Chairman’s Chat

It seems incredible that the chat I penned this time last year was from the glories of Athens – a trip that will be remembered for many things (+ and not just instruments!). And now I find we’re about to set off for the more temperate climes of Sweden which, judging from the organisers’ ‘menu’ looks like we’re in for a real treat, even if the price of a beer will make your eyes water more than a fjord! A full report and snaps will be carried in a future edition, but advance thanks to Professor Karl Grandin of for putting it all together so smoothly.

After this, our next event will be the AGM – this time we’ll be locating ourselves at Greenwich and, thanks to owner Frank Dowling, have secured the use of a room at the famous Trafalgar Tavern with lunch afterwards. It’s then but a short step up to the museum where members have been invited to give short pithy presentations on their favourite topics – we’ve already had some very interesting submissions. After that we get a tour of the brand new ‘Moon’ exhibition with our very own Louise Devoy who curated it and has organised this AGM – it looks set to be a fun and informative day so do come along, I promise the AGM won’t last too long…

Now to an important update regarding the Fair

We were hoping to repeat the format used last year at Glaziers’ Hall and have a fair, followed by speakers etc. in the afternoon. Having consulted with the trade and collectors closely, it seems that despite being a great venue, the footfall achieved is too small and, no matter where you are, it is the footfall that really counts. Instead of having a stand-alone fair, we’ve decided to try linking up with the Antique Arms Fair being held in the Pillar Hall of Olympia - a lovely venue with good transport links and already established as a successful and busy fair - and there is some crossover for us as gunner’s rules and levels etc. are much sought after by both sides of this area, and there is a close appreciation of all things technical as well as beautiful. It will be a little earlier - SATURDAY 21 SEPTEMBER. set up for stand holders is between 7-9am, and the fair is open to the public from 9am-5pm - I’m afraid it will be a little more expensive, but not seriously enough to put off tenacious vendors or buyers we think - before, please contact our Executive Officer to reserve a table - these will be limited to a section of the hall initially, so it will be first come, first served. We will continue to forge relations with the Worshipful Company who are as keen as we are, and I think we can evolve a useful part of our programme with them.

Finally, I have been told that two indices have been completed – with three others closely following – many apologies have been given for the delay, but I think the depth and level of work that’s being undertaken is considerable and can be compared to underpinning a house – once the work has been done, the following top-ups will be merely cosmetic, but it’s important to get the foundations right as I hope we would all agree. I think that’s all for now – for the lucky Study Tour delegates, translate this: Vi sessnart, ta med handskar och en fackla och skål!

Charles Miller

The SIS Study Tours

Our study tours are educational and fun (Fig. 1) judging by the reports published in the Bulletin over the years. The two-day Edinburgh visit in February reported on in this issue took in one of my favourite museum buildings in this country – the old Royal Scottish Museum building in Chambers Street, whose construction was started in 1861. The exterior in Venetian Renaissance style belies the existence of the light-flooded main hall or Grand Gallery (Fig. 2). Its designer, the civil engineer Captain Francis Fowke of the Royal Engineers, was also responsible for the Royal Albert Hall in London. He was inspired by The Crystal Palace of 1851, and possibly also by the similar glass-house interior of The Oxford University Museum of Natural History, which was started in 1855, completed in 1860, in the neo-Gothic style influenced by the writings of John Ruskin. I encourage our readers to join our tours – you may find them life changing!

WDH

Cover: Microscope Micrometer by John Cuff, c. 1750

Following the death of Edmund Culpeper in 1737, John Cuff became the leading innovator in microscope design in Britain. By making all-metal microscopes with controlled focus adjustment Cuff brought a new precision to the task of observing minute organisms. In 1747, apparently with the guidance and encouragement of Martin Folkes, President of the Royal Society, Cuff developed a microscope micrometer, consisting of a lattice of fine silver wires with a separation of one fiftieth of an inch. This required unscrewing the eyepiece to fit the micrometer at the focal plane. Cuff also made stage micrometers which were easier to use and there is evidence that Cuff sometimes sold these micrometers as a pair.

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Julian Holland