



# Newsletter

June 2022



## Hello Friends

At the May committee meeting we discussed the 'Salubritas et Industria' paintings by Harold Dearden, which illustrate the motto on the Swindon Borough Coat of Arms. The paintings are held in the Swindon Collection and we believe they are in need of assessment, which the Friends would like to pay for.

A mural depicting a modern interpretation of Salubritas et Industria, painted by local artist Tim Carroll, has been installed in Regents Circus outside the former Morrisons' site.

## June Zoom talk

**Wednesday June 29<sup>th</sup>, 7.30pm, 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.

The Zoom link to the talk will be emailed close to the date

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

Thanks very much to **Sarah Finch-Crisp**, Chair of the Friends of Lydiard Park for her illuminating talk about the Lydiard Archives.

## Friends' trips

We hope to include photographs in next month's newsletter, of our June visit to the **Fresh Air Sculpture Exhibition** at The Old Rectory, Quenington, <https://www.freshairsculpture.com/>

## Trips in the pipeline

Early July, a visit to Rabley Drawing Centre, Mildenhall, Marlborough

## Monthly Zoom talks for the rest of the year

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

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

**September 28<sup>th</sup>:** **Lucy Abel-Smith** will tell us about Quenington Rectory Garden, see above.

**October 26<sup>th</sup>:** to be confirmed

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

## Friends' visit to St Mark's Church, Railway Village in May

It was heartening to see a large group of Friends meet at St Mark's, albeit on the first wet morning for several weeks! Despite the rain we were very grateful to Michael Gray for his informative tour of the graveyard and Church, in particular the beautiful stained glass. Thanks also to the church members who provided much appreciated hot drinks and lovely cakes.



## 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

The consultation period has now ended and the Determination Deadline has passed but at the time of 'going to press' the Planning Officer dealing with the application is still in correspondence with the Council Officers who made the Application, regarding further information and clarification of certain points. So we are still waiting to hear the decision.

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 and a short history of the Grade 11 listed Council Offices, designed by architects Bertram, Bertram and Rice of Oxford and built 1937-1938.

**If you visit the Art on Tour displays in the Civic Offices you will be able to see the building's original nineteen-thirties design features including the staircase, the Council Chamber, the wood panelled foyer and meeting rooms and also the courtyard gardens (through the windows).**

Enter by the central door, via the steps or the ramp, sign in at the reception desk.

Monday-Friday 9am - 5pm.

## **A recent statement from the Save Our Museum and Art Gallery campaign group**

***The Save Our Museum and Art Gallery (SOMAG) campaign group has welcomed the appointment of Councillor Matty Courtliff as Swindon Borough Council's new Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Town Centre Experience.***

***A spokesperson for SOMAG said the group hopes this might be the start of more proactive and positive engagement over the future of the town's museum and art collections.***

*The public campaign, which began in 2021, successfully forced Swindon Borough Council to abandon its plan to leave the collections in storage until a promised new Cultural Quarter is delivered in the town centre.*

*The museum and art gallery had been housed in Apsley House on Bath Road for around 90 years, but following the end of the pandemic restrictions Swindon Borough Council announced that Apsley House would not reopen and collections would simply be put in storage.*

*The council then proposed to use two small rooms at Lydiard House to display a small selection of the collections, before deciding to convert part of the Civic Offices into gallery spaces.*

*SOMAG supports the ambition to create a temporary home for the collections at the Civic Offices, particularly as the Cultural Quarter is unlikely to be completed for many years, if not decades.*

*However, the group – which has several members with professional experience and qualifications in museums, buildings and heritage – has repeatedly asked the council how the current proposal can deliver professional quality museum and art gallery displays once the building shell is converted.*

*In March 2019, the council estimated it would cost £1,864,000 to convert the first floor of the Civic Offices to provide appropriate gallery space for displaying the collections. However, its most recent estimate is that the conversion will cost £400,000.*

*Despite repeated requests to Swindon Borough Council for an explanation of how the cost of conversion can have fallen by £1,464,000 in three years, SOMAG has not had an answer.*

*“We are very pleased that following our lobbying Swindon Borough Council agreed to find an alternative venue for Swindon's own Museum and Art Gallery, rather than wait many, many years for the Cultural Quarter,” said the spokesperson.*

*“However, it has been frustrating for us and for all the adults and children who loved the displays at Apsley House – including the famous ‘Croc’ or gharial – that the plans for the Civic Offices are so vague.*

*“We urgently ask for realistic timelines and budgets to be allocated to the interpretation and display of the art and museum collections, which are still absent.*

*“We are also concerned that papers relating to the SBC planning application to convert the building reveal that the new facility will only be open during office hours, and will be closed at weekends. This seems very odd, as weekends are the days when families would normally plan to visit.*



*“We are hoping that the appointment of Cllr Courtliff will mark a change in approach, and that Swindon Borough Council will now proactively involve and engage the community in the development of the plans for the museum and art gallery collections.”*

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

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

Please visit these displays and talks, if possible, and pass on your thoughts to the Friends, email: [admin@friendsofsmag.org](mailto:admin@friendsofsmag.org), and to Matty Courtliff, newly appointed Swindon Borough Council Cabinet Member for Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Town Centre Experience, email: [Mcourtliff2@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:Mcourtliff2@swindon.gov.uk)

### Interventions

9 April – July 2022 Lydiard House Museum, Lydiard Tregoze, Swindon, SN5 3PA



*'Interventions' brings artworks from Swindon Museum & Art Gallery to the historic setting of Lydiard House Museum. This playful trail responds to the grand Palladian spaces with modern creativity, encouraging fresh visual and contextual relationships between the two.'*

A Lucie Rie 'Coffee Set' surprisingly displayed on a silver tray in the Dining Room at Lydiard House

Opening times: Wednesday – Sunday: 11am – 4pm (last admission 3.30pm).

Admission charge to Lydiard House Museum is applicable, information here:

<https://www.swindon.gov.uk/lydiardhouse/info/11/plan-visit/4/plan-visit-1/7>

**Lunchtime talks:** Saturday 4th June, 12 – 12.40pm *'Hear more about the artworks on display, which include exquisite Lucie Rie ceramics and a unique book illustrated by R.B. Kitaj.'*

Free, booking essential, email [ArtOnTour@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:ArtOnTour@swindon.gov.uk).

### Highlights from the Swindon Collection

**Civic Offices**, Euclid St, Swindon, Ongoing, Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm

Enter by the central door, via the steps or the ramp, sign in at the reception desk.

*'This exhibition brings together 20 works of art from Swindon Museum and Art Gallery, to showcase the variety and quality of the Swindon Collection of Modern British Art. It includes paintings and prints by world famous artists, and artists with a special connection to Wiltshire and Swindon.'*

**Lunchtime talks: Talented Swindon**

Wednesday 8th June and Friday 1st July, 12pm – 12.30pm

Free, booking essential, email [ArtOnTour@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:ArtOnTour@swindon.gov.uk). *This talk explores artworks and artists with links to Swindon, including Roy Bizley, Harold Dearden and Nicholas Monro.*

### A Celebration of Colour

**Committee Room 3, off the foyer of the Civic Offices**, Ongoing, Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm

Enter the building 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.'*

Art on Tour continued

**The Art of Industry, STEAM Museum of the Great Western Railway,**

Ongoing, 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. ‘The Art of Industry’ includes work by Leon Kossoff, Margaret Neve and Ken White, amongst others from the Swindon Collection.’*

**Ongoing exhibitions elsewhere**

**‘Pissarro: Father of Impressionism’ Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, until 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

Booking is essential, including members

**‘The World of Stonehenge’ British Museum, until 17<sup>th</sup> 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](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDy2RvseIW8ZPY4z7rBVfNg?view_as=subscriber)

**‘Hardy’s Wessex: The Landscapes That Inspired A Writer’ 28<sup>th</sup> May - 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

Wiltshire Museum, Devizes Open 7 days a week. Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 11-3

Pre-booking is recommended. <https://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/>

**Exhibition: The Lost Words until 18th September 2022**

Russell Coates Gallery, Bournemouth Open Tues - Sundays 10am-5pm

*‘This enchanting exhibition combines the creative talents of writer Robert Macfarlane and artist Jackie Morris to celebrate the relationship between language and the living world, and nature’s power to spark the imagination. <https://russellcotes.com/event/the-lost-words/>*

**Kelmscott Manor** ‘the inspirational Cotswold retreat of William Morris’ is now open until October. Thursday to Saturday from 10.30am to 5pm with timed entry for the manor house at 15 minute intervals, book online: <https://www.sal.org.uk/kelmscott-manor/>

**Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience** is a 20,000 square feet light and sound spectacular featuring two-storey projections of the artist’s most compelling works. Encounter the brilliance of one of history’s greatest artists in 360 degrees. Propyard, 39-46 Feeder Rd, Bristol, BS2 0SE <https://vangoghexpo.com/bristol/>

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

email: [admin@friendsofsmag.org](mailto: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 **make a donation to FSMAG.**

**Instagram**

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

Try out the Friends **Instagram account**, now with **1,124** 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/>