



contemporary art society for wales  
cymdeithas celfyddyd gyfoes cymru

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# NEWSLETTER 2015

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## Thoughts from the Chair...

DEAR CASW MEMBER,

As I reflect on another year of CASW's activities, I value the opportunity to share my thoughts with you and to send best wishes to you and yours. I hope the holiday period was enjoyable and, in keeping with the spirit of Christmas, that the New Year will bring the sense of renewal we all try to achieve. If I were to choose one word to sum up the CASW year 2014 then it would be 'generosity'. I am constantly reminded of this theme in witnessing the amount of hard work done by the Executive Committee and by CASW members not on the committee. To produce the programme involves a lot of hard work; discussing, planning and then organising and executing. Individuals give freely of their time and energy and I hope no one's contribution goes unrecognized.

Our lecture programme is central to the life of CASW and Judith Foy organized 12 lectures covering a range of topics from ceramics to fine art and art history which, I believe, are enjoyed by you. Indeed, your pleasure is important and helps turn the wheel of CASW. The general events programme was put together by Sian Williams, whose role is now taken on by Sonia Davies.

I identify Judith and Sian as their roles were clearly defined, but I am very aware that for the show to go on the road there is an army of workers behind the scenes, especially on our Saturday lectures at Lisvane. To produce the best lunch in Cardiff for the price can only be achieved with detailed planning of the food and organising of the hall. I cannot mention everyone but I do thank Sonia Davies' experienced organisation. You will have a programme of future events with this publication and as always it looks interesting, balanced and CASW can be proud.

For CASW to function well we are reliant on the essential work of Dan Evans, the Membership Secretary; Gwyn Stone, the Treasurer; Arthur Parker, the Assistant Secretary and our working President, Bryan Hibbard who manages the website, alongside numerous other tasks. These roles are performed with diligence and professionalism; they are the backbone of the Society and enable me to relax in their competence.

I am pleased to report we have 30 new members this year and our finances are very healthy so we were able to keep to our budget in planning for a student prize of £1000, support for Artes Mundi of £1000, an Eisteddfod prize of £2000 and £6000 (match-funded by the Morel and Gibbs Trusts) for purchasing works of art for Paintings in Hospitals.

Our planning for 2015 will include funding the free Tuesday lecture programme, a postgraduate prize of £1000, an Eisteddfod prize, £8000 for an award and an exhibition at Cyfarthfa of CASW works gifted to the museum. Our events have included visits to Dilys Jackson's workshop at Cyfarthfa, and study tours to Margate and Prague. Dilys Jackson and Tom and Ilse Fisher Hayes were the organisers and are also Executive Committee members but I highlight the significant contributions made by Sylvia Olley and Paul and Jo Weiner, who are not committee members.

Again on the theme of generosity, I mention the passing of Audrey Jones and of Bernard Rees. Audrey had a stoical approach to life and a dedication to community work in general. She was also a support to her husband, Huw, in his chairmanship. Bernard Rees served on the executive committee as Membership Secretary, Vice-Chairman and Vice-President, but his striking quality was his attitude to life of full commitment and goodwill. I applaud both and feel I have learnt from them. Sadly, I cannot mention other members who have passed away but I am told CASW made a difference to their lives and, I know, they to us.

As always, the AGM at Carmarthen saw an end and a beginning. It was the end of their time on the Committee for Sian Williams, Audrey Walker and Jean Williams. Sian and Jean continue to give generously of their time in working for the Society. I must say more about Jean as she has played such a pivotal role in the Society. She held the office of Secretary for eight years as the lynch-pin of CASW activities, but among all her qualities I would single out her sound counsel, networking on the Society's behalf and her joyous approach. The beginning is that new members join the committee and we have been fortunate in Andy Taylor, our new Secretary, Steve Bowkett and Fiona Gilligan.







Andy has had a baptism of fire as he arrived at a busy time of management and, although challenging, he has established his position with commitment and charm. Fiona is taking us into the digital age and social networking by tweeting on our behalf. At the AGM our buyer Robert Harding presented his purchases which, as noted above, were jointly funded by CASW and the Morel and Gibbs Trusts. We are grateful for the support of the Trusts, which also enabled us to exhibit the works at Oriel Canfas, a public exhibition opened by Mark Drakeford.

Tom and Ilse Fisher Hayes hosted an event which was multi-layered. It was a fundraising event, an open house to view their art collection and a collection of Frank Roper's work as part of the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of his birth. Next year we will be seeing the launching of the e-journal; hopefully by the summer. The formatting and the work on the articles are both near completion. We have already announced one important event for 2015, which is the CASW Gift Award of £9000. This included an extremely generous gift of £1000 from Sian Williams. As a variation on our purchasing we invited museums to compete for this award by putting forward a project. We had eight applicants and we have awarded the prize to Carmarthen County Museum for their modern version of a Welsh dresser to display newly-commissioned works of art. The work will be unveiled at Carmarthen in the early summer and presented to CASW at the AGM in July.

I end as I began by highlighting the generosity of CASW members. We have received a legacy of £1,000 from the estate of Donald Moore and two works of art previously bought and gifted by CASW appeared at an auction in Cardiff. Two of our members, Penny Owen and Jenny McClelland, bought one piece, *Ship Aground* by Donald Matthews, and have given it to CASW so it can again be part of the collection. A wonderful end to a sad story. I think you will appreciate why I have made such a point of highlighting the generosity of our members; hopefully it invites other members to join the committee, work alongside the committee or just support us in your own particular way. My heartfelt thanks to all.

**Chris Evans** *CASW Chairman*

# INTRODUCING YOUR NEW SECRETARY

HELLO

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Andy Taylor and since the July 2014 AGM of CASW I have become the new secretary of the Society. I've had the pleasure of meeting many members already but this column gives me the opportunity to tell you a little of my background and experience, which I hope will enable me to become a worthy successor to Jean Williams. Taking over from the redoubtable Jean will be a difficult task but I will do my best.

I retired just over a year ago, after 11 years as the Friends' Manager at Welsh National Opera. Many CASW members are supporters and members of the Friends of WNO and I therefore felt an immediate affinity at CASW. Before that I was a teacher at what is currently the University of South Wales. Since I started there in 1975, it has had many titles and I look forward with interest to the next incarnation. I very much enjoyed my 25 or so years teaching, which was in the area of the built environment. I qualified as a chartered quantity surveyor in 1970 and spent a few years in private practice until the opportunity to teach presented itself. Jean and I were contemporaries at the then Poly and we bumped into each other from time to time in odd committees. (Very odd if my memory serves!)

My experience as the Friends' manager at WNO will, I hope, enable me to settle quickly into the role of CASW secretary. There are many similarities in the two charities, not least the boundless enthusiasm and commitment of the members to share the magic of great art; whether opera or visual art, with as many people as possible. The ability of 'the arts' in general to contribute to national well-being is profound and we lose sight of that at our peril.

I look forward to meeting as many CASW members as possible in the coming years and I'd like to thank those I've already met for their warm welcome and fellowship.

**Andy Taylor**

PS This annual CASW publication is called a Newsletter. It seems to me that this is a rather lacklustre title which does not do justice to its contents. I wonder therefore if we should rename it? If you would like to contribute a suggestion please do so. My email address is [andytaylor2295@outlook.com](mailto:andytaylor2295@outlook.com). The next issue in January 2016 may bear your name!

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## "I'd have the Hepworth curlew"

Bryan Hibbard is the president of CASW and emeritus professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at Cardiff University. I was interested to hear his thoughts on how the society might develop in the future and what the word 'contemporary' means to him...

**AT** Who was your predecessor?

**BH** I took over from Betty Evans who herself took over from George Melly, two redoubtable characters and role models in very different ways! Having previously served CASW in a variety of activities over many years I see my role as an advisor and facilitator.

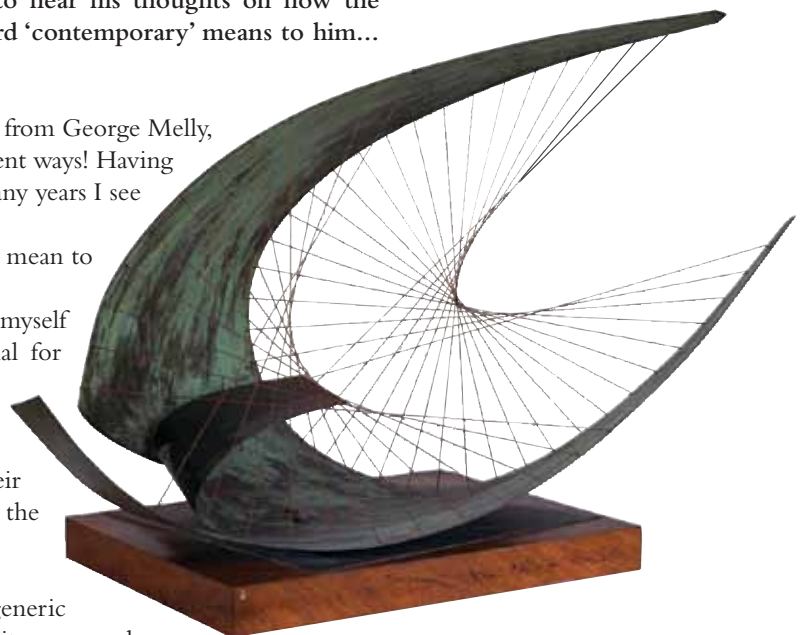
**AT** The word 'contemporary' is in our title, what does it mean to you?

**BH** I think it's what people, the Mad Hatter and myself included, choose it to mean. There is also the potential for confusion between 'contemporary' and 'modern' or even 'modernism'. Taking a narrow interpretation, contemporary is 'as of the time'. Many people take this to mean the work of living artists, some take it as being of their personal lifetime. The broadest definition is anything from the Impressionists onwards.

**AT** Some would even include the Impressionists?

**BH** Yes, they would and also embrace them under the generic term 'modern art'. One has to have a dividing line, albeit a personal one and mine is anything from WWII onwards. That gives plenty of scope.

**AT** You and Elizabeth are keen collectors evidenced by the lovely pictures in your living room; do you dabble yourself?



**BH** My art master at school despaired of me. I'm very left-handed and my generation were forcibly 'encouraged' to become right-handed. Consequently my artistic ability, if it ever existed, was compromised. My earlier creative instincts leant towards photography; but now I have huge piles of images waiting to be sorted and digitised. A problem common to many people, I think.

**AT** People with a science background are often drawn to the arts in general, why do you think this is so?

**BH** Scientists share with artists an originality of thought and a creative energy. But scientists are often bound by rigid rules and discipline so art can be something of an escape for them. This synergy between science and the arts is also seen in other forms. For example, I have a very musically talented nephew whose skills seem to fit well with his day job of running computer services at one of the major banks. Great artists are also disciplined and there is an affinity with their scientific fellows. Dylan Thomas had a chaotic life but as far as his work was concerned he had an iron discipline.

**AT** The age profile of supporters of arts organisations veers to the right...is this a serious issue for CASW?

**BH** The short answer is no. I think it's inevitable. Members need to be active and involved and this is where the strength of CASW lies. Another strength of CASW is the diverse nature of our membership – professional creators of art, curators, critics, historians and the rest of us as supporters and purchasers. They all are bound by the common thread of appreciation of art in all its forms. People from many different backgrounds with disparate areas of professional expertise contribute to the character of the society. Younger people are naturally preoccupied with careers and family and can't therefore give the time. But it's crucial that the seeds of art appreciation and latent interest are planted in young people, students, etc., so that when their time becomes less pressured, they come back to organisations like CASW and various 'Friends' groups. Keeping in touch using communication vehicles like our website, newsletters and social media outlets are vital tools to connect with both our active and latent members, and indeed the wider public.

**AT** How important are the arts in general to national well-being?

**BH** CASW began at the time of the Great Depression; there was a belief in the ability of the arts to uplift the human spirit when faced with material adversity. The society was founded by a group of London Welsh who met at the Great Western Hotel on Paddington Station (practically Wales!). An exhibition of contemporary arts was organised to tour Wales. It was curated by Augustus John and he continued to be a hugely influential figure in the early days of CASW. I think this philosophy still persists.

**AT** You have some beautiful paintings, is there a theme to your collection?

**BH** They're often impulse buys and landscapes predominate. They are evocative of places we've visited and enjoyed. But the artist's interpretation of landscape gives us the most satisfaction and enjoyment.

**AT** When you're away do you visit galleries?

**BH** Yes, and if there's something that strikes a chord the urge to buy is often too strong to resist. Our paintings give us great pleasure over many years.

**AT** How do you see the future of CASW...is it secure?

**BH** Yes I'm sure it is. Like all things it has to evolve and embrace change in response to the needs of its members. For example, overseas study trips are becoming less popular with members, but UK trips are, if anything, oversubscribed. Maybe it's a case of pressure on disposable income in these rather straitened times.

**AT** I'm going to give you a hypothetical pot of money...what will you buy?

**BH** If funds were unlimited and I was feeling altruistic, maybe a masterwork that needed to be saved for the nation. But altruism went by the board and I became more selfish, looking for personal pleasure. After careful thought I decided that a piece of abstract sculpture in an appropriate setting in the garden but in full view from the house which would give lasting pleasure in all moods was needed. After further agonised deliberation I settled for Barbara Hepworth's *Curlew*.

**AT** Consider it yours.

## Carmarthen County Museum

Chairman Chris, Jean Williams and I travelled to Carmarthen County Museum on the 18th November to view the work of photographer Marian Delyth, who is the recipient of the 2014 CASW Eisteddfod Prize.

Marian's work comprises 6 separate photographic images of individual people set against, sometimes misty sometimes clear, autumnal backgrounds. They are of men who were members of the Free Wales Army. Whatever one's views of the politics of the time and the rights and wrongs of the FWA campaign, it is part of the contemporary history of Wales and for that reason alone the art work is fully justified. It is also highly topical as it follows the effect of the Scottish referendum across the UK. The images are highly atmospheric and, of course, they stimulate thought as all good art should.

Whilst we were at the museum, which is the winner of the

CASW 2015 Gift Award, we took the opportunity to talk to Peter Bodenham, amongst others. Peter is the curator of the winning art work. The successful bid was for a contemporary Welsh dresser on which will be displayed ceramic and other medium art works, predominantly by Carmarthenshire-based craftspeople. We were able to discuss the siting of the dresser, which will be in an atrium-like space juxtaposed with some very fine traditional dressers. We were delighted with the enthusiasm shown by the museum and look forward to the development of the project as it moves to fruition. The team from Carmarthen will give a presentation to CASW members at the July 2015 AGM in Merthyr Tydfil and a formal 'unveiling' will take place at the museum in August.

**Andy Taylor**



# Ai WeiWei at Blenheim

A pop-up CASW coach-trip to Blenheim Palace to catch the Ai WeiWei exhibition, the palace's first adventurous foray into contemporary art, was an instant pre-Christmas hit with members.

The strange pairing of a dissident Chinese artist with the pinnacle of the English aristocracy had shock value. In Winston Churchill's low-lit birth room, for example, a pair of wooden handcuffs lay on the bed, referencing Ai's 81 days handcuffed in captivity, and on the wall a porcelain picture with a wire coat hanger bent into a profile of Marcel Duchamp. Ai, I was told, reveres Churchill as a fighter for democratic freedom and Duchamp as the man who freed modern art with the concept of the readymade.

Ai's artworks lived amongst the treasures of the palace: antique Chinese artisanal stools next to tapestries which took eight years to weave; a bowl heaped with kilos of freshwater pearls, numerous as rice grains and asking subtle questions about the worth of the individual and the many; that infamous Bronze Age vase inscribed with the Coca Cola logo on a hall table; porcelain river crabs cascading from a state room chimney piece in memory of the Chinese supporters who celebrated Ai's release from prison with this favourite delicacy; a vast red palace carpet replaced with a newly-woven wool carpet patterned like a Chinese dirt road, complete with tank tracks. Marble featured frequently and incongruously: marble for a builder's hard hat and a surveillance camera, for stumps of cut grass atop pillars, for chairs like the wooden ones which accompanied Ai's family into political exile.



Mysterious porcelain cubes were positioned in the chapel; apparently Ai would give no explanation. And in the grounds, a single porcelain water droplet and a strange unexplained pillar in a row of glittering Christmas trees overlooking the courtyard. So much to think about - and no labels for written guidance, though a major catalogue is in the pipeline. It was as though Ai was whispering - "Think for yourself about privilege, skill, work, art, the overlooked, the undervalued, the spied-upon, the captive, natural resources, pillage and power."

Thanks to Jean Williams and Fi Gilligan for organising a memorable day of grey skies and sparkling art.

Judy Stephens



# PRAGUE AUTUMN



Doug Anthony is a new CASW member and is emeritus professor of Japanese studies at Cardiff University. His particular areas of interest are the Japanese economy and the economic history of Japan...and, of course, contemporary art.

Leaving Cardiff in the morning darkness, our party travelled by coach to Heathrow and thence to Prague. We were met at Prague Airport by CASW members Paul and Jo Wiener and bussed to the K+K Central Hotel. A fine and comfortable art nouveau gem itself, a short walk from it enabled us to see many other examples of this most exuberant style of Prague architecture, perhaps most notably the close-by Municipal House.



Next morning, the bulk of our party was led via tram, by Paul and Jo, across the Vltava and up to Prague Castle and the massive gothic and part neo-gothic St. Vitus Cathedral. First-time visitors to Prague, of whom I was one, are likely to be astonished by the variety of what is to be seen on this huge site in its commanding position over the city. Jo and Paul rightly described it as a 'virtual textbook of central European architectural styles', but there is also much to be enjoyed by lovers of gardens, students of religious history and those whose particular joy is in the visual arts.



The walk back to the hotel took us through the crowds on Charles Bridge, past the Old Town Hall Tower with its famous astronomical clock, through the vibrant Old Town Square and eventually along Celetna Street. I single this location out because it allowed us to visit the Black Madonna House, one of the buildings in Prague which exhibits the unique form that cubism took there on its arrival in the early twentieth century. The Grand Café is housed here, and there can be few better ways to see cubist style and decoration than whilst enjoying its coffee and ice cream.



On day three, we took the long coach journey south into the Bohemian countryside to the town of Cesky Krumlov. Picturesquely situated on the lower reaches of the Vltava, much of its centre remains unaltered and is dominated by its huge castle. With little time to explore, some of our party opted instead for the little Egon Schiele gallery/museum. Schiele is usually placed in the Viennese secessionist school and is perhaps best known (notorious?) for his nude studies, which some still consider to be (near?) pornographic. You may judge for yourselves if you go to the Courtauld Gallery and see the exhibition of his *Radical Nudes* now showing there. But his very notoriety drove him out of Vienna, and for a relatively short time he found refuge in Cesky Krumlov (then known as Krumau). There he painted, inter alia, impressionistic pictures of its townscapes which can be seen in the gallery and which give a fuller insight into his peculiar genius.



Days four and five were a time when people could go freely to visit whatever most intrigued them on the Prague cultural scene. For me, and quite a few others I believe, this meant a memorable visit to the Franz Kafka Museum, where, with the aid of sound, film, photographs, letters and text, light was shed on the author's family background (particularly his fraught relationship with his father), his life, work, loves, influences, friendships and so on. In a twisting, tunnel-like space surely meant to echo the labyrinthine setting and plot of *The Trial*, one's understanding, if such it be, of Kafka's work seemed to deepen markedly; and it was exciting to know that we had walked the same streets and seen many of the sights familiar to him.



Another highlight was a visit to the Alphonse Mucha Museum, situated within easy walking distance of our hotel. Exhibited there was a good selection of the art nouveau posters for which he is so well known. The exhibition also gives an introductory insight into his *Slav Epic*, a work which he is said to have regarded as his life's fine art masterpiece and on which he lavished much time and effort after settling in Prague in his later years. All twenty of these large canvases are on display in the National Gallery's Veletržní Palace, and were seen by some of our party on their visit there. They serve as an example of something to be observed elsewhere in modern Czech art and letters: viz. the pivotal role of the artist in the revival of Czech national consciousness, and ultimately the creation of the modern Czech State. Whilst at the National Gallery, our main party was treated to a guided tour of an exhibition of Czech art since 1900.

Our final full day gave us perhaps our most comprehensive chance to gauge the range of contemporary art in the Czech Republic. It started with a visit to the studio of Antonín Stránecký, followed in the afternoon by a visit to an exhibition of the work of some post-modernist artists. There we met several of the exhibitors, who were happy to take questions and explain their work. Not yet fully satisfied, we moved on to receive a private view of an exhibition entitled "Discussion with Geometry" where again we met the contributing artists. They, too, were generous with their time and happy to respond to questions. As a final extension to our rapid trek through the regions of Czech contemporary art, on our way to the airport the following morning we visited the studio of Tomáš Cisarovský, another leading artist who was also most welcoming and ready to respond to our questions.

Lack of space prevents me from describing everything else we saw and did in Prague, but I can, at least, mention visits to the State Opera Theatre by some, whilst many visited the Jewish quarter of the city whence came, amongst others, the great, enigmatic Kafka.



Lastly, I should mention the Society's memorable dinner on the evening of our final day. It took place in the Café Imperial in the splendid art deco Imperial Hotel. We had there the opportunity as a party of thanking Paul and Jo for their indefatigable efforts on our behalf as guides, interpreters and all round dragomans. Here I should like to reiterate those thanks on behalf of the Society as a whole.

**Douglas Anthony**



# THE LONDON TRIP



Ann Stone reports on the CASW cultural visit to London in November organised by Chris and Dan Evans.



Our first stop was the recently refurbished Imperial War Museum. In the atrium we were transfixed by a Harrier Jump jet alongside a Spitfire, and a Sopwith Camel and a Mark V tank loomed overhead. In the Ashcroft Gallery, a poignant moment for me was reading the VC citation for the father of a dear friend. Also deeply moving and indeed shocking was the Holocaust Exhibition. Moving in a different way were the large numbers of schoolchildren at the museum and I talked to some girls, giggling, as they tried on prickly WWII uniforms. The best teachers can't compete with the immediacy of these graphic 'hands on' experiences. We saw some memorable pictures and I was struck by John Singer Sargent's mural called 'Gassed'. It depicts the horrors of mustard gas, juxtaposed with soldiers playing football. It was a memorable start to what was to prove a marvellous weekend.



The next day we were at the Arts Council Collection at the South Bank Centre where we were met by the knowledgeable and very entertaining curator, Ann Jones. The collection is the nation's largest of modern and contemporary art. Ann told us that the collection comprised some 8,000 works and one aim of the collection is to encourage the appreciation of contemporary art (not dissimilar to an aim of CASW). In the afternoon we visited the National Gallery to see the Rembrandt exhibition. It was disappointing, not for the art but for the excessive number of people squeezed into too little space. So, on to the National Portrait Gallery...always a treat, and it did not disappoint. Later that day we went to a reception at the offices of international law firm Simmons and Simmons. The firm has been collecting art for 25 years and has amassed an eclectic and very impressive collection.



Day three started with a visit to the Royal Academy to view the work of the German artist Anselm Kiefer. He uses straw, ash, clay, lead and shellac...even real diamonds to depict stars (I got too close and set off the alarm!). His work has been described as challenging and occasionally confrontational. I understood very little and was somewhat relieved to move on to the Sigmar Polke exhibition. Polke represented Germany in the 1986 Venice Biennale. An experimentalist, he worked with meteor dust, bubble wrap, soot and potatoes. I just thought it was weird but was curious where he got his dust from. In the evening at our hotel we enjoyed the traditional Society dinner and entertained some South African rugby fans with *Mae hen wlad fy nhadau*. They reciprocated but in view of the score we felt we had the upper hand.



Our final day began with a visit to the Dairy Arts Centre in Bloomsbury to see the Yoshitome Nara exhibition. Nara came to prominence in the art world during Japan's Pop Art movement in the 90s. His subjects are mainly children, especially girls. The progressive works began with an endearing simplicity but darkened considerably. They left me with a feeling of unease and disquiet. We then moved to the Zabudowicz Collection in Kentish Town. The works were mainly video installations, which I confess meant nothing to me. Finally, we visited the studio of Cardiff-born Laura Ford. She is a lecturer at Chelsea Art School and a visiting tutor. She was utterly charming and seemed genuinely pleased to meet us. Her work is widely displayed in London Galleries and nearer to home in the National Museum and the Glyn Vivian Gallery. The London trip was fascinating and, as is the case with all art forms, not all was in everyone's taste...but I would not have missed it for the world. Thanks are due in huge measure to Chris and Dan for their immaculate planning and superb organisation.

# MARGATE

Alan Spiller, recently appointed Vice-President of CASW, reports on the May study visit to Margate.

En route to Margate, our party stopped at the Lightbox Gallery in Woking. And what a revelation it was! Backed by an enlightened local council and with the drive of some seventy arts and culture enthusiasts, a highly successful gallery and museum was established some twenty years ago. Its welcoming atmosphere ensured its popularity with local people. Earlier in 2014, Lightbox staged an exhibition entitled 'Renoir in Britain' and it was a major triumph. Our party viewed a nostalgic exhibition of Hollywood photographs of the stars from the 1930s to the 1950s and an exhibition of artists working with people with learning difficulties.

Later that day we viewed the Faversham studio of sculptor Richard Wilson. Following his retirement from teaching art, Richard took to sculpture and we much enjoyed his delightful wood and stone pieces. This visit was arranged through a family connection of Dilys Jackson and it was one of those occasions that only CASW membership can facilitate.

Finally, we arrived at a misty and drizzly Margate to the excellent, if quirky, Walpole Bay hotel. Through the mist, we were assured, were sea views. Next day the weather slightly improved and the sea was more discernable. Our first port of call was to an installation by Alek Chinneck... a house with a brick façade built as if it had slipped. It alluded to the regeneration of derelict buildings in Margate and it caused much interested debate. We progressed to the Turner Contemporary Gallery for the 'Mondrian and Colour' exhibition. The 50 or so works traced Mondrian's journey to abstraction through colour. As *The Observer* put it... 'a real revelation'. The gallery also housed an exhibition by Spencer Finch and Edmund de Waal. Both used the gallery's openness to light to explore changes to their work as daylight progresses. The final exhibit at the gallery was a huge work by Sol le Witt, called *Wall Drawing No. 1136* which covered two whole walls.



Then on to Ramsgate and The Grange, Pugin's house and the adjacent church of St. Augustine...both built by Pugin. The church now belongs to the Archdioceses of Southwark and it demonstrates Pugin's dedication to his faith and to the town of Ramsgate. Thursday ended at UpDown Gallery in Ramsgate to view the works of Stephen Melton in an exhibition called 'Shop till they Drop'. His work caused much discussion on the short coach ride back to the Walpole.

The improving weather saw us visit the Shell Grotto, discovered in 1835 by James Newlove and his son while digging a duck pond! 70 metres long with 4.5 million shells (someone counted!) CASW really does take you to places other societies cannot reach. Then to Canterbury and the cathedral where we split; one group enjoyed the archives and the library, whilst the other saw the stonemason's workshop. Was the 11th century charter signed by William the Conqueror more interesting than the work of 17 masons preserving the fabric of the great building? Opinions varied and experiences were shared as we made our way back to Margate.

The journey back to Cardiff, after a most convivial last night dinner, began with a visit to Ightham Mote, a 14th century National Trust property near Sevenoaks, then to the Fire and Iron Gallery at Leatherhead. As the name implies, it displays the products of a forge run by husband and wife team, Lucy Quinell and Adam Boydell. When you're next in Surrey it's a much recommended visit. As the Severn Bridge hove into view, we reflected on a most enjoyable CASW holiday and huge thanks are due to Dilys and Sylvia for their exemplary organisation.





# Frank Roper: A 'Welsh' Sculptor

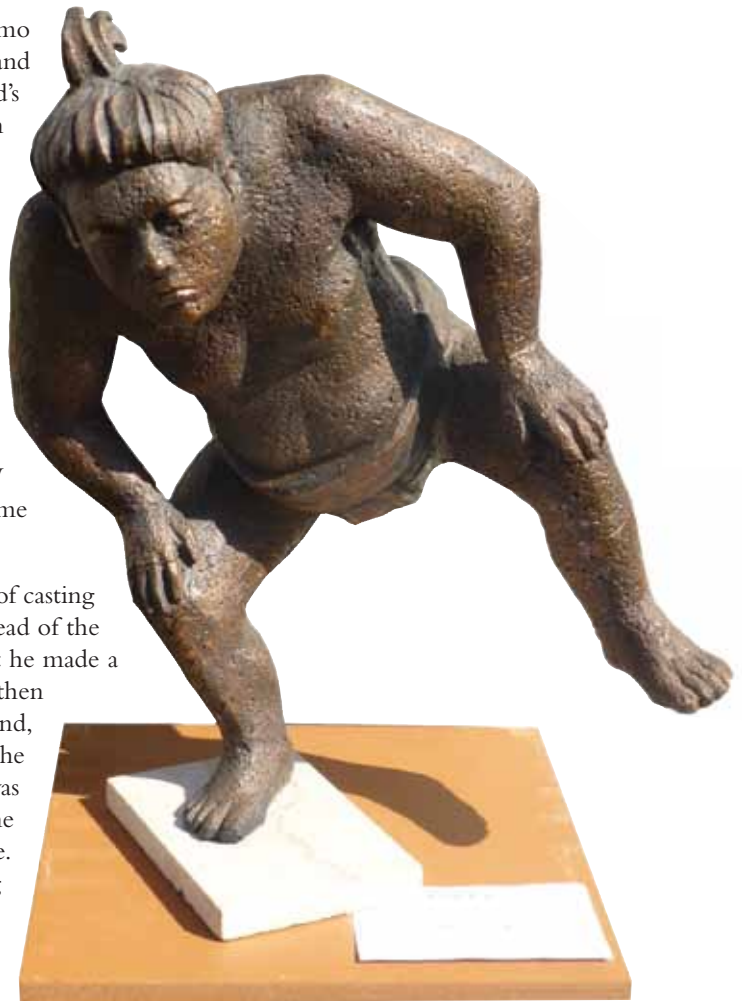


2014 is the centenary of the birth of the well-known sculptor Frank Roper and this was celebrated by several events in Cardiff; an exhibition in the Traveller's Gallery in Barry, a CASW event in Lisvane and a memorial service in Llandaff Cathedral on 12th December, his actual birthday. Although born a Yorkshireman, he and his wife Nora (a renowned artist in her own right) lived for the last 52 years of his life in Wales, mainly in Penarth. He was made head of sculpture at the then College of Art in Cardiff and later he became Vice-Principal. He was not a churchgoer, but he had many friends amongst the clergy and his work is to be found in numerous churches both in Wales (for example in Llandaff Cathedral, St David's Cathedral, St Augustine's Church in Penarth, Christ Church Roath, St Denys Lisvane and many others) and in England (for example in the cathedrals of Durham, Wells, Southwark and Peterborough). For these commissions he worked in metal, mainly aluminium and bronze, but also in stained glass. He also made smaller pieces such as candle-holders and lecterns.

His only work in wood is a carving for St Martin's Church in Roath, where there is also a set of his Stations of the Cross. Many of his church windows have coloured glass, designed with Nora. More details of the work he completed for churches, especially in south Wales, can be found in a booklet and a calendar made for Llandaff Cathedral. In addition to many church pieces he also loved making bijou objects such as the 5 cm horse, but also classical sculptures such as seated lady (27cm tall) both cast in the traditional way.

My favourite sculpture is the Sumo wrestler, which my late husband bought at an exhibition in St David's Hall, arranged for Frank's 80th birthday in 1994. The balancing of the bulk of the figure is just perfect as is the chosen size of the sculpture: 60 cm tall. There are smaller editions of this but they are not as satisfactory in my eyes. A timeless and very elegant sculpture is the mask supported by a single hand, which was the subject of much admiration at the recent CASW fundraising events held at our home in Lisvane.

He developed a novel technique of casting metal using 'lost polystyrene' instead of the traditional 'lost wax' process. First he made a model in polystyrene, which he then buried in a box filled with sand, with tubes or sprues attached to the model; the liquid aluminium was then poured in, vapourising the polystyrene. Thus a cast was made. The surface of his sculptures using this technique, is always slightly pitted. He enjoyed making water clocks, mythological figures, musical fountains - when he worked with the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen - and animated constructions such as a walking lion. The combination of water and metal seemed to have fascinated Frank and he created several fountains in Italy, Cyprus and Canada. His typography in metal is glorious. It can be seen in many of his church works, particularly his lettered panel for the tomb of Beda Venerabilis in the Galilee Chapel in Durham Cathedral.





His last works included the grave markers he made for his wife and himself for St Lawrence's Churchyard at Lavernock. He made these markers after Nora had died and after he had been diagnosed with cancer; he cast two successive dates for his own memorial and regrettably the first was the one that had to be used. He died of cancer of the lung and it has been speculated that the fumes from the polystyrene he used may have contributed to this, but he had been a pipe smoker too. Frank was a modest man, who always felt that his work was not as perfect as he wished it to be; everyone else thought it was wonderful. He was often reticent, except when planning a new project when he became excited and voluble. When pondering a new project he loved to chew his pipe in the garage, since Nora had forbidden him to smoke in the house.

The National Museum of Wales has two examples of Frank's work and one is currently on show in the Oriel Restaurant there. It is simply titled 'A Horse'. Next time you are in the museum, do go and see it.

**Ilse Fisher Hayes**

[www.casw.org.uk](http://www.casw.org.uk)

Visit our website for all you need to know about the Society

- illustrated history of the Society, its objectives and support for the arts
- programme of all activities for the year
- complete archive of our acquisitions since the Society's inception, with an easy search facility
- images and notes of all our acquisitions since 1999
- details of membership - including on-line application
- useful links to contact officers, museums and galleries

## WHERE THERE'S A WILL

The Society has recently been informed that it is the recipient of a legacy from the estate of Mr Donald Moore. The sum of £1,000 will be used to further the constitutional aim of CASW, namely... 'to foster and promote the maintenance, improvement and development of artistic taste and the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the arts among the people of Wales'. We are very grateful that CASW has been remembered in Mr Moore's will. If you would like to do something similar, do please let us know so that we can properly thank you in your lifetime. If you would like a form of words for a codicil that may be added to your will, please contact: Andy Taylor, CASW Secretary on [andytaylor2295@outlook.com](mailto:andytaylor2295@outlook.com) or telephone 01446 772295 or write to Crud-y-Gwynt, Love Lane, Llanblethian, Vale of Glamorgan, CF71 7JQ.

Thank you.

## CASW NEWS

### DATES FOR YOUR A DIARY

Tuesday 20th January

**Cecile Johnson-Solz, sculptor**

**In and out of the Artist's Studio**

7.30pm in Room 0.53, School of Architecture, Cardiff University, King Edward VII Avenue, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Wednesday 11th February

**Morning visit to view murals and artworks**

Llancarfan Church, Vale of Glamorgan.

Led by Madge O'Keeffe.

Followed by lunch in the Fox and Hounds.

Tuesday 19th – Thursday 21st May

**Study visit to Chichester and its environs**

Led by Madge O'Keeffe.