

Come and join us!

In order to continue the work of supporting and raising funds for the Gallery we need to develop and diversify the direction and activities of the Friends to embrace the digital and media age and move forward towards the next 25 years. Our new website will be launched in the Autumn but that is just the beginning, we hope to find younger, new committee members who will feel as proud and possessive of Harrogate's Art Gallery as the present Friends and committee do.

Please contact Judith Thomas (judithnitterhill@gmail.com) 01423 504231 if you are interested and would like to know more.

Fond Farewell

This special Friends' year has also been my own personal 25th anniversary of serving on the committee. And after so long producing your leaflets and brochures, helping with outings and talks, those early years of the newsletter and your new website design, 2017 finally seems a fitting time to retire from the team. A background in tourism and hospitality, feature writing, PR promotion and the art connections of running my own gallery all came in handy. But I've learnt so much, researching people and places, whilst making lovely friends (little f and big F) along the way. I'll miss my involvement hugely – the camaraderie too, but after caring for my sweet Mother right to her last breath at 99, then reaching 70 myself, it's now time for a few adventures, like spending time in France where I studied in my youth, (working at a language wards off dementia they say!!); and visiting major tennis tournaments around the world, (as well as playing till I drop).

We're very fortunate to have the Mercer. It's special. And it has been ever so rewarding to be part of a multi-faceted, happy group dedicated to supporting such a worthwhile operation. To any of you who might fancy volunteering, in whatever way fits into your life, I couldn't recommend the experience highly enough. See you around then, from time to time – little dog in tow perhaps (if I can find a Griffon Bruxellois in the UK).

Au revoir, it's been 'such Fun' - with a big F!



Alison Breeze

Appeal for assistance with gift aid claims

A special thank you to those members who have completed Gift Aid forms. Income from Gift Aid has become a much appreciated regular source of income. However, here is the sting in the tail! The administration of our claim has become a task on its own. However, it is a part of the workload of the Honorary Treasurer that could be separated and be a satisfying and helpful, annual occupation for someone else.

Please do give a moment's thought to this problem. Perhaps you could accept this role, or you know of someone suitable.

For full details, please contact the Chairman Judith Thomas (judithnitterhill@gmail.com) 01423 504231

Forthcoming Events

Please note these are diary dates only and the full details and invitations will be sent out approximately four to six weeks before the event.

Talk and demonstration by Matthew Wilcock at Harrogate College: Thursday 2nd November

The Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery Christmas Party: Wednesday 6th December

Do you have an interest in the arts?

Do you enjoy meeting people in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere?

Would exclusive private previews and gallery events such as talks by exhibiting artists be of interest to you?

Would you find visits to historic buildings, museums and art galleries interesting?

Then please come and join us. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to new members who would like to join the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery.

The Friends' brochure and application form are available at the Mercer Art Gallery or alternatively you can contact our

Membership Secretary: Christine Brown on 01423 504079 cb@brown73.co.uk

The annual subscription fees are: Single membership £15.00, Joint membership £30.00, Life membership £250.00

The Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery Newsletter

Autumn 2017



Recent Acquisitions

The Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery are very pleased and excited to announce that their contributions have helped secure the purchase of three new paintings. These paintings are by Graeme Willson, Caroline Walker and Eileen Cooper the latter was obtained with joint funding from ourselves and the Mercer Art Gallery.

Below: 'Spirit of Rombald', by Graeme Willson, bought from the Harrogate Open 2017.

Top left: 'Apparition', by Caroline Walker, 2017 oil on board 43 x 35cm, was received from the Contemporary Art Society as a result of the Friends paying the annual subscription to the CAS on behalf of the Gallery.

Bottom left: 'Touchstone', Eileen Cooper, 1993 oil on canvas 152.5 x 122cm.



Welcome Catherine!

I was delighted to be invited to join the committee of the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery. I have lived in Harrogate for most of my life, moving away only to study at University. There I met my husband and once we both qualified as architects I convinced him that Harrogate was where we should live!

That was nineteen years ago. As an architect I specialised in the education sector, including the design and the development of the School of Music and Department of Maths at Leeds University, student housing and nurseries. I left the profession to be a full-time mother and have used my spare time to develop my marketing, graphic and business skills. I am a Trustee of the Royal Hall Restoration Trust and have organised open day events which attracted over 1800 people last year. We were nominated for 'Best Achievement' at the Destination Harrogate Hospitality Awards this year. In 2014-15 I undertook the role of Heritage Project Officer for St Wilfrid's Church, a contract post funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. As a fund raising venture I conceived and ran a very successful art exhibition, Art Space. I was delighted to bring on board the talented potter Matthew Wilcock from the BBC's 'Pottery Throw Down', who exhibited and opened the event.

Also with a small group of volunteers (Judith Thomas being one!) we organised the Duchy Street Party to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday. Local schools, community groups, bands and performers were involved. It was a huge success both financially as we made over £5000 and as a community venture.

I am currently helping the website subcommittee to get the Friends of the Mercer Gallery website up and running. I will manage this site once it is live, and so if anyone has any information they wish to add, please get in touch with me.

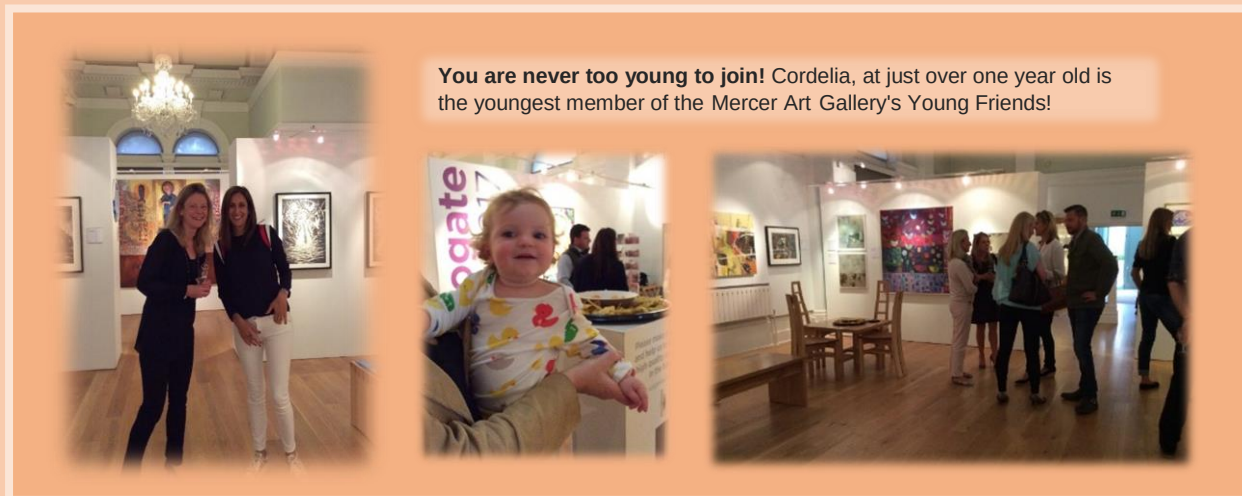
I look forward to meeting more Friends in the future. Thank you for having me on board! **Catherine Wright- Bond**

**The Young Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery**

Once again the Young Friends of the Mercer Gallery hosted a gallery drinks party to celebrate the start of the Harrogate Open. The event was held on a summer's evening and over forty newer Friends attended. The number included our youngest attendee to date Cordelia who is just over one year old! Her mother has already volunteered her daughter to join as the official youngest friend on the Friends of the Mercer membership list.

The feedback after the event was fabulous. The attendees loved the space and many had not been before. They thoroughly enjoyed the exhibition and numerous enquiries were made when there would be another event.

For information on the Young Friends of the Mercer please email: Youngfriendsmercer@hotmail.co.uk



You are never too young to join! Cordelia, at just over one year old is the youngest member of the Mercer Art Gallery's Young Friends!

Welcome to the Friends Anne!

Impressed by the Mercer Art Gallery and mystified by the Friends, I was pleased to be encouraged to join their committee when I retired recently - despite my lack of knowledge of the arts. Having known Judith for many years, I now realise how little she had explained about the success that she, and the Friends team around her, can justly claim. I have since enjoyed learning more of the Friends' work, and of the energy and detailed planning which ensures the success of all their events.

My own experience was far removed from "the Arts". I had had a rewarding career in health and social care. Principally, I was the founder / director of The Carers' Resource (delivering specialist services of information, advice and support for unpaid carers in Harrogate, Craven, Bradford and Airedale) and deputy chair of the Standing Commission on Carers (advising Government on legislation and policy).

In mid-2013, I was thrilled to be awarded an OBE for services to carers. Gardening, exploring new places and walking in our beloved North Yorkshire form the backbone of my current interests but the arrival of the Curzon cinema in Ripon has enabled much-appreciated opportunities for ballet, opera and theatre – not to mention biographical films on important artists. I now look forward to advancing my knowledge of the arts with the Friends of the Mercer! **Anne Smyth**

**Byron, Black Diamonds and Glass**

Two of the many advantages of going on a coach trip organised by the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery are finding new places and meeting local artists in person. Such was the case on the May outing to the North East of England. Friends' committee member, Alison introduced us to Seaham, the place where she was born on the East Durham Heritage Coast, a seaside town in the Land of the Prince Bishops. It has a very striking ten foot high metal sculpture called, '1101', of a First World War soldier in full uniform, sitting brooding on a packing case with his gun at his side, one minute after the eleven o'clock armistice. Another sculpture 'Coxswain' by the same artist, Ray Lonsdale, was on the quayside nearby. Later in the day, we visited his workshop, where he gave us a very graphic presentation of exactly how he went about creating such impressive works by welding each strip of steel into place one at a time.

Coffee and pastries were arranged in Seaham Hall, where the newly married "mad, bad and dangerous to know" Lord Byron lived with his wife Annabella for seven months, and where his brilliant daughter, later known as Ada Lovelace, was born.

A further highlight of the outing was a visit to the National Glass Gallery in Sunderland, which had a special exhibition of works by Finn Lynggaard, a trail-blazer of Studio Glass pioneers in Denmark and founder of Glasmuseet Ebeltoft museum. Lunch was in the gallery restaurant overlooking the River Wear, and afterwards we walked beside it in the sunshine, looking at the ships and their reflections in the water. Thanks for a perfect day! **Richard Turner**

**To Hull and Back**

Hull is only the second city to be designated as UK city of culture. It based its pitch on being 'a city coming out of the shadows' and this is certainly how it felt having spent the day there with the Friends of the Mercer. There were real echoes of a city trying to once again build a sense of civic pride, something we so take for granted in Harrogate.

Having passed under the magnificent looming structure of the Humber Bridge we enjoyed a whistle stop tour of the hugely impressive Ferens Gallery. How fortunate Hull is to have this bijou art gallery with its precious permanent collection, stimulating exhibitions and its welcoming Friends. I always love discovering a new artist I have never heard of and this trip didn't disappoint. First at the Ferens the outstandingly realistic sculptures of Ron Mueck and the captivating 'Sea of Hull' photographs of Spencer Tunick (so glad there was a fridge magnet to take home). And then at Terry Bacon and John Oldham's enchanting home the pictures of Rose Hilton talked to me profoundly.

Old favourites too... The 'Offshore' exhibition featured chalkboard drawings by Tacita Dean - 'Roaring Forties', evoking the aesthetic of black and white cinema.

Back at Hazlewood, Craigie Aitchison was clearly a favourite. The ceramic collection was intriguing especially for our colleagues who are accomplished potters. There were some incredibly sensual pots on display and John and Terry's curatorial skills are to be admired. Congratulations to the 1884 Dock Street Kitchen for laying on a delightful lunch with plenty of time to chat with fellow Friends.

My we are an interesting bunch!

A windy post-lunch walk took in the shore line and some of the architectural highlights of the city from the wooden jetty to the old medieval quarter and the cutting-edge design of The Deep. All in all, there appeared to be plenty to explore further and I suspect we shall return to delve deeper. Our thanks to the hardworking team who organised yet another excellent outing.

Alison, Ann and Judith put together a cracking programme for us and their attention to detail is much appreciated. Thanks also to the 'bar staff' who lugged and poured the prosecco. Fun aside, there was a poignant moment in the Minster – the woolly fish, representing the 6000 Hullensian lives lost at sea between 1835 and 1987. A more primitive portrayal of the Sea of Hull but no less thought provoking than Tunick's blue bodies.

Isn't that what Art is about?

Julie Goldsmith



