

HERITAGE CIRCLE

Tony Diamond, The Mona Lisa

At the February meeting of the Heritage Circle Tony Diamond spoke about the Mona Lisa.

It was painted in oil, on board, in 1505, by Leonardo da Vinci. It is regarded as the best known painting in the world, and the most expensive. IT has been suggested that it may be a self-portrait of da Vinci himself superimposed onto the Mona Lisa's face. To make her smile he hired a jester, and also a lute player. It may also be a portrait of his boyfriend, to whom he gifted the painting. People have also claimed to recognize the house and landscape behind the Mona Lisa as being the house of a woman of ill repute. What makes the painting so beautiful is the shades on the face, and the 180 degree eye contact looking to the left. The hands are also unique, as they are beautifully executed. So was the portrait a Madonna or a demon?

Walter Pater, poet, called the portrait a vampire, and Dracula was inspired by the Mona Lisa. People went on the Grand Tour between 1880 and 1900 to see the painting. Queen Victoria refused to visit Paris because of the Mona Lisa. In 1911 the painting was stolen from the Louvre, causing national hysteria. People flocked to look at the empty place where the painting had been. An attempt was made to sell the painting in Italy, and it was displayed in Rome. It was then returned to France where it remains today in its own special room, attracting thousands of visitors every year.

The next meeting of the Heritage Circle will be on Wednesday 27 March at 7.30pm at Rickinghall Village Hall when Stuart Bowell will be speaking about *A Waveney Childhood*. Further information about the Heritage Circle is available on its website at www.heritagecircle.onesuffolk.net.

Angela Bigley.