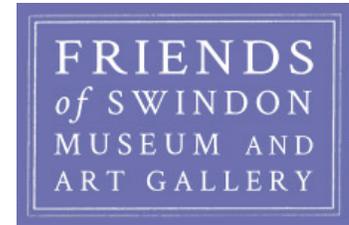




Newsletter

April 2022



Hello Friends

At the March committee meeting we discussed the Planning Application by Swindon Borough Council for a Change of Use of the First floor of the Civic Offices from offices to a Museum and Art Gallery. See Pages 2 and 6

April Zoom talk

Wednesday April 27th 7.30pm: **Lisa Westcott-Wilkins**, Co-founder and Managing Director of Dig Ventures will be telling us about the **Mammoth Graveyard** uncovered near Swindon. Dig Ventures 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. The Zoom link to the talk will be emailed close to the date

Thanks to David Dawson, Director of the Wiltshire Museum, for his March Zoom talk about the plans for the relocation of the Wiltshire Museum to the old Assize Courts building in Devizes. Videos of past talks are available at: <https://friendsofsmag.org/you-tube-videos-of-talks/>
Apologies that a recording of David Dawson's talk is not available.

Friends' trips

St Mark's Church and Cemetery Wednesday 11th May, 10.30am Michael Gray will give us a guided tour with refreshments available afterwards in the railway village.

Fresh Air Sculpture *A Celebration of Contemporary Art in a Beautiful English Garden*

The Old Rectory, Quenington, eight miles north east of Cirencester in Gloucestershire GL7 5BN
<https://www.freshairsculpture.com/>

Thursday 9th June 6pm-8pm Lift sharing to be arranged.

Trips in the pipeline

Early July, a visit to Rabley Drawing Centre, Mildenhall, Marlborough
Later in the year, a trip to Banwell Bone Caves, north Somerset

On the following pages

Page 2 Monthly Zoom talks and the Planning Application

Page 3 Art on Tour, displays of artworks and ceramics from the Swindon Collections

Page 4 Exhibitions in Winchester, London and Oxford

Pages 5 and 6 Friends mark the second anniversary of the closure of Apsley House and recent articles in the Swindon Advertiser about this and the Council's plans for the future of the Museum and Art Gallery.

Monthly Zoom talks for the rest of the year

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.

July 27th: A talk from **Kettle's Yard Gallery** in Cambridge.

August 24th: **David Thackray** will give an update on the Swindon Mechanics Institute.

September 28th: Lucy Abel-Smith will tell us about Quenington Rectory Garden, see also page 1
To be confirmed:

October: a talk from **MK Gallery** in Milton Keynes

November: **Richard Osgood**, Senior Archaeologist with the MOD, and 'Operation Nightingale' for post combat, post traumatic stress disorder sufferers.

Council proposals for a Museum and Art Gallery at the Civic Offices

Swindon Borough Council has submitted a Planning Application for a Change of Use of the First Floor Offices to a Museum and Art Gallery, at the Civic Offices building in Euclid Street.

The application reference number is S/22/0204

You can view the application documents here:

<https://pa1.swindon.gov.uk/publicaccess/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=R71AL2PTKLY00>

The drawings are only plans of the existing building and don't show the extent of the alterations, as this is just an application for Change of Use. A further application will be needed if the changes involve alterations to the listed building fabric.

The Heritage and Access Statement gives more information.

If you want to comment on the application, click on 'Comments'

You will need to register first, details are on the screen.

Comments have to be submitted by Monday 18th April

The Determination Deadline is Wednesday 11th May 2022

Page 6 of this newsletter has an article about the planning application from the Swindon Advertiser

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

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

A Celebration of Colour

Committee Room 3, off the foyer of the Civic Offices, Euclid St, Swindon, Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm
Enter by the central door, via the steps or the ramp, sign in at the reception desk.

'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 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.'

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.'



A selection of the ceramics on display, including three patterned jugs by Peter Holdsworth

Exhibits in the ‘Celebration of Colour’ exhibition at the Civic Offices

Friends have written to officers at Swindon Borough Council expressing concern about the condition of two items in this exhibition. The painting by Emily Drake 'If I'm going to dive in you're going to have to tell me how deep it is' has a patch which is peeling away from the canvas. The ceramic goblet by Alan Caiger-Smith has a break in the stem which has been inexpertly stuck together.

Ongoing exhibitions elsewhere

‘Extraordinary Everyday’ The Art and Design of Eric Ravilious until 15th May 2022

The Arc, Jewry Street, Winchester (formerly the Winchester Discovery Centre)

For linked events go to <https://www.arcwinchester.org.uk/events>

‘80 years after his death, this dazzling new exhibition will guide visitors through his brilliant career, showcasing wood engravings, watercolours, books, ceramics and lithographs. Among the many highlights are stunning watercolours from public collections, such as Train Landscape, and rarely seen works from private collections, including Room at the William the Conqueror.

Partnering with 15 lenders from across the UK, this specially curated exhibition for Hampshire Cultural Trust will show Eric Ravilious’ love for the simple pleasures of everyday life (a mug of strong tea, a train ride). He saw the extraordinary in the everyday and, at the same time, made everyday things seem extraordinary, whether this was in the design he made to decorate an eggcup or in his marvellous watercolours. ‘

The World of Stonehenge, British Museum, until 17th July 2022

The exhibition includes artefacts from Salisbury Museum and Devizes Museum.

There are talks about the exhibition available on the museum’s YouTube channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDy2RvseIW8ZPY4z7rBVfNg?view_as=subscriber

Pissarro: Father of Impressionism, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, until 12th June 2022

This major exhibition of works drawn from the Ashmolean’s collections as well as international loans, spans Pissarro’s entire career. Booking is essential, including members

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

email: admin@friendsofsmag.org

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 1,057 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/>

Second anniversary of the closure of Apsley House



Apsley House was closed on the 18th March 2020. On the same date this year the Friends marked the anniversary with a gathering, including, cakes, balloons and a large card, to cheer ourselves up and to draw attention to the loss of the Museum and Art Gallery.

Read more: <http://friendsofsmag.blogspot.com/>

Swindon Advertiser printed this article

'Protesters second anniversary of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery closure

CAMPAIGNERS marked the second anniversary of the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery's closure as the search for a suitable new home continues.

Apsley House had housed the paintings and exhibits since the 1930s but its closure at the start of the first lockdown on March 18 2020 soon became permanent.

Swindon Borough Council has resolved to sell Apsley House, and instead plan to include a new museum and gallery in the cultural quarter which they hope to build in the town centre.

In the meantime, some rooms on the first floor of the Civic Offices in Euclid Street will be altered to house some of the art and museum collections.

But it is feared that this short-term solution could end up becoming permanent if the process of planning and building the new cultural quarter takes longer than expected or is never finished.

The Friends of Swindon Museum and Art Gallery's spokeswoman Linda Kasmaty said: "We have had little opportunity to view the art and ceramics collections, and no opportunity to view the museum and archaeology collections for two years.

"We completely accept that Apsley House's internal layout meant it wasn't ideal in terms of accessibility, but it's very clear that any next home for the museum and art gallery collections will not be a temporary solution.

"Experienced professionals in the property and development industries tell us the cultural quarter will take decades to finance and construct, which means the Civic Offices will actually be a permanent site for the collections.

“Creating new exhibition spaces for important historical artefacts, local archaeological finds and our nationally renowned British art collection is expensive if it is done properly, but it does need to be done properly to protect the collections and make the experience a positive one for visitors and researchers.

“We just want to sit down with the council and understand how they propose to deliver totally accessible new exhibition space within their budget which started off at £1.8million in 2019 but has since shrunk to £400,000.

“We genuinely don’t understand how that can be the case. We are very keen to fulfil our role of local champions for Swindon Museum and Art Gallery, and hope that our gentle marking of the second anniversary of its closure will encourage Swindon Borough Council to share that thinking with us and the people of Swindon.”

The Friends of SMAG group launched in 1993 to help develop, maintain and enhance the best possible museum and art gallery for Swindon’s citizens and visitors.

Since then, its has acted as local champions, providing input to management and ensuring formal community involvement in council decision-making about the museum and art gallery.’

On 31st March the Advertiser printed this article

Plans revealed for new museum and art gallery at Swindon council offices

PLANNING application has been submitted to turn the first floor council offices on Euclid Street into a museum and art gallery.

It comes after a lengthy campaign from Save our Museum and Art Gallery to prevent the former home of the town’s artefacts at Apsley House being sold and closed off.

The council says it will allow it to display a large collection which could not be provided at its present location in Bath Road.

If approved, there would also be a small shop, offices, and storage.

To provide improved public access to the upper floor, there would also be a lift installed in part of the former staff canteen area, rising up into a former small office adjacent to the proposed retail area.

“It is understood that the construction of a new lift will result in some damage to the original fabric, but this facility will provide considerably improved access to the first floor,” the application states.

A separate application for Listed Building Consent will be made for any alterations proposed deemed “to be alterations to the historic fabric of the property”.

A council spokesperson added: “We appreciate people want to see the new Museum and Art Gallery provision opened as soon as possible, and we’d like to reassure them we are moving as quickly as we can.

“Considerable work has taken place to enable us to convert the first floor of the Civic Offices and a planning application for a change of use has been submitted.

“But this work will take a little longer due to the fact we will be converting a listed building and will be installing a new lift to ensure that everyone will be able to access our collections. We anticipate the main works at the Civic Offices will take place from the summer as we will need to go out to tender for the works.” It added that the new facilities will be “far superior” to the one it replaced at Apsley House, being fully accessible, in a location close to the town centre and with suitable parking provision.

It said: “In the meantime, art exhibitions are continuing to take place through Art on Tour and residents can come to the Civic Offices now to view some of the collection, while a room on the ground floor has been converted to provide a taster of how the new museum and art gallery will look.

“We have also begun a pop-up museum programme where we are taking artefacts to local schools so children can continue to benefit from the collections while the new museum building is being finalised.”

With thanks to the Swindon Advertiser