



NEWSLETTER

Supporting the Mercer Art Gallery by assisting in the acquisition & exhibition of works of art for the benefit of the public



A heartfelt thank you to Ann Joslin for her invaluable contribution to the Friends as Deputy Chair and continued support on the Main and Social Committee.

Welcome from Judith Thomas

So much has been happening since the last Newsletter I felt we needed to update you on the exciting changes and plans for the future.

Our last AGM brought forth a flurry of new applicants to join the committee and we were delighted to welcome Alice Atkinson, Paula Russell and Charles Spencer, very much reducing the average age of our members. It is refreshing to bring in new ideas and enthusiasm and I feel their involvement ensures our future.

Anne Joslin retired as Deputy Chairman after very many years of wonderful help and support to me and the whole committee. Thankfully she remains on the committee so we will not lose her expertise and dedication. Catherine Wright was elected as the new Deputy Chairman a role to which she already brings her energy and enthusiasm as well as writing our leaflets and editing this Newsletter with Emily Ogden.

Julie Goldsmith has taken on the role of chair of the Social Sub Committee and we have co-opted Andrew Sloane on to that committee to channel his wonderful organisational abilities. Julie and Andrew have worked tirelessly to bring you a very exciting programme of events and visits.

Jane Sellars MBE still works part time at the Gallery in order to complete her work with Richard Green on the exciting exhibition 'William Powell Frith: The People's Painter,' due to open on the 15th June. The excitement level was raised earlier this month by the announcement that one of his most famous paintings was for sale for the first time since the Pope family bought it from the Royal Academy in 1883. It has now been sold to a private collector, but we very much hope 'The Private View at the Royal Academy 1881' will come to the Mercer exhibition in June. Keep your fingers crossed!



In 2009 we were able to assist the Gallery, together with major support from the Art Fund and the V&A Purchase fund, in acquiring the final working study for this painting.

The Private View Courtesy of Martin Beisley Fine Art, London

URGENT: Committee Secretary

We would be grateful if a Friend felt able to fulfil the role of Secretary and join our Committee. Please contact Judith to discuss.

Life in the Gallery

After 14 years at the Mercer Gallery Jane Sellars left her role as Head of Cultural Services for the Harrogate District in July and is currently feverishly working as Consultant on the upcoming Frith exhibition to which we are all looking forward.

May Catt continues her role as Curator and tells us about the changes at the Gallery and what's in store.



Views of Harrogate
16 Feb – 2 June 2019



Ian Mitchell: Yorkshire Linescapes
16 February to 1 June



Hello Friends!

As I write this we are in the middle of changing over the exhibitions. Our programme continues apace. Frith logistics and Turner's visions of a romantic northern landscape are also keeping us busy and as you'll see from our list of all our upcoming exhibitions, we

have a great programme ahead. Karen has joined the curatorial team again, having first worked here back in 1992 and I am delighted that the Gallery can once more benefit from all her knowledge of our collection and expertise gained over the past 33 years, both here and with collections elsewhere.

"So with a collective 90 years under our belt we will certainly be using this as an excuse for cake!"

2019 marks my 25th year of working in museums and galleries, Lucy has been here for 12 and both Nic and Diane celebrate ten years with us here this year too. So with a collective 90 years under our belt we will certainly be using this as an excuse for cake!

Do call in soon and tell us what you think of our latest exhibitions, in homage to both Harrogate and the wider Yorkshire landscape, enabling us to travel up into the Dales and out onto bracing beaches, all without leaving the comfort of the Gallery.

Recent Acquisition : Linton Life

We are very grateful to the Mercer Friends for enabling us to purchase this bold early work by Sheila Bownas, the 20th century designer who featured in our popular exhibition here at the Mercer, back in 2017.

It features the picturesque village of Linton in the Dales where Sheila was born and where her parents Reg and Minnie owned and ran the village general store, Sheila went on to have her studio in Linton and worked there until her death in 2007.

As one of her designs from the 1950s when Sheila was in her 20s, it is a representation of her early striking graphic work and a wonderful addition to our permanent collection, building on our policy of collecting works by female, Yorkshire based artists.

written by May Catt

The Friends Christmas Party

As the gallery doors swung open on the 5th December the trays of canapés began to circulate amongst the 90 gathered partygoers.

Being one of the first Christmas parties in the calendar there was a buoyant mood of optimism and excitement for the evening. In fact the tickets had sold like hot cakes and the party was at capacity.

Judith Thomas and her merry band of Friends mixed amongst the gathered guests.

The committee had made all the food which was delicious and highly professional. With free pouring fizz the atmosphere bubbled.

There was a deep appreciation in the room for being amongst such lovely art and wonderful like-minded people on a Wednesday on the run up to Christmas.

The raffle was fabulous and comprised of a multitude of fantastic prizes. It was quickly apparent the new members of the Friends committee had pulled off a triumph. (Thank you and well done to Andrew and Paula!)

The event was fantastic and the Friends committee thanks all the attendees for their ongoing support.

written by Emily Ogden

Wilhemina Barnes-Graham

Yet again, the value of a well-informed guide proved pivotal to the success of an outing by the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery.

Organised at relatively short notice, our special preview of "Earth, Ice, Rock and Sea" by Wilhemina Barnes-Graham (Willy) took place at the 108 gallery on Cold Bath Road in Harrogate.

Geoffrey Bertram, Chair of the Trust which bears the artist's name, had travelled from Devon at the height of the early February snow. He brought the exhibition to life for us, directing us round the two ground floor galleries which housed this carefully selected display of Willy's work. Celebrating her artistic links with Yorkshire, it reflected her passion for the natural world.

It was interesting to hear of the impact she had had on the St. Ives School in the early 1940s and of the significance her formal training in drawing had had on her (then) contemporary work. Lynne Green, a trustee of the Trust and author of the only substantial book on Willy's work, was in the audience and she added fascinating insights, including Willy's struggle as a woman in the artists' world.

written by Anne Smyth



Malcolm Neesam Talk

February 2019

HARROGATE IN 50 BUILDINGS

The town's highly respected historian spoke to the Friends about some of Harrogate's well known and not so well known buildings, about which he has written in his latest book.

His talk was to have been in the Mercer Art Gallery but due to the interest shown, the venue was changed to the beautiful Pump Room to accommodate an audience of 80.

Malcolm ranged over a great variety of buildings starting with the Crown Hotel, which has been gradually but substantially changed since being visited in 1806 by Lord Byron with 'his string of horses, dogs and mistresses'. By contrast it was included in a German Luftwaffe target list in the 1940s while occupied by the Air Ministry.

The charm of the Arts and Crafts architecture of several houses built before the First World War and those in the Art Deco style of the 1930s were also appreciated.

Less appreciated was the destruction of the Railway Station in 1965 and its replacement by what 'many citizens regard as having been an act of unutterable folly'. This has only been partly redeemed by the survival of the original northern wing where The Harrogate Tap bar has retained the atmosphere of the original railway station

Malcolm has never failed to express his strong views on these matters but does not only dwell on the past. He appreciated the Conference Centre design and the Hornbeam Park Pyramid (officially known as the Inspire). He describes this as a splendid example of how visually impressive a contemporary business headquarters can be.

The audience having been primed with rosé and white wine on arrival were in an appreciative mood.

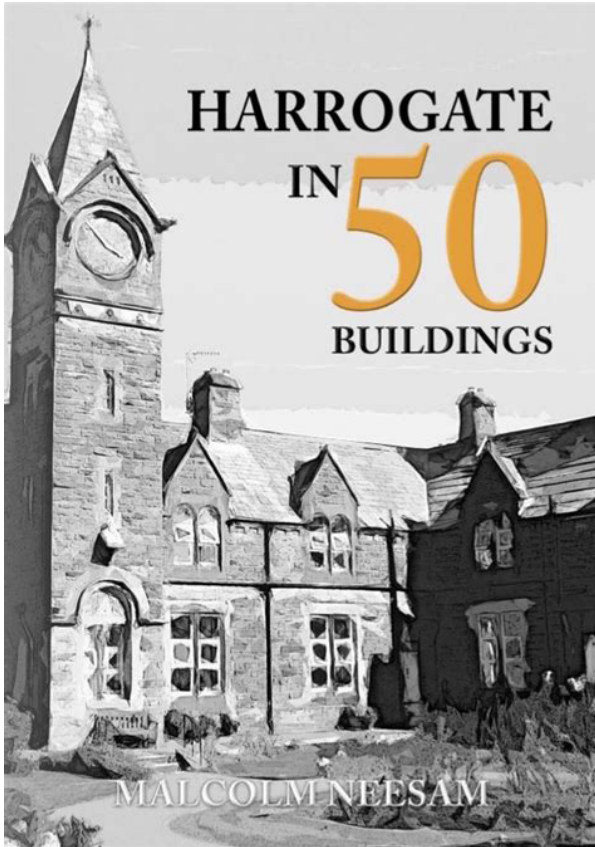
written by Richard Thomas

Life drawing classes at the Mercer

Why not consider joining the Friday morning life drawing workshops with artist Nicola Turner? The next sessions take place on the 5th and 12th April at 10:30 am -12:30 pm.

This beginner friendly workshop is an opportunity to develop your observation and drawing skills, working with a professional artist and a model (male and female). All materials, easels and refreshments are provided, and you can access as much guidance from the tutor as you wish.

All classes take place in the Mercer Art Gallery, Swan Road, Harrogate HG1 2SA. £22.00 per class, all materials provided plus refreshments. Telephone 01423 556188 or email museums@harrogate.gov.uk



Birmingham Trip

October 2018

Nineteen Mercer Friends boarded Tony's luxury coach for the October journey through a fascinating mixture of houses, gardens, galleries and workshops in the West Midlands.

Any lack of conveying the pleasure, sense of learning and camaraderie engendered in this trip are the writer's own.

First off was a private visit to the Elizabethan mansion of Arbury Hall, a fine example of Gothic Revivalist architecture so fashionable in the C18th, ceilings elaborately decorated with 'petrified lacework'.

Then a short journey to Coventry Cathedral, consecrated in 1962 and designed by Basil Spence. A tennis-court-sized silk tapestry by Graham Sutherland hangs above the altar, works by the likes of Jacob Epstein, Elizabeth Frink and John Piper providing further evidence of the cathedral's famed Spirit of Reconciliation, symbolized by three nails salvaged from the bombed ruins in 1940. One departed with a distinct feeling of awe as the choir began their evening practice.

Day 2, Birmingham's elegant Barber Institute of Fine Arts, a fine example of Art Deco and described as 'one of the finest small picture galleries in the country'. Of particular interest was sight of the wonderfully illustrated

Lichfield Codex dating from the Last Roman Emperor, Justinian.

Across the road for lunch to the quintessentially Edwardian Winterbourne House and Botanic Garden through and around which we spent a delightful two hours before coaching to the Museum.

The Museum of The Jewellery Quarter, specifically the former factory of Smith & Pepper, closed in

1981, the grinders, lathes and drills and cluttered offices now carefully preserved, in a state of suspended animation so one could easily re-start operations. The visit was made even more enjoyable by our guide, whose family had been working in the Quarter for 190 years

On to Day 3, a private visit to the magnificent Palladian mansion Ragley Hall, ancestral seat of the Marquess of Hertford, described as having 'a conventional exterior and sensational interior', as the 40' high x 70' x 40' stunning baroque pink saloon testifies. A superb lunch before travelling to the Gordon Russell Design Museum.

Gordon Russell Design Museum in Broadway, a pioneer (1892 – 1980) in the field of furniture design and manufacture who believed that good design could be made affordable and accessible to all.

A magnificent high tea before the slog home, forecast to take 4 – 5 hours, but the gods were with us, so a welcome 3 hours, their passing enhanced by some excellent white burgundy and claret (sourced by Charles Joslin) served expertly aboard a moving coach by him and Richard. At £410 per person for 3 days with 2 nights at the 4-star Hogarths Hotel, simply everything included, Judith Thomas and her team deserve the party's sincere gratitude.

written by Charles Spencer



William Powell Frith THE PEOPLE'S PAINTER



Frith Exhibition

The Frith Exhibition opens in June and runs until September. This exhibition is expected to draw large numbers of visitors to Harrogate and as it is on during the UCI cycle event, the Mercer may be very busy. Therefore the team at the Gallery would be most grateful for volunteers to help during this exhibition.

If you are interested in giving some hands-on help please contact Lucy in the gallery and she will give you more details. Email museums@harrogate.gov.uk

Jane Sellars MBE has agreed to give the Friends an Exclusive look at the William Powell Frith Exhibition with the joint Curator Richard Green. This talk will take place on 2nd July and copies of their exhibition publication, "William Powell Frith The People's Painter," will be available.

Editor's Choice

As the new Editors of the Friends of the Mercer Newsletter, Emily and I wanted to bring a new element to the publication. So, here it is...we have called it "Editor's Choice."

It is a recommendation of 'cultural' events, talks, exhibitions or just something that we think you may like to know about that is going on locally and nationally.

First on our list is a selection of

drawings by Leonardo da Vinci at Leeds Art Gallery. This exhibition marks the 500th anniversary since his death and runs until 6th May. Next up is the biennial at Harwood House which is currently showcasing the work of 26 leading craft designers. If you can travel farther afield, The Jeff Koons exhibition at the Ashmolean in Oxford looks fascinating but the must see exhibition of the season has to be the Christian Dior show at the V&A in London.



by Catherine Wright

Legacy Fund

We are so grateful to have received a legacy donation from Mr George Wright Taylor.

This donation will be ring-fenced for future development work at the Gallery.

The Committee feel it is the right time to start to investigate ways in which we could develop the Gallery further to ensure it continues to thrive and keep the momentum we have helped to achieve over the last 20 plus years.

We all know we are short of exhibition space so if we could find a



Legacy Fund

Gallery Shop Picks - Featured Artist



Charlotte Morrison

Charlotte is an established ceramicist from the Yorkshire Dales. Charlotte hand-builds her individual ceramics using porcelain and stoneware clays, to create both functional and decorative items. These are then decorated using underglazes, oxides and various glazes.

Her work generally reflects the past in some form; as she has a fascination in researching times past. Her 'Map Collection', through form and symbolic inspired decoration, echo ancient roads, places and the surrounding landscape.



way to increase this, it would be a worthwhile exercise. We will keep you informed when plans develop!

If you would like to donate to our Legacy Fund please see our Chair or Treasurer.

Sad Loss

We are sad to record the deaths of two people who played an important part in the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery.

Terence Mercer, who died in October 2018 and his late brother Gavin gave a most generous donation to Harrogate Borough Council in memory of their father, a talented artist, H Agnew Mercer. This money was used to start the Appeal to raise the funds to convert

the Promenade Room into the wonderful Art Gallery we have today.

Patrick Walker died this month. Due to illness he had moved to be with his family in America. From the very beginning of the Mercer Gallery Appeal Patrick was a most generous supporter and benefactor. His company, Watmough Printers, printed most of our early catalogues and literature and this support continued through the years.

Our New Committee Members



Paula Russell

Hello, my name is Paula Russell and I'm very pleased to have recently joined the Friends Committee. I'm originally from Ireland but have lived in England for almost twenty years now. Prior to moving here, I lived and worked in America, the Channel Islands and Australia.

My husband is from Harrogate which explains my move to the town twelve years ago and we have a lovely 9 year old son. I have a long-held appreciation of art and have previously worked for The Henry Moore Institute. My favourite piece of art currently at the Mercer Gallery is Atkinson Grimshaw's Silver Moonlight, which surprises me with something new every time I see it. I look forward to my time and contribution to the Committee.



Charles Spencer

Over the last 35 years I have lived in Harrogate, I have visited the Mercer often. Our family has always been interested in art, my sister is an artist and on holiday with my wife and daughters the first port of call in any new city is always the art gallery.

After 33 years as a commercial mushroom farmer, I decided to take my interest in art a bit more seriously and studied for a BA in History of Art at York University. Quite apart from the theoretical knowledge I gained, I found the experience of mixing and studying with the young undergraduates invaluable. I was then able to build on that with an MA in English Literature at Sussex University.

Although my wife Kate and I have long been Friends of the Mercer, we'd never been on their excursions until last year. The superbly organised trips to often exclusive venues made us realise what an active group of supporters they are. It is therefore a great pleasure to have been asked recently to join the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery Committee and I look forward to contributing to the team.



Alice Atkinson

After moving to Harrogate 6 years ago, one of the first landmarks I sought out was the local art gallery. I signed up as a Friend of the Mercer and then in 2018 I was delighted to be asked to join the committee. With a family background in art, architecture, bookbinding and publishing I grew up with an appreciation for all things designed and handmade. As a student I worked as a warder at The National Galleries of Scotland, loving being surrounded by art instead of an office. I now work in NHS primary care with data quality and compliance (in an office!) Little did I know that I would also happily find myself back in gallery surroundings! The Mercer is a wonderful resource, treasured by the town and I hope I can contribute to the dedicated team that support it.

Dates for your diary

May 2nd	Day Trip: Nottingham Allsorts - closing date for bookings 29th March
June 14th	Evening Preview: William Powell Frith Exhibition
June 25th	All Day Trip: Yorkshire Sculpture International and The Hepworth, Wakefield
July 2nd	An Exclusive look at the William Powell Frith Exhibition with the joint Curators and authors Richard Green and Jane Sellars MBE
September 26th-28th	3 Day Trip: Dundee and the Treasure Houses of the Tweed Valley
October 11th	Preview: Harrogate Open Exhibition 2019