

"Pure Gold" at the Mall Galleries

50 Years of the Federation of British Artists

TEA with ROYALTY!

Thursday, 17 February, dawned bright and clear when Sue Smith and I took the train to London and the Mall Galleries. As a Friend of the Mall Galleries, Sue and a companion had been invited to attend a very special royal event there to celebrate the Federation of British Artists' 50th year at the Mall Galleries in the presence of Her Royal Highness, the Princess Alexandra.

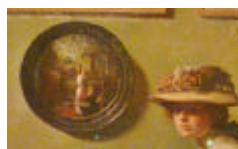
Sue and I arrived in good time to have lunch in The Crypt of St Martin's-in-the-Fields church. The food choice is extensive, the prices good and the brick arches of the ceiling wonderful! In Trafalgar Square, the pigeons strutted, the tourists clicked and the sun shone. We also joined in and captured the Ship in the Bottle on the 4th plinth.



Inside the gallery, quite a crowd was gathering in anticipation of the royal visit at 3:30. Sue and I had time to view the eclectic mix of paintings in all media, from many of the famous art societies and institutes, including the Royal



Society of British Artists, the New English Art Club, the Pastel Society and the Royal Institute of Oil Painters. Famous names leapt out at us, such as John Singer Sargent RA, Edgar Degas, Augustus John RA, and Paul Banning! This beautiful oil by Sir William Orpen KBE RA, called "The Mirror", caught our eye because of the image portrayed within the mirror of two other children playing. We had seen a similar use of a mirror in



Jan Van Eyck's "Arnolfini's Marriage" at the National Gallery.

As we made our way to the back of the second room, we met Ken Howard RA, whom Sue knew. He had on display Orpen's easel, chair and the mirror itself, all of which had been given to him because Ken uses Orpen's Oriel Studio as his workplace, featuring the room in many of his paintings.

Shortly after 3:30, we made our way back to the main gallery to look again at Paul's watercolour of the Slip at Devonport Docks, and almost bumped into Princess Alexandra! She looked very elegant in a dark purple suit. She asked us if we painted. "Yes", we stammered like schoolgirls, "but not at this standard." She told us that she had tried watercolour and that her mother, Princess Marina, was rather good and that Princess Alexandra had a couple of her mother's paintings which she treasured. Sue missed the opportunity to ask the princess if she would like some lessons!



What an exciting day we had! Rubbing shoulders with royalty isn't something you do very often and we were thrilled to meet her in such awesome surroundings.

Madeline Hawes