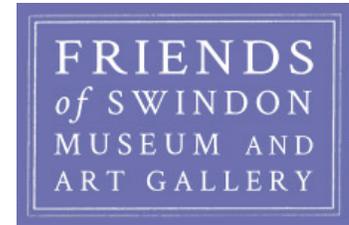




Newsletter

February 2022



Hello Friends

We had a busy Committee meeting, discussing the current situation with Apsley House and the display of the collections in the Civic Offices. We also finalised a range of varied and informative talks for the first half of 2022.

Monthly Zoom Talks

Wednesday 23rd February 7.30pm, Michael Gray, conservation architect, will be talking about St Marks Church, Swindon, dedicated in 1845, for the employees of the railway works.

March 23rd: David Dawson, Director of the Wiltshire Museum, on plans for the relocation of the Wiltshire Museum to the old Assize Courts building in Devizes.

April 27th: Lisa Westcott-Wilkins, Co-founder and Managing Director of Dig Ventures will be telling us about the **Mammoth Graveyard** uncovered near Swindon. DigVentures began the excavations after being alerted to the site by Sally and Neville Hollingworth, non-professional palaeontologists, who will also take part in the talk.

May 25th: Sarah Finch-Crisp, Chair of the Friends of Lydiard Park will speak about the Lydiard Archives, a unique on-line collection of objects, portraits, records, manuscripts, photographs, memories, and ephemera related to Lydiard Park.

June 29th Martin Newman of Historic England and also a member of the Friends committee will talk about 'List Swindon: 75 Years of Protecting England's Heritage'. Martin is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquities, a Member of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

More talks and are being arranged for the rest of the year.

Videos of past talks are available at: <https://friendsofsmag.org/you-tube-videos-of-talks/>

Thanks very much to Neil Redfern, who gave January's fascinating talk on 'Art and Archaeology'.

Friends' trips

Fresh Air Sculpture A Celebration of Contemporary Art in a Beautiful English Garden
The Old Rectory, Quenington, Gloucestershire GL7 5BN <https://www.freshairsculpture.com/>
We have arranged a Friends' visit to this exhibition on Thursday 9th June 6pm-8pm
More information to follow.

Good News About the Roman Wine Strainer



A year ago, in the first edition of the Friends' Newsletter we reported that the restoration of the Roman Wine Strainer, paid for by the Friends, had been completed but that it was still at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre in Chippenham, where the restoration had taken place. Linda Kasmaty recently made enquiries and found that the Strainer is now back in Swindon. We are hoping that it will soon be on display in Swindon for all of us to see and enjoy.

Ongoing exhibitions

Wiltshire on Paper: Post-War Prints from the Bath Academy of Art

Chippenham Museum 8th January – 2nd April, Monday – Saturday, 10am – 4pm,
9-10 Market Place, Chippenham, <https://www.chippenham.gov.uk/chippenham-museum>

'Centred on the Bath Academy of Art in Corsham, the decades following the Second World War, saw an explosion of creative printmaking in this corner of Wiltshire. The first in a series of displays celebrating the Golder-Thompson Gift to Chippenham Museum, the exhibition will include works by Clifford & Rosemary Ellis, Gillian Ayres, Howard Hodgkin and many more.'

A Century of British Art - Bournemouth Arts Club 1920-2020

Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth, ending 1st March 2022

A selection of the paintings on display can be seen at:

https://artuk.org/discover/curations/view_as/grid/search/keyword:bournemouth-arts-club

Included in the exhibition are nine paintings from the Swindon Collection, displayed together.

Swindon Hub

Part of an ongoing programme of events and exhibitions themed around health, wellbeing and creativity, Swindon Hub's 'Dedications to Pei' is a new show of pop art collaborations from around the world. <https://swindonlink.com/lifestyle/pop-art-swindon-hub/>

Let us know of exhibitions and events, which may be of interest.

email: admin@friendsofsmag.org

Arts Council England, Let's Create Jubilee Fund

Wiltshire Community Foundation has partnered with Arts Council England, in supporting this programme to develop creative and cultural activities as part of celebrations in June, to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Friends are hoping to apply for funding in co-operation with other Swindon groups to organise an event during June this year.

Current 'Art on Tour' displays – glimpses of Swindon's paintings and ceramics

<https://artontour489147035.wordpress.com/exhibitions-2/>

A Celebration of Colour

Civic Offices, Euclid St, Swindon,

From January 31st, Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm

'This exhibition presents a selection of paintings and studio ceramics. It explores the chemistry behind some of the most vibrant ceramics in the collection, and reveals different ways modern and contemporary artists have approached colour through paint. 'A Celebration of Colour' presents work by Gillian Ayres, Basil Beattie and Terry Frost. A new acquisition by Emily Drake will be shown for the first time since entering the Swindon Collection.'

Lunchtime Talks: Friday 4th February, Friday 4th March and Friday 8th April, 12 – 12.30pm

Check for any changes at: <https://artontour489147035.wordpress.com/talks-and-tours/>

and email: ArtOnTour@swindon.gov.uk to book your space. Booking is essential

There are also 18 paintings from the Swindon Collection on display in the foyer of the Civic Offices, Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm

The Art of Industry

STEAM Museum of the Great Western Railway, Firefly Avenue, Swindon, SN2 2EY

From 19 January, Monday – Saturday, 10am – 5pm, Sunday, 11am – 4pm

This exhibition brings together artworks from the collections at STEAM Museum and the collections formerly housed at the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery, now closed.

'Paintings, drawings and prints capture the dynamism and transformation of the railway in the 20th Century.' 'The Art of Industry' includes work by Leon Kossoff, Margaret Neve and Ken

White, amongst others from the Swindon Collection.' See also: <http://friendsofsmag.blogspot.com/>

Lunchtime Talks: Friday 11 February, 12.30 -13.00 and Friday 11 March, 12 – 12.30pm

Visitors will hear about pieces in 'The Art of Industry' display, and gain access to a collection of paintings, prints and drawings by Swindon railway artist Hubert Cook, displayed within the museum.

Check for any changes at: <https://artontour489147035.wordpress.com/talks-and-tours/>

and email: ArtOnTour@swindon.gov.uk to book your space. Booking is essential.

Local Legacies: Ceramics from the Swindon Collection

Highworth Museum, Visitor Information Centre, 7 High Street, Highworth, SN6 7BE

15 February – 14 May 2022, Tuesday – Friday, 10am–3pm, Saturday, 9am–2pm

'Local Legacies' presents studio ceramics from the Swindon Collection. The selected pieces have local roots, and provide links to broader narratives of 20th Century and contemporary ceramics. This celebration of Wiltshire-based makers is co-curated with Highworth Historical Society, and includes work by Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie, Ivan Martin and Jo Taylor.'

Any questions or comments? Contact Councillor Richard Jandy, RJandy@swindon.gov.uk

From Swindon Museum and Art Gallery at Apsley House to an empty building and paintings hanging in a corridor - how did this happen?

A report on 'Swindon's Art and Museum collections and cultural provision' was presented at a Swindon Borough Council Cabinet meeting in March 2019. The report highlighted the Museum and Art Gallery as housing 'an outstanding modern art collection of national importance, alongside largely locally sourced artefacts of historic significance'. The report went on to say, 'The collections deserve greater visibility, bringing cultural and educational benefits to a wider audience'. The report recommended 'approval for a budget of up to £400,00, to undertake essential improvements at the Swindon MAG at Apsley House.' This work was to include the installation of a lift to improve accessibility. It also recommended that 'Every child will be encouraged to visit the Council's museums including the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery as a learning opportunity while they are at school'.

In order to 'increase visibility', the report also introduced the idea of 'Art on Tour', Pop Up exhibitions in 'satellite facilities in or around the town centre to house art or artefacts on tour'. Artworks and artefacts would be made available to residents unable to visit Apsley House and the publicity would bring more visitors into the Museum and Art Gallery. So far so good.....

Moving forward to June 2021

The council decided that Apsley House would not be re-opening after the covid lockdown. During lockdown maintenance of Apsley House by the council had lapsed. The council stated that the roof was leaking, the boiler had broken down and the fire alarm system wasn't working properly. The lift installation had not taken place. Furthermore the council considered that Apsley House, which in February 2020 was operating as an accredited, functioning Museum and Art Gallery was suddenly no longer fit for purpose. The council had it seems, allowed Apsley House, containing the 'outstanding art collection and artefacts of historical significance', to fall into disrepair such that the precious collections were endangered. Since then the collections have been removed and stored elsewhere.

The council has mounted 'Art on Tour' displays of artworks in the foyer of the Civic Offices, corridors in Steam museum and the Central Library and at two Heritage Open Weekend sites. These areas are not accredited art galleries and conditions for accessing and viewing the works are less than ideal. Posters have not been in evidence to advertise the displays.

The purpose built art gallery in Apsley House, displayed at least forty paintings at a time and the exhibitions changed throughout the year, yet the council maintain that the 'Art on Tour' displays are bringing 'More art to more people'.

In the space of two years the council changed it's mind from encouraging more visitors to Apsley House through 'Art on Tour' to saying that 'Art on Tour' and another idea 'Museums Without Walls' would completely replace the Museum and Art Gallery.

Protests from Friends and the petition signed by over 5,000 supporters have persuaded the council to convert the first floor of the Civic Offices into temporary galleries for the Museum and Art Collections until new facilities are provided in maybe 10 years time in the Cultural Quarter. We have been told that the timetable for the temporary galleries has already slipped.....

Any questions or comments? Contact Councillor Richard Jandy, email: RJandy@swindon.gov.uk

Friends' Website

Click on <http://www.friendsofsmag.org> to find details of talks, newsletters, news, videos of talks, a link to the blog and you can also **make a donation to FSMAG**.

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/friendsofswindonmag/>

Try out the Friends **Instagram account**, now with 1,030 followers.

We share news of talks and other events etc on the account so do give it a follow.

Don't forget the Friends' page on the '**We Are Swindon**' website:

<https://weareswindon.co.uk/swindons-charity-hub/friends-of-swindon-museum-and-art-gallery/>

Let's not forget the Museum and Art Gallery Collections now in storage

Here are a few links from the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery website

<https://www.swindonmuseumandartgallery.org.uk/>

Swindon Archaeological Collection

<http://www.swindonmuseumandartgallery.org.uk/info/4/collections/4/collections-1/3>

and a 3D virtual tour of the archaeology gallery

<https://my.matterport.com/show/?m=xEMpfF81p4N>

The Victoria Hall Historic Collections

<http://www.swindonmuseumandartgallery.org.uk/info/4/collections/4/collections-1/6>

Including the Swindon Collection of Musical Instruments

45 Wonderful musical instruments available to see on

<http://minim.ac.uk/> Choose 'Browse by Collection - Swindon Museum & Art Gallery

Swindon Social History Collection

<http://www.swindonmuseumandartgallery.org.uk/info/4/collections/4/collections-1/4>

Earth and the Natural World

<http://www.swindonmuseumandartgallery.org.uk/info/4/collections/4/collections-1/5>

The Swindon Collection of Modern British Art and Ceramics

<http://www.swindonmuseumandartgallery.org.uk/info/4/collections/4/collections-1/2>

Several items in the Ron Sloman Gift are included in the Art on Tour display at the Civic Offices.

The Friends are not sure of the contents of the Ceramics collection.

If you have information or photographs then please let us know so that we can build up a record. email: admin@friendsofsmag.org

You can also view some of Swindon's Collection of Modern British Painting and Swindon's Local Art Collection on the ART UK website.

<https://artuk.org/visit/venues/swindon-museum-and-art-gallery-5267>