



TIMES PAST

The Newsletter of the Kennington History Society
Issue 24 Winter 2015

YOUR SOCIETY



HISTORY SOCIETY NOW HAS FOUR CHAIRMEN ON A ROTATING CYCLE

Gerry Bowen-Thomas, Bob Johnston, Philip Martin and Linda Andrews are now each taking it in turn to chair the meetings, which certainly gives us variety. We

BLAST FROM THE PAST

This year it is 210th Anniversary of perhaps the most decisive naval battle in our history. It is Monday the 21st October 1805, the Napoleonic Wars have been raging for two years, conflicts which are seen as a continuation of the Revolutionary Wars, that had broken out all over Europe in 1782, during the French Revolution. In these wars Napoleon Bonaparte had led France to pre-eminence on the European mainland and an invasion of Great Britain seemed inevitable.

The weather that day in the Atlantic off the Spanish coast is squally with light winds and rain when Admiral Lord Nelson sights a Franco-Spanish force of 33 ships. Nelson prepares to engage the enemy by dividing his 27 ships into two divisions and as they sail into action he famously signals from Victory, 'England Expects That Every Man Will Do His Duty'

In five hours of fighting, the British devastate the enemy fleet, destroying 19 enemy ships. None of the British ships are lost, but 1,500 British seamen are killed or wounded. The battle was fiercest around the Victory and a French sniper, in the rigging of the Redoubtable, shot Nelson while he was pacing the Quarterdeck with Captain Thomas Hardy. Admiral Lord Nelson was taken below and died 30 minutes before the end of the battle. Nelson's last words after being informed a great victory was imminent were 'Now I am satisfied. Thank God I have done my duty'

Victory in the Battle of Trafalgar ensured Napoleon would never invade Britain and Nelson was hailed as the saviour of the Nation with a column erected in his memory in the newly named *Trafalgar Square*.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

18th January: Berkshire Houses

Geoff Tyack

15th February: AGM and Members Short talks Evening. Please tell a committee member if you would like to speak.

21st March: Oxon and Bucks Light Infantry on the Somme in 1916

Stephen Barker

PROGRAMME FOR 2016

a copy is enclosed with this newsletter,

HISTORY SOCIETY WEBSITE

Keep up to date with the latest details of the society's events via the village website www.kennington.org and clicking History.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE (NO INCREASE)

Annual Subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2016. A renewal form is enclosed.



VINCENT VAN GOGH – HIS LIFE AND ART

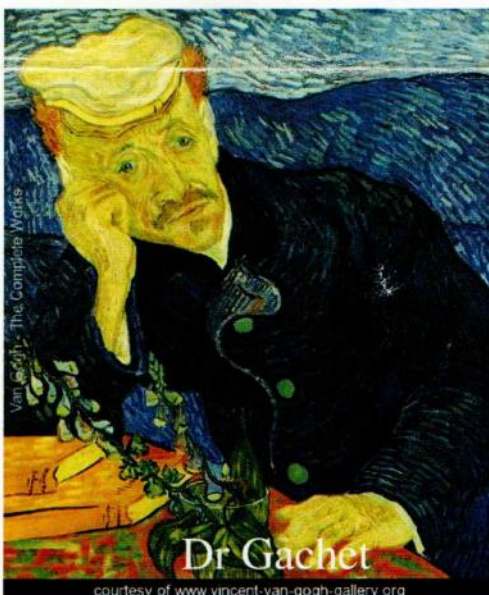
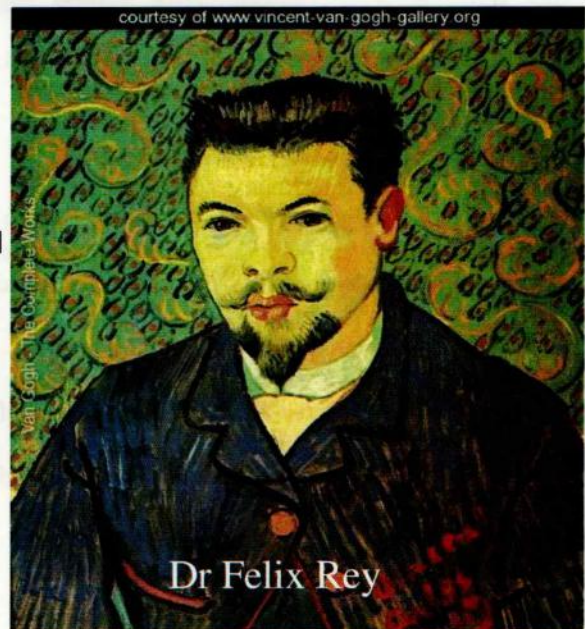
Following my talk to the History Society on Monday, 16th November, 2015, the following are a few additional points of interest which had to be omitted due to time.

Theo Van Gogh, Vincent's brother, an art gallery manager for Goupil & Company in Paris, filled the basement of the company showroom with new Impressionists pictures. Few dealers in history had a more discerning eye. At Theo's sudden death, the company, finding all these modern art works in their basement, called them rubbish and ordered the new manager to clear them out as best he could.

In a Dordrecht bookshop where Vincent had briefly worked, the shop owner's son, who had ridiculed Vincent in his life time, ransacked the office looking for any Van Gogh sketches or doodles that had been overlooked.

During Vincent's time in hospital in Arles, to sooth him, Dr Felix Rey allowed him to paint. The Doctor also agreed to sit for a portrait, aptly called "Portrait of Dr Felix Rey". As a thank you he gave the completed picture to the doctor. However, Dr Rey's mother did not like the picture and later used it to repair the door to her hen coop. It stayed there on the hen house door for twelve years until found by another painter searching for Vincent's work.

Vincent had a relationship in Paris with an Italian woman, Agostina Segatori, and he filled her restaurant with his pictures. Later, when they parted, he was unable to retrieve his art. The pictures were sold by Agostina, in bundles of ten, for as little as ten cents a bundle. i.e. one-tenth of a Franc.



In 1885, after leaving Holland, a large number of his paintings were stored in a carpenter's house. Forty years later, in 1926, an art scholar discovered that the carpenter had given most of them to a junk dealer, who had sold them from his cart. Others had gone to an innkeeper, who gave them out as prizes to customers. Some ended up as patches on holes in a wall. Another had been glued as decoration on an attic door. This door was later cut out and the picture restored. Of about 500 drawings, only a fraction of them were ever recovered.

A picture "Portrait of Dr Gachet" (Left), was sold in 1990 at auction in New York, for about £48million.

David Holt