



THE FRIENDS OF THE TOWNER

Supporting the Arts in Eastbourne

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2010



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www.friendsofthetowner.org.uk

A message from the Chairman

Elizabeth Muir-Lewis

There have been two important changes to the Friends' Management Committee recently. Greg Szanto (our last Eastbourne Mayor) joins us as the Council representative which is welcomed by us all. We also thank Stephen Lloyd who filled this role until his elevation to be the Member of Parliament for Eastbourne. We wish him every success and thank him for all the wise advice he gave to the Friends during his time with us.

We have a mission which we consider to be important. In our capacity as "Friends of the Towner" we give the Gallery all the support we can by raising funds to help them in their ambitions and also our backing for their plans. We are, of course, an organisation that presents events in Art, Literature and Music therefore our mission is to set our aspirations at a high professional level offering a variety of quality talks, lectures and concerts to appeal to every taste. We cannot do this successfully without your support.



Photo by Mike Goss

We thank you for that support in the past and hope that what we have provided is what you want. Do let us know your views on this as your opinion is very important to us.

I look forward to seeing you at a Friends' event soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Elizabeth Muir-Lewis

Eric Ravilious (1903-1942) Downs in Winter, watercolour 1934
Eric and James Ravilious: Father and Son will run in the Exhibition Gallery until
5th September. Admission £5.50/£4 concessions/under 16s free

Committee Member Profile introducing: **Ann Gregory**

Ann spent her early years in a small seaside village called Birchington. This idyll was not to last. Hitler's threatened invasion led to a swift removal to Reading where she won a scholarship to The Abbey School and later trained for teaching. While still at school she met, and later married, Robin, who carried her off to her first teaching post in Havant. After several moves she became, at 28, Head of a school in the Peak District.

It was in Derbyshire that her interest in poetry and drama flourished. Robin and Ann were both actively involved in the amateur dramatic world, their high-spot being when they won first prize in Shaw's *Man of Destiny* at the Ferranti Festival in Manchester.

Quite suddenly life became almost surreal when they were appointed Consultants in Education to the Khashoggi family based in Switzerland. This involved five years of fascinating work, living in a style to which they were certainly



not (but rapidly became) accustomed - yachts, private Boeings and exotic venues. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this employment concerned the many celebrities with whom they mixed: the Aga Khan, Dodi Fayed, two James Bonds, Placido Domingo, Edward Heath and the Greek President.

Two more headships and several moves finally brought her to Eastbourne, where she enjoys a life incorporating such organisations as the Towner Friends, the U3A, the European Movement, Sussex Opera and Ballet Society, the Under Ground Theatre and the Recorded Music Society of which she is Chairman.

Committee Member Profile introducing: **Robin James**

He was born, brought up and educated in N E Wales. Robin is married to Shirley; they have two children and two grand children. After college Robin worked as a Chemist in R & D at ICI in Runcorn; he spent six years with Monsanto in North Wales and then the family moved for two years to Lobatse, Botswana while Robin was working at the Geological Survey. They arrived in Eastbourne in October 1975, where Robin joined what was then called Armour Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd working in Quality Control and Quality Assurance. He worked at the same site in Hampden Park under six different owners until retiring in 2002.

He first visited the Towner in 1975. His first Friends event was a year later when he heard the great jazz pianist Marian McPartland give a concert in the Long Gallery. As a result of attending more events Robin and



Shirley began to help on the bar. From there Robin was elected to the management committee an enjoyable task he did for over 20 years. He remains on the management committee. In that time he says change has been continuous as the organisation has gone from the small homely gallery in the manor house to the prestigious building of today. Robin has had the pleasure of working with four curators and six Chairmen of the Friends. His main interests are Jazz, gardening, 20th century art and motor racing.

EVENTS REMINDER

If all goes according to plan, this Newsletter should be arriving on your doormat on Tuesday 10th August. If you're not doing anything tonight do, please, come along to the Winter Gardens and hear **Grace Robertson** - a female pioneer of photo journalism - talking about her career in a male-dominated world and the history of "Picture Post", a magazine now long gone but still much missed. Grace will be really worth hearing so put away your Box Brownie and get yourself along to the Gold Room for what promises to be a memorable illustrated talk.



NOW BOOKING!

Afternoon Concert at Glyndebourne

Sunday 7 November
2.30-4.30pm

This is to let you know that we are now taking bookings for a very special event in November. The date is Sunday, November 7th and the occasion is an afternoon concert at Glyndebourne (2.30-4.30 pm)

We will meet at Glyndebourne - please note that transport will not be provided - and the concert of opera and song will be given by the Royal College of Music Singers and hosted by Nick Sears (Head of the Vocal Department) Tickets are priced at £15 and we are sorry but there are no concessions.

This is likely to be a very popular event and we expect an early sell-out so do please book early as we would hate to disappoint you!

For those who don't know Glyndebourne, the complex embraces a 700-year old country house and an award-winning opera house near Lewes in East Sussex. Since 1934 it has been the venue for the annual Glyndebourne Festival Opera. The country house (the home of the Christie family) and the Opera House enjoy the most beautiful setting in formal gardens and fields where the audience for the Festival Opera often picnic, although there are several excellent restaurants and bars in the public areas.



Photo by Mike Hoban

The original theatre is no more. By the late 1980s it became apparent that a completely new theatre (rather than further enlargements to the old one) was necessary and in 1990 George Christie announced that a new Opera House capable of seating 1,200 people would be constructed in 1992. It was completed at a cost of some £34 million, 90 per cent of which was raised through donations and today it is an international venue which attracts VIP visitors and the very best talent from all over the world.

The Friends' visit - which is being organised in conjunction with the Sussex Opera and Ballet Society - is a "must" for your diary and promises to be an occasion when we can all enjoy a feast of marvellous music in the very best surroundings and a pleasant social afternoon in the heart of the Sussex countryside.

SUNDAY 7th NOVEMBER
at Glyndebourne

2.00 pm for 2.30 pm
Tickets £15 each

Vivien Heffernan's Journey through art

What have the following painters in common: Kauffmann; Lebrun; Gonzales; Cassatt; Morisot; Knight; Forbes; Goncharova; Valadon; Carrington; Zinkeisen and Rego? Yes, they are all women. And they formed just a part of Vivien Heffernan's superb illustrated talk in the Gold Room in June.

Using "old fashioned" slides, she was able to project images of fine clarity through a Japanese projector of remarkable quality, generously provided and lashed-up by the Council's knowledgeable staff. Each picture was analysed expertly and the overall theme (the gradual emancipation of women painters) proved to be of profound interest.

"The woman of genius does not exist. When she does, she is a man." Ms Heffernan quoted this ancient poppycock, then demolished it by showing how even in the sixteenth century women uncovered ways of painting well. Denied access to proper training, they found an individual man (often their own father) willing to pass on the secrets of his painterly technique. Unable to paint the male nude, the ladies produced exquisite self-portraits, or pictures with historical or personal significance. The great Gentileschi's daughter, once launched, displayed chiaroscuro to equal that of Caravaggio.

The Swiss Angelika Kauffmann drew on her own emotional experience to show the struggle to choose between life as a musician and life as a painter, revealing that she knew that her choice of painting would lead to a difficult road in the early nineteenth century.



Twenty years ago I went into an art-shop in Eastbourne to ask the price of a Laura Knight drawing of tenor Frank Titterton. The dealer was amazed that I knew the identity of the sitter (stander, more correctly), he having failed to secure an identification from Sotheby's. He offered it to me at a discounted price to reward my rather specialized information. Having heard Vivien Heffernan's high opinion of Knight, I now regret that I declined. The projected image of Dame Laura's self-portrait (from her back, painting a female model, and thus exhibiting three superbly-caught figures on the canvas) was just one of many highspots in a talk which drew enthusiastic questions. (A roaming mike would have enabled the audience to hear the questions.)

The final image of Paula Rego's pastel of Germaine Greer (from 1955) completed the evening's circle: a woman's painting of a woman. No man could do better!

COMING ATTRACTIONS - BOOK NOW!



Ronan Magill Pianist

Tuesday 7 September, 7.30pm. Gold Room, Winter Garden
Admission £12 (Members £11)

The composer and pianist Ronan Magill was born of Irish parents in Sheffield in 1954, he was a founder member of the Yehudi Menuhin School. Later he met Benjamin Britten who became his musical mentor while at school at Ampleforth and later as a student at the Royal College of Music. He won medals and prizes as a pianist and for

composition and after his acclaimed Wigmore Hall and South Bank debuts in 1974 he moved to Paris to study at the Conservatoire.

Later he appeared frequently on French Radio and Television. In 1994 he won the third British Contemporary Piano Competition which led to appearances throughout the UK and he has performed many of his own compositions at leading venues.



Paul Atterbury

Tuesday 28 September, 7.30pm. Winter Garden
Admission £9 (Members £8)

Paul Atterbury will be making a welcome return when he will explore the remarkable partnership of Sir Edward Lutyens and the extraordinary gardener Gertrude Jekyll.

A familiar face to many through his twenty years of appearances on the Antiques Road Show, Paul Atterbury is much in demand as a speaker and we are delighted to welcome him back to Eastbourne where he is always a favourite with audiences.

Strolling through the Forties with Roy Hunt

Tuesday 5 October, 7.30pm.

Winter Garden. Admission £8 (Members £7)

Something a little different from the Friends this time. An evening of pure nostalgia as we re-visit the Forties through the music of the time.

Roy Hunt retired from the Law and found himself in demand as an entertainer. Talks on Al Jolson and George Formby were all well received and his ebullient personality and keen sense of humour ensure that he is much in demand.

He has been a leading speaker on the Queen Elizabeth liner and was voted the best entertainer on board.



His talk *Strolling through the Forties* evokes an era of great songs. Lerner and Loewe, Richard Rodgers, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, and Hoagy Carmichael are all names to conjure with and their music is bound to stir up memories. Prepare to re-live the war years and their aftermath but mainly to recall the laughter and camaraderie of the feisty Forties.



Graham Whitham The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

Tuesday 26 October, 7.30pm. Winter Garden.

Admission £8 (Members £7)

Contemporary art often invites criticism and comment. Some regard it as

unconventional, controversial or just irrelevant while others consider it the epitome of creative endeavour and a significant expression of modern culture.

These contradictory views are a matter of opinion but they also dramatize the conflicting attitudes that surround contemporary art and contribute to its fascination and challenge. Perhaps one thing that makes contemporary art so controversial is that where there was

once a relatively clear distinction between something that was art, such as a painting or a sculpture, and something that was not art, such as a pile of bricks or an unmade bed. This is not necessarily the case with art today.

Graham Whitham has called his talk *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* because we often judge art using such criteria. However, he would like to suggest that although contemporary art differs in appearance from art of previous times, it actually does what art has always done - encourages innovative ways of looking at and interpreting the world around us.



Caterina Grewe Pianist

Tuesday 2 November, 7.30pm. Gold Room, Winter Garden
Admission £8 (Members £7)

***Winner of the Norah Sande Award
for young adult musicians***

This award is made possible by a substantial bequest from the late Norah Sande, in memory of her Grandmother Alice Mary Caffan. Its object is to encourage and support young pianists aged 18-25 at the outset of their careers who were born or who are resident, training or working in Kent, Sussex, Surrey or London. German-Japanese Pianist Caterina Grewe, born in Tokyo in April 1988,

moved to Hamburg in 1991 and started to play the piano at the age of four. She studied with Ilse Laue and Gabriele Wulff at the Hamburg Conservatory, Bernard Roberts at the Chetham's School of Music, the late Yonty Solomon and Ian Jones at the Royal College of Music where she now studies with Vanessa Lata arche and Dmitri Alexeev.

Nicholas Reed The British Impressionists

Tuesday 16 November, 7.30pm. Gold Room,
Winter Garden. Admission £8 (Members £7)

Who were the British Impressionists?

One might start with Philip Wilson Steer whose magical evocations of young girls playing on the beach at Walberswick and Southwold in Suffolk are a match for any beach scene by Monet or Boudin. Continue with Spencer Gore, the first President of the Camden Town Group, and his misty views of Richmond Park in winter and Letchworth Garden City in summer. His successor Walter Sickert's vivid views of Venice are rivalled only by his dark but distinctive depictions of Dieppe. Their predecessor Lucien Pissarro influenced them and painted landscapes all round England, including Hastings and Rye.



After looking at interiors and portraits by Gilman (the English van Gogh) and architectural masterpieces in Bath and Plymouth portrayed by Ginner, perhaps the most striking feature of the Camden Town Group is that they hardly ever depicted Camden Town! They simply met there for tea to discuss their paintings.

To sum up: the British Impressionists gave the French a good run for their money and if they were sometimes better, they were after all a generation later, and learnt much from their predecessors.

BAFM CONFERENCE

The initials BAFM (pronounced Baff-em) are often greeted by a blank stare while people try and work out what you're talking about but in a couple of years' time blank stares will be very much a thing of the past. BAFM stands for the British Association of Friends of Museums and, drawing on over thirty years' experience, it offers a friendly and practical network of support in the running of Friends organisations. Full membership is open to any not-for-profit society of any size which supports an institution preserving our cultural heritage. This includes museums, art galleries, cathedrals, churches, theatres, libraries, archives, art centres, historic buildings, gardens etc.

And why will the blank stares disappear? The good news is that BAFM will be holding its annual National Conference and AGM in Eastbourne in association with the Friends of the Towner in 2012 from 28th to 30th September. There will be a theme to the weekend but this has yet to be chosen and more details will emerge as the Big Weekend approaches.

Our Vice-President, Geoffrey Williams, is also a Vice-Chairman of BAFM so he will be looking after our interests and keeping us in touch with developments.



Friends Vice President Geoffrey Williams, with Joan Bakewell and Loyd Grossman at the BAFM Conference in Norwich 2008

This September's Conference will be held at Douglas, Isle of Man with the Friends of Manx National Heritage. Next year London will be the venue with the Friends of London Transport Museum and then it's our turn. I'm sure you will agree that this is excellent news for the Friends of the Towner as it should bring numerous visitors to Eastbourne, will raise the profile of the Friends' work and will, of course, draw attention to attractions of the Gallery itself.

BAFM's Patron is HRH The Duke of Gloucester and Loyd Grossman, OBE is the President.

More details of the Conference will follow as they become available.

WHAT'S ON AT TOWNER?



Eric and James Ravilious: Father and Son

**Showing in the Exhibition Gallery
until 5th September**

*Admission £5.50/£4 Concessions
Under 16s free*

Though Eric Ravilious died during the war only a few years after his son, James, was born, parallels can be seen between the artistic practices of father and son. For Towner's summer exhibition (which runs until 5th September) the work of Eric Ravilious is shown alongside that of his son James for the very first time. Eric Ravilious' Sussex landscape paintings and James' photographs of rural Devon reveal a deep-seated love of the land inherent to both.

Towner is renowned for holding what is thought to be the largest single collection of Eric Ravilious' work and the exhibition includes major loans and little seen works from private collections, as well as key works from the Towner Collection.

Left: *Dolly Engine*
By Eric Ravilious (1903-1942)



Above: '*Alfriston*' Oil on canvas
by Harold Swanick (1866-1929)
part of the Towner permanent collection

A Walk in the Park

**Showing in the Collection Gallery
until 26th September**

Free Entry

This latest Collection display is a celebration of East Sussex' breath-taking natural landscape, in honour of the South Downs' new status as a National Park.

Early warning of coming attractions!

Yes - I'm fully aware that we're only just into August and you may not have had your summer holiday yet, but I'm going to use the December word anyway: **CHRISTMAS!** Don't worry, you're not required to do anything at the moment except please make two entries in your diary.

One should be against **Tuesday, December 7th** and should say **Friends' Coffee Morning (1030 - 1200)** and the other should be entered on **Tuesday, December 21st** and that should read **Friends' Christmas Lunch**. Old hands will know that these are highly sociable occasions and the ideal opportunity to get to know fellow Friends and to renew old acquaintances in two of the smartest hotels in Eastbourne.

The Coffee Morning which will be held at the Hydro Hotel gives you a chance to renew your membership for 2011 and we hope too to have tickets on sale for the first few events in the New Year. This saves getting mixed up with the Christmas post and, if you bring your own

Christmas cards, you can if you wish exchange them with friends and save the postage altogether!

The Friends' Lunch will once again be at the Chatsworth Hotel and the menu - which will appear in the next newsletter - will offer two choices of starter, a main course and sweet with coffee at the tables. A small group of singers will entertain us with amusing and seasonal songs and we can assure members that it will be a friendly affair with terrific food and a grand start to Christmas week. The cost will be £20 per head to include a complimentary drink on arrival and coffee.

Full details of both events will appear in the next newsletter due out in late November but we know how busy everyone is at that time of year and we thought you would appreciate some advance warning. May I be the first to wish you a very merry Christmas (!) and your Committee looks forward to seeing you at one or hopefully both of the above events.



Roberto Ortiz

Recital by the young Mexican tenor

At the Gold Room in the Eastbourne Winter Gardens on 29th June 2010, Roberto Ortiz gave a varied programme of songs and operatic arias that showed all the facets of his considerable talent and covered many eras, languages and moods of music without pushing his voice beyond its capacities. Starting with Monteverdi's Orfeo the full warmth of his lower notes was demonstrated and offered glimpses of the brightness of the top. He then introduced a Christmas carol by M de Sumaya, a Mexican composer of the baroque period. Its style, with florid passages and runs, all accomplished with ease, was reminiscent of Handel.

Roberto's brief introductions to the items revealed great charm and rapport with the audience as well as a passion for the music that was so evident when he sang. He followed with a group of Schubert Lieder all sung with expressive attention to the text. A group of Shakespeare songs by Quilter sensitively sung concluded the first half.

Then the operatic section included the well-known Handel 'Where're you walk', Donizetti 'Una furtiva lagrima', Mozart, 'Il mio tesoro' and Verdi 'Questa o quella', performed with great characterisation and beauty of tone. The final group was of French, Italian and Mexican songs; each a love song but well-contrasted in mood so displaying his vocal range of tone.



The evening was sponsored by the Richard Lewis Trust, which commemorates the acclaimed British tenor, and Roberto expressed his thanks for its support for the concert and his continued training at the Royal Academy of Music.

Eva Thyri Hilmarsdottir was his sensitive and supportive accompanist, not seeming the least perturbed by the presence in the audience of Martin Isepp, world-renowned accompanist to the like of Dame Janet Baker and Elizabeth Schwarzkopf.

This young tenor Roberto Ortiz is evidently on the way to a great career, having a second recital with Dame Kiri te Kanawa to perform later this year. So long as he continues to sing music as well suited to him as this cleverly constructed programme, that career should also be a long one perhaps reaching world class; Eastbourne was fortunate to hear him at the start of it.

Gabriel Woolf

A man of three parts

Dylan Thomas still has the power to attract an audience. The small but appreciative audience in the Gold Room at the Winter Garden was presented with a cornucopia of the words of a man more infamous than famous. Gabriel Woolf gave us Thomas in three guises, as a poet, as prose-writer and as correspondent. In all three Thomas rang out as a lover of the English language. While he was alive, Thomas read his own poetry in a sonorous English accent. Woolf chose to give us the wordy wizard in a singing Welsh lilt.

Thomas's obsession with questions of life and, above all, death came through strongly in Woolf's choice of extracts. We, of course, had "Do Not Go Gentle into that Dark Night", possibly Thomas's most quoted piece, addressed to his supposedly dying father.



"Under Milk Wood", his paean to the life of a small Welsh village, Llareggub ("buggerall" backwards) is the most affectionate of satires. Woolf kept to the brilliant descriptions of the mythical place, rather than confuse us with impersonations of its inhabitants.

It seemed appropriate that a pair of youthful waifs had strayed into the audience's midst. She was a Chichester undergrad reading English; he a film-maker in the making. They listened enchanted to the spell of Dylan's words, which a very fine actor made his own.

The summer months are always busy for the Friends who serve on your Committees with people gathering first thing in the morning and late at night in order to fit in all the activities and meetings. The holiday rush is almost over now but our Hon.Sec. **Margaret Whitehead** (who, among her many other talents is a published poet) found time to break into verse and to speak for us all! She hopes it may make you smile.

TOO MUCH INGING

Sunday and I'm free
The papers and a cup of tea
- and me

Monday I'm envisioning
Tuesday is choral singing
Wednesday at a meeting
Thursday I'm rehearsing
Friday I'm competing
On Saturday I'm singing
I'm doing too much inging.

But then it's Sunday and I'm free
The papers and a cup of tea
I'm revelling in liberty
Nowhere to go, I can just "be"
It's just the cat,
the BBC
- and me.



Kiri

FRIENDS OF THE TOWNER

Patron The Duke of Devonshire KCVO, CBE, DL

President The Worshipful the Mayor of Eastbourne

Vice President Geoffrey Williams

Chairman Elizabeth Muir-Lewis

Honorary Treasurer Wendy Bishop

Honorary Secretary Margaret Whitehead

Committee Members

Ron Cussons, Ann Gregory, Nicholas Howell, Robin James, Frances Lloyd, Frances Robinson Geoffrey Mantle, Sam Sweiry, Michael Kaye

Co-opted Member Philip Anson

EBC Representative Greg Szanto

Events Committee

Michael Kaye (Chair), Elizabeth Muir-Lewis, Ann Gregory, Robin James, Frances Lloyd, Margaret Whitehead

The Friends of the Towner Newsletter

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Forthcoming Events

Sunday 7th November
Afternoon concert at Glyndebourne
2.30-4.30 pm Tickets £15 each



Tuesday 7 September
Ronan Magill
Pianist



Tuesday 28 September
Paul Atterbury
Lutyens and Jekyll



Tuesday 5 October
Roy Hunt
Strolling through
the Forties



Tuesday 26 October
Graham Whitham
The Good, The Bad
and The Ugly



Tuesday 2 November
Caterina Grewe
Piano Recital
Winner of the Norah
Sande Award



Tuesday 16 November
Nicholas Reed
The British
Impressionists

All events are held in the Gold Room, Winter Garden at 7.30pm
Tickets from: The Congress Theatre, Tourist Information Office,
Wendy Bishop 01323 731607 or on the door