

## **Bank of England Museum Tour**

On Wednesday September 4, 2013, 22 Friends, partners and other guests spent the afternoon with "The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street".

The tour began, as all Friends events do, with plenty of conversation and banter while waiting for proceedings to start. At 2pm we were met by our host Richard who ushered us behind the scenes to the cinema where an unexpectedly long visual presentation and talk had been arranged for us. As the organiser of the tour, my heart sank when I heard that it was to last one hour, fearing that we might have to sit through a rather dull session about monetary policy! I need not have worried, for our host shared his extensive knowledge about the Bank in a most interesting manner, lightly peppering the proceedings with just the right amount of humour. The hour flew by and following a Q&A session it was time to see the museum displays.

We were now self-guided, enabling us to spend as long as we wanted in a particular area, asking the curatorial staff questions when required. There was a surprising amount to see, covering all aspects of the history and modern operations of this Central Bank, so crucial to the running of this country. My favourite area was the Banknote Gallery, where obsolete and current artworks and actual notes could be seen. There was even an intaglio printing plate that could be handled and viewed with a magnifying glass, satisfying the philatelist in me and making me nostalgic for the stamps of my youth that utilised that exquisite printing method.

As with many museums, you could not easily exit without passing through the shop area, where an extensive range of gifts and publications was on offer at all prices. If you were unable to join us, I can recommend that you visit the museum on your own account if ever in the area.

Judging by the emails received after the event, Friends appear to have enjoyed the afternoon and I am grateful for the support received. Your Management Board works hard to provide an interesting and varied programme of events each year and there is no better reward for us than your participation.

Footnote: Whenever you handle a Bank of England banknote in future, think of Debden. If you have ever visited BPMA's Museum Store in that town you will have received a very warm and friendly greeting from the curatorial staff, I am sure. However, go just a few metres away and you will be 'greeted' by insanely high fences topped with razor wire and security cameras, for it is here that the Bank of England Print Works is based. De La Rue Currency are current holders of the contract to print the notes, but as you can see they do nothing to encourage visitors. A guided tour for Friends cannot therefore be arranged, unfortunately, and yes I did ask.

**Glenn H Morgan**, Friends of BPMA Trustee.

(500 words)