

SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER NO.15

SUMMER 2007

Letter from the Director

At 10am on Friday 29 June, the next door house, No. 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, was handed over to the Museum in a solemn but informal ceremony by our builders, thus bringing to an end a 56-week contract for its repair and restoration. It was a moment the Museum has been waiting for since 1996, when the freehold of the building was acquired in dramatic circumstances. Years of fundraising, planning and preparation – much of it under the direction of my predecessor, Margaret Richardson – have at last culminated in the Museum taking possession of a fine, lovingly repaired, five-storey Soane-designed townhouse ready to help fulfil many of the requirements of a modern museum. Other museums have to anguish about the design of much-needed additions to their premises, but we have a perfect extension, designed by Soane himself at the height of his career, which completes his imposing triad of townhouses on the north side of Lincoln's Inn Fields.

I would like to pay tribute to the hard work, patience and dedication of our architects, Julian Harrap Architects, especially the No. 14 project architect, Lyall Thow. Thanks are

also due to our builders, William Fuller & Co. Ltd, particularly Mick Roberts and Stefan Moretta, our Project Manager, James Pain, and our Quantity Surveyor, Kevin Newlands of Nolans. Many others also made a vital contribution, particularly craftsmen and subcontractors, and nor should the enthusiasm and patience of the long-suffering Trustees, staff and visitors of the Museum be taken for granted. Last but not least we thank our donors and supporters, whose gifts, large and small, have enabled this restoration to take place. A series of events planned for the autumn will ensure that everyone's contribution is properly recognised.

Although we have now taken formal possession of No. 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, we still have a lot to do before we move in and make it habitable. A complicated alarm and fire prevention system needs to be tried out and tested, and two breakthroughs still need to be made to connect the upper floors to the Museum. Then there are the final decorations, the delicate task of moving and installing our voluminous research library, offices for up to seven staff, and fitting up the facilities for our Children and Families Education



The team from Fullers Builders load test the balcony at No.14 Lincoln's Inn Fields

programme. This means that it will be several months before No. 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields will be officially opened, and possibly next year before it is fully up and running. Nevertheless, its benefits will soon be felt all over the Museum.

One of the principal benefits of the new addition is *room* – especially enough room to plan and deliver the many educational events that take place in the Museum every year. Thus, the arrival of Bethany Kingston as the Soane Museum's new Education Manager last month is timely. Bethany comes to us from the Wallace Collection from where she was recently seconded to Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, setting up the new children's education programme there – perfect experience for the Soane, although we hope she won't get ormolu withdrawal symptoms! We wish her every success in her new role working alongside Jane Monahan and Will Palin.

June 2007 also saw the much lamented departure of Susan Bogue, the Museum's House and Visitor Services Manager, to take up her new post as Custodian to the National Trust's Chastleton House in Oxfordshire. Over the last eighteen months Susan has made many improvements to the way the Museum is run, particularly to security, cleaning, and staff facilities. We will all miss her greatly and thank her for her huge contribution to the life of the Museum. Her successor, Colin Wood, comes from the National Portrait Gallery where he has been Visitor Services Manager, with a special responsibility for security. We look forward to welcoming him to the Soane.

In the last *Newsletter* I mentioned the ways in which the Museum is helping itself. Perhaps the most notable of these initiatives is the licensing agreement we have recently signed with Chesneys Ltd, the well known manufacturer of marble chimney-pieces. Chesneys will be producing a range of high quality chimney-pieces to Soane designs exclusively under license from the Museum, including reproductions of chimney-pieces in the Museum itself and new mantels made to designs by Soane that have hitherto remained unexecuted. The Museum will benefit from a royalty on every Soane chimney-piece sold. We are currently exploring the possibility of further licensing partnerships, so as to help the Museum benefit from the enduring popularity of Soane's distinctive designs.

The month of May saw the Museum celebrating Museum's and Galleries Month 2007 with a special trail and free leaflet, entitled *A Portrait of Soane*, which looked at portraits and masks in Soane's collection and shared their stories with our visitors – ranging from a bust of a clergyman executed for forgery to a Cromwell look-alike mutineer. The leaflet proved a great success, and our visitors seemed to appreciate exploring and getting to know more about the personalities who stare out at us from odd corners throughout the Museum.

Over the Summer, the Soane Museum celebrates *India Now* with another informative offering, a leaflet telling the story of Soane's greatest Indian treasure, his beautiful suite of intricately carved ivory furniture. Pakistani novelist Moni Mohsin writes about differing national perceptions of Tipu Sultan, the supposed owner of the suite, and the mixed feelings that imperial plunder from India stirs in the breasts of British Asians. The revelation that Soane's delicate ivory table and chairs were never actually owned by Tipu after all, but were probably made for the use of one of his English enemies, adds a curious twist to this tale of celebrity relics.

With the mailing of this Soane Museum *Newsletter* we enclose leaflets for the Georgian Group and the London Topographical Society. As before, these are reciprocal mailings – they are doing the same for us with their mail-outs – so we can combine forces to promote our worthwhile causes. Finally, if you want to support the Soane Museum and enjoy receiving this *Newsletter*, why not recommend the Soane Supporters' Circle to a friend? As Claudia Celder explains in this issue, your support and contributions are vital to help us care for the Museum and keep it looking the way it does.

Tim Knox
July 2007



Portrait of Tipu Sultan, Powis Castle, Wales, UK/The Bridgeman Art Library

Library News

GROLIER CLUB VISIT

On 6 June we were delighted to host an evening visit by the Grolier Club of New York, America's oldest and largest society for bibliophiles and enthusiasts in the graphic arts. The Grolier Club, named after the celebrated Renaissance book collector Jean Grolier, was founded in 1884 to stimulate the literary study and promotion of the arts pertaining to the production of books. Members of the Grolier Club assemble each year in London for the Antiquarian Book Fair, and we were delighted that such an international group of bibliophiles took up our suggestion to use the Soane Museum as the venue for their traditional reception on the evening before the opening of the Book Fair.

Guests at the reception were able to view a wide-ranging exhibition of treasures from Soane's library displayed in the

South Drawing Room and Research Library. Many Grolier members and their guests had visited the Museum before – one in 1969 to be advised on a research topic by Sir John Summerson – but all were thrilled at the chance to see behind the glazed fronts of the book cabinets. Sue Palmer and Stephie Coane had taken care to select books that reflected the known bibliographic interests of our guests as well as highlighting the special qualities of Soane's collection, from the fine bindings and illustrated books to illuminated manuscripts and of course our Shakespeare First Folio. Soane's collection of Napoleonica was especially admired.

Stephie Coane
Librarian

Education

The Museum is pleased to announce the appointment of Bethany Kingston as Education Manager. Beth has the daunting but exciting task of developing the new Education Centre in No.14 Lincoln's Inn Fields. She will not be starting from scratch however, as the children's education programme, under Janey Monahan, is well established, as is the architectural history Study Group for adults.

Another successful education project Beth inherits is the Art Workshop programme, with James Willis at its helm, which has gone from strength to strength over the last year. James, aided by Rosemary Bianci and Jane Bush, has put together an exciting series of courses for next year, including classes on drawing, watercolour, printing and stone-carving. Watch the website for details.



An art student at work in Soane's Drawing Office. Photograph: Handan Ereğ

Other News

SOANE PODCASTS

Providing visitors with information about the Museum, without spoiling or disturbing the magic of the place, has long posed a challenge. Our little *Short Description* guides have been tremendously successful and, of course, the warding staff are famously knowledgeable and helpful. However, technology has now opened up new possibilities for providing visitors with information and the Museum is delighted to announce a new series of audio tours which visitors will be able to download from the web and put on any MP3 player ready to take through the Museum. Their advantage over traditional audio tours is that the Museum does not have to administrate the equipment, and that they provide a discreet and truly personal tour of the Museum. The first two tours, the 'Classic' and the 'Junior' are introduced by Stephen Fry (pictured) and conducted by Tim

Knox and Eleanor Bron respectively. The scripts for the tours were developed by Simon Sharkey at *Vocal Heroes*, a company specialising in this genre. *Vocal Heroes* have also produced the recordings (complete with sound effects and music) which will be available via the Museum website from September 2007. The audio tour project has been made possible thanks to a generous grant from the BAND Trust.



Photograph: Johnny Boylan

BRITAIN'S BEST

You have until 27 August to vote for Sir John Soane's Museum in a new television poll. UKTV History's 'Britain's Best' campaign aims to find the nation's favourite historic site. The campaign will involve two television series and a final

programme presenting the winner as decided by the British public.

You can register your vote on the UKTV website – www.uktvhistory.co.uk

Sarcophagus Party

On 24 May the Soane held its second annual 'Sarcophagus Party' – held this year in aid of the Tivoli Recess – 'London's Lost Gallery'. The Sarcophagus Party is so called because in March 1825, to celebrate the acquisition of the Egyptian sarcophagus of King Seti I, (discovered in 1817 by Giovanni Belzoni), Soane held not one, but *three* parties here in honour of its arrival. Last year, for the first time, the Soane Museum re-created the Sarcophagus Party, lighting the interiors with hundreds of candles, just as in Soane's day.

The theme for this year's party was 'Classical Rome' and guests, including the guest of honour, HRH Princess Michael of Kent, were greeted at the door of the Museum by standard-bearing centurions wearing crested helmets. Inside, 'slaves' clad in tunics and sandals served Roman-inspired food, while a flautist and a lyre player played in the Monument Court. Meanwhile, fortunes could be told by a soothsayer who took up residence in the gloomy Monk's Parlour!

The 2007 Sarcophagus Party was made possible thanks to sponsorship from Chesney's Fireplaces, the Deborah Loeb Brice Foundation, Sheppard-Day and others. All the proceeds will go directly towards the £300,000 project to recreate the Tivoli Recess, one of the Museum's most curious lost features. If you would like to know more about this important project,

or if you are able to help in some way, please contact the Development Office: 020 7440 4240/41 or email ccelder@soane.org.uk

Claudia Celder
Development Officer



HRH Princess Michael of Kent and guest arriving at the party

© MPPIMAGECREATION 2007

The Soane Foundation, USA

The Soane Foundation Spring Gala Dinner, entitled *Mood Inigo Jones*, was held on 25 April at the Rainbow Room in New York. This year's fundraising event was an evening of dinner and dancing preceded by a mini-Masque, written and directed by the organisation's President, Chippy (Mrs Keith) Irvine. Irvine's elegant period-inspired costumes, conjured out of plastic bags and cleaning materials, with flower pots for hats, and her spirited players recruited from friends and family – were given a standing ovation from the black tie crowd led by International Chair, Mrs Debby Brice and Gala Co-Chairs Joseph A Field, Peter Pennoyer, Mrs Stanley DeForest Scott, Kathleen E Springhorn and Paul V Wiseman.

After the Masque, Co-Chair Elizabeth H Scott welcomed the crowd and introduced Tim Knox, the Director of Sir John Soane's Museum. Richard Griffiths, Chairman of the Trustees, gave a toast, which was followed by the presentation of the first Soane Foundation Honours to author, illustrator and educator David Macaulay and philanthropist and preservationist, Richard H Driehaus for their outstanding contributions to architectural education. Pledges are still coming in but it is hoped that the 2007 New York Gala will raise over \$100,000 for the Museum.

That April week also featured two other events; the first was a lecture, *Regency Rivals? The Collections of Sir John Soane and Lewis Nockalls Cottingham* by Tim Knox, given to a capacity audience of Soane Foundation supporters and members of the Royal Oak Foundation (the American support group for the National Trust). The second event was a trip for 35 friends along the Hudson River to visit two important houses – Boscobel, dating from 1825, and Kykuit, an early 20th-century house. Kykuit was the hilltop home of four generations of the Rockefeller family, beginning with philanthropist, John D Rockefeller, the founder of Standard Oil – his business acumen made him, in

this day, the richest man in America. Both houses were closed for the season and we were received by the director of one and the curator at the other, making for very special and personal visits.

Later in May, the Soane Foundation came to England to explore the great country houses of Derbyshire. There was also an evening drinks party at the Soane Museum followed by a seated dinner for 75 at The Travellers Club. Our evening was 'in salute to three directors' of the Museum, Tim Knox for his current leadership and support, Margaret Richardson OBE, for her longtime support and help to the Foundation, and the memory of Peter Thornton, Director at the time of the formation of the Foundation in New York.

Chas A Miller III
Executive Director,

Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation (New York)



*Richard Griffiths, Chairman of the Trustees, with
Professor Alan Tait at the New York Gala*

Soane Supporters' Circle

The Soane Museum is a fragile entity and one of the main reasons for establishing the Supporters' Circle was to help conserve its vulnerable historic surfaces and fittings, and to help keep the Museum looking just as Soane left it nearly 200 years ago.

One vital project the Supporters have helped fund is the recent programme of repairs to the Museum's painted interiors carried out this spring by Joy and Saskia Huning of Huning Conservation. In the Library-Dining Room for example, the Hunings have carefully conserved and repaired areas of the famous Pompeian red paintwork that were peeling or flaking.

Acrylic artists' colours were used to match the Pompeii red

colour found on the ceiling of the Library-Dining Room, as well as the stone, grey and green which Soane used elsewhere in this room. The colours were mixed with varnishes so as to match the finish and patina of each particular area being restored.

Other parts of the Museum to receive attention were the Monk's Parlour; Soane's Dressing Room and Study, the Picture Room and Breakfast Room.

The Hunings' work could not have been carried out without the help of the Supporters' Circle and is an example of the real difference becoming a Soane Supporter can make.

Soane Patrons' Circle

100 MEMBERS

The Museum established its first ever membership group in September 2002. The Soane Patrons' Circle was formed to provide a means by which individuals could support the Museum at a higher level and get to know the Museum better. Since 2002 the membership of the Patrons' Circle has grown steadily and we recently welcomed our 100th member. Funds from Patrons' subscriptions have provided invaluable support for the Museum's education, conservation and exhibition programmes and many Patrons have provided additional help by paying to hold private events of their own at the Museum.

In return for an annual donation of £1,000 (or £780 with Gift Aid) the Museum organises an eclectic programme of special events for Patrons: talks, private views, concerts, receptions and visits to private collections. For example, our forthcoming programme includes a talk by Lisa Jardine on the

life of Robert Hooke; a *Magic Flute* recital with singers from English National Opera; a private visit and architect-led tour of Horace Walpole's Gothick villa, Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, and a special evening to celebrate the 250th birthday of William Blake. These events are relaxed, sociable affairs and reflect the range of interests of Patrons and their guests. Events are free of charge to Patrons and are usually sponsored – often by Patrons.

As somebody who already has an interest in the Soane, you might like to consider helping the Museum by joining the Patrons' Circle. If you would like to receive more information, please contact me on 020 7440 4241 or email mnicholson@soane.org.uk

Mike Nicholson
Development Director

Exhibitions

VAULTING AMBITION: THE ADAM BROTHERS, CONTRACTORS TO THE METROPOLIS IN THE REIGN OF GEORGE III

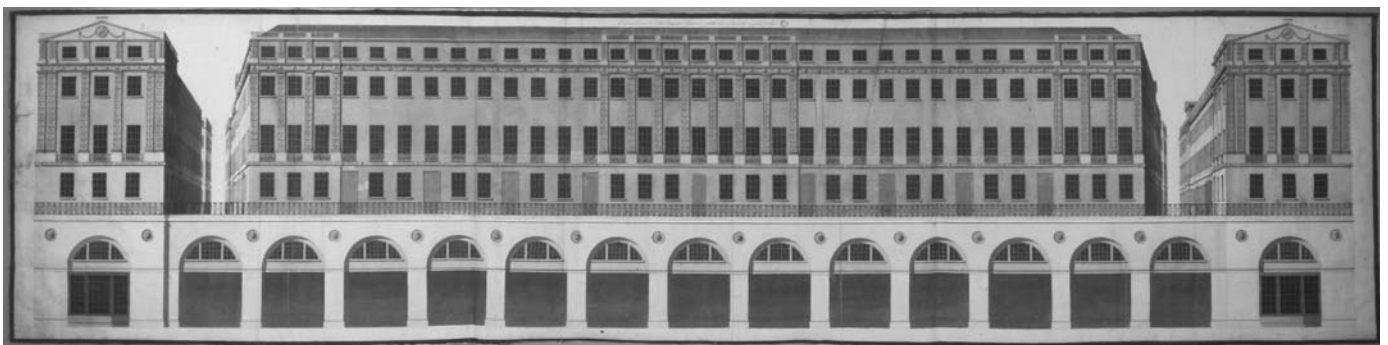
The Soane Gallery, 14 September 2007 to 12 January 2008

Known primarily as the first celebrity architects in Britain, Robert and James Adam were also partners in the biggest building company in the eighteenth century – a company that encompassed supply, materials, contracting and speculative development. Bob and Jamie were the second and third sons of the most eminent Scottish architect, William Adam, who, with their eldest brother Johnny and with Willy, the youngest son, established their business under the name of *William Adam & Company* in 1764, which remained trading until 1801.

The scale of the company's operations is astonishing. At its height the firm employed as many as 3,000 men, a large

number even by today's standards and exceptional for the eighteenth century. Four years after William Adam & Co. was established, the brothers began their great business adventure, building some 69 houses overlooking the Thames at Durham Yard on a run-down site that had belonged to the Duke of St Albans. The development was to be called the Adelphi and the organisation, energy and novelty that the brothers brought to the Adelphi project was phenomenal. The story of their company is fascinating and ultimately touching.

The Adelphi was a 'showcase' for elegant new architecture, setting standards for urban developments throughout Britain.



Robert Adam: Elevation of the river façade of the Adelphi development, London, c.1768

It established the ideal of civilised domestic design in the late Georgian age. A selection of magnificent drawings – one almost nine feet long of Royal Terrace (pictured), and other beautifully executed designs for interiors will tell the story of this astonishing scheme and the family that planned and promoted it.

The exhibition, curated by Professor Alistair Rowan, will also feature the Adam brothers' other great London schemes, Portland Place and Fitzroy Square, together with Robert's

visionary designs for Bath and his magnificent proposals for Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Vaulting Ambition, together with *A Passion for Building: The Amateur Architect in England 1650–1850* is supported by the MLA Designation Challenge Fund as part of the 'A Passion for Building' project. Both exhibitions will tour three regional UK venues during 2007–09.



JOHN SOANE: READING'S ARCHITECTURAL HERO

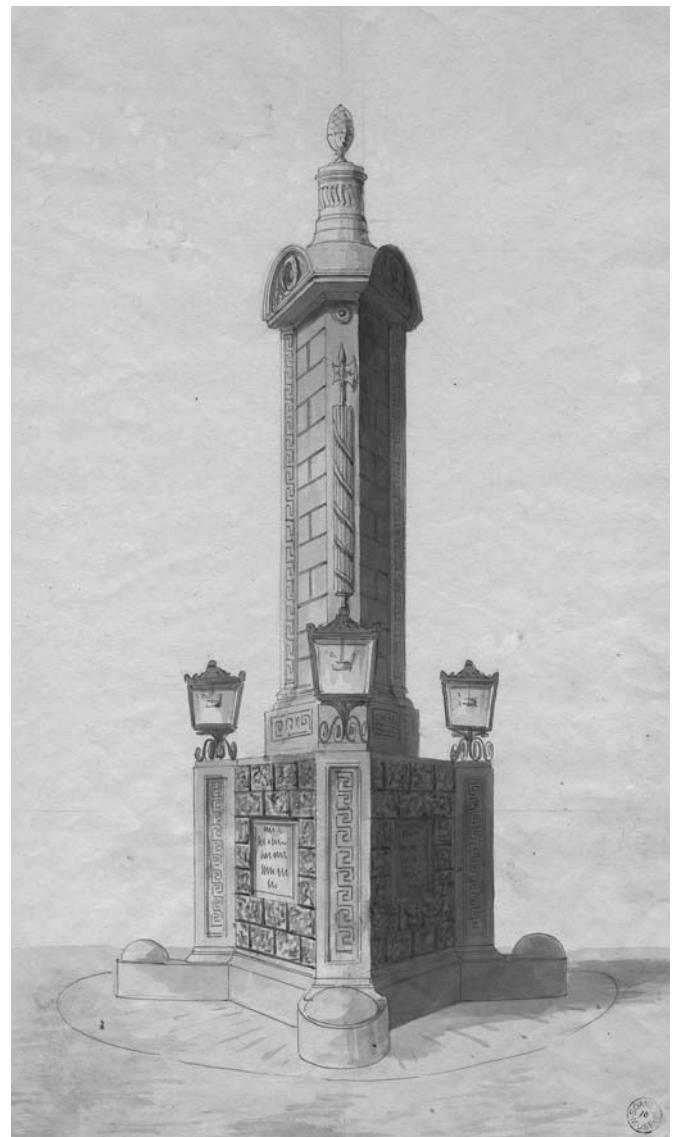
at Reading Museum until 2 September

John Soane was born at Goring, close to Reading. As a boy he attended school in Reading and later in life returned to design a number of buildings in the town. Sadly, most of his works (including Simonds Brewery and Austwick House) were swept away in the 20th century, but his delightful and enigmatic obelisk in Market Place has survived. This curious structure was commissioned by the wealthy banker Edward Simeon in 1804 in order to brighten (both literally and metaphorically) Reading's bustling market square. It was intended as a visual focus for the square and to support four lanterns to help guide traffic at night.

The Portland stone obelisk, which has become known as the 'Simeon Monument', suffered the indignity of having public lavatories installed at its base in the 1930s. Its subsequent history has been one of sad neglect but finally, in 2001, following a long campaign and the offer of financial help from the Soane Monuments Trust, plans were drawn up for its repair and restoration. The lavatories were removed last year and the work on the monument itself, which is being carried out under the direction of the Soane Museum architect Julian Harrap, is due for completion at the end of August.

To celebrate the long-awaited restoration of the monument Reading Museum is staging an exhibition celebrating John Soane and his links to the Reading area. The exhibition, *John Soane: Reading's Architectural Hero* is a collaboration between Reading Museum and the Soane and features a number of loans from Soane's collection including three design drawings and the handsome mahogany model of the monument itself. For more information see the link in the 'Exhibitions' section of the Soane website. The exhibition is supported by Peter Brett Associates and the Soane Monuments Trust.

William Palin
Exhibitions and Education Curator



Sir John Soane: Perspective design for the Simeon Monument, Reading, c.1804

Forthcoming Events

FILM SCREENINGS

The Museum is organising three special film screenings in late 2007. Places cost £5 (payable on the door) and must be booked in advance by contacting Bethany Kingston, Education

Manager, at Sir John Soane's Museum.

Tel: 020 7440 4254. Email: bkingston@soane.org.uk

Wednesday 26 September. 6.30 for 7pm

Pevsner's Cities: Liverpool (2005)

Written and presented by Gavin Stamp

Directed by Adrian Sibley

Film introduced by Gavin Stamp

Wednesday 10 October. 6.30 for 7pm

Pevsner's Cities: Newcastle (2005)

Written and presented by Gavin Stamp

Directed by Adrian Sibley

Film introduced by Gavin Stamp

Monday 12 November. 6.30 for 7pm

A Passion for Churches (1975)

Written and presented by John Betjeman

Directed by Edward Mirzoeff

Film introduced by Edward Mirzoeff

The Soane Annual Lecture

MOVING ROOMS: THE TRADE IN ARCHITECTURAL SALVAGES

by John Harris

Wednesday 21 November 2007, 6.30pm

at the Royal College of Surgeons, 35–43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2

Since at least Tudor times there have been architectural salvages: panelling, chimney-pieces, doorways, or any fixtures and fittings might be removed from an old interior to be replaced by more fashionable ones. Not surprisingly, a trade developed; by 1820, there was a growing profession of brokers and dealers in London and a century later antique shops specialising in period panelling and fittings were commonplace throughout England.

In England salvages are not only native in origin – as a consequence of the French Revolution a mass of panelling and carved woodwork poured into the London auction rooms, much of it from religious desecrations. However, during the period following the First World War, hundreds of country houses in this country fell to the demolisher's pickaxe, and this coincided with the fashion for 'period rooms' in American museums. It was the age of Moving Rooms.

In this lecture, which celebrates the publication of his *Moving Rooms: The Trade in Architectural Salvages* (Yale University Press), John Harris will not only speak about this phenomenon, but about the hundred thousand salvages bought by William Randolph Hearst for his houses and castles in New York, California, Long Island, and St Donat's Castle in Wales, and the duplicity of dealers such as Charles Roberson of the Knightsbridge Rooms who invented rooms to suit the demands of hungry museum directors.

John Harris is Curator Emeritus of the RIBA's Drawings Collection. His many publications include the recent *Badminton*:

The Duke of Beaufort his House; and the exhibition catalogue to the Soane exhibition *A Passion for Building: the Amateur Architect in England 1650–1850* jointly with Robert Hradsky.

The lecture will be followed by drinks at the Museum. Tickets cost £10.00 (£5.00 to students) and can be purchased on the door (subject to availability), or booked in advance by printing the booking form on the Museum website

www.soane.org/events.htm



The Knightsbridge Rooms at Roberson's London Warehouse