



"SIMON SAYS....."

The Seymour Group continues to flourish and attract some star speakers. In May, we hosted Simon Danciger, an independent auctioneer trading as 'Barnes Auctions' who was due to ask us 'Is there a Monet in your living room?' There wasn't actually a Monet in his collection of stories but we were treated to a host of information about the world of auctioneering, and in particular to his particular place in it. He started by delving into the history of auctioneering, suggesting that its origins may go back some two and a half thousand years ago when women were 'auctioned' to the highest bidder and there was no 'caveat emptor.' which meant that unsatisfactory purchases could be subject to return, and often were so. Another early example of something akin to auctioneering to which he alluded was to be found in the biblical tale of Joseph being 'sold' to David. And Roman soldiers, he explained, used to sell their spoils of war by auctioning them, signifying they were doing so by placing a spear in the ground – the forerunner of the traditional auctioneer's hammer.

Simon's talk was jam packed with anecdotes and many lessons. These included guarding against spoilage by exposure to light (beware keeping an item in a bay window where the sun shines brightly), take care before bagging everything up to take to the charity shop – there may be just one item that is worth a (small) fortune, make sure that any treasures one has are regularly valued for insurance, and understanding that choosing an auctioneer rather than an antiques dealer, will ensure the best financial reward, especially now with the advent of internet bidding giving a new breadth to the potential value. His final story of the auction of two of Churchill's cigars to a buyer in the Cayman Islands was surely the quirkiest of them all. Asked how he (the successful bidder) proposed to show them, the surprising response came that they had not been bought to show, but would be shared with a friend and smoked with a bottle of vintage wine. As his journey through life progressed, Simon concluded, he was realising more and more each day how little he knew and how much more he had to learn. I am sure I was not alone in sharing these thoughts, and as the time to end his talk approached, it was all too soon a case, as he might put it, of 'Going, going, gone!' and if you will pardon the pun, time too to bid him and each other 'farewell.'

Jack Lynes.