

## HISTORY OF THE CHILTERN DECORATIVE AND FINE ARTS SOCIETY

### **CDFAS is Society No.1 of NADFAS.**

Founded in 1965 at a meeting in the Long Room at Chenies Manor on 28<sup>th</sup> January (the link still continues with CDFAS trained guides at the Manor)

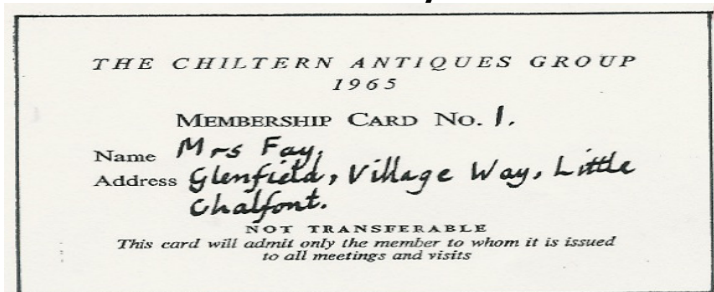


*Plaque at Chenies Manor*

The speaker was Miss D.K. Millington on the subject: *Small Antiques in our Homes* and it described her collection of Victorian tea spoons. Cost 'best part of £5.00'. Subsequent meetings were held at The Crown in Old Amersham until November 1965 when the Society moved to the Community Centre at Chalfont St Peter where it has been ever since.

**Called 'The Chiltern Antiques Group'** it had grown from an idea of the founder, Patricia Fay (Mrs Charles Fay) when beagling with Elizabeth Watts (subsequently Bainbridge) Cherry Aston and Elliott Viney. Edna Johnson met Patricia through the Young Conservatives and with Georgette Johnson the five women launched the Group. Each sent out 20 invitations.

### **Member No 1 was Patricia Fay.**



### **Member No 2 was the late Audrey Chavasse, whose husband Christopher wrote the first Constitution and is still one of our Vice-Presidents.**

Patricia lived with her husband, Charles, a barrister, and two daughters Caroline and Rachel in a house in Village Way, Little Chalfont, Buckinghamshire. She was confined to bed for some months with a spinal injury and during this time worked to make her dream a reality.

'Lady Deramore, the first Vice-Chairman, commented "When I first met her almost forty years ago she was recovering from an operation on her spine, lying in a swing hammock encased in plaster and looking quite radiant. With time on her hands she could find no general source of information about silver, porcelain etc- hence the idea of the Chiltern

Antiques Group. From the beginning she was determined that it would not be a group of dilettante housewives filling in their time, but a serious organisation with first class lecturers and study groups so that in due course the members would be able to serve the community. Hence Church Recorders, book restoration etc."



*Founding and early members with Brian Sewell at Eton for 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event*

By 1966 there were 123 paid-up members. (Membership Fee: £2.2 shillings )  
In 1968 there were 200 members

**The objects of the Group** were 'to enhance the appreciation of our heritage, both in museums, galleries and private houses and eventually to teach us how to look after our own antiques and objets d'art.' It provided the opportunity to study the Decorative Arts not hitherto available outside London.

One must be careful this interest (fine and applied arts) is taken seriously and this and other societies do not degenerate into merely popular social gatherings and outings.

Clive Rouse: February 1967

**Veronica Papworth, Sunday Express – 31<sup>st</sup> March 1968**

I have absolutely nothing against women meeting to swap sponge cake recipes or listen to home-spun talks on loose cover-making – if that's what they enjoy. But the thought that so many are evidently interested in a serious study of the decorative and fine arts and now have an opportunity to develop that interest really pleases me.

**The members** were mostly young women with children at school  
'I do remember that the timing of the meetings 10.30 – 12 was because we could drop our children at nursery school and collect them again at lunch time' said an early member. (Chiltern still keeps to this timing)

## **The name was changed to the Chiltern Decorative and Fine Arts Society in 1968**

Following a visit Windsor Castle when the policeman on the gate said 'Are you the antique ladies?' Patricia thought it was time to change the name!

### **'Change your name, says Sir Hugh'**

Sir Hugh Casson, world-famous architect and one of the liveliest controversialists in the art-world today, somewhat shattered his audience at Dr Challoner's Grammar School Amersham, last Thursday, by suggesting **that the Chiltern Antiques Group**- who organised his talk-should change its name.

He took as his subject the preservation of the arts –and architecture in particular –but went on to stress the danger of lack of realism in not accepting that however beautiful an ancient building may be, there comes a time when it is no longer worth keeping.

It was in this connection that he criticised the nomenclature 'Chiltern Antiques Group' for he thought it implied a blind approval of all that was old –simply because it was old.

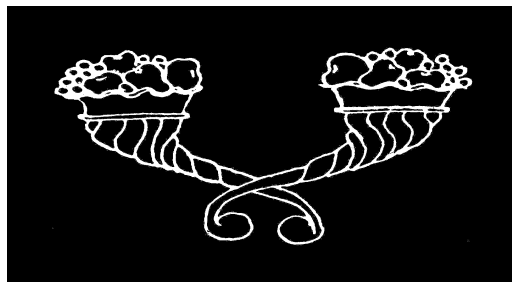
Perhaps in deference to his audience, however, Sir Hugh did suggest an alternative.

Sir Hugh's talk, entitled '**The Future of the Past**' was the first public meeting to be organised by the Chiltern Antiques Group since it was formed last year. The group achieved success almost overnight and now there is a waiting list for the various courses and study groups that are run.

The Times, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1966

Described as 'Handmaidens of the Arts' in Country Life 1974

**LOGO : in 1969 a competition for an emblem was mounted.**



### **The first President was Mrs James de Rothschild (1965-1975)**

'To my mind Patricia's outstanding achievement was in persuading Mrs James de Rothschild to be our first President. In those early days no-one had heard of the Chiltern Antiques Group- certainly none of the first-class lecturers, but her name gave us instant status and credibility.' The Lady Deramore, Vice-Chairman

'One of the initial problems was persuading potential lecturers that we were worth talking to and not a crowd of women with nothing better to do.' Patricia Fay

### **Vice-Presidents were :**

Oliver Millar CVO FSA (later Sir Oliver). Keeper of the Queen's Pictures

Clive Rouse MBE FSA Historian

Elliott Viney DSO MBE FSA

**In 1967 Honorary Membership** was granted to  
 Cherry Aston,  
 Audrey Chavasse,  
 Edna Johnson  
 The Lady Deramore  
 and later to Felicia Horne and Pamela Foster-Brown.

**Presidents subsequently:**

Sir Oliver Millar (1975)  
 Elliott Viney (1986)  
 Mrs Pamela Cohn (2002) (ex-Chairman of NADFAS)

**Chairmen:**

*11 of these photographed with Brian Sewell the lecturer at the 40th anniversary event in Eton*



Patricia Fay	(1965)	<i>(First Chairman of NADFAS)</i>
Gwyneth Lloyd	(1968)	
Edna Johnson	(1970)	<i>(Hon. Member)</i>
Pamela Foster-Brown	(1974)	<i>(Hon. Member)</i>
Mary Stirling	(1977)	
Dorothy Rance	(1982)	
Anthea Fyler	(1983)	
Pamela Cohn	(1986)	<i>(Ex Chairman of NADFAS)</i>
Catherine Dolman	(1989)	
Margaret Stratford	(1992)	
Margaret Dalziel	(1995)	
Rosemary Ladd	(1998)	
Elizabeth Stephens	(2000)	
Sally Main	(2002)	
Christine Stanners	(2004)	
Colin McBride	(2007)	<i>(first man!)</i>

### **Vice- Presidents**

Oliver Millar (later President)	1966	Dr Clive Rouse	1966-98
Elliott Viney (later President)	1967	The Lady Deramore	1970-85
Mrs Nancy Armstrong	1971-84	Richard Came	1984
Christopher Chavasse	1986	Helena Hayward	1986-89
Mrs Elizabeth Gordon	1990	Lady Popplewell	1991-98
The Earl Howe	1998	Mrs Pamela Cohn	2000-02
Mrs Catherine Dolman	2002	Mrs Anthea Fyler	2002

### **Study Groups**

Set up 'to arrange an annual series of lectures to study a subject in greater depth than is possible for the monthly meetings and to follow these up with museum visits and outings.'

A Furniture Group started in	1965
A Silver Group	1965
Porcelain	1965
History of Art	1966
Ancient Civilizations	1977

### **Church Recorders started in 1972**

With the help and scholarship of one of our original Vice Presidents, Mr Clive Rouse, Church Recorders was begun with the Parish Church at Chalfont St. Giles.

### **Heritage Volunteers started in 1975 as the Voluntary Conservation Corps**

The Group was asked to clean books, after suitable tuition from the V & A at Milton's Cottage, Chalfont St Giles' and after a visit to WOBURN ABBEY when the Duke of Bedford and his French wife Nicolette had showed us round NADFAS was asked to catalogue and restore bookbindings there.

At WEST WYCOMBE, Sir Francis Dashwood gave us a talk and showed us round the ground floor of his home. He also allowed us to hold a black-tie event there. As a result of this he asked us to provide volunteers through the National Trust as guides round the house.'

'The NADFAS Volunteer is changing its image- the industrious band of people who labour under the cruel nickname ' The Association of Dragons and Fiery Spinsters' and called 'The Antiques' by their husbands

Historic House- Autumn 1984

#### **Bucks Life – October 1967**

Backed by Patricia Fay's drive and charm and the proven success of the Chiltern Antiques Group there is no reason why the decorative and fine art societies should not be the most valuable labour force that the owners and custodians of Britains works of art have ever been offered.

## **OTHER SOCIETIES**

**By 1967 2 more Societies had been founded.** The Thame Fine Art Study Group and Harrogate Decorative and Fine Art Society, was founded by a Chiltern member who moved to Harrogate (also the home town of Patricia Fay's mother). The Vale of Aylesbury and Gerrards Cross were next to be inaugurated.

At the AGM Patricia expressed the view that it was time to consider forming an association of societies, amongst other reasons to 'develop our status and influence in the art world'

In June 1968, with the encouragement of Helen Lowenthal from the V & A, there was a meeting in London to form the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts societies (NADFAS) The President was Sir Trenchard Cox; Vice Presidents Helen Lowenthal, Oliver Millar and John Pope-Hennessy. There was an inaugural meeting at the V & A when the Earl of Pembroke gave an illustrated lecture on his house, Wilton.

## **CDFAS ANNIVERSARIES**

### **5<sup>th</sup> (1970)**

Sir Trenchard Cox was to speak on 'The Development of the V & A' of which he was Director. He developed laryngitis and Miss Helen Lowenthal author and lecturer at the V & A and Vice-Chairman of NADFAS talked on 'The Development of the English Garden.' This was followed by a Birthday Luncheon at Mrs Edna Johnson's home in Beaconsfield with Patricia Fay and Clive Rouse in attendance.

### **10<sup>th</sup> (1975)**

A reception was held at the Worshipful Company of Armourers and Braziers where Mr John Hayward, the V & A expert on Arms and Armour was a guest with his wife Helena. She too was one of our earliest lecturers and later a Vice President. The Master of the Company kindly agreed to have their silver vaults opened (never on show to non-members) so that Mr Hayward could have access and tell us about them. Patricia Fay coined the name 'NADFASARIANS'.

### **15<sup>th</sup> (1980)**

**Patricia Fay had died on 23 October 1979**

**The first lecture each year was to be the Patricia Fay Memorial Lecture**

**Patricia's last words to Elliott Viney about NADFAS were "I do hope NADFAS never becomes too solemn and over-organised. After all it ought to be fun."**

The first Memorial Lecture coincided with the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of CDFAS  
It was given by Dr Reece on 'Roman Britain'.

### **20<sup>th</sup> (1985)**

Eve King gave a lecture on 'The Treasures of Leningrad'. Lunch at the Chalfont Community Centre was followed by the cutting of a big anniversary cake and a toast. 133 people attended.

### **25<sup>th</sup> (1990) The Silver Anniversary**

Memorial Lecture given by John Julius Norwich on 'Byzantium' followed by lunch in the Chalfont St. Giles Community Centre which had been transformed by elegant green and silver decorations. Patricia Fay's daughter, Caroline, was a guest of the Society. A hand carved gavel was commissioned by the Society to mark the Anniversary.

### **30<sup>th</sup> (1995)**

Elizabeth Gordon gave the Memorial Lecture on 'Marie Antoinette' £200.00 was donated to NADFAS to fund an engraved nameplate for the front door of NADFAS House

### **35<sup>th</sup> (2000)**

A celebratory dinner was held at Denham Golf Club. The Earl Howe, Vice President of the Society, gave a talk on 'The House of Lords'.

### **40<sup>th</sup> (2005) The Ruby Anniversary**

The Patricia Fay Memorial Lecture was held on Patricia's birthday, the 27<sup>th</sup> January with Anthea Streeter lecturing on 'The Sixties' and Rachel Fay cut a large cake decorated with the CDFAS cornucopia. On the actual anniversary, 28<sup>th</sup> January, Edna Johnson, Founder Member, presided over a tea party held for the Committee and attended by 7 Chairman at the house in which Patricia founded CDFAS ; Rachel, was also a guest.



500 NADFAS members including over 200 from CDFAS attended a special commemorative lecture in Eton College. The lecture was given by Brian Sewell on his 'Forty Years as an Art Critic'. The Chairman and Chief Executive of NADFAS were in attendance with Rachel Fay, the Founder's daughter. Early and founding members of CDFAS were there and 2 founder members of NADFAS. Afterwards there was a lunch for CDFAS members in the new Eton Boathouse facility.

An engraved glass and pewter water ewer for the use of the lecturer was commissioned to mark the Anniversary and presented at an evening event at the Moor Park Golf Club.



The Society completed its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, with a tour and lunch at The House of Lords by invitation of The Lord Howe and £200 was donated to St. George's Chapel, Windsor for the restoration of two books to commemorate the society's anniversary.

The Anniversary Newsletter was awarded the NADFAS Media prize

