

SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER NO.26
WINTER 2010/2011



Letter from the Director

GOOD NEWS OUTWEIGHS THE BAD!

I'm pleased to announce that the Soane Museum has now raised £6.5 million of the total £7 million needed to embark on *Opening up the Soane (OUTS)*. This has been an eye-watering sum for a small museum like this to raise, especially in a far from auspicious economic climate, and we thank all the generous donors – trusts, foundations, private benefactors and the HLF – who have contributed so far. Still, the last £500,000 is always said to be the most difficult to raise, which is why we hope that the Soane Public Appeal, to be launched on 14 February, will assist us in our aim to raise this final amount. If you haven't heard from us about this yet – you will!

The Public Appeal has become even more important to us since we also received more sobering news last month that the Museum would experience a 15 per cent cut in its government grant-in-aid over the next four years. As I speculated in the last *Newsletter*, it could have been far worse, and the relatively lenient settlement imposed on national museums and galleries (of which the Soane is the smallest) attests to the success and popularity of museums in the last decade and the important role they play in tourism. This is why, now more than ever, the Soane needs to redouble its fundraising efforts, attract more donations (however modest) and do more to help itself. To this end, I welcome the newly refurbished Soane website, which has been wholly redesigned, and now includes a host of additional features, including the facility to make online donations and an online shop and is, I hope, much more user-friendly. Do visit www.soane.org, and let us know what you think.

BUILDING AND RESTORATION WORK TO COMMENCE IN FEBRUARY 2011

The Museum is currently preparing for the heavy building work that will be starting here next February – long awaited after so many months of careful planning and fundraising. The building work will mainly be confined to No.12 Lincoln's Inn Fields. Visitors to the Soane will find the front of No. 12 swathed in scaffolding, clad in a tasteful screen-printed fabric to minimise visual distraction, with hoardings that will extend over the pavement. The Museum will remain open throughout the works, which will continue until mid-2012, but there will be part closures as well as some reduction in the number of visitors we can accommodate at any given time. Please do bear with us during this busy, but exciting time!

Between now and 2012, we will see the installation of two disabled lifts, plus the new Soane Shop, the new Gallery and a Cloakroom and improved reception area for visitors. Repairs to Soane's cantilevered staircase, new Conservation

Studios on the second floor, structural work to reinstate the Tivoli Recess (although currently a lavatory this was in fact Britain's first ever contemporary sculpture gallery!) and work to extend the Shakespeare Recess to its correct depth directly below the Tivoli Recess will also begin.

FAREWELL TO AN OLD FRIEND

To herald the start of this first phase of *OUTS*, in October the Museum bid farewell to a rather stylish and beautiful interloper at the Soane Museum. She installed herself here 15 years ago and wormed her way into our affections, becoming something of a Soane institution. Of course, I'm referring to the Soane Gallery, which was established in 1995 and has since hosted over fifty diverse exhibitions of treasures from Soane's collections, as well as shows of contemporary architecture and design.

We all felt a bit glum about the prospect of dismantling the gallery, which was designed by the Czech-born architect, Eva Jiřičná and is a rather rare surviving example of Eva's work of this period, but there really didn't seem to be a better solution. Even from the earliest days of planning for the *OUTS* project, it became clear that the ground floor of No. 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields was the only space where our need to provide much improved facilities to welcome visitors could be realised. The Gallery, purpose built for the space and incredibly heavy, couldn't be transferred to the proposed new Gallery on the floor above, which – being fine Soane Drawing Rooms – demanded a different approach and another bespoke solution.

Thankfully, the Chatsworth House Trust rode to the rescue and as part of their plans to provide new changing displays for visitors from the Chatsworth Archive, the Duke of Devonshire and his advisers seized the opportunity to buy Eva Jiřičná's handsome Gallery. It will provide an interesting late 20th-century counterpart to other architectural salvage installed at Chatsworth by the 6th or 'bachelor' Duke of Devonshire in the 1820s and '30s; including a set of 16th-century German choir stalls in the Oak Room and marble columns from Old Richmond House in the Library. We look forward to seeing Eva's Gallery installed at Chatsworth next March.

THE NEW SOANE GALLERY

The new exhibitions Gallery, which will be installed in the two large rooms on the first floor of No. 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields and will open in mid-2012, has been designed by the well-known contemporary firm of architects, Caruso St John. The new fittings will closely complement the design of these subtle Soane rooms, which will be repainted in their original

1790s livery of Pompeian red with grey-grained 'harewood' joinery and a ceiling imitating a blue, cloudy sky. The old Gallery, or No.12 Eating Room, will house the Soane Museum Shop and Cloakroom and will also to be fitted up by Caruso St John with the historic fabric repaired by Julian Harrap Architects. During the gallery's closure, the Museum will host a series of installations in its historic rooms and the former New Picture Room will be fitted up for temporary displays. Exhibitions Curator, Jerzy Kierkuć-Bieliński reveals more about our plans for installations within the Museum during the Gallery's closure in this issue of the *Newsletter*.

PICTURE LOANS – THE COMING AND GOING OF TWO GREAT MASTERPIECES

In January we are celebrating the return of our great painting by Canaletto, the *Riva degli Schiavoni, looking West* from the 'Canaletto and his Rivals' exhibition that is currently on show at the National Gallery. Excitingly, this painting will be re-hung in the Picture Room to complete the original configuration of art works as they were hung in this room on 20 January 1837, the day of Soane's death. While this is happening, the Picture Room will be closed for a week from Monday 24 January.

And as one picture returns to us, we'll be missing another great masterpiece as it goes on loan to the Dulwich Picture Gallery in January. The wonderfully dapper portrait of Soane that usually takes pride of place in the Library-Dining Room will be lent to Dulwich as part of its bicentenary celebrations which get underway on 9 January. More about this from Helen Dorey later.

PROTECTING THE SOANE TOMB

Finally, it came to the Museum's attention in September that a carved finial from the Soane tomb in St Pancras Gardens was for sale on ebay! The carved block was selling for £4,000, with a long disclaimer from the vendor saying it had not been removed illegally from the tomb but had been found in a corner of St Pancras Gardens. Some years ago Julian Harrap Architects restored the tomb, but at that time this piece had to be replaced with a copy; the original being missing. We can now only presume that the original piece had been dumped by vandals in the deep undergrowth around the extensive gardens. The Museum reported the appearance of this finial on ebay to the Parks Department of the London Borough of Camden, who own St Pancras Gardens, and swift action was taken. The item was removed from ebay, the vendor interviewed by the Police and the piece recovered and returned to the Council. Julian Harrap Architects will be removing the carved replica and reinstating this piece of the Soane tomb in its original position, under the auspices of the Georgian Group, who now administer the residual funds of the former Soane Monuments Trust.



The capital from the Soane tomb that was found for sale on ebay for £4,000 and which will be restored back to its original position on the tomb

Tim Knox FSA
Director



The Soane Tomb in St Pancras Gardens. Photograph by D Whitman

The Soane Gallery Past and Present

October saw a landmark moment in the history of the Museum with the closure of the Soane Gallery following a run of fifty successful temporary exhibitions. Conceived under the directorship of Peter Thornton (Curator 1984–1995), the highly distinctive Gallery cases were designed by the renowned Czech-born architect Eva Jiřičná. The Soane Gallery was the first such museum project that Eva's office undertook. The Gallery, which was completed in 1995, the year of Peter Thornton's retirement, was intended to showcase some of the 30,000 drawings (and other works of art) in the Museum's collection and to make them more accessible to the general public and not just to scholars of art and architectural history. Peter's vision was to create a type of 'treasure box' into which choice items could be inserted to dazzling effect.

In order to overcome the size limitation of the room, which had formerly been the dining room of Sir John Soane's earlier house at No.12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, the Jiřičná Office came up with an ingenious, mechanised system of obliquely



Eva Jiřičná

sliding glass cases. The new Soane Gallery was soon recognised as a design classic. Peter's approach to the brief for the new Gallery furniture was informed by the realisation that you cannot out-Soane Soane – that a pastiche of his style would not have been in keeping with the spirit of his own architectural style. In line with Soane's own innovative use of glass as an advanced building material Eva's glass and steel cases were characterised by a melding of architecture and engineering in a resolutely modern idiom.

Although the Soane Gallery has closed, this does not mean that the exhibitions programme has ended. This winter the contemporary glass artist Michael Petry has been invited to make two interventions in the rooms of Nos 12 and 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. Michael's sculptures respond to Soane's own technologically innovative use of glass in his buildings. Taking found metal vessels, whose forms distantly echo the silver designs of such architects as Robert Adam which are represented in the collection, molten glass (at about 1,000 Celsius) is then poured into them, often spilling over or forcing its way through apertures. The glass is then allowed to anneal, or cool down to room temperature, in a furnace over a period of twenty-four hours so that it bonds with the metal without cracking and retains its liquid-like quality. The resultant scorched and buckled vessels, which have been interspersed amongst the Museum's collections, become just as emblematic of entropy, or decay, as the fragments



*The Soane Gallery
designed by Eva Jiřičná.
Photo © Peter Durant*

of antiquities, the models of classical architecture shown in ruins or indeed Soane's own buildings, such as the Bank of England, depicted in drawings as they might be chanced upon by architects many hundreds of years into the future.

In April 2011, the Museum will host an exhibition, to be displayed in the New Picture Room, of twenty-five architectural models of British and European cathedrals on loan from Canterbury Cathedral. Made by the (as yet) little-known Cheltenham modelmaker William Gorringe and dating from around 1850, the highly detailed models, all constructed to the same scale, were intended to be used as comparative examples for the study of architecture. Following this, the Museum's unique collection of Fouquet models will be displayed in their entirety for the first time to the public. The Soane holds twenty plaster models by François Fouquet of restorations of classical buildings and monuments from Greece and Rome. In all likelihood, this is the largest historical collection of these rare and fragile objects still extant (the V&A has five complete and two fragmentary Fouquet models from the Nash collection). In the late autumn, we hope to have a display of architecturally inspired works by the contemporary artist Liliane Lijn in collaboration with the Riflemaker Gallery, Soho, London. Liliane's early work of the 1970s explored utopian architectural projects, anticipating many of the environmental concerns that inform architects today. Her later practice looks at the use of light in sculpture – a theme that resonates with Soane's own use of plain yellow glass throughout the Museum in order to bring to life the

many sculptures that adorn the interiors of No. 13. We are also working on a project with the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, which will explore both historical collections through the use of the fragment to evoke a whole (be that a building or a human body). Finally, we look forward to the inaugural exhibition of the new temporary gallery being designed by Caruso St John. The exhibition, entitled *Stadia: Sport and Vision in Architecture*, 27 July – 22 September 2012, is being sponsored by Populous, the official architectural and design service providers to the 2012 Olympic Games, and will look at the development of sports architecture from classical antiquity to the present day with the buildings being raised at the Olympic site in Stratford.

This project, as well as many of the other exhibitions which have preceded it, has only been made possible through generous sponsorship either by private individuals or by corporate bodies. In the changed cultural landscape which the Soane now faces, this type of support is even more crucial if we are to continue Sir John Soane's legacy of making architecture, art and his extraordinary collections accessible in the future. Already we have a list of exhibitions which will take the new gallery through to 2015. I am sure they will prove just as stimulating and exciting as those which were held in the Soane Gallery. However, more on this and on the new gallery design in the next *Newsletter*.

Jerzy Kierkuć-Bieliński
Exhibitions Curator



Examples of work from the second of Michael Petry's interventions to be displayed in the rooms of Nos 12 and 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields from February until March 2011

Soane in Malta

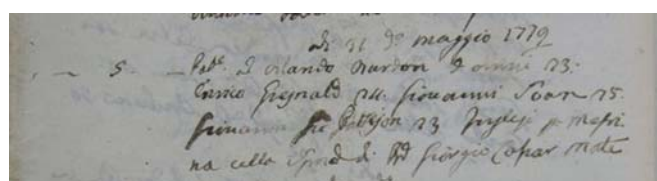
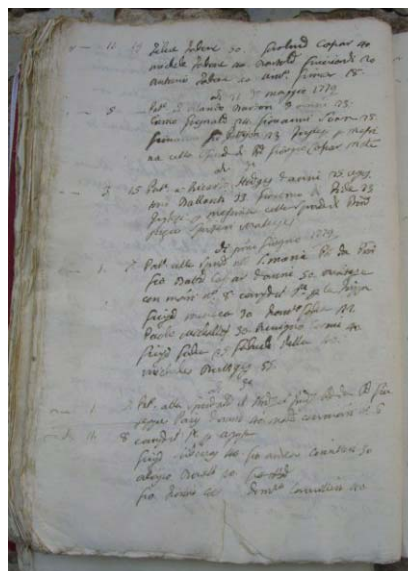
Soane's brief trip to Malta in 1779, as part of his two-year Grand Tour as the King's Travelling Scholar, has always remained shrouded in mystery, with little known about it bar the dates and the ports of embarkation and disembarkation.

The trip was made with a group of three friends – Rowland Burdon, John Patteson and Henry Greswald Lewis (all of whom later became clients) – as a side excursion during a longer exploration of Sicily. The scant details (some of Soane's notebooks having subsequently been lost on his return journey to England) come from a letter written by Patteson to his Mother back home in Norwich, after they had returned safely to Sicily. Sometime after 23 May 1779 they embarked for Valetta from Licata 'on board speronaros, which are long narrow boats that go at a prodigious rate; the wind was fair and in 24 hours we made upwards of 100 miles. I will not trouble you with the minutia of our reception at Malta, but I am sure princes could not have had more attention shewn to them. We staid there till June 2nd, and had much such a journey to Syracuse as Brydone had from thence to Malta; bad weather and contrary wind obliged us to put into the same harbour he did, but fortunately we were not long confined there. After the conveniences and luxuries of Malta, Syracuse appeared a miserable place to us . . .' Brydone is a reference to Patrick Brydone's *A Tour Through Malta and Sicily* first published in 1773, a copy of the 1775 edition of which is still preserved in Soane's library.



Portrait of John Soane by C.W. Hunneman, painted in 1776 – three years before Soane's visit to Malta as part of his two-year Grand Tour

Because of the sparsity of information about this trip, we were particularly excited when Krystle Farrugia, a student of Professor Mario Buhagiar of the University of Malta, found the following documentary evidence in the National Archives of Malta:



Magna Curia Castellania (MCC) Registrum Patentarum Vol. 27 (1777–1780), unpaginated, at the National Archives of Malta Legal Documentation Section, Mdina

di 31 dº. maggio 1779

– Parº [Partenza] ad Orlando Burdon di anni 23; Enrico Greswald 24. Giovanni Soan 25. Giovanni Pattison 23 Inglese per Messina sulla Sperª [speronara] di Padº [padrone] Giorgio Cassar

31 of May 1779

– Departure for Orlando [Rowland] Burdon of years 23; Henry Greswald 24; John Soan 25; John Pattison 23 English for Messina on the speronara of owner Giorgio Cassar

By good fortune this discovery was shortly followed by the internship at the Museum of another Maltese student, Lisa Attard. She kindly agreed to write an account of the attractions of Malta for Grand Tourists in the eighteenth century to give some context to Soane's trip. Her piece is

extremely interesting and informative, but sadly too long to reproduce in full here. What follows is therefore an edited and condensed version, the full text of which is available for consultation by appointment in the Research Library:

In 1530, the Maltese islands together with the fortress of Tripoli in North Africa were handed over as fief to the Order of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, by Emperor Charles V. Their arrival in 1530 brought the Maltese islands to the attention of European powers and their subjects. In fact, the number of visitors to write about their sojourn in Malta after this time is remarkable. By the 17th century, Malta became one of the most visited, best known and most fascinating places in the European tour. From visitors' accounts and diaries, one can trace those aspects of art, culture and crafts that attracted European attention. Malta, as the Scottish traveller Patrick Brydone put it, was seen as the epitome of all Europe.

Brydone was illustrating, in a series of letters to his friend William Beckford, his travels through the islands of Sicily and Malta, which he undertook in 1770 as a mentor for young Lord Fullarton. His party entered the Grand Harbour on 4 June 1770, and were immediately struck by the 'infinite number of fortifications', and the strong castles which commanded the port on either side. Upon arrival at the quay, they found themselves in a new world: 'the streets crowded with well dressed people, who have the appearance of health and affluence'. Waking up on his first day on the island, Brydone remarks that 'The aspect of the whole country is far from being pleasing' and that 'the whole island is a great rock of white freestone' with very little soil. He also writes, however, that he is somewhat surprised that the crop is exceedingly abundant. He comments on the Maltese oranges, the 'finest in the world'. Brydone commented on the flat-roofed houses which were admirably suited to the hot climate. Village churches also caught his attention. 'Every little village', he states, 'has a noble church, elegantly finished and adorned, with statues of marble, rich tapestry, and a large quantity of silver plate. They are by much, the handsomest country churches I have ever seen.'



The Grand Harbour; Valletta, Malta

Most 18th-century Grand Tourists resided in inns and hotels in Valletta, and some travelling diplomats or guests of distinction were housed in the Grand Master's palace. After the radical transformation of the Sciberras peninsula brought about by the Order of St John, following the Great Siege of 1565, Valletta remained the main modern feature noted by visitors. Many were impressed by its grid pattern and its spectacular fortress architecture. Brydone described how: 'The city stands upon a peninsula betwixt two of the finest ports in the world, which are defended by almost impregnable fortifications.' He is especially impressed by the depth of the grand harbour, on the south side of Valletta, which 'runs about two miles into the heart of the island, and is so very deep, and surrounded by such high grounds and fortifications . . .'. The harbour on the north side of the island, although it was only used for fishing and quarantine, was also inestimable by international standards, and has a castle built on the island in the middle of it.

The principal buildings of Valletta which received most interest from visitors were the Palace of the Grand Master, and the Church of St John. As the seat of the supreme head of the Order the Grand Master's Palace never lost its appeal. The basic structure was built in the early 1570s to the designs of Maltese architect Gerolamo Cassar. Brydone wrote that it was plain in structure, but that the Grand Master lodged more comfortably there than any prince in Europe. He gives a special mention to the staircase which he says 'is the easiest and best I ever saw'. Like most Baroque palaces, the halls and corridors of the palace were hung with portraits of sovereigns and princes, many sent over to Malta by monarchs



Palazzo del Gran Maestro (Grand Master's Palace) in Valletta, Malta

and rulers. However, it was the Gobelin tapestries of exotic plants and animals, commissioned by Grand Master Perellos, that were the real delight of the palace. Count Gian Antonio Ciantar in *Malta Illustrata* (1778) notes that in the eighteenth century, the armoury, too, remained an attraction for visitors, many of whom wrote about it at great length.



Valletta rooftops, Malta

No traveller to Malta missed a visit to the Conventual Church of the Order, the Cathedral of St John, also designed by Cassar. 'The pavement in particular is reckoned the richest in the world. It is entirely composed of sepulchral monuments of the finest marbles, porphyry, lapis lazuli, and a variety of other valuable stones admirably joined together, and at an incredible expense; representing in a kind of mosaic the arms, insigna &c., of the persons whose names they are intended to commemorate.' The vault paintings by Mattia Preti also attracted much mention.



The vault paintings by Mattia Preti at St John's Cathedral in Valletta, Malta

A popular meeting point for 18th-century Grand Tourists was the newly-established library of the Order, which in its initial years was housed in the conservatory and not the present Biblioteca, which was completed in 1796. The library was mainly compiled from the bequest of Balí Guerin de Tencin in the 1760s, and also housed a collection of classical artefacts discovered locally. Many foreigners discuss the contents of the cabinet in the library, which included antiquities, minerals and mathematical instruments.

Apart from the collection of the library, a number of other private cabinets are mentioned in the 18th century. Charles Antoine de Saint Priest recommended visits to the collections of Marchese Testaferata in his palace at Marnisi in Żejtun. Marchese Barbaro also enjoyed a particularly good reputation among scholars and connoisseurs: 'The traveller should also visit the cabinet of M. Barbaro in this city, who has arranged with great taste, a fine collection of specimens of all the natural productions of the island, and a considerable number of Roman coins, highly valuable for their excellent preservation, which he shews to strangers with the utmost affability and politeness.'

Like the modern tourist, the Grand Tourist also enjoyed some entertainment and relaxation while in Malta. Following its establishment in 1731, the Manuel Theatre, built by Portuguese Grand Master, Anton Manoel de Vilhena, also starts to feature in various visitors' descriptions. In the later guide of 1791, Charles Antoine Saint Priest says that this theatre was especially full during carnival, when several balls were held there. Many discovered the joy of swimming and bathing in the open sea. Brydone enjoyed watching local horse races 'of a very uncommon kind', of which he gives a detailed account. Village feasts and ceremonies were enjoyed for their uniqueness and Saint Priest's guide of 1791 lists the feasts of St John in Valletta, St Peter in Mdina, St Lawrence in Birgu and St Gregory in Żejtun as the most popular in Malta in the 18th century.

It is unlikely that Soane's party, in the short time they had on the island, were able to venture far outside Valetta, but had they done so they could have visited the ancient city of Melite and the Rabat area just outside Mdina with its extensive catacombs. The subterranean grotto of St Paul was another attraction, as were the country villas of the Grand Masters with their extensive gardens.

'Visitors are . . . treated kindly here in Malta, it is said, and a sojourn there is pleasant, with many fine things to see', wrote a Norwegian diarist, Pedar Pavels, in October 1796, echoing what John Patteson had written to his Mother seventeen years earlier. We can only speculate which of these attractions Soane and his companions were able to see during their short stay, but it is certain that there are a number which would very much have interested Soane.

Lisa Attard and Sue Palmer, Archivist

Latest Discovery regarding Soane's Sarcophagus of Seti

Ever since its discovery by the Italian adventurer, Belzoni, in 1817, the Egyptian King Seti I's magnificent alabaster inner coffin has proved to be something of an enigma to Egyptologists.



The Sarcophagus of the Egyptian King Seti I in the Crypt at Sir John Soane's Museum

Why was it found lying over the entrance to a unique corridor cut into the floor of the burial chamber and running for hundreds of feet into the bedrock? Why was the coffin inscribed with the Book of Gates when the burial chamber also has this inscribed on its walls? Why was the lid of the coffin smashed? The burial chamber was huge and this was surely unnecessary. Could it in fact be that there was a second secret burial chamber at the end of the curious corridor? There was only one way to find out.

Starting in 2008, the Egyptian Supreme Council for Antiquities commenced the excavation of the corridor. This had been attempted before but the corridor was cut through extremely friable shale that crumbles to dust like dry newspaper and excavations had failed due to the danger of collapse. The corridor had been filled with the debris of flash floods over the years since its discovery and it was filled from floor to ceiling. The excavation was long, hard and dangerous. The walls and ceiling had to be reinforced with steel and brick as they descended into the depths of the Theban mountains. After clearing the corridor to an amazing depth of 136 metres the end was finally discovered early this year. Two sets of very well made stairs were found, a granite false doorway, usually leading from the burial chamber, a number of small statues called Shabtis, an unfinished room and, significantly, a piece of the lid of the superb alabaster coffin, which now sits in the centre of Soane's Crypt.



View of the corridor reinforced with steel and brick descending to the second burial chamber of Seti I. With permission of the SCA

These finds lead to only one conclusion. Yes, the intention was for Seti to have a second secret burial chamber deep in the rock under his tomb. The piece of coffin lid also showed that it must originally have been placed here and not in the burial chamber above. But due to his premature death, the work was never finished and instead of a burial chamber, his burial was made at the end of this corridor.

To learn more about this incredible new discovery please go to www.sca-egypt.org/eng/main.htm or visit www.drhawass.com.

Stephen Cross
Egyptian Archaeologist

Stephen Cross is a member of the Egypt Exploration Society and the Geologist's Association (UK). He has written many articles and papers and has been filmed for TV documentaries on Tutankhamen. He has worked as an investigative archaeologist in Egypt and has been an advisor to the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities on excavations in the Valley of the Kings.



The piece of the alabaster sarcophagus lid found at the end of the corridor within the tomb of Seti I excavated earlier this year. With permission of the SCA

Soane visits his Dulwich Gallery

Dulwich Picture Gallery, England's oldest public art gallery, built by Soane in 1811–1812 to house the picture collection and mausoleum of his close friend, Sir Francis Bourgeois, is celebrating its bicentenary in 2011.

To mark this important event the Soane Museum will be lending the famous portrait of Sir John Soane by Sir Thomas Lawrence – normally found in the Library-Dining Room at No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields – to Dulwich from 20 December 2010 until the end of January 2011.

Soane commissioned the portrait in January 1828, paying £420 for it – rather less than the 700 guineas which is recorded as Lawrence's standard charge for a portrait in the late 1820s. Perhaps Lawrence reduced his fee because Soane was a friend and fellow Royal Academician. Soane sat for Lawrence several times in 1828. On 27 December Soane's old friend John Taylor saw the portrait in the artist's studio and immediately penned a poem *Lines on a Portrait of John Soane* (he subsequently wrote two further long poems on the subject). An extract gives a flavour:

*Lawrence, thy faithful pencil here has shewn
A vivid portrait of benignant Soane;
Thy Genius caught him in a lucky hour,
When free from Study's agitating hour,
Free, too, from all those troubles that await
From shallow critics and from rival hate,
When Guests around his social board attend,
And find the cordial welcome of a friend ...*



The portrait of Sir John Soane, painted 1828–29 by Sir Thomas Lawrence in the Library-Dining Room of Soane's Museum

The portrait was completed in February 1829 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in the same year. The composition frame is by George Morant and Sons of New Bond Street.

The seventy-six year old Soane is shown wearing a brown curly wig and clothes which were old-fashioned for the late 1820s. His appearance matches the vivid description of



Composite view of Soane's designs for Dulwich Picture Gallery by J M Gandy, 1822

him by George Wightwick (an assistant in his office in 1826–27 just before this portrait was painted):

He was certainly distinguished looking; taller than common; and so thin as to appear taller; his age at this time about seventy-three. He was dressed entirely in black; his waistcoat being of velvet, and he wore knee-breeches with silk stockings. Of course the exceptions to his black, were his cravat, shirt-collar, and shirt-frill of the period. Let a man's 'shanks' [i.e. his calves] be ever so 'shrunk', – if they be but straight, the costume described never fails upon a gentleman. The idea of John Soane in a pair of loose trousers [sic] and a short broad-tailed jacket, after the fashion of these latter times, occurs to me as more ludicrous than Liston's 'Romeo'! The Professor unquestionably looked the Professor, and the gentleman.

Wightwick adds that 'Sir T. Lawrence's portrait of him . . . is extremely like; but the facial breadth, though in a certain light it may have warrant, was decidedly flattering in respect to what was its general seeming'. The truth of this comment is borne out by comparing this portrait with the one by John Jackson, painted at almost the same time (the sittings alternated), in which Soane looks more his true age.

Soane's close friends seem to have felt Lawrence's portrait was a revelation of Soane's character, his friend John Taylor writing to him on 19 June 1830 (on receiving an engraved copy) that 'the Artist has hit you at the bottom of your heart'.

The painting still hangs in the position in which Soane placed it, above the fireplace in his Library-Dining Room, where it would be the first work seen by every visitor entering the main reception room on the ground floor of his house. Soane is depicted as a gentleman, without any of the attributes of his profession (with which he is shown in earlier portraits by Christopher Hunneman and William Owen). It hangs above a fine plaster model of one of Soane's most prestigious architectural commissions, for Government buildings on the west side of Whitehall. The arrangement advertises Soane as both a gentleman and the leading architect of his day. In 1834 he added the mirrors which surround the painting and create an almost magical effect by making the painting seem suspended in space.

The choice of Lawrence to paint this portrait was in part because of his particular association with the Royal Academy of which he was President and where Soane had been Professor of Architecture since 1806. Soane certainly thought



Portrait of John Soane in Masonic costume by John Jackson, 1828

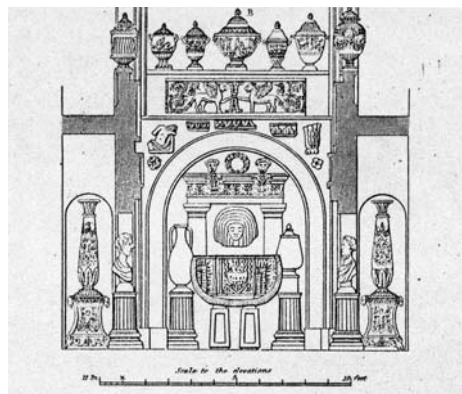
highly of Lawrence, placing a bust of him by Sievier (a gift from Sir Thomas), in the front hall of his house and a plaster cast of the same bust at the heart of his Museum, in the Dome Area, high up above his own bust by Chantrey. The position of the Lawrence portrait places not just Soane, but the Royal Academy and its President where they will be the first works seen by visitors on entering; it is no coincidence that Soane hung a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds, the Royal Academy's first President, opposite the portrait.

The absence of the portrait in January 2011 will enable visitors to see the wall surface behind it. When the Library-Dining Room was last repainted in 1951, Sir John Summerson carefully did not repaint this area which appeared to him still to be the original Pompeian red (unlike the rest of the room) – this decision is recorded by an inscription which is of course normally concealed by the picture.

Helen Dorey
Deputy Director

The Return of Nephtis

Following on from a previous report (see Newsletter No. 24 available to download at www.soane.org) regarding the new cast of the Egyptian red granite head of Nephtis (of which Soane had a plaster cast hanging in the West Corridor in the basement), we're pleased to announce that this new cast has now arrived from the Gipsformerei in Berlin.



Detail of plate from John Britton's Union of Architecture, Sculpture and Painting showing the exact location of the cast of the Head of Nephtis when it hung in the west corridor of the Basement in 1827



Watercolour by C J Richardson of Soane's original arrangement of sculpture as it appeared in 1834. The Nephtis is on the far wall



The plaster cast of the head of Nephtis discovered in the Gipsformerei in Berlin, from which the new cast for the Soane has been made

It has been hung in position with the help of our sculpture conservators Taylor Pearce Restoration. In the absence of conclusive evidence that Soane's original cast was a stone colour we asked the Berlin workshop to paint the cast in imitation of the red granite of the original Egyptian head and this paint finish has been done most beautifully.

We are very grateful to our Danish colleague Dr Jan Zahle who first alerted us to the existence of another cast identical to that owned by Soane in the Thorwaldsen Museum in Copenhagen and to our colleagues at the Gipsformerei for making the mould and cast from the example that was discovered by Tim Knox a few months after the Danish cast came to light.

The making of the cast and its installation were most generously sponsored by Ömer Koç and Simon Ray.

*Helen Dorey
Deputy Director*



Tim Knox, Helen Dorey and Jane Bush unpacking the cast of the Nephtis on its arrival at the Soane Museum

The new cast in position at the north end of the Basement West Corridor



Book Conservation

Readers of previous issues of the *Newsletter* may recall that at the start of 2010 the Soane Museum was able for the first time to establish a dedicated fund for the conservation of books in Soane's library, thanks to a generous initiative by Eileen Harris, the distinguished architectural historian and writer. Instead of a leaving present, Eileen suggested the creation of the fund to mark her retirement after 25 years cataloguing Soane's architectural library and seeing at first hand some of the most fragile and valuable volumes in the museum.

As a result of the incredible response of the many friends of Eileen and of the Soane Museum, almost £30,000 has been raised to restore the books that have suffered most from the action of time and gravity, and we have been able to commission Professor Nicholas Pickwoad, director of the Ligatus bookbinding research centre at the University of the Arts London and advisor on book conservation to the National Trust, to undertake the first full conservation survey of the seven thousand bound volumes in Sir John Soane's library. Professor Pickwoad is assisted in this formidable task by two very able students from the MA course in Conservation at Camberwell College of Arts, Francesca Lemass and Monika Stokowiec.



From left to right, conservators from the Camberwell College of Arts, Francesca Lemass and Monika Stokowiec and Stephie Coane, Librarian, at work carrying out the conservation survey of the seven thousand volumes in Soane's library

Soane's library is unique as the only intact library of a great architect which remains in its original setting, the house and museum which he built at No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, and his collection of some seven thousand volumes includes one of the finest architectural libraries in the world as well as many other treasures published before his death in 1837. Although many of the books are in near perfect condition, others – particularly the large architectural folios that were most heavily used by Sir John, his pupils and assistants, and the 'Amateurs and Students in Painting, Sculpture and Architecture' ever since in accordance with Soane's wishes enshrined in the Soane Museum Act of Parliament (1833) – are in need of sensitive restoration. Book conservation to the standards expected can be a lengthy process requiring highly skilled specialists and it would be easy to spend the entire sum raised on the studio repair of a relatively small number of deserving cases, but we also intend to deploy some of the fund on a series of *in situ* interventions aimed at improving the storage conditions of the larger number of volumes still in good condition over 170 years after their owner's death. The book conservation survey is an essential preliminary stage in allowing us to plan the deployment of the Eileen Harris Book Conservation Fund, and the database and report resulting from the survey will be fundamental in ensuring every penny is spent where it will be of the greatest benefit.

At the time of writing we have just passed the halfway point of the ten-day survey, which is taking place on Mondays and Tuesdays in November. Each volume is being assessed *in situ* and any treatment needs to be recorded, along with the physical dimensions of the books and book-presses in anticipation of the need to relocate some of the architectural books as part of Phase I of the *Opening up the Soane* project.

The generosity of everyone who has made donations large and small is helping to ensure the preservation of Soane's library treasures for another 170 years, and contributions can still be made at:

<http://www.justgiving.com/EileenHarrisBookConservationFund> or by cheque, payable to 'Sir John Soane's Museum' and addressed to Mike Nicholson, Development Director, marking your donation 'Book conservation'.

Work continues on publishing the catalogue of Soane's library on the Museum's website. Sixty percent of the catalogue entries are now online and can be seen at <http://www.soane.org.uk/library>

Stephie Coane
Librarian

The Education Department – Getting to Know You

As the Education Department expands, the education team is continuing to develop its range of programmes. This year, the focus seems to be on developing extended courses that complement the one-off sessions that we have generally run previously:

YAC, NAC and AD15-18 – The Monthly Saturday Clubs

Our main experience at the Soane of educational activities providing longer-term contact between the Museum and its participants has been the very successful ‘Young Architects’ Club’ (YAC). YAC is a club with annual membership for children aged 7–13, during which children learn about architecture and its associated arts, and each year the club focuses on a different theme. For the 2010–11 Informal Education Programme, we are now running two Saturday clubs – one for children aged 7–10 (YAC) and the other for children aged 11–14 (NAC – the New Architects’ Club). Splitting the original club means that we can now accept more children, although we already have a waiting list for the 2011–12 programme!

AD15–18, the Architectural Drawing course for 15–18 year olds started again in October 2010, after a successful pilot in 2009–10. This six-session course aims to give students an introduction to architectural drawing. The course is over-subscribed.

Building Explorers – The Weekly After-School Club

In September, we were very pleased to launch a new initiative for children in our local community, the ‘Building Explorers After-School Club’. Lucy Grace Trotman secured funding from *Children in Need* for a three-year period to run the club, which meets every Tuesday in the Museum. Eighteen children from four local schools signed up and attend this weekly programme. The Club gives its members a chance to learn about architecture and design through fun planned activities



Three building explorers present their temple design to the rest of the Weekly After-School Club in the Museum's Education Centre

such as ‘Spaghetti Skyscrapers’, using everyday materials to explain architectural concepts. The Club will also go on exciting trips to view structures such as the London Eye and explore developments such as Docklands. By having regular contact with the Museum, the children will develop a deeper knowledge of and connection to the Museum, and we hope this will, in turn, encourage them to become confident users of other museums in the future.

Thursday Late Evening Art Classes for Adults

The Museum's hugely popular adult art workshops are also developing. We have maintained the programme of one-off day-long workshops, but this year the education team is piloting a range of evening courses. James Willis is teaching three five-session courses, each with a different focus: a drawing course in November/December 2010, an oil-painting course in January/February 2011 and a watercolour course in March 2011. We hope that by offering evening courses (running 6:15pm–8:30pm) we will attract new people to the Museum. The course participants are very privileged to experience the Museum when it is so quiet. Places are still available for the oil-painting and watercolour courses and if interested, please contact Beth Walker at bwalker@soane.org.uk

Rome: Retracing Soane's Footsteps – A Study Trip and Drawing Holiday

Beth Walker and James Willis are also planning a very exciting development for the adult art workshop programme – a week-long study trip and drawing holiday to Rome in September 2011. Final touches are being added to the trip, which includes visits to Soane's favourite sites in and around Rome, staying at the British School at Rome and the use of its resources and, of course, the excellent tuition and guidance of James Willis. Please contact Beth Walker if you would like to receive further information about the Rome study trip.

Community Outreach Programme – New for 2011

With everything listed above, it seems impossible that the Education Department could expand any further! However, we are delighted to be developing a programme in 2011 to work with audiences new to the Soane Museum. An Education Officer, responsible for Community Outreach, has been appointed and will start in February 2011. This post is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the *Opening up the Soane* project. It is very exciting to be able to develop a completely new programme and we will report on developments in future newsletters.

Beth Walker
Education Manager

The Journal of Mrs Soane's Dog Fanny by Herself: *A special new children's book published by the Soane Museum*

Inspired by Mrs Soane's beloved dog Fanny, whose elaborate grave is a well-known feature at the Museum, the Soane Museum has published its first book aimed at children titled *The Journal of Mrs Soane's Dog, Fanny by Herself*.

This enchanting book, which chronicles the adventures of Fanny and her friend Mew (the next-door cat) in the Museum, is written by Mirabel Cecil and beautifully illustrated by Francesca Martin. When Mirabel first approached the Museum with the idea for this book, the characters of Fanny and her companion, Mew, were very much already established in her imagination, as were the outlines of a number of adventures they might have together. However, she was naturally concerned that the book should be as factually accurate as possible, so she very generously invited me to comment on the draft text. There followed an enjoyable series of discussions and quests to verify particular domestic and period details.

Once the text was finalised, these discussions continued with Francesca Martin, the artist who provided the charming illustrations. Francesca spent some time sketching *in situ* in places such as the Upper Drawing Office and the Kitchens, after which many packets of information were sent off to her in response to queries regarding such disparate subjects as candelabra and 19th-century funerals.

But this was not the only way in which Soane's collections were involved in the genesis of the book. It was decided, where possible, to use views of the interiors of the house drawn by Soane's own pupils as a basis for Francesca's illustrations. The process involved was quite a complex one, but has worked extremely well. Firstly, transparencies of the drawings were scanned by the book's designer, Daniel Devlin, so that Francesca could paint the figures and objects to be added over a lightbox, painting the shadows separately. Daniel continues: 'I then placed the scanned image over the watercolour using Photoshop. To get the images not to look . . . cut-out but . . . as if they belonged there, I would set the image to 'multiply', which means that the image on top overprints the image below. In between these two layers I would carefully paint white, but with a feathered brush and not to the limit, and would also not paint white under the shadows so that it really feels like the image is casting a shadow'. Daniel's description is symptomatic of the great care and attention that has been lavished on this book by everyone involved in its creation, from the author and illustrator to the book production team. It has been, from start to finish, an immensely enjoyable project with which to be involved.

The publication of this charming book, whose sales will directly support *Opening up the Soane*, has been made possible

by thirty subscribers who each gave £500 towards the project. It is also the first time the Museum has produced a book especially for children and it hopes that it will convey some of the magic of the Museum and help inspire a new generation of Soane enthusiasts.

The book is priced at £10 and can now be bought online at www.soane.org or in the Soane Shop.

Mirabel Cecil usually writes biographies: she is currently working on the life and art of Rex Whistler (1905–1944) with her husband, the historian Hugh Cecil, but she has also written several books for children, including the best selling *Ruby the Donkey*, published by Walker Books, the children's book publishing house founded by her brother, the late Sebastian Walker, whose biography, *A Kind of Prospero*, she wrote in 1995. Her last book was with David Mlinaric, *On Decorating*, published by Frances Lincoln in 2008. She has also written extensively for *The World of Interiors*. Mirabel's first collaboration with the illustrator Francesca Martin was twenty years ago when, as neighbours in North London, they produced a children's book, *Lottie's Cats*, about their many and varied pets. Francesca Martin is well known for her colourful children's books based on her childhood in East Africa, notably *The Honey Hunters* and *Clever Tortoise*.

Sue Palmer
Archivist



NOW AVAILABLE AT SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM



The Journal of
MRS SOANE'S DOG
FANNY
by Herself

This enchanting children's book, which chronicles the adventures of Mrs Soane's beloved dog Fanny and her friend Mew (the cat next door) is written by Mirabel Cecil and illustrated by Francesca Martin.

The publication of the book has been made possible by 30 subscribers who each gave £500 towards the project. All sales of the book will directly support the Soane Museum and its major fund-raising appeal Opening up the Soane.

PRICE £10



The Journal of
MRS SOANE'S DOG
FANNY
by Herself
AND MIRABEL CECIL
ILLUSTRATED BY FRANCESCA MARTIN

The book can be bought online at www.soane.org or from the Museum gift shop

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