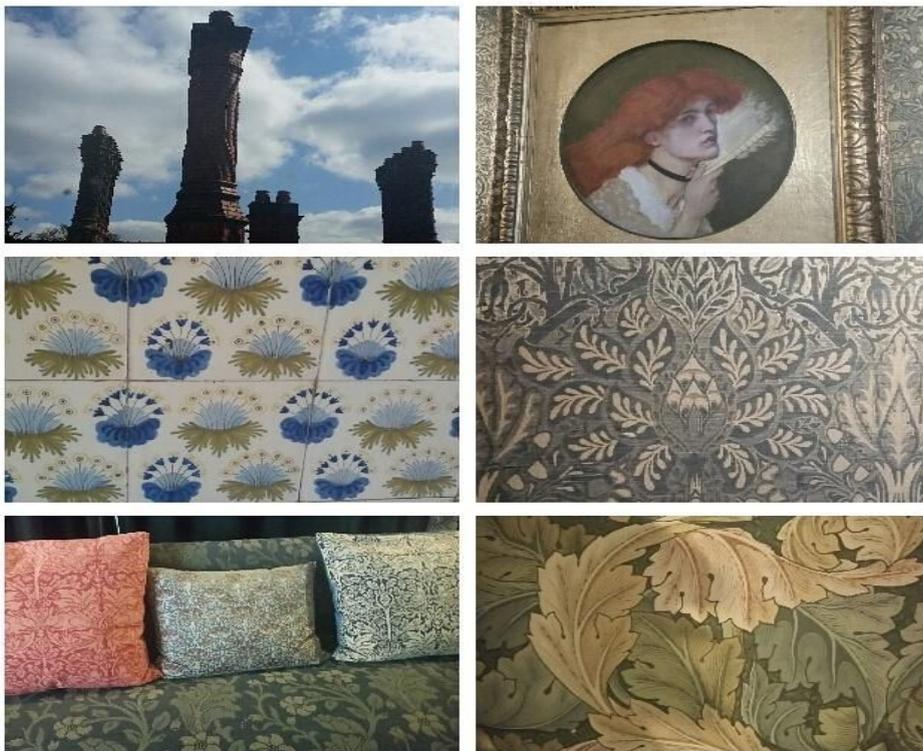


2 – 5 April 2017 Oxford DFAS Visit to Liverpool

As a virgin DFAS traveller I approached the 4 day trip to Liverpool with a degree of trepidation. This was completely unwarranted as it was a totally fabulous adventure.

Setting off from St Giles on Sunday morning we set off in a northerly direction towards our first staging post – Wightwick Manor in the West Midlands. An unexpected treasure trove of Victorian art and design. The house, which was so obviously planned as a family home was packed to the gills with Pre-Raphaelite art and, despite the fact that William Morris never visited the house, you feel his presence in every room



We were reluctantly rounded up from this fabulous house and garden, in order to reach Liverpool by close of play. There was general relief that the hotel was situated alongside the Big Wheel (which could be seen from all over the city) – with that landmark, surely nobody would get lost. The following day I veered slightly off-course in order to have the chance to “do” the ferry across the Mersey...however, it wasn't to be...

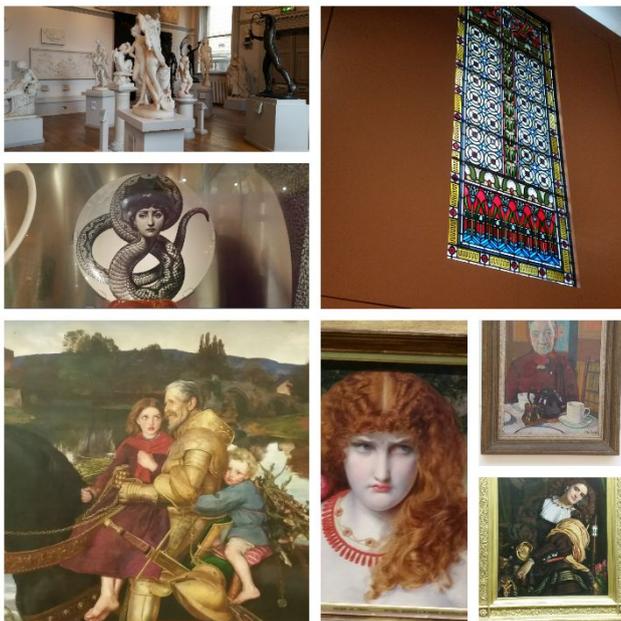


(Note by N&SM on the visit to the cathedrals)

Our coach took us through the fine & unexpectedly extensive Georgian quarter before arriving at the Anglican Cathedral designed by Giles Gilbert Scott at the tender age of 22. Sitting on the ridge above the port and dominating the skyline, the massive sandstone exterior gives no hint of the luminous interior with its magnificent craftsmanship. This modern take on pure Gothicism was a wonderful surprise.

Then on to the Metropolitan Cathedral. What a contrast! All that was built of Lutyens' over-ambitious classical design was the vast crypt. Above just half of it rises Frederick Gibberd's unashamedly modern inverted funnel crowned by a spiky coronet. The interior is a single circular space bathed in blue light. Decoration by striking modern craftwork is confined to the circumferential chapels.

I met up with the group, and our guide, Elizabeth, outside the Walker Gallery in the afternoon. We then had a choice of St George's Hall or the gallery. Some of the group managed both but I just experienced the delights of the gallery. St George's Hall is one of the finest examples of neo-classical buildings, is Grade 1 listed and visitors can get an unparalleled idea of what was it was possible to achieve during the heyday of Britain's industrial greatness. The Walker Gallery really does have something for everyone with decorative and fine arts from the Renaissance to the modern day



The library next door was pretty amazing too...if only all libraries were like this one...



Tuesday brought the wonder of philanthropy - Port Sunlight the brainchild of Lord & Lady Lever. We learned how the village was built (on the Wirral) from marshland in the nineteenth century. With the Mersey on one side and the train line on the other, vital trading and commuting links were on the doorstep. As well as the amazing garden town, where no more than 3 houses were built in the same design, there was also the Lady Lever gallery. Another gallery in which to wallow – artworks galore. The collection was Lord Lever’s passion. Despite the fact so much had to be sold to pay death taxes, you would not know it from the size of the gallery and its treasures, including much Wedgwood as well as paintings.



We almost had to be dragged from Port Sunlight, but there was so much still to see elsewhere. I spent the afternoon at Tate Liverpool in Albert Dock. A glorious eclectic mix of modern art. I was fascinated by the William Blake/Tracey Emin exhibition. Who knew how many links their work has? There were fascinating Cindy Sherman pictures and videos. One of the videos was moving images of one of an old fashioned cardboard doll inspecting and trying on her wardrobe. It transfixed me for ages

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sherman-doll-clothes-t12571>

There was also the Maritime Museum, Slavery Museum and the Museum of Liverpool to explore on our doorstep as well as all the fine examples of Art Nouveau and Art Deco to be found in the city. We followed this up by a jolly farewell meal in an Italian restaurant on the dockside, where ancient and modern architecture blended to form a perfect backdrop.



Bags packed we were eager to get to Crosby the next morning to see Anthony Gormley's, *Another Place*. Nobody was disappointed and the overcast sky and wind gave the installation a perfect aura.



It was then a quick drive to Sudley House, a collection of 18th and 19th century art and an exhibition of Peter Farrer's (a cross-dresser) day and evening gowns. Peter had died only 6 weeks earlier and the staff were keen to advise us that the Sudley welcomed the *unexpected* sitting amongst their permanent collection.

Speke Hall was our final stop before we headed for home, a black and white Tudor Manor, with so many beguiling features, of which my favourites were the priest's hole and an Edwardian essential – *The Woman's Book*, giving instruction on how to engage servants, general directions for dusting and the like.

Travelling back we talked volubly about our fabulous experiences facilitated by our exceptional (and self-deprecating) group leader, Sally MacLennan, who made it all happen for us. I came home enriched, exhausted and so happy to have made 20+ new friends.

Wendy Greenberg