

NEW YEAR, NEW DIRECTION



With the New Year, the Museum takes a new direction. Honorary Curator Neil Westerman (*above right*) is retiring and handing over to Mark Lewis (*left*), who began working for the museum as a volunteer over 20 years ago and has been Collections Manager since 2005. And for the first time the post of Curator will be paid.

Neil, who is retiring for personal reasons – though he will remain as a trustee and continue to play an active part in the running of the Museum – recommended this change. “It is more and more difficult to find a suitable person to serve as Curator in a voluntary capacity because of the time commitment -- up to 25 hours a week all year round,” says Neil. “This way the Museum will not only have a full-time Curator, but one with the huge knowledge and creativity Mark has shown in his time here. I’m delighted to be handing over to him.” (*cont’d p3*)

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

An end-of-year “thank you” message from the Trustees: see p4

LOOK AT WHAT WE’VE DONE!

We – the Friends – had a very successful burst of fundraising during the autumn, producing a total of £5,765.50 for the benefit of the Museum. Here are some details:

QUIZ NIGHT:

This brought in £144.50.

CRAFT & VINTAGE FAYRE:

Table sales amounted to £590. There were also lots of compliments from both stall-holders and visitors for the event. It was held at the De Valence, which the Council generously let us use free of charge.

ART AUCTION:

Sales of pictures donated by various artists totalled £6,991, of which £5,031 was donated to the Friends.

Cordial thanks to all who made this possible, and especially Ian Nicholls (Quiz Night), Meryl Sharp and Sue Barnes (Craft & Vintage Fayre) and Alec and Pat Lewis (Art Auction).

“Artist in Residence” to paint museum’s butterflies

Award-winning Tenby painter Naomi Tydeman is internationally known for her watercolour scenes of coastal Pembrokeshire. But during the next few months she will take on a new subject: the museum’s collection of butterflies.

“I occasionally do still life paintings of objects such as sea shells,” says Naomi, “and I have often thought I’d like to do butterflies. Then about a year ago Mark Lewis, the museum’s Collections Manager, showed me their lepidoptera collection, and I immediately asked if I could borrow it. Unfortunately, because the specimens are so fragile, the collection can’t be taken outside the museum, but Mark said ‘you’d be most welcome to come and paint it here. In fact, you could become a temporary Artist in Residence!’”

Naomi has her own gallery in Cob Lane and says it is difficult to get away while she is running it. “But now the gallery is closed until Easter, so I have an opportunity to take up Mark’s kind offer. I plan to do a large still life watercolour, recording as faithfully as I can some of the specimens, choosing some of the largest and most beautiful along with some more modest and humble ones, and losing myself in observing this sample of Nature’s masterpieces.”

The butterflies in the collection have recently been re-pinned and boxed, which will enable Naomi to paint particular specimens without the need to remove them. “And at some point we would like to be able to put the collection on display, now that it has been suitably repackaged,” says Mark. “Meanwhile, we hope Naomi’s work will increase public awareness of it.”

Naomi, who opened her Tenby gallery in 1998, has won numerous artistic honours, including the Turner Watercolour Award of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour in 2013. She is a member of the Institute’s council.

Last autumn she appeared in *The Harbour*, a six-part series by ITV Cymru Wales, which looked at a year in the life of Tenby around its harbour. One of 10 local people who figured in the series, and seen in each episode, Naomi was filmed at work there, sketching the boats, painting the reflections at night and going out to sea to look at Tenby from an unusual angle. One result (*below*), titled *First Light, Tenby Harbour* is a dawn view of the harbour from the basin at low tide.



NEW YEAR, NEW DIRECTION (cont'd from p 1)

Born in Tenby, Neil returned to live there in 2008 after taking early retirement. At the time the Friends of the museum were finding it difficult to recruit people willing to join the committee and Neil volunteered to join it. He was made secretary of the Friends in 2010 and in 2011 he joined the board of trustees, serving as its honorary secretary, as well as secretary to the Friends, until February 2014, when he was appointed Honorary Curator.

During his tenure he introduced Gift Aid, an arrangement whereby charitable donations can be increased by about 25% at no cost to the donor provided he or she pays tax. "This has generated over £12,000 for museum funds and will continue to make a substantial contribution," says Neil.

His immediate plan after retiring from the curatorship is to explore the coastline of the UK. "Like many people," he says, "I know countries such as Greece better than my own, so I have decided to get to know it better. And no doubt I shall visit quite a few museums on the way!"

Mark, who was born in 1971, became a volunteer at the museum in 1994 after gaining a degree in English Literature. He worked his way up through the profession, taking an NVQ in Warding and Visitor Services for which he was awarded a City and Guilds Bronze Medal of Excellence, to become Museum Officer, then Assistant Curator and, after obtaining an Associateship of the Museums Association (the professional museum qualification), was appointed Collections Manager in 2005.

As well as his regular work at the museum he writes creatively: he scripted *For as long as forever is: the life and work of Dylan Thomas*, a narrative of the poet's career illustrated with extracts from his works and other material, which was performed at the museum twice in 2016, as well as other items, such as the scripts for *The Portrait Speaks* series of "talking pictures". He also offers mentoring advice to various museums in Pembrokeshire.

Of his appointment as Curator, Mark said: "I am delighted to be taking over this role. The museum faces big challenges in the present financial climate, but I mean to be creative and imaginative in order to keep the museum relevant both to visitors and to the local community. Fortunately I have the support of the trustees and a wonderful band of staff and volunteers".

"A warm, lovely man"

This picture shows the unveiling in September of a memorial bench to the artist John Uzzell Edwards, who twice exhibited at the museum and loved to visit it whenever he came to Tenby. The bench, on Castle Hill and overlooking a broad view of Carmarthen Bay, was unveiled by artist-blacksmith David Petersen, with John's widow, Mary, members of their family, trustees and staff of the museum present.



Describing John as "a wonderful man and a superb artist", David said: "He is very much missed, both by those who knew and loved him and by the art world in general". John's son Charley, also an internationally-renowned artist, who works under the name Pure Evil, said: "I hope people come to the bench and have a quiet contemplation or a conversation with Dad, as I have done over the past year". Councillor Michael Williams, chairman

of the trustees, who was instrumental in getting the memorial bench placed, said: "John was a warm, lovely man, and I am so glad there is a bench here dedicated to him."

A big “thank you!” from the Trustees

We want to say a big “thank you” to you, the Friends, for your continuing support and for your energetic fundraising during 2016. Your efforts are vital, funding projects that would otherwise remain undone, like, most recently, completely renewing our internal CCTV equipment, essential for security.

As Trustees we've been taking a long hard look at where we are and, more importantly, where we're going; where we want to be in five or 10 years' time. In Tenby of course; we know that we are important to the town and we have a vision of being part of a Tenby which embraces the modern family and visitor, providing opportunities for entertainment, relaxation and renewal. We know we have great resources; our collections, our library and, most importantly, our staff and volunteers who do such excellent work.

However, it is a challenging market, and visitors are what are needed for a sustainable museum and gallery. For the future we want to make the collections and library more accessible, in all the meanings of that word, and to have a greater presence in the community; in the schools, in the clubs and associations, in the town and surrounding area. Our aspiration is to work with our existing building, so iconic on Castle Hill, completely re-thinking the layout, creating or re-creating display and activity spaces and a state-of-the-art welcoming entrance area. All this will take time, but we want you to know how much we appreciate the work done by the Friends in raising our profile in the community and contributing so much to the demands of a modern museum. We will, with your support, continue striving to make Tenby Museum and Art Gallery a valued contributor to the community as well as a “must do” on the visitors' list!

EXHIBITIONS 2017

7 to 28 January *Junior Schools and Community Art Exhibition* (includes Hafal Tenby Resource Initiative and The Avenue Social Activity Centre)

7 February to 18 March *The Welsh Group* (paintings)

25 March to 7 May *Linda Thompson* (paintings)

13 May to 25 June *Paul Butler* (paintings)

1 July to 13 August *Meirion Jones* (paintings)

19 August to 1 October *Darren Yeadon* (sculpture)

7 October to 11 November *Lee Phillips* (paintings)

18 November to 16 December *Alun Crockford* (photographs)

FRIENDS!

Comments and suggestions are always welcome, whether about the museum, the Friends themselves or this newsletter. Please email them to friendsoftenby@btinternet.com. And keep up-to-date by visiting the museum's website, www.tenbymuseum.org.uk, or our Facebook page.

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