



CONTENTS

News

- Membership Survey 3
- Skillicorne Unveiling 4
- Friends Christmas Card 5
- AGM and Request for Volunteers 6
- New Members and The Wilson Shop 7

What's On

- Forthcoming Events 8
- Luncheon Clubs 9
- Forthcoming Exhibitions at The Wilson 11
- Tercentenary Civic Dinner 12
- PJ Crook's Gloucester Exhibition 14
- Cheltenham's links to *Trundling the Cheese* 16

Favourite Works Of Art

- Michael Ayrton's *The Field Roller* 18

Reviews

- Summer Party 20
- Visit to Hartlebury Castle 20
- Visit to National Memorial Arboretum 23
- Visit to Bristol Museum & Art Gallery 24
- Luncheon Club: From Ice Floes to Battlefields 26
- Luncheon Club: Cheltenham Since the 1700s 27
- Luncheon Club: Highlights from the American Museum Bath 29

Contacts

- Committee Who's Who and Contact Details 30-31

A Positive Response to our Membership Survey

Almost a quarter of the membership responded to our survey earlier this year, which is a high response rate for this kind of exercise. Some of the key findings were as follows.

- The main reason for joining the Friends is to support The Wilson. 47% of respondents gave this as their most important reason for becoming a member. The next most popular reason was to be able to attend the talks and visits organised by the Friends.
- Buying new acquisitions for The Wilson's collections is seen as the most important use for the Friends' funds, with conservation and maintenance of the collections the next most important.
- This newsletter is used by a majority of respondents as their principal way of finding out about Friends' news and events, with email the next most popular. Our website and our Facebook page are less popular, but almost two-thirds of respondents say that they would be interested in booking and paying for events online if this facility was available.
- Talks and visits are generally very popular, with over three-quarters of respondents in both cases rating them as "generally good" or "very well chosen." A large number of comments and suggestions were received on both topics, which will be taken into account in planning the future programme. It is clear that there is a preference for what might be called a "back to basics" approach in our programme, including more talks which are based around The Wilson's own collections and more "local" visits.
- Social events such as our summer and winter parties are less popular, with almost half of respondents saying that they are not interested in these. Again, almost thirty respondents provided additional comments which will be used when planning future events.

- Although the overall response was very positive, it's clear that we need to guard against being perceived as exclusive; some respondents felt that events were not always welcoming to outsiders.
- 98% of respondents think that their Friends' subscription represents good value for money, and over a third say that they would be prepared to pay more. Over 25% of respondents say that the Friends perform better than other similar organisations that they belong to, and almost 50% say that we perform comparably.

Full details of the survey responses can be found on our website. We would like to thank everyone who responded and provided us with such helpful information on which to base the future of the organisation.

Hilary Simpson

Skillicorne Unveiling

The portrait of Captain Henry Skillicorne was unveiled on 3 May just after the last edition went to print. Below and overleaf are 'before' and 'after' photos of the event.





Buy your Christmas Cards and Support the Friends

Our fundraising Christmas cards feature *Melting Snow* by Alfred Thornton, which was donated by the artist to Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum in 1923.



Thornton studied at the Slade School of Fine Art during the 1890s and his *Diary of an Art Student of the Nineties* is a fascinating account of that era. In the 1920s he settled in Painswick, and became a leading member of the Cheltenham Group of Artists.

Cards are available in packs of ten for £6.50, and will also be on sale in The Wilson shop. They are printed on good quality card and the text says "With Best Wishes for a Merry

Christmas and a Happy New Year", with information about the artist on the back.

Packs can also be ordered by post. Please add £1.50 for postage and packing - making a total cost of £8.00 per pack - if you order in this way. Send a cheque made payable to FCAGM with your name and address on the back to Hilary Simpson, 67 Prestbury Road, Cheltenham GL52 2BY.

All proceeds go directly to the Friends of The Wilson.

Hilary Simpson

AGM 2016

A well-attended AGM was held on 30 June at The Wilson. After the formal business, our Deputy Chair Adrian Barlow presented the results of the member survey. Our guest speaker was James Hodsdon, who outlined the fascinating and colourful life of Captain Henry Skillicorne, whose portrait we recently purchased.

A full list of the 2016-17 committee can be found at the back of this newsletter.

Hilary Simpson

Volunteers

The Wilson is looking for volunteers to join the Visitor Services Team. To find out more, please contact Laren Bonanos or Lindsey Draper on 01242 775713 or email Laren at laren.bonanos@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk or Lindsey Draper at lindsey.draper@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk.

New Members

We welcome the following members who have recently joined the Friends:

Virginia & David Adsett	Rosemary Kember
Tony & Marion Beeney	Janet Macpherson
Maureen Carnan	Joan & Gerry McAllister
Anita Caslake	Bridget Pettigrew
Margaret Cleverley	Michelle Rees
Corynna Jeudwine	Alex & Mary Robinson
Sue Forsyth	June Taylor
Heather Jackson	

The Wilson Shop

There are exciting developments in 'The Wilson Shop' this autumn/winter:

- The shop will soon be launching the 'ARTium' (art in the atrium!) where there will be original works and prints by artists for sale (the focus is on 2D/ fine art so the work on sale will differ from that of The Guild at 51).
- The shop will also be hosting Cards For Good Causes again from mid-October. Other Christmas lines (non CFGC) and gifts will also be in the shop as part of the Christmas and gift ranges.
- The shop is increasing the selection of products licensed from pieces within the collections. This has started with a range of products featuring (the recently acquired & displayed) Glad Eye Penguin postcard (mugs, tote bags, notebooks, notelets, greeting cards & postcards). It will also be launching products featuring designs from the Arts & Crafts Movement Collection, local history and The Edward Wilson collection soon.

Friends get 10% discount off permanent stock ranges (not original artwork and prints) in the shop on presentation of a membership card.

Vikki Dean, Retail Co-ordinator, The Cheltenham Trust

Forthcoming Events

Cheltenham

Our own Friends' events are in **blue**, The Wilson's events in **red**.

Until October

A Common Spirit: the Century Guild and the early Arts and Crafts Movement
The Wilson

Until end 2016

A Sense of Place
The Friends Gallery, The Wilson

19 – 23 September

Study Tour
Lille

22 September

At Home with PJ Crook
The Old Police Station, Bishop's Cleeve

24 September – 8 January 2017

The Last Word in Art
The Wilson

24 September – 15 January 2017

Cheltenham Illustration Awards 2016
Tales of Nonsense
The Friends Gallery, The Wilson

1 November 12:00

Luncheon Club 154: Dame Laura Knight, DBE, RA, RWS 1877 - 1970
Heather Whatley
St Matthew's Church

3 November

Tercentenary Civic Dinner
Pittville Pump Room

9 December 12:00

Luncheon Club 155: Enchanted Cotswold Country: John Drinkwater and the Arts and Crafts Movement
Kirsty Hartsiotis
St Matthew's Church

Frameworks Partners

The Holburne Museum, Bath:
www.holburne.org

Until 2 October
Stubbs and the Wild

Until 6 November
A Handful of Dust

Until 2 January 2017
Linda Brothwell: The Missing

Victoria Art Gallery, Bath:
www.victoriagal.org.uk

10 September – 27 November
Kenneth Armitage 1916 – 2002
Centenary sculpture exhibition

3 December – 19 February 2017
Jean Rose: the Poetry of the Everyday
Peter Brown: A Bath Painter's Travels

Forthcoming Events continued

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery:

www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-museum-and-art-gallery/

Until 31 October
Through Whose Hands It Passes

Until 14 May 2017
Adela Breton: Ancient Mexico in Colour

17 September – 25 June 2017
Stone Age to Iron Age

22 October – 23 April 2017
Warrior Treasures: Saxon Gold from the Staffordshire Hoard

Swindon Museum & Art Gallery:

www.swindonmuseumandartgallery.org.uk

Until 19 September
Wiltshire's Story in 100 Objects

21 September – 28 January 2017
Still Life

Time for Tea: Functional and beautiful pots from the Swindon Collection

From Where I'm Standing

November and December Lunchtime Talks

On Tuesday 1 November, Heather Whatley will give a talk on Dame Laura Knight, DBE, RA, RWS 1877 - 1970.

Heather Whatley founded and has been Chair of the Malvern Friends of Dame Laura Knight Society since 2008.



She will be talking about Laura Knight's early years, from her birth near Nottingham in 1877 till she came to Malvern in 1931. By this time Laura was already in her 50s, a well established woman artist and shortly to be made a Royal Academician. Then Heather will go on to explore the periods Laura and Harold Knight spent here until his death in Colwall in 1961 (referred to by Elizabeth Knowles as her 'Golden Years').



Heather describes herself as an enthusiastic amateur, not an art historian but someone who has always admired art and artists. When she retired to Malvern "from a completely different life", by chance she came upon Laura Knight's long connection with the area. Since then she has learned a good deal about this significant, representational artist and frequently gives talks to promote awareness.

Following Dame Laura's death in London in 1970, aged 92, her reputation was overlooked and her connection with the district was sadly forgotten. Recently, however, Laura Knight's contribution to British art has been reassessed. It is on the range and depth of her work over a

long creative life that the speaker will concentrate.

On Friday 9 December, Kirsty Hartsiotis will give a talk entitled: Enchanted Cotswold Country: John Drinkwater and the Arts and Crafts Movement.



Dymock poet John Drinkwater had links with the Arts and Crafts Movement from his early days in Birmingham, through to his time living in Far Oakridge, near Stroud, during the First World War.

Kirsty is the Decorative Arts & Designated Collection Curator at The Wilson.

Jan Turner

Forthcoming Exhibitions at The Wilson

The Last Word in Art

24 September – 8 January 2017

The Last Word in Art explores the theme of language – word, image and body – in 20th century and contemporary art. There will be work on display across a range of media by artists including David Hockney, Richard Hamilton, Tracey Emin, Jeremy Deller, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Roy Lichtenstein, Georges Braque and Ben Nicholson. Selected from the Arts Council collection and the collections held at The Wilson, the exhibition will show artists' approaches to the use of text and language in the visual arts, and prompt debate about how ideas around the visual, literary and conceptual converge and diverge.



Door-portrait of Mr Whittern from A Whittern & Sons grocers, currently undergoing conservation thanks to over £3,000 raised through crowdfunding (which included many donations from members of the Friends) so that it can go on display as part of the Last Word in Art exhibition.

WHAT'S ON

The Arts and Crafts Movement Gallery contains internationally important pieces, including furniture, jewellery and ceramics. From October 2016, a new display **Ingenious Woodwork** explores the techniques of woodcarving and inlay in the Arts and Crafts Movement, featuring work by Ernest Gimson, Arthur Simpson and George Jack, and more.

The Paper Store displays items from The Wilson's fascinating archive collection relating to Edward A Wilson, Cheltenham and the Arts and Crafts Movement. 2016's theme is Visits and Visitors - to celebrate 300 years of Cheltenham as a spa town. From November 2016 a new display, **Illumination!**, shows beautiful calligraphy, illuminated manuscripts and private press books drawn from the Emery Walker Library.

Showing work drawn from the fine art collection at The Wilson, **The Language of Landscape** in the Friends Gallery will embrace different ways of viewing landscapes by exploring mark-making, abstraction, and ways of expression.

Check out The Wilson website for their Autumn/Winter What's On brochure.

Tercentenary Civic Dinner

3 November at Pittville Pump Room



There are still a few places left at the Tercentenary Civic Dinner on 3 November. This has been organised by the Cheltenham Civic Society in partnership with the Friends to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the discovery of mineral waters in Cheltenham.



Chris Moore from the Rococo Players in their 2012 production of The Rivals

Join us in the splendid surroundings of Pittville Pump Room for an evening in the company of the Mayor, the Lord Lieutenant, the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire and representatives of Cheltenham's many organisations, societies and institutions.

Entertainment will be provided by the Harpsichord Collective and the Rococo Players. The Harpsichord Collective perform baroque chamber music for voices and instruments, and will bring their period harpsichord with them to the Pump Room to entertain us with some music from the period – some familiar, and some less so.

The Rococo Players specialise in staging plays in atmospheric locations and you may have seen their performances of Shakespeare and other classic drama at Gloucester Cathedral, Berkeley Castle or Warwick Castle. They will join us at the Pump Room to perform a comic interlude on Cheltenham's origins.

The evening will also be marked by the formal presentation to Cheltenham Borough Council of the portrait of Captain Henry Skillicorne recently purchased by the Friends.

It promises to be a very special evening and we hope that as many Friends as possible will join us. For more information please see the website at cheltenham300.wordpress.com.



Hilary Simpson

Time is Time was Time's Future



The Museum of Gloucester is showing an exhibition of our President, PJ Crook's work entitled *Time is Time was Time's Future* until 24 September.

The inspiration for the exhibition came after PJ had been commissioned to make a 3D painting, based on the famous cheese rolling at Cooper's Hill near Gloucester, and happened across Charles Gere's 1948 painting of the



same subject in the Museum of Gloucester's collection. She wondered how many other of the Museum's works and hers may be related.

The exhibition pairs over 50 of PJ's vibrant works, the paintings over-spilling exuberantly on to the frames, with works

on similar themes from the permanent collection.



A large sci-fi painting, *Tin God*, chimes with the summer Robot exhibition in an adjoining room prompting a child's comment in the Visitors' Book: "came for the robots but really enjoyed the PJ Crook paintings".

Lovers of aircraft can enjoy C.E.P. Davis's paintings and of nostalgia will enjoy the pairing of *The Big Race* and a *Totopoly Board*



Game from 1950. PJ's *The Piggy-Wig Stood* is accompanied by a gloriously fat *Gloucester Old Spot* by John Miles of Northleach.

Notable paintings from the permanent collection include Walter Sickert's *Glencora*, Thérèse Lessore's *The Serpentine in Spring* and William Shayer's *Gypsy Encampment*.

The £5 entry fee allows admission to this museum as well as the Gloucester Life Museum (formerly Gloucester Folk Museum) for a year.

The Museum of Gloucester is well worth a visit and has a lot for children to see and do. Other highlights include: a Lynn Chadwick sculpture; a copy of the *Invictus* poem (written by WE Hardy, pupil of the Crypt School, Gloucester) signed by Francois Piennaar the 1995 Rugby World Cup winning South African captain (see final verse below); remains of a Roman wall; the oldest complete set of the Gloucester Table Game (an early version of Backgammon); Roman Glevum to Saxon Gloucester; the Civil War and the Siege of Gloucester; and Medieval Meals (including Pudding of porpoise!).

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*

Martin Renshaw



Cheltenham links to *Trundling the Cheese*

When my husband and I were in Australia in 1996, one of the many art galleries we visited was that of New South Wales, in Sydney, where we were intrigued by an 1887 water-colour of a scene that looked strangely familiar. The Gallery's staff were very helpful but, after searching their archives, the only information they could give us about the painting was the name of the artist, R. Thorne Waite.



Back at home in Cheltenham, I made enquiries at our own Art Gallery (now The Wilson), and was told that they had one or two paintings by that artist, donated to them many years ago by his nephew, Councillor Wilfred Waite. So - there was the definite connection we'd suspected and the painting, *Trundling the Cheese*, obviously depicted our local annual event now known as Cheese Rolling.

On our next visit to Sydney, we took to the Art Gallery of NSW a letter I'd written covering all we could learn about the artist, with photographs we had taken of the Cheese Rollers Inn, of Cooper's Hill, the venue, and several others of the actual event obtained from the records of the Gloucestershire Echo, along with an extract describing it from *A Year in the Cotswolds* by John Hudson.

We immediately had a telephone call to our Sydney apartment from the Curator of International Art at the Gallery, delighted and full of thanks for our package which meant they now had some information about their water colour, *Trundling the Cheese*. In appreciation, he said he would have the painting removed from its frame and suitably copied for us. A month or two later, we duly received this, together with further information he had since been able to discover about the artist. My vision of a Cheltenham resident having taken the painting with him as a nostalgic reminder of home, upon emigrating to Australia, was put to rest, the facts advised by the Curator being much more prosaic. When the Art Gallery of New South Wales opened in about 1882, finances did not stretch to buying many oil paintings and so their representative in UK had bought at auction many of the much cheaper water colours to help fill the new Gallery, one of these being *Trundling the Cheese*.

The artist, Robert Thorne Waite (1842-1935) was born in Cheltenham, educated at the town's Grammar School and studied at South Kensington. He was elected A.R.W.S. in 1876 and R.W.S. in 1884. The Royal Society of Watercolourists had advised me when I'd initially enquired in 1996 that they had no record of him, but in view of this later information, their suggestion that he'd been a member of "the old W.S." was perhaps the answer.

A click on the computer these days immediately produces a tremendous amount of information about artists and illustrations of their work, as is now the case with Robert Thorne Waite, but it is not so exciting as doing one's own research!

We have now offered the copy to The Wilson for their collection.

Joan Moore

Favourite Paintings/Objects from The Wilson's Collection

This is the first in what we hope will be a regular series of people talking about a work of art from The Wilson that is special to them. We invite contributions from Friends, Trustees, volunteers and staff.

In The Friends' Gallery: Michael Ayrton's *The Field Roller* (1948)

Field rollers: essential, heavy-duty farm equipment. They break down clods of earth after ploughing, embed the scattered seed and make it easier to harvest crops that will lie close to the surface. The earliest field rollers were improvised from tree trunks; later, granite was sometimes used. Horses or oxen pulled them. Today they are steel, and in the Fens huge tractors pull gangs of them across prairie-like fields.



Michael Ayrton's painting of an abandoned field roller always draws my gaze. It

was painted when Ayrton was only 27, and shows the influence of Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland; but it's a mysterious picture that might have been painted by a much older artist, someone with a strong sense of continuity and an abiding awareness of the past. Ayrton once wrote, "I do not believe it is possible to create living art out of anything but the direct visual experience of nature, combined with the heritage of a tradition."*

Ayrton's field roller dominates the picture, but not the landscape. Abandoned and semi-derelict, its chassis, with its two rough-hewn wooden braces, has collapsed on one side. Poppies and dandelions entwine the ironwork; daisies and grasses flourish in the fallow field beyond. But in the middle distance, the corn is waving, ready for harvest. Sunlight just catches the distant edge of the field and the far hills are in shadow against the strange pink light.

Actually, the sky has a hole in it. Above the white cloud a patch has been scraped away by the artist, revealing a faint gauze-like texture. Ayrton believed in the power of metaphor and image; and beyond the abandoned roller, beyond the fields, beyond the blue hills and the pink sky, this glimpse of the barely-primed canvas suggests possibilities stretching way beyond the limits of our ability to see.

Adrian Barlow

*Michael Ayrton, *Golden Sections* (1957), p.80



Summer Party 2016 at Abbotswood



Our summer party this year was held at Abbotswood Gardens near Stow-on-the-Wold. During a period of otherwise dismal weather, we somehow managed to secure a sunny day for it. The house at Abbotswood (which dates from the 1860s but was remodelled by Lutyens in 1901-2) sits in a large landscaped park with

beautiful formal gardens by Lutyens, including a lily pond, terraced lawn and fountain. After exploring these idyllic surroundings we rounded off the afternoon with tea at the picturesque village hall in Lower Swell.

Hilary Simpson

Visit to Hartlebury Castle



A very select group of Friends, just 23 of us, set out on a fine spring morning for the Worcestershire countryside. Our driver took the scenic route, courtesy of his satnav, but we eventually arrived at Hartlebury Castle, home to successive Bishops of Worcester for over a thousand years.

A Saxon king of Mercia gave the land to a Bishop of Worcester in 854 AD, possibly with a view to using the Bishop's men to defend the kingdom from marauding Vikings sailing up the river, and from the Welsh. During its long life, the Castle was visited by various reigning monarchs from Edward I to our own Queen. There was a brief period when the Parliamentarians sold it to a local man. He carried out a considerable refurbishment before returning it to the Church.



In the early years of this century, the building was considered to be too large to maintain for a bishop's sole use, and a more practical house was found in Worcester. The Castle was bought by the County Council, principally to house a collection of nineteenth and twentieth century artefacts donated by a local family and for civic functions. This also proved impractical and the Castle was put up for sale.

A heritage group was formed to attempt to buy the building and maintain it as a place of historic interest. With the help of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund this was accomplished in 2015.

The building has the appearance of a rambling manor house built of mellow local sandstone. The chapel is two storeys high with Gothic windows and an enclosed gallery. The Great Hall is well-proportioned and hung with portraits of

many past bishops. The saloon is painted in pale green, with what appears to be delicate plaster work on the ceiling, though this is in fact made of papier-mâché.

When a certain Bishop Hurd arrived in the diocese, he was already in possession of a large, eclectic collection of books, and a Library was built over the long gallery to house them. Unusually, the shelves are recessed into the walls, though their wooden surrounds are in fact painted plaster. We were privileged to examine and handle various tomes, some dating from the seventeenth century.



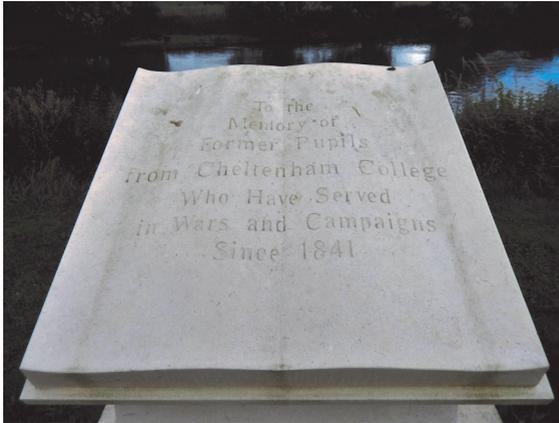
The local museum now occupies the upper floor with displays about farming and horticulture as well as the collection mentioned above. There is an outbuilding housing vintage vehicles and a large collection of gypsy wagons. The grounds are now properly maintained and paths beside the moat are being reinstated for public use.

It is good to know that this historic building is beginning a new phase of life in the safe hands of devoted volunteers.

Sue Fairclough

Visit to the National Memorial Arboretum

In July, a number of Friends enjoyed a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas. The pictures below show the memorials to Cheltenham College former pupils and the Naval Services:



Visit to Bristol Museum & Art Gallery



Following an invitation from the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, 26 Friends visited them in July to see Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait at the Age of 63*, on loan from the National Gallery, and their refurbished and re-displayed European Old Masters Gallery.

Our enjoyment and appreciation was enhanced by an introductory talk by Fine Arts curator, Jenny Gaschke. She explained that this was one of over 90 self-portraits by Rembrandt and was painted in the last year of his life in 1669. It is characterised by the extraordinary rendition of the face; the paint being applied much more thickly

than elsewhere, evoking the texture of aged flesh. It is an introspective image, less brazen than his younger self but no less dignified.

The style of the Rembrandt is in marked contrast to, displayed alongside, his contemporary Jan de Bray's *Portrait of an Unknown Old Woman*, a member of the confident Dutch merchant class, in which there are no visible brush strokes.

On the other side are 5 Rembrandt etchings from the museum's own collection: 4 depicting biblical stories – *The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds*, *The Raising of Lazarus*,





Abraham's Sacrifice and Christ and the Woman of Samaria – and, unexpectedly, Landscape with a Cottage and a Haybarn.

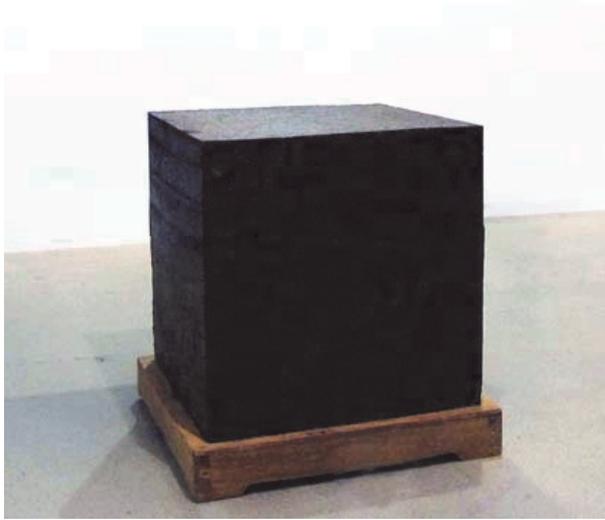
The European Old Masters gallery covers the period from 1300-1700 and the museum were justifiably proud to have recently had confirmation that their *Ecce Homo* is by the Spanish Baroque painter, Murillo. Other highlights include: *A River in Spate* by Jacob van Ruisdael; *Kitchen Interior* by Jan Steen; a massive *Noah's Ark* by Jan Griffier, the Elder; and a beautifully sensitive *Portrait of Madame Bruguère* by Antoine-Jean Gros,

concentrating on her eyes and wistful expression.

The adjoining gallery exhibits British Artists including Constable, Lawrence, Gainsborough, Reynolds and Stubbs.

After a Café lunch we were offered an optional extra tour by the Modern and Contemporary Art curator, Julia Carver of the *Art from Elsewhere* touring exhibition hosted jointly with the Arnolfini. This afforded a great insight into less familiar works (video, installation, photography and painting) from the 1960s to the present.





Feminist artists such as Barbara Kruger, Nancy Spero, Kara Walker and Ana Mendieta were well represented but the most striking piece was a grey-brown cubic meter sculpture with an oddly aromatic fragrance. This turned out to be Ai Wei Wei's *A Ton of Tea*. The tea leaves have been dried and compressed into a block form, a traditional means of preserving and

transporting tea. Someone had calculated that it could be used to make 200,000 pots of tea!

Martin Renshaw

Anne Strathie on A Call to Arms for Edward Wilson's Terra Nova Companions

Anne Strathie based her talk on *From Ice Floes to Battle Fields, 'Antarctics' in the First World War* which is her second book about Scott's Antarctic Expedition. She introduced us to its survivors, known in a group as the 'Antarctics', as though they were old friends of hers. Their ship, Terra Nova, had arrived back in the UK in 2013 and many of the returnees very quickly found themselves on active service in the First World War.

The enthralling aspects of the tales Anne Strathie told, with the help of her many photographs from 1912 to the 1920s, were the personal events and coincidences of the war-time lives of the Expedition Scientists and Ship's Officers and, especially for the Friends' audience, their connections with the Cotswolds.



Victor Campbell, Naval Officer and Scientist, was involved with the attempted defence of Antwerp early in the war where poet, Rupert Brooke, also served. They met again in the battles of the Dardenelles and Gallipoli. Unlike Brooke, Campbell survived the war; a be-medalled veteran.

Cecil Meares, the Expedition's Dog-handler, with an entertaining sense of humour, gave five lectures about the Expedition in Cheltenham early in 1914. He later served in the Northumberland Hussars alongside Lawrence Johnston, founder of Hidcote Gardens.

Harry Pennell, Captain of the Terra Nova, was married in Oddington. His wife's numerous brothers had all attended Cheltenham College. Unfortunately, he did not survive the war; he was serving on HMS Queen Mary when it was sunk in the Battle of Jutland.

A statue of Edward Wilson was unveiled in Cheltenham by Captain Scott's widow in July 1914 less than a month before war was declared. As we learnt with interest from Anne Strathie he was not the only Expedition member with famous friends and Gloucestershire connections.

Tricia Wilson

Dr. Steven Blake on What the Visitors Thought – a light-hearted look at Cheltenham since the 1700s

Being a true Cheltonian, I became a little concerned upon being told that early visitors considered us ignorant and illiterate folk, including a couple of alleged witches together with obligatory cat! Some of the mixed visitors reviews were "damn dull", "nothing fit for gentry" and "no understanding of rational thought"; this being based on a population of circa 2,000 country folk! The town contained only one lodging house, and I dread to think what the critique of that was!

However, upon discovery of 'the waters' in 1716 and the subsequent visit by George III and his retinue, matters began to improve and visiting ladies were much taken by the shady well walks, gardens and musical entertainments whilst they were taking the air in their London finery. But this largesse was not to last as the waters lost their favour of being "most efficacious in every case" and the seaside took its place as a favourite destination. Sometime later, in 1820, William Cobbett chose to ride through with his usual scathing commentary:



"Cheltenham... they call a "watering place"; that is to say, a place to which East India plunderers, West India floggers, English tax-gorgers, together with gluttons, drunkards, and debauchees of all descriptions, female as well as male, resort... in the hope of getting rid of the bodily consequences of their manifold sins and iniquities... To places like this come all that is knavish and all that is foolish... It is situated in a nasty, flat, stupid spot, without anything pleasant near it."

Dr. Blake's popular presentation was accompanied by well-chosen slides to illustrate his intelligent, informative and amusing words. Thanks to Dr. Blake for giving us food for thought past and present.

Janette Broome

Judi Grant on Fab @ 50 – Part II, with additions

This was my first Buffet Lunch with the Friends of the Wilson and it will certainly not be the last! The venue at St Matthew's Church was appropriate, comfortable and welcoming. I was pleased to meet with fellow members, some of whom I had met at other Cheltenham cultural societies.



Prior to the talk we were invited to help ourselves to the excellent and varied buffet.

The talk given by Judi Grant, volunteer Tour Guide at The American Museum Bath, traced the history of the Museum and was illustrated by numerous slides. The museum was founded by two antique collectors, American Dallas Pratt and Brit John Judkyn, opening in July 1961. The exhibits cover American history in the form of Period Rooms from 1690 to 1860, including a Textile Room for quilts and coverlets, depicting events in people's lives using whatever materials they had to hand. The Shaker Room contains domestic furniture. There is also a yearly changing exhibition of more recent American history. Judi concluded her talk by showing us some of

the Art exhibited, including a naive painting by Grandma Moses.

I have not visited the American Museum and found the talk full of fascinating facts. For example, I thought that the feathered headdress was purely ornamental or showed the position in the tribe but in fact the feathers are cut and notched to indicate acts of bravery.

Following this most enjoyable event The American Museum is high on my Bucket List!

Chris Jones

Committee Who's Who

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Deadline for next issue: 24 November for January 2017 edition. Please send articles, illustrations, letters, news and reports to the editor: editor@friendsofthewilson.org.uk. Articles may be edited and the editor's decision is final. Articles should be a maximum of 270 words unless otherwise agreed with the editor and accompanied by an image or images if possible.

Change of address or contact details: Please provide any change of address or contact details to the Membership Secretary (membership@friendsofthewilson.org.uk).

Newsletter Dates and Mailing Preferences: Newsletters are published in January, May and September each year. Wherever possible, we will include booking forms for events such as visits and Luncheon Clubs with your copy of the Newsletter. At other times we will contact you by email if we have your email address, as this keeps our costs (and administrative effort) to a minimum. If we do not have your email address already, please let us know. If we have your email address but you would prefer to receive information by post where possible and appropriate, please also let us know.
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Cover photo: *Abbotswood Garden, venue for the Friends Summer Party (see page 20)*



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