

We are looking for a new editor for the Friends' newsletter

I have really enjoyed my time editing the Friends' newsletter but due to changes in my work schedule I will no longer be able to give the time necessary to produce our twice yearly publication. However that aside I would thoroughly recommend what is a creative and rewarding job. I would like to thank Judith for her help and encouragement and everyone who has submitted articles over the last three years.

If you feel you are able to undertake this position please contact Judith Thomas on judithnitterhill@gmail.com

Thank you once again

Bobby Jefferson

Our new website

Many of you may be aware that last October we launched our new Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery website with the intention of keeping our members up to date with current and future activities. We think the website is a fabulous addition for communicating any matters which could be relevant to the Friends. Not only will information on future exhibitions and excursions etc. be available but a catalogue of back newsletters will also be available to view. We really hope you will find this site a useful addition and it can be found at:

www.friendsofthemercerartgallery.co.uk

Opportunity to see the painting of Private View by William Powell Frith

William Powell Frith (1819 – 1909), one of the greatest British painters of the Victorian age, was born in Aldfield near Ripon. He spent his early years in Harrogate, where his father ran the Dragon Inn. In the 1850's, Frith began to paint the pictures of modern life that were to make his fortune. In 1858 his oil painting Derby Day was such a success at the Royal Academy of Arts that it had to be roped off from the public and a policeman put on guard to protect it. The same applied to his other great masterpieces, The Railway Station, Ramsgate Sands and the Private View, 1881, for which the Mercer acquired the oil study in 2009.

This year the Royal Academy is celebrating its 250th birthday and the painting Private View is part of this exciting exhibition. www.royalacademy.org.uk



Above on the right: oil study for the painting Private View which was purchased with the support of the Friends of the Mercer

Lucy Scott is celebrating her appointment as Museum Operations Manager after working for ten years at the Mercer Art Gallery, Royal Pump Room Museum and Knaresborough Castle and the Courthouse Museum.

'We feel as though Lucy has grown up with us', said Jane Sellars, Curator of Cultural Services.

Lucy first joined the museums in 2008 as a casual museum assistant when she was studying first at Harrogate College of Art and then taking a degree in Fine Art and History of Art at Leeds University. She worked in all areas of the museums and gallery, in education and front of house activities. In 2015 she was made a full time Museums and Gallery Assistant and spent the last three years taking advantage of the training on offer to her from Harrogate Borough Council, learning about management skills, health and safety, visitor services and much more.

Now Lucy has taken on a full time management position organizing the everyday running of some of Yorkshire's most popular heritage sites. 'I am really proud of the work we do here at Harrogate Museums and Arts to make culture and history part of people's lives in Harrogate. "I'm happy and excited to take on my new role and looking forward to working with my colleagues as we continue to bring the museums and their collections to a wider audience. It has been an absolute pleasure working alongside the wonderful exhibitions put on by our fabulous curators during my time here."

Lucy also has a very famous surname: she is descended from polar explorer Captain Robert Falcon Scott, otherwise known as Scott of the Antarctic. Scott famously made an attempt to be the first to the South Pole in 1912, but was beaten to the post by Norwegian Roald Amundsen. Scott, unfortunately died with his four team mates on the return leg of the 1800 mile journey. Scott did however complete extensive scientific research on the expedition which scientists still use today.

Scott's wife Kathleen was a sculptor who trained at the Slade School of Art and under the famous French sculptor Auguste Rodin in Paris. Lucy's grandfather, Captain Scott's only son, was the nature conservationist and artist Sir Peter Scott who founded the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust and co-founded the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and designed the familiar panda logo.

General Data Protection Regulations

By the time you receive the Spring Newsletter all members should have had sight of our policy document. If this is not the case, a copy may be viewed on our website. Alternatively, copies are available from the Membership Secretary, Christine Brown. Telephone: 01423 504079

The Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery

Spring Newsletter 2018

**The Studio at the Mercer Art Gallery**

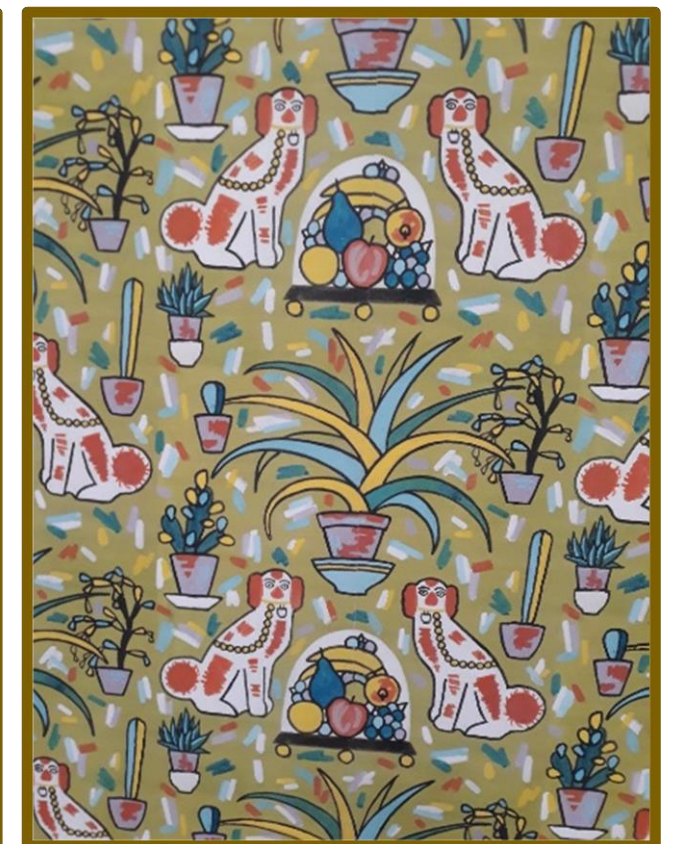
The Mercer makeover of 2011 did not quite stretch to our important cultural activity space at the gallery, so the Friends kindly stepped in to help in 2017. Last year they made a contribution of £10,000 towards the upgrade of the former Activity Room.

The room was completely redecorated, with new lighting and blinds and the wonderful feature wallpaper designed by Sheila Bownas (1925 - 2007) whose work was shown at the Mercer last year. Sheila Bownas grew up in Linton in Craven and her talent for drawing took her to the Slade School of Art in London. She made a career in textile pattern design and worked for Liberty and Marks and Spencer amongst others. The Staffordshire dogs design with a background of fashionable 1950s cacti is an example of her quirky and original handiwork.

Also, a new art store room was created and the bathrooms and sink area have been much improved. The Studio now hosts regular art classes, talks and education sessions in a much more comfortable and inspiring setting, thanks to the Friends of the Mercer.

Jane Sellars

Below: the new look Studio at the Mercer Art Gallery featuring the wall paper design by Shelia Bownas

**Diary Dates**

June 12th visit to the Terracotta Army at the World Museum, Liverpool

August 10th Summer Party at Copt Hewick Hall, nr Ripon

October 3rd/5th a three day visit to Birmingham and Warwickshire

New Acquisition for the Mercer Art Gallery

The Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery play a major part in helping the Gallery to acquire new works for the Harrogate Fine Art Collection and are very pleased to announce their most recent acquisition by Katharine Holmes. The Yorkshire landscape painter Katharine Holmes's exhibition entitled 'In Grandmother's Footsteps' showed new work from the artist as she visited the places known to her artist grandmother, Constance Pearson. Holmes went on a pilgrimage around the Yorkshire Dales and to Cornwall in the toe of the British Isles, making sketches outside in all weathers to capture these favourite places. Back in Katharine's studio, some of her subjects were worked up into large scale oil paintings, such as this one of Malham Cove in the bright, lightness of summer. Judith Thomas said, "We simply had to have this painting for the Mercer because Katharine Holmes is an outstanding Yorkshire artist. We all love her work, which has drawn a big audience here to the Mercer. Now we have a wonderful painting for the collection which will be there forever."

Below left: Jane Sellars Curator of Cultural Services receiving a cheque for the Katharine Holmes painting from Judith Thomas and Alan Ritchie on behalf of the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery.



Left, the new acquisition by Katharine Holmes
Summer, Malham Cove.
Oil on canvas, 150cm X120cm, 2017.

Katharine Holmes was born in 1962 in Malhamdale and is best known for paintings and drawings of the Yorkshire landscape. A graduate of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne she returned in 1990 to live and work in the Yorkshire Dales. She works outside in all seasons and weathers and currently lives and has a studio in the Malham house where her mother and grandmother lived and painted before her. A catalogue of Katharine Holmes's work written by Jane Sellars with photography by Jerry Hardman-Jones and design by Neville Barker is available at the Mercer Art Gallery.

Katharine Holmes:
'In Grandmother's Footsteps' was on show at the Mercer Art Gallery from September 2017 to January 2018.



Jane Sellars to leave the Mercer

I have had fourteen exciting years at the Mercer Art Gallery, first of all as Curator of Art and then as Curator of Cultural Services. Now it is time to move on, so from the end of June I will be leaving to pursue a freelance career. I am going to work for a further 12 months or so for the Mercer as an Independent Curator, primarily on the major exhibition **William Powell Frith: The People's Painter** planned for the artist's bicentenary year. I would like to say many thanks to the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery for all the support we have received from you, and long may it continue.

Jane Sellars

Master at the Wheel at Harrogate College

On the evening of Thursday 2nd November, Harrogate College celebrated The Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery's 25th anniversary by hosting a sold out event with special guest, and winner of BBC's The Great Pottery Throw Down, Matthew Wilcock. Attendees were welcomed with a complimentary glass of wine before joining Matthew at the wheel, kindly lent by the College's Ceramics Department. "I've never been so looked after before!" said Matthew. The room was quickly filled with excitement and laughter as the Master of the Wheel himself shared his experiences, noting the importance of taking risks and setting challenges as a maker. The worse thing one can do is not do it. Following the demonstration, guests were met with drinks and canapés prepared by the College's Hospitality and Catering students and tutors, at our very own Bistro on the Park. Two lucky winners were drawn, bringing home with them a unique pot or bowl by Master Potter Matthew Wilcock. Alison Breeze, part of the Friends' Committee and event organiser, extended thanks to all the College Departments involved, saying, "You've all been such a pleasure to work with and absolutely nothing has been too much trouble. This successful evening, an amazing experience for both Harrogate College and the Friends of the Mercer Art Gallery, is just the start of a flourishing friendship!" Catherine Wright, committee member of the Friends of the Mercer Gallery and staff member of Harrogate High School said, "I just wanted to say how impressive the College is and how fabulous the service and canapés were. They did you proud!" "The event was a total triumph, thanks again to the whole College team coming together and creating yet another ambitious and successful happening." said David Oxley, senior Ceramics lecturer at Harrogate College.

Anthea Cho, Marketing and Communications Officer at Harrogate College



Pictured left to right:
Demonstration and talk by Matthew Wilcox at Harrogate College and one of the bowls made by Matthew and won by Sian Gamble.



Friends of the Mercer Autumn Outing to Cumbria

Art and history, enthusiastic guides and fine fare not to mention excellent company and charming overnight accommodation ensured that the Friends' 2017 summer outing to the Lake District was a great success. All four of the places we visited were well served by their guides (generally volunteers) and to be recommended for their hospitality and catering. Three of them dated back to mediaeval times and owed much to the ongoing care and pride, initiative and responsibility demonstrated by the families who had long been associated with them. Interconnectivity of family histories, marriages and inherited portraiture became an ongoing theme. After an early start from Harrogate on the first day, we headed for Levens Hall, south of Kendal. We enjoyed hearing tales of its thirteenth century Pele tower and even had time to explore its extensive topiary garden, claiming to be the oldest and most extensive in the world. In the afternoon, a short drive took us to Blackwell Arts and Crafts House on Windermere as a masterpiece of twentieth-century design which provided a real contrast in style and presentation. Refreshed by delightful overnight accommodation at a charming country house hotel near Bowness, we set off towards Penrith for two more inspiring visits which filled the programme for our second day. At Hutton-in-the-Forest, a tour of rooms rich in history linked architecture, artwork and furniture with a fascinating family history. Later at Dalemain House we again gained insight into the challenges of sustaining ancient houses in private hands supported here by their enterprising development of 'The World's Original Marmalade Awards and Festival'. Our cheerful journey back to Harrogate, via Moulton for an evening meal, completed a thoroughly enjoyable holiday for those Friends lucky enough to have joined the excursion. Many thanks to the committee members who did so much research and planning to make a varied and memorable two days. Pete Smyth

