

New Light on Ancient Egypt

Galleries re-open with new displays

The long-awaited results of a £1.5 million project to re-display the Museum's outstanding Egyptian collections will finally be revealed when the galleries re-open to the public on 25 May. Years of planning and eighteen months of refurbishment, research and conservation work will conclude with stunning new displays of over 1,100 objects, many of which will be exhibited for the first time.



Nichole Doub, Conservation intern, makes final adjustments to new displays

Visitors to the refurbished Egyptian galleries will experience a chronological introduction to Ancient Egypt, plus thematic displays introducing Egyptian religion, magic and

superstition, writing, carving and drawing, dress and adornment, and other aspects of daily life. In an inner room, dimly lit to evoke the atmosphere of a tomb, burial practices from the Pre-dynastic period to Islamic Egypt are explored through coffin assemblages and objects associated with funerary ritual.

In-depth research on many objects has been made possible by the project - a major focus being the coffins, where wood, pigment and structural analysis has been carried out. The Museum's human and animal mummies were CT-scanned at Addenbrooke's Hospital in order to study their contents and condition; the intriguing results will be revealed later this year.

A special week-long programme of Egyptian events for all ages during Museums and Galleries Month 2006, starting with an Egyptian Galleries Open Day on Saturday 27 May, will bring to life many aspects of the new displays through talks, trails and gallery tours, workshops, storytelling and drop-in sessions. See page 7 for further details.

The Museum's human and animal mummies were CT-scanned at Addenbrooke's Hospital in order to study their contents and condition; the intriguing results will be revealed later this year

The Egyptian collections were conserved and re-displayed through the generosity of

The Heritage Lottery Fund | The DCMS/Wolfson Foundation Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund | The Garfield Weston Foundation | The Getty Foundation | Isaac Newton Trust | Renaissance | The Trust House Charitable Foundation | The Aurelius Charitable Trust and other corporate and private donors

From the Director



Duncan Robinson

After all that has been written and said about the disaster which occurred on 25 January when a visitor crashed into three Qing vases and blamed the museum for 'leaving them lying on a window-sill', I hesitate to add to the column inches. For the first time, I found myself questioning the adage that no publicity is bad publicity; after all of our efforts, over the years, to attract coverage for what we are doing, we found ourselves propelled accidentally into an avalanche of attention. Alerted by a photograph we neither took nor released, which was captured on camera by another visitor, the media descended in force. Emails from the Far East and the Americas attested to the power of an image to activate the internet.

Meanwhile, here at the Museum we were launching 'A Touch of the Divine', which is arguably the finest exhibition of Italian drawings from British collections to be mounted in this country for several decades, *pace* Michelangelo at the British Museum. Shown with none of the hypermarketing distractions which are now so characteristic of major exhibitions, David Scrase's sharply focused treatment of Federico Barocci as a sublime draftsman, a worthy heir to Raphael, has brought together virtually all of his surviving works from collections in this country to celebrate the acquisition of his *modello* for *The Institution of the Eucharist* by the Museum in 2002.

For me, here is a news story worth telling. Four years ago we became aware of the fact that this superb example of Barocci's powers of composition, combined with his unsurpassed skill as a draftsman, was about to be sold from a private collection. Thanks to relatively recent changes in government legislation we were able to pursue a private treaty sale with the owners to our mutual advantage. Of course we were only able to do so thanks to generous support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Art Collections Fund, whose contributions, combined with our own, saved

a major work of art from almost certain export. The exhibition was thus conceived to highlight the importance of public support for museums and their acquisitions and in particular to remind government and its agencies, in a period of increasing financial pressure on the arts, of the importance of fiscal incentives on the one hand and investment from the public purse on the other. Should I be surprised that there were no takers, when cracked pots dominated the headlines? Or am I being totally unreasonable by suggesting that the public would be better served by a press which eschewed sensationalism in favour of the life-enhancing pleasures to be derived from great art?



His Excellency Signor Giancarlo Aragona, Italian Ambassador to the Court of St James (left), and Signora Aragona with David Scrase, curator of the Barocci exhibition, at the Private View

On the other hand, clouds do have a way of turning up silver linings. Many of the comments we received in the wake of the vases incident were supportive. People who knew the Museum urged us not to over-react by introducing barriers and distancing the objects on display from their viewers. One of the defining characteristics of the Fitzwilliam Museum is its house style, thanks to which the objects on display are enhanced by juxtaposition; paintings with sculpture and furniture, ceramics, coins and medals and glass. Without attempting to create period rooms, a misconceived invention of twentieth century museology, our galleries avoid the relentless monotony of textbook illustration by mixing and matching, coaxing and challenging the hearts and minds of our visitors. Appreciation and sympathy came from all over the world, including offers of practical help from conservators in China. Fortunately we



John Dix, Managing Partner, Hewitsons, with Penny Bendall, ceramic conservator, and Duncan Robinson, Director, at the press conference held to announce conservation plans for the damaged Chinese vases.

were able to identify sources closer to home. On 29 March the press returned, this time at our invitation, to meet Penny Bendall, who had already agreed to take on the task of rebuilding the vases. She appeared with what seemed at first sight to be unbelievable: one of them reconstructed, albeit held together by tape, but clear evidence of future success. She was joined by John Dix, Managing Partner of Hewitsons, the firm of solicitors based in Cambridge who volunteered, within days of the incident, to cover the cost of conservation. And with that, my last example of silver linings, I would like to end by thanking everyone who has supported the Museum throughout a season as unpredictable as it was unfortunate. Finally, don't forget Barocci; only until 29 May, and once you've been, you will want to go back to enjoy that 'touch of the Divine.' Now that is what museums are all about!



Warwick Newbury, Group Chief Executive of S G Hambros (centre) and colleagues with Director Duncan Robinson at the opening of the exhibition 'A Touch of the Divine: Drawings by Federico Barocci from British Collections'

Celebrating the life of Philip Grierson

Philip Grierson, the Museum's Honorary Keeper of Coins since 1949 and the University's longest serving college fellow (elected to Caius in 1935), died on 15 January at the age of 95.

Professor Grierson was a medieval historian who specialised in monetary history and became the most celebrated numismatist of the 20th century. He formed the greatest collection of medieval European coins that exists. For thirty years this has been deposited in the Fitzwilliam, housed in the specially designed Grierson Room, where it has been constantly used for research and teaching. A selection of these 20,000 specimens is on display in the Rothschild Medieval and Renaissance Gallery.

Under his will the collection is bequeathed to the Museum, along with his magnificent library and archive and a share in his residuary estate. Philip Grierson is truly one of our greatest benefactors, not only for the wealth of his collection, but for the inspiration and guidance he gave the Department of Coins and Medals over more than half a century.



Philip IV of France (1285-1314), gold masse (Grierson collection)



Perry Hastings

Philip Grierson

A Celebration of his Life was held in the Museum on 14 March attended by 200 friends, colleagues and members of his family. There was music and reminiscences covering various aspects of his life: his early days in Caius, his love of collecting, and his sociability, especially with the undergraduates, who even in his 90s he entertained with pizzas and films.

Philip Grierson is truly one of our greatest benefactors, not only for the wealth of his collection, but for his inspiration and guidance over more than half a century

Names and Faces – the people behind the collections

The latest round of funding from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) for Designated Museum collections under the Renaissance in the Regions banner is called 'Opening up Collections: Hidden Histories'. The Fitzwilliam has been awarded just under £100,000 for a project during 2006-08 which

will reveal connections between key objects and key people in their history. Portraits of the eminent and the little-known, both commissioned and incidental, and hidden stories of lives connecting the people who discovered, created, collected, donated, used and cherished objects in the collections will be

worked up. Links within Cambridge and its other collections or further afield will be the interesting subject of research. The result will be a wealth of information on the Fitzwilliam's website, new guided tours and talks within the Museum, and valuable information for future exhibitions, publications and collaborations.

If left untreated now, will the structure become so fragile in the future that any repair will be much more difficult or even impossible?

Mission Impossible?

Ethics and Choices in Conservation

1 July - 24 September 2006

Mellon Gallery

With support from Renaissance East of England, The Marlay Group, Conservation by Design, Preservation Equipment Limited

Most exhibitions with conservation as their subject highlight successful and dramatic treatments, especially where examination and treatment have led to a significant discovery about the object. This exhibition - organised by the Conservation Division of the Museum and exploring conservation across the entire collection - will concentrate on issues that face the conservator and curator when deciding the best treatment for each object so that it is not only preserved but made as accessible as possible. Almost invariably there is no single and correct course of action - every decision is a compromise and that compromise might well be the result of what has happened to the object in the past, or affect its future.

Examples will be drawn from the Museum's collections of fine art, antiquities and applied arts, where condition, a combination of the degradation of the materials from which they were made and the object's subsequent history often pose problems for their safe display. The surface of an unlined Dutch painting that has received little if any structural treatment since it was painted in the mid-17th century, now looks very uneven as the linen support inevitably loses its structural strength; see images above and right. However any major



Frans Snyder (1579 - 1657) *The Larder*, No.362, oil on canvas

Chris Titmus

intervention will change the original state of the painting irreversibly for ever. Can sympathetic display reduce the appearance of some of the distortions without undertaking extensive repairs? If left untreated now, will the structure become so fragile in the future that any repair will be much more difficult or even impossible? An Antiphon displays the corrosive effects of iron gall ink, where the ink has destroyed its support. How can the progress of this irreversible damage be slowed and how can the manuscript be made safely accessible for display and study? A fragmentary Roman sculpture has been extensively reconstructed in the eighteenth century by a major English sculptor. His repairs, however inaccurate, are now of great historical interest. Should the sculpture be preserved in its present state, or would it be better understood in its 'original'

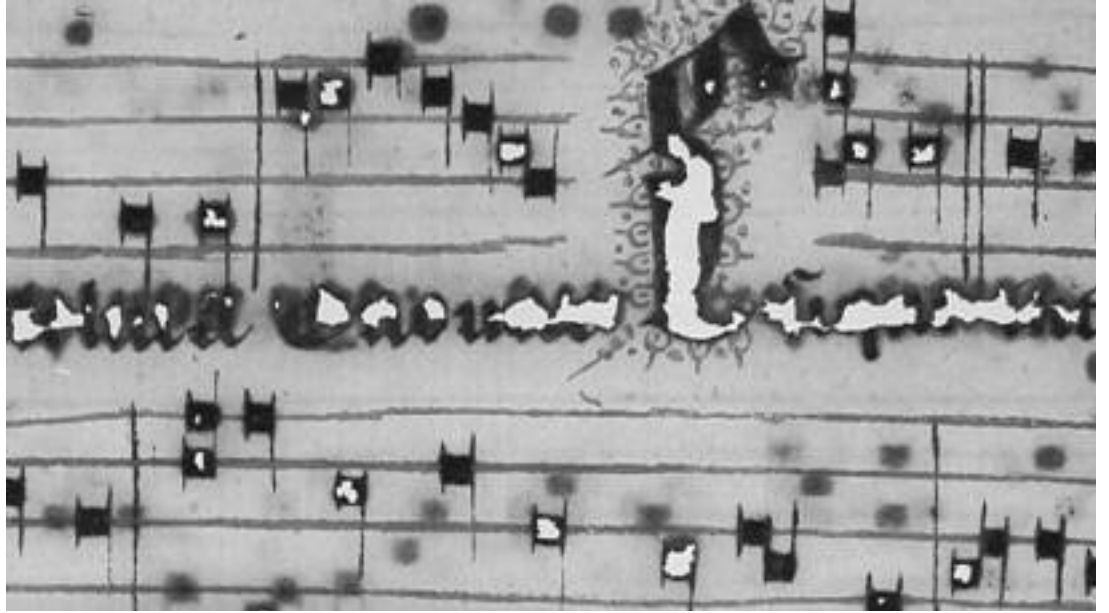


Frans Snyder, *The Larder*, detail of maid's head in raking light

Chris Titmus



Restored statuette of Apollo(?) GR.2.1885. Given by Dr. J. Disney. Roman, probably 1st century AD, based on one or more original Greek works of around 500 - 480 BC. The restorations of head, limbs, quiver and plinth were carried out by John Flaxman and Antonio d'Este in Rome in 1793



Antiphon MS 46. Dutch (probably Augustinian) 15/16th century. Detail showing the irreversible effects of iron gall ink corrosion

fragmentary state? The exhibition will also chart the progress of the restoration of the three Chinese porcelain vases, recently damaged whilst on display.

Fascinating displays will examine the agents of degradation: from the inside, in the self-destructing components of many objects - glass, bronze and artists' pigments - and from the outside: the damaging effects of light, changes in relative humidity, unsuitable storage, past inappropriate treatments and the damaging effects of pests, including insects and that most

ubiquitous specimen, man. This section of the exhibition will also contain working models and displays where the visitor will be able to see and, by being encouraged to touch, contribute to damage taking place. This section has been designed as a travelling exhibition and has attracted funding from Renaissance in the Regions to tour to other museums in the region where it will be shown with objects from each host museum's collection from 2007. The exhibition will be complemented by a series of gallery talks and courses; details from www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk.

Jesus College Collection of Japanese Prints

23 May - 17 September 2006 | Shiba Gallery

In 2003 The Fitzwilliam Museum received as a gift from Jesus College a collection of Japanese prints collected by a former Master of the College. They are on display for the first time after conservation made possible by a grant from the Sumitomo Foundation. Many were originally collected by a fan of Kabuki theatre in Edo (now called Tokyo) in the middle of the nineteenth century and kept in an album, preserving their colours in excellent condition. Fascinating examples by the leading figure print designers of the day, Kunisada and Kuniyoshi, give us different views of actors in the same performance. Other highlights include a spectacular set by Toyoharu Kunichika showing leading actors as firemen, and a small group of the exquisitely produced privately commissioned prints known as *surimono*.



Toyoharu Kunichika (1835-1900), *The actor Sawamura Tanosuke III*, from a series of eight prints of actors as firemen, 1864, colour print from woodblocks

Let There Be Light

Frances Sword, Head of Education, sheds light on an innovative education project with regional impact

"What's it all about then?" asked Michael. "What's what all about?" I answered. "Life", he replied with a sigh. Not a conversation you expect to have with anyone you have just met, let alone with a nine year old, but this type of questioning has filled our days recently, during one of our most exciting and ambitious schools' programmes.

Let There Be Light focused on the visible and the invisible, on how artists visualise the invisible, on how light enables us to see at all. And so each session began in the dark; light levels were gradually raised so the spooked children could experience the subtleties of vision as degrees of light enabled them to see, first shape and then the miracle of colour. We talked about invisible aspects of life, about gravity, air and love, which after much thought led us to talking about God.

The children spent the next two hours immersed in Islamic or Christian art. No matter which religion formed the focus, the children engaged in role-play and movement sequences, acted out

tableaux and cracked codes. Paintings and artefacts were scrutinised for the means through which invisible meanings had been made visible. Throughout the day each child wore two badges, on one a pair of eyes, on the other a shining light bulb, and as we worked their understanding grew of how it is that the verb 'I see' can become the exclamation, "Oh I see!"

The afternoons were filled with experimentation. In the Museum's Education Studio the children explored, examined and tried to explain the extraordinary phenomena they were seeing, from dancing after-images to fish that disappear in transparent water. The children saw with some incredulity that the visible can be just as extraordinary, just as hard to believe, as the invisible.

Let There Be Light is funded by Renaissance in the Regions and has regional reach and impact. We are working with partner museums in the East of England developing similar projects to

encourage science investigations within museums without science-based collections. The project is also the focus of a research project at the Faculty of Education, Cambridge University.

The last word must go to Bradley, one of the many children who wrote to us about their experience. "I give the museum 10 out of 10; the best I enjoyed me was the experiments because I just couldn't believe my eyes."



Let there be light participants reflect on experimentation with mirrors

New Honorary Keeper of Music: Dr Gerald Gifford

Dr Gerald Gifford's introduced harpsichord recitals of music from the Founder's collection drew capacity audiences to Gallery 3 over four lunchtimes during the early Spring. Using a harpsichord styled after the large Parisian instruments that Lord Fitzwilliam would have encountered during his studies there with Jacques Duphy in the late 1760s, Dr Gifford featured a number of Fitzwilliam's own compositions in their first performances of modern times. He also surveyed a range of other rare or neglected music preserved in the Museum's collections, including several autograph Handel manuscripts that are of exceptional interest and importance.

Dr Gifford has been invited to accept an Honorary Keepership of Music at the Fitzwilliam in recognition of his efforts to make the Museum's collection of music more widely known through performance and publication. '**Lord Fitzwilliam as Composer of Music**' will form the subject of his free lunchtime talks in Gallery 3 on Fridays 5 and 26 May at 1.15 pm, sponsored by Prentis & Co, Chartered Accountants.



Dr Gerald Gifford performs to appreciative audiences in Gallery 3

The end of an era: Frances Sword retires as Head of Education

After nearly twenty years of outstanding service, Frances Sword has decided to step down from her post as Head of Education. During that time she has not only succeeded in establishing public education as a core activity for a University museum, she has also attracted a far wider recognition as a leader in her field. The Museum of the Year Award for innovative educational programmes in 1996 was essentially hers, as was undoubtedly the award of a Churchill Travelling Fellowship to the United States in 1998, an opportunity which enabled her to extend her contacts and experience abroad. In Cambridge she has pursued her vision for this and the other museums with conviction and determination, which she combines with a kindness towards colleagues that will be sorely missed. Frances has a rare talent for bringing out the best in people while getting them to cooperate and to undertake new ventures in ways they had not imagined.



Frances Sword

Frances joined the Fitzwilliam in 1988 on attachment from Cambridgeshire County Council one day a week to prepare teachers' notes and to ensure that school children would be welcomed in the

Museum. Eighteen years later, during which over a quarter of a million children and their teachers have come under her spell, she has decided to return to her easel.

From a timid and poorly supported start perching by the photocopier, education in the Fitzwilliam grew in 1995 to MAGIC – Museums and Galleries in Cambridge – a clever scheme pairing very different museums in the delivery of themed programmes.

Frances was the hub of this enterprise funded by the County Council which led directly to the establishment of several museum education posts in the City and County.

A turning point in her career came in 1999 when the University established the post she has held ever since. She began at once to build up her department, invariably seeking external funds for projects and people. The next leap forward was the development of services after the Museum's Courtyard Development in 2004. At last dedicated spaces made it possible to provide new ways of responding to the collections for both adults and children through practical art, poetry, dance, drama and scientific experiments. Digital services were launched offering extensive information linking the collections through theme and time with *Pharos* and eGuide, a handheld personal digital assistant, in 2004. At the same time the first round of government funding for

museum education arrived through the Museum's participation in Renaissance in the Regions as a partner in the East of England Museums Hub and further expansion was undertaken. Frances has been a guiding spirit in the development of significant initiatives in the region where collaborating museums have delivered innovative and high quality programmes for children and young people aged from 5 – 19.

Simultaneously she has developed remarkable work under the title 'Art and Well-being' which has been undertaken in the Museum and in the wards of Addenbrookes and other hospitals. This has extended the Fitzwilliam's outreach into areas of mental health and social inclusion, with life-enhancing results for many of the participants and has transformed and enriched the practice of Frances and her colleagues. We rejoice in her achievement and wish her a well-deserved retirement.

May launch planned for new catalogue of Museum's paintings

The long-awaited catalogue of oil paintings in The Fitzwilliam Museum published by the Public Catalogue Foundation (PCF) is due to be launched during May. The Fitzwilliam's collection of paintings is one of the finest in the country and is of such importance that it is the subject of an entire catalogue – the first to be published which includes all these works and regarded as a significant resource for scholars and members of the public alike. *Cambridgeshire: The Fitzwilliam Museum*, 240 pages with over 1,570 colour reproductions, will be available in softback at £20 (ISBN 1-904931-13-8) and hardback at £35 (ISBN 1-904931-12-X) from the Museum shop www.fitzwilliammuseum.org, telephone 01223 470474, selected bookshops and via the PCF: www.thepcf.org.uk or telephone 0870 128 3566.

New Light on Ancient Egypt

A special week-long programme of Egyptian events to celebrate the reopening of the Egyptian Galleries during Museums and Galleries Month 2006 runs from 27 May to 2 June.

Visitors of all ages can enjoy a variety of talks, trails and gallery tours, workshops, storytelling and drop-in sessions. Highlights include:

- Ben Haggarty, renowned storyteller, tells **Egyptian tales** ancient and modern to accompanied children aged 7 and over on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 May
- **Cartonnage making** with freelance artist Annie Davey explores the construction of mummy cases using an ancient example on Tuesday 30 May

- Dana Goodburn-Brown, conservator and expert in ancient technology, shows children and adults **how to wrap an Egyptian mummy** on Thursday 1 and Friday 2 June
- **Gallery trails** for children, opportunities to **Meet the Curators** and **Meet the Antiquities** – offering close encounters with staff and objects – and **talks** on subjects ranging from 'The Egyptian world of the dead' to 'Wrestling with mud' are on offer throughout the week.

Visit www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk or pick up a special leaflet for full details of events.



RENAISSANCE
EAST OF ENGLAND
museums for
changing lives



Friends of The Fitzwilliam Museum

Rosalind Dearlove, Chairman, writes about Friends' activities and events



Rosalind Dearlove

in the Collection: "The Court of Versailles comes to London".

October also offered Friends a double bill in London: an exhibition of Rubens at the National Gallery, described as the most thorough exploration of the flowering of his genius ever attempted, and *Degas, Sickert and Toulouse-Lautrec: London and Paris 1870-1910* at Tate Britain, exploring the relationship between French and British artists of the period. November provided an opportunity to visit two major exhibitions on the same day, at the Royal Academy *China: the Three Emperors (1662-1795)* and *Edvard Munch by Himself*.

The Friends were most grateful to the Museum for enabling us to organise two further visits "behind the scenes". One with Helen Strudwick, Outreach Officer, Ancient Egypt, to the Egyptian galleries during refurbishment, and one with Dr James Lin, Assistant Keeper of Applied Arts, to his exhibition *Life, Ritual and Immortality: Eating and Drinking in ancient China*. Both visits were oversubscribed; the appetite of Friends for learning more about, and viewing in greater detail, the Museum's treasures is never satisfied.

Professor Jean-Michel Massing's absorbing, magnificently illustrated lecture on 24 November, "The Iconography of the Nativity

and the Emergence of the Black King", and the Friends' Christmas party - as well-attended as ever - were thoroughly enjoyable contributions to Cambridge's Christmas festivities.

A visit on 5 January to the Geffrye Museum and Denis Severs' House fulfilled its promise to provide both a fascinating tour of English domestic interiors through the ages, and a detailed insight into particular interior.

On 16 February an eagerly awaited exhibition opened in the Mellon Gallery: *A Touch of the Divine: Drawings by Federico Barocci in British Collections*, and two weeks later two small groups of Friends were treated to masterly gallery talks on these exquisite drawings by the curator, David Scrase.

On 9 March Mr J.W.N. Petty, Warden of the Goldsmith's Company of Newcastle gave a most interesting talk, illustrated with pieces from his own collection, on "English silver and its style 1870-1939".

Successful visits to Elton Hall and Fotheringay Castle and Church, and to Spencer House and the Wallace Collection were followed by an engrossing lecture on "Plants as Ideas: The Cambridge Collections" by John Parker, Director of the Botanic Garden in April. Our Easter mailing provides details of summer visits.

The two study tours to the continent planned for this year have materialised: Ace's Spring visit to Amsterdam to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of Rembrandt took place at the end of March; and the expedition, to be led by Duncan Robinson, in early September to Aix-en-Provence to celebrate Cézanne's 100th Anniversary, is already fully subscribed. A visit to China is a possibility that we are now exploring.

The Syndics of the Museum were delighted to be offered further gifts from the Friends: A set of nine proofs by Henry Moore for the cover of the 100th number of the journal *Encounter*, January 1962; "Wilfred Owen: five poems", designed, printed and published by Sebastian Carter at the Rampant Lions Press, 2005; eight pen and ink or graphite drawings of 20th century composers by Milein Cosman; two miniatures from a manuscript of Guillaume de Deguileville's



Hiroshi Suzuki silver vase

"Pilgrimage of the Human Soul"; "Fifty Etchings" 2004-5, a portfolio including two monotypes, by Christopher Le Brun; and a hammer-raised fine silver vase, made in 2005 by Hiroshi Suzuki. We are

planning to organize special displays of Friends' gifts for the Friends in the very near future.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the Volunteers who continue to support the Friends and the Museum with discretion and enthusiasm in activities ranging from sorting leaflets and "stuffing" envelopes for the five mailings each year, providing abundant canapés for the parties, manning the Information Desks and helping visitors to the galleries or to offering assistance to the curatorial staff when necessary or appropriate. Their hard work is hugely appreciated by the Committee and by all the Friends.

Join the Friends

For full information on Friends' activities and how to join contact the Secretary, Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB telephone: 01223 332933 email: fitzmuseum-friends@lists.cam.ac.uk

The Fitzwilliam Museum is supported by



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Heritage
Lottery Fund



MUSEUMS LIBRARIES ARCHIVES

RENAISSANCE
EAST OF ENGLAND
museums for
changing lives



The
Fitzwilliam
Museum

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB

Telephone: 01223 332900; email: fitzmuseum-enquiries@lists.cam.ac.uk; www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk