand there and hope members will drop by to say "Hello" and look encouragingly at any non-members within reach. Please spread the word and help to make this event a success.

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## St Leonard's Undercroft

The YPS was pleased to be able to donate £1000 towards work on improving St Leonard's Undercroft, and received the following thanks from Martin Watts, Director Knowledge and Learning at York Museums Trust:

*"Thank you very much indeed for the generous donations by the YPS to the project at the Undercroft. It is very much appreciated. Having your early promise of money was very helpful in persuading people that we had a viable project and hence ultimately getting it off the ground. Please pass on our thanks to all your members."*

## The Library in the Lodge

The library in The Lodge is, of course, quite small, but we are developing it as more of a study centre for members; hence the books we have to offer are of a practical nature for reference purposes. Besides the books we have Annual Reports from all the leading York learned Societies. These are available for consultation by visitors to the Lodge and are very useful for the research of academic subjects, and/or York history.

We also have a comprehensive collection of YPS reports with, however, one notable exception; our very first Report dated 1823 is missing. If anyone has a copy the Lodge Library would be very grateful to have it donated to its collection. The Society's sole copy is held at the Borthwick which is not always an easy place for members to reach, and to have a copy made for the Lodge would be very costly.

Indeed, as we sell surplus YPS Annual Reports, we would be glad to relieve anyone's cluttered library shelves by taking unwanted copies into the Lodge Library.

Celia & Alan Cochrane

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## Memories of Suffolk

For those of you who enjoyed our tour to Suffolk in May (and any other interested members) Ted Keen has deposited a CD of photographs in the Lodge. This may be borrowed by contacting Frances.

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## Help needed

For the last few years our lecture posters have been distributed to locations around the City Centre by Bill Fairburn, whose dedication to the task has even included taking them out within hours of stepping off a plane from Australia (apparently a brisk walk is good for jet lag!). Bill has now relinquished his delivery duties in order to concentrate on a PhD, and we would like to thank him very much for all his help and wish him every success with his research.

This leaves us with a vacancy for a poster deliverer for central York. If you could spare an hour or two once a fortnight during the lecture season, we would be most grateful. Please contact Frances at The Lodge if you would like to find out more.

## William Etty

There is a major exhibition of the works of William Etty at York City Art Gallery, an exhibition I believe to be of some interest to the YPS. Etty was not just an artist of international importance, but a son of York, the City of his birth and to which he was devoted. His efforts to preserve this great city were considerable; so much so the YPS made him a life member for his services. In our Report of 1902 Miss Moore wrote: *I would earnestly impress on the citizens of York the noble example he set in reverent care for his native city, and trust, that recognising the inestimable value of the glorious heritage they have received from the past, while mindful of the needs of the present, they will not ignore the claims of posterity and constantly endeavour to preserve from destruction and decay the priceless historic treasures of our ancient city.* Some of Etty's best portraits are on display in the Gallery; indeed it is believed one of the very best is that of James Atkinson, which once belonged to the YPS.

James Atkinson (1759-1839) was a link between two worlds. His father had been a member of the old Barbers' Surgeons' Guild of York in its final days. During a busy life he found time to travel extensively, visiting hospitals in Edinburgh, Leiden, Paris and Montpellier in order to improve his knowledge and technique. He was a humane man and was conscious of the limitations of surgery and the suffering which resulted from the methods of treatment available. However he admitted that: "Cruelty and the art of surgery are synonymous". The founding of the YPS provided him with a passionate interest, when his busy medical activities declined on retirement. He helped collect the bones and fossils from the Kirkdale Cave, he transferred his large collection of skeletons of animals, fishes, birds and reptiles, as well as human anatomical specimens, along with books, a microscope, telescope, coins and pottery to the care of the YPS. He contributed generously to a fund for the new building to house and display the specimens, plus the restoration of the Hospitium. As curator of comparative anatomy, he devoted much time and enthusiasm to the affairs of the Society which owed a great deal to him.

We encourage all members to go along to the Art Gallery and see this very fine portrait. The exhibition continues until 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012.

Alan Cochrane

## ... and more paint

You may be interested to know that York Museums Trust and the York Artworkers Association will host a lecture by Lisa Ostreicher, at 7.30 pm on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011 in the Tempest Anderson Hall.

A vital and often contentious aspect of historic buildings and their contents is colour: what were the paint colours originally, how have they changed, and when? Lisa Ostreicher is an architectural paint researcher who trained at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and has worked on a wide range of historic buildings.

Tickets are £4.00 for members of The York Artworkers Association and £8.00 for non-members. They can be obtained via email to Chris Utley [binnsuntley@yahoo.com](mailto:binnsuntley@yahoo.com) or from Janette Ray's bookshop, 'Rare and out of print books', 8 Bootham, York, YO30 7BL, or on the night at the Yorkshire Museum.

## Other events of interest

### World Class Heritage: Archaeology of York Conference 2011 - 30 September to 2 October 2011

To mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the *York Development and Archaeology Study* - the "Ove Arup" report, the York Archaeological Forum which advises the City of York Council on archaeological and historic environment matters is sponsoring a conference to launch the process of developing a new strategy for the city's archaeology and historic environment. There is a wide range of speakers, many of whose names will be known to you. The cost is £85 for both days including lunch but it is also possible to book for just one of the days. Full details are available at The Lodge or on [http://www.york.gov.uk/leisure/Local\\_history\\_and\\_heritage/Archaeology/conference](http://www.york.gov.uk/leisure/Local_history_and_heritage/Archaeology/conference).

### Climate, atmospheric chemistry and ocean interactions - Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2011

The York & District Branch of the Geographical Association will be holding a lecture by Professor Lucy Carpenter, University of York, at 7.15 pm at Bootham School. The cost is £3 for non-members.

## Behind the Museum

You will all remember the controversy that the proposal for the Wheel caused when planning permission was sought 18 months ago. Many of you let your views be known, and the YPS Council collated these and incorporated them into a demanding set of conditions attached to the installation of such a wheel. It is now acknowledged in the Press Release below that heritage groups played a significant role in the project being dropped.

We should congratulate and thank YMT for their readiness to listen, and will follow the progress of this project with a great deal of interest.

### PRESS RELEASE

A once hidden area of York could be transformed into a new landscaped garden and arts space as early as spring 2012. The large area of land behind York Art Gallery will be opened up to create a whole new area of the Museum Gardens, creating pathways from Exhibition Square, the gardens themselves and Marygate. The recent bat survey of the area has concluded that the land can be developed as there is no serious risk to any species.

The development, subject to planning permission, is key to the £6 million proposed refurbishment of York Art Gallery. It is estimated the creation of the space will cost £300,000, with funding from the City of York Council and recently acquired funds from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). If planning permission is granted, the development of the land will go ahead without the York Wheel being installed in the area.

Michael Woodward, commercial director for York Museums Trust, said: "The Trust has given a great deal of thought to the people of York's reaction to bringing the wheel to this area of the city. While it had many supporters it also raised a lot of concerns, especially with heritage groups and the residents of Marygate. The delay in installing the wheel has also shortened the time it would have been in place by nearly half – dramatically reducing the economic value it would bring to the Trust and the city.

"We have taken these and other factors into account in deciding not to apply for permission to install the wheel. Instead we will focus on transforming this area of derelict land into an exciting new area in its own right, as well as linking the gallery with the Museum Gardens.

"We have informed Great City Attractions of our decision and wish them well with their future plans."

York Museums Trust will submit new plans for consideration by planning chiefs in the next few months, with the aim of demolishing the derelict huts in autumn this year. It is hoped the area will open to the public in time for spring 2012. The Trust will be consulting local people about future uses of the space.

York Museums Trust are currently working closely with architects Ushida Findlay on the £6 million plan to refurbish York Art Gallery, which would reopen in 2015. This includes the further development of this new space, with opportunities for outdoor exhibitions and performance.

The £6 million refurbishment plans also include:

- Opening a new "secret" gallery on the first floor – creating a large and naturally lit space.
- Expansion of the exhibition and learning spaces, with the City Archives set to be relocated from their current position to York Explore, Museum Street. (The proposed relocation is a separately funded project led by the City of York Council.)

It is estimated the York Art Gallery project will cost around £6 million, with around £1.5 million already secured thanks to a generous bequest from an anonymous benefactor. The Trust has already informally approached other funding bodies and will formally submit bids when the plans are finalised later in the year. If the funding is found and planning permission is granted the gallery will close for the refurbishment in late 2012 and it is hoped work would begin in spring 2013, with the gallery reopening in 2015.