

Meeting of the Chertsey Society 24 November 2014

WWI in Colour- Artist of the First World War by *Victor Spink*

Meeting began at 19.50, with over 50 members and guests present.

Chairman opened the meeting and brought us up to date; Hew Locke artist commissioned by National Trust and Surrey County Council is creating a bench and table made in bronze representing the jury system of democracy and justice to be unveiled on Runnymede meadow 15 June 2015. As part of the celebration of Magna Carta bells will be rung in Churches up and down the country including Chertsey, as part of the '*Strike A Blow For Democracy*'. The Thorpe Players' Pantomime, '*Alice in Wonderland*' will be performed on 28 and 29 Nov & 4-6 Dec. Chertsey's Goose Fair is scheduled for 13 December. Armistice Day was well attended by various parts of the community and widely reported in *The Surrey Herald*.

Victor Spink commenced his talk at 20.07 on '*World War I Artists in Colour*'. Showing War and Peace pictures of the same. Some artists including were Nevinson, Stanley Spencer and Nash. Some paintings showed soldiers deceased and severely injured. Some pictures reflected the modernism of the day and were futuristic and less realistic than others. Bombing of Belgian Villages was used in propaganda. Hospital paintings of Christmas Eve party, German partying met halfway. In August 1914, after discovering that Germany had a Propaganda Agency, David Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was given the task of setting up a British War Propaganda Bureau. Lloyd George appointed the writer and fellow Liberal MP, Charles Masterman to head the organization, whose headquarters were set up at Wellington House, the London headquarters of the National Insurance Commission, of which Masterman was the chairman.

Other artists discussed were John Singer Sargent, other images showed French peasants farming whilst a battle raged overhead and behind them. Mr Spink then spoke about Sandham Memorial Chapel built by Bernstein and interior painted by Stanley Spencer in Burghclere, The Society proposes to visit in 2015. Paul Nash, Official War Artist studied at the Slade School. Nash's anger was a great creative stimulus which led him to produce up to a dozen drawings a day. He worked in a frenzy of activity and took great risks to get as close as possible to the frontline trenches. Despite the dangers and hardship, when the opportunity came to extend his visit by a week and work for the Canadians in the Vimy sector, Nash jumped at the chance. Victor also described how women would fry kippers on hot forged shell cases for breakfast, whilst the shells were cooling down, nothing wasted!

The mystery artist that one of the members present guessed correctly was Lt Col Winston Churchill.

Following considerable discussion the speaker was thanked by the Chairman and Meeting finished at 21.20pm.