

Anton u3a AHA Group Visit to Willis Museum, Basingstoke - W Heath Robinson Exhibition

On January 28th thirteen group members decided to join the party to view the compact, but representative, exhibition of the celebrated humourist, illustrator, and artist's work of W Heath Robinson. This proved to be an amusing and educational experience showing the exceptionally wide range of his lifetime output. He commenced work as a book illustrator in an era (pre-WW1) when illustrated books of all types were popular; and there were a number of representative examples of his work. His colour illustrations for an unpublished edition of Shakespeare were quite exquisite.



As the market for (expensive) book illustrations diminished, he turned his attention to drawings and cartoons for newspapers and periodicals. He continued to apply the same meticulous attention to small details and his quirky sense of humour began

to come to the fore. There is no doubt, from what we saw, that he was an outstanding draughtsman and many of his pen and ink drawings were first class.

It seems, however, that his first love was watercolour painting which he did for his own pleasure and sold only rarely. Some of his work proved to be just superb, and others imaginative as he experimented using blocks of a few similar colours to achieve the effect desired. This technique proved to be particularly effective with shore-scapes, and in some cases the sea appeared to be quite realistic. In all it proved to be a most pleasant morning, and a unique opportunity to laugh out loud in an Art Gallery. Whilst at Willis Museum, some took advantage of updating themselves with Basingstoke history and its displays, well worth a visit.



We decided to return to Andover taking the scenic route with stops. Taking full advantage of the



nice weather, ten of us stopped off for a light lunch at the White Hart Restaurant, Overton, enjoying some jolly banter between us. This was followed by a visit to Whitchurch Silk Mill. The newly refurbished Silk Mill had looms working and we were able to see them in operation weaving a variety of patterns. They are often requested by the BBC and other film companies to provide material to be incorporated into period costumes; also, special commissions such as the material for Princess Dianna's wedding dress have all been made at Whitchurch.

All materials are produced on old timber looms which would have originally been driven by the huge waterwheel, which is currently being refurbished. A very helpful guide was on hand to explain what it was like working in the mill and to answer the many questions we had about the process. Whitchurch Silk Mill is the oldest in the country still operating in its original buildings.

Yet another very successful day for the AHA Group.

Ron Bryan – AHA Co-ordinator

PS: Don't forget to check the Anton u3a Website for activities!

