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The Magazine of The Friends of Blackburn Museum *Autumn 2021*

This newsletter is completely FREE

WELCOME

To the 2021/22 Friends' Season!

The new programme is on the left. Inside is news and information about the Museum and its collections, Friends' activities, local history and archaeology and news.

ON OTHER PAGES:

2. Hiroshige's 53 Stations of the Tokaido Road
4. "Pressing the Button" - The Don McCullin Exhibition at Tate Liverpool
5. "A Giant in the Rain" John Turkington visits the Cemetery
6. News
7. Committee Business
8. Richard Weisbrod, Silk Manufacturer and Artist
11. New Acquisition for the Museum - Craig Easton's Banktop Photographs
12. Medieval Iron Smelting on Holcombe Moor - The Holcombe Moor Activity Group
15. Science in Blackburn, Pendle and the Ribble Valley
16. Committee meetings, members and contacts

Programme 2021/22

Following a request from the Museum in response to the Covid emergency, the Committee agreed that meetings will be held on Tuesday afternoons during the 2021/22 season. If members' response is positive, this change may become permanent.

As the Museum is closed to the public on Tuesdays, we will have the gallery to ourselves and only those attending the meetings will be admitted.

Meetings will be held at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery

On TUESDAY afternoons

12th October 2021 at 2 pm: "Hokusai in Blackburn Museum." John Turkington talks about the great Japanese printmaker.

9th November at 2 pm: ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, after which Rebecca Johnson will talk about developments at the Museum.

14th December at 2 pm: "The Art of Christmas." Mike Millward will talk about depictions of the Christmas story.

11th January 2022 at 2 pm: "Twentieth Century British Painting." A talk by Richard Cross, formerly Head of Art at Blackburn College, and a noted painter himself.

8th February at 2 pm: "Engels in Manchester." Valerie Miles will talk about the joint author of *The Communist Manifesto*.

8th March at 2 pm: "Print Works - Doesn't it?" A talk by Heather Davis, Manager at the Lancashire Conservation Studios, Preston.

12th April at 2 pm: "Beethoven and the Theatre." The dramatic works of the great composer described by Raymond Watton.

10th May at 2 pm: "Kenyon in Blackburn and the First Western." Jamie Holman talks about the local pioneer of cinema.

14th June at 2 pm: A talk by a member of Museum staff, subject to be announced.

The David Shipway Lecture, Coffee Morning and Garden Party are still to be arranged, and will be announced as soon as they are available.

Hiroshige's 53 Stations of the Tokaido Road

On show at the Museum until 18th September

Anthea Purkis, Curator of Art, Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery

Here at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery we are lucky enough to have a wonderful collection of Japanese woodblock prints. Originally owned by Thomas Boys Lewis, who was a local cotton manufacturer and founder of the Lewis Textile Museum, they were donated to the museum after his death, by his wife, in 1944.

Fifty-five of the prints in our collection make up the complete set of Utagawa Hiroshige's most famous series, the 53 Stations of the Tokaido Road. Published between 1833 and 1834 these ukiyo-e woodblock prints take you on a journey, starting in Edo (modern day



The Start, Edo

Tokyo) and ending in the Imperial city of Kyoto.

Hiroshige first travelled the Tokaido Road in 1832 as part of an official delegation to present gifts to the Emperor at the imperial court.



10th Station, Hakone

During the journey he was inspired to capture the beautiful scenery and the hustle and bustle of life around him so he made sketches as he travelled to and from Kyoto, then on his return home to Edo he created the 55 prints.

In this series Hiroshige depicts everyday scenes at each of the 53 post stations that had been created by the government to provide rest stops for weary travellers.

From tourists and local inhabitants to feudal lords, all levels of society and human nature are featured. Hiroshige expertly captures the natural beauty of Japan and the widely varying weather conditions that could be experienced along the journey. Driving rain, misty mornings, windy days and snowy mountains are all depicted in the landscapes.

Viewing the series in its entirety allows people the rare opportunity to travel with Hiroshige along the Tokaido Road, stopping to admire the fascinating views and humorous events captured by him.



15th Station, Kanbara



45th Station, Shono

Hiroshige was born in 1797 into a samurai family. His father was a fire warden and Hiroshige inherited that role at the age of 12 when his father died. At about 14 years of age he began painting and throughout his life he produced thousands of prints. In his later years Hiroshige retired from the world and became a Buddhist monk. He continued creating prints, beginning his series One Hundred Famous Views of Edo when he joined the monastery in 1856. He died only 2 years later in 1858 when he was 62 years old. At the time of his death a cholera epidemic was rampaging through Edo but it is not known if that was his cause of death.

The popularity of Hiroshige's art work has flourished for almost 200 years, his influence can be seen in works by artists such as Vincent Van Gogh and Claude Monet and he continues to inspire to this day.

Just before he died he dictated a farewell poem –

*I leave my brush in the East,
And set forth on my journey.
I shall see the famous places in the Western Land*



47th Station, Departure from the Inn



Memorial portrait print of Hiroshige by Utagawa Kunisada

The exhibition is now open and closes on the 18th September 2021.

“Pressing The Button”

Gillian and Paul Mason’s Trip to The Tate Liverpool for the Don McCullin exhibition.

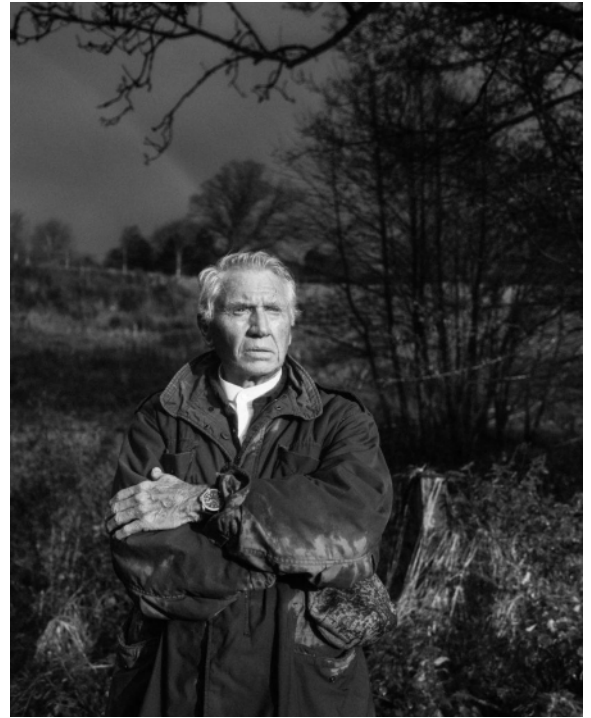
We were delighted when Tate Liverpool announced the exhibition of Don McCullin’s work was to be extended beyond the Covid lockdown. So we immediately booked our tickets, filled our flasks with coffee and made the journey across to Merseyside.

Donald McCullin is Britain’s greatest living photographer.

It was a great day In 1958 when Don McCullin’s friends persuaded him to take a picture of a group of lads. The result, “*The Guv’nors In Their Sunday Suits*’ [see below left] was the first of Sir Don’s photographs to receive acclaim and set in motion his brilliant career. It is significant to know that Don, born 1935, grew up in Finsbury Park, a neighbourhood of London that had been badly affected by bombing in the second world war. His formative years then were spent surrounded by rubble and debris. We were reminded several times during the exhibition that his work often forced him to revisit painful memories of people and places he had known in his youth.

It is also worth noting that Sir Don, as well as being an expert photographer, produced all the exhibits himself being a developer and printmaker painstakingly working to produce the best possible images. Don McCullin’s works are all expressed in black and white. The

exhibition was arranged in a number of rooms displaying over 250 photographs. The first, his early work, reminds us that he is photographing people whose experiences he has shared.



Sir Don McCullin CBE, Somerset, April 2020.



The second deals with the building of the Berlin Wall. (Several pieces of which reside on our mantle shelf in the front room). This work won a British Press Award plus a permanent contract with the Observer. Images of grieving women in Cyprus in 1964 follow. McCullin placed himself in considerable danger during his time here yet he said his experiences from this time honed his self awareness as a photographer.

Images of Biafra and The Republic of Congo follow. In both theatres of war he was shocked by “*the appalling things we are ALL capable of doing to our fellow human beings.*”

He visited Vietnam 16 times. Most photographs depict the experiences of the young teenage American soldiers. (Average age 19).

McCullin returned to Bradford and Liverpool to record the lives of those left behind by industrialisation. McCullin’s ever abiding interest in the eccentricity, humour and resilience of the British is captured by photos of knobbly knee contests and sunbathing. They capture the inequality, inconsistencies and unfairness of society as observed through his lens, forever coloured by the remembrance and impact of his formative years.

The other rooms continue with his mission of drawing attention to the plight of the disadvantaged. “*I want to create a voice for the people in my pictures. I want the voice to actually hang on a bit*



Local Boys, Bradford 1972

longer when they look at them, so they do not go with an intimidating memory but with a conscious obligation.”

These days McCullin takes shots of rural scenes of the countryside around his home in Somerset. There is still an aura of sadness. All are devoid of human interference.

We left the exhibition full of admiration for this unique person, able to gaze so well into the pain and suffering of our fellow humans and in possession of an amazing ability

to achieve his avowed aim of making us think. These are not photographs that you can look at and forget. They stay with you haunting you while you despair at the apparent futility of the efforts of one person to change the world for the better. Too often the world can be a stark unforgiving place. Evidence of the fact, communicated through Don McCullin’s photographs, bears a chilling testimony.

“When I take photographs... I dream of misty England,”

“When human beings are suffering, they tend to look up, as if hoping for salvation. That is when I press the button”

A Giant in the Rain

John Turkington

I had a couple of hours to pass on while waiting to take my son back from Whalley New Road surgery. It was late afternoon, rain falling lightly, so what better than a trip to see the giant’s grave? In the lockdown I had given a talk about Irish giants, an 18th/19th century genetic cluster, only one woman amongst them, whose descendants are still alive today, and one of my listeners had made a special visit to the Blackburn Giant, emailing me about it. I had never visited the grave, here was a special opportunity.



With the rain and the hour I was the only person in the Cemetery, Blackburn Old Cemetery, Whalley New Road. Within moments of entering the gates I was in a wonderland of tall, dripping grasses, tumbled gravestones and gloomy spires under dark, heavy trees, all thoughtfully cared for by the Friends of the Cemetery. PHOTO 1 A notice board showed the position of the giant’s grave with ample information about him and other residents. War graves are scattered throughout the grounds, one of the founders of Blackburn Rovers was prominently mentioned.

I followed the route up the hill to where, slightly isolated, the giant’s grave stretched out. He is Frederick John Kempster, born 13th April 1889 in London, died 15th April 1918 in Blackburn, not of the Spanish ‘flu as you might suspect but of pneumonia. He was 7 feet 9 inches tall, possibly the tallest man in the world. He was given up to Barnardo’s together with his brother when he was 9

Continued overleaf



years old as his mother, who led a life of grinding poverty could no longer afford to feed her children. Barnardo's, as was often the case, shipped the boys off to Canada to work on a farm but Frederick only lasted 5 years here as he was found unfit for farm labour and shipped back to England. It was in Canada that his gigantism revealed itself, with all the accompanying weaknesses in his skeleton, especially his legs. Big? Yes. Strong? No.



He eventually embarked upon a career as a show giant, as did so many of the Irish giants, appearing in theatres, touring with a circus, and being a highlight of The Parade of Giants to celebrate the coronation of George V. Whether this kind of life was a humiliation or a source of

pride to him, we do not know.

Why is he The Blackburn Giant? Simply because he died and was buried here. He had other titles - Frederick the Great, the Canadian Giant, Teddy Bobs, the Bayeswater Giant and so on. His grave is worth the effort to visit it as you will have good views over Blackburn while meditating on the meaning of life.

I was really touched by one particular, very modest memorial.

This man must have been held in high regard, or affection, by his workmates. In some way he must have enriched their lives. I wondered who was the person who had organised this? As I was looking round fruitlessly for another stone from his family. the rain dripping from my nose, two young girls pranced by, their high voices slowly fading in the gloom.



NEWS

The Museum & Art Gallery is open again, and looking splendid. There has clearly been a lot of work going on behind the closed doors during the pandemic and associated lockdown.

The Friends look forward to being able to meet in real life again. A brief programme listing is on the front page, and our first meeting will be on Tuesday afternoon, 12th October, when John Turkington will talk about "Hokusai at the Museum." The programme card will be sent out later in September.

Our Hon Treasurer Jeff Cooper intends to retire next year. He has threatened to do this before, but I suspect that this time he means it. We therefore will soon be needing someone to replace him. I'm sure Jeff will mention this from time to time, and explain how there is nothing much to it. In the meantime, please consider whether you may be able to help by taking on the role.

Exhibitions at the Museum & Art Gallery



Hopefully you will still have a chance to catch some good things at the Museum, which are on until mid September:

A selection of **watercolours by J.M.W Turner** from the permanent collection are on show in the Hart Gallery until 18th September.

They include the wonderful *Falls of Terni* and *Tynemouth* [see left]

Photographs of **Bank Top, Blackburn** by **Craig Easton**, winner of the 2021 Sony World Photography Organisation Photographer of

the Year, will be in the downstairs gallery until 17th September. (See more news about this on page 9)

The complete **53 Stations of the Tokaido Road** by Utagawa Hiroshige are on show in the Small Art Gallery upstairs until 18th September. They look splendid in new mounts and frames.

(See much more on page 2)



COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Committee Meeting

On 25th May, via Zoom because of the pandemic, the Committee met for the first time since February 2020. Unsurprisingly, despite the long interval a number of projects were still to be completed, including the production of advertising banners. Good news was that the coffee morning had taken place in February 2020 and made a profit.

Museum Manager Rebecca Johnson reported on improvements made to public areas during the 7-month shutdown up to reopening on 19 May 2021 and on successful funding applications to Arts Council England Cultural Recovery and Emergency Funds. She outlined exhibitions plans and online developments towards a stronger social media presence and an exciting partnership with the British Library involving the manuscript collections.

A brief Hon Treasurer's report appears below in "Money Matters." The results of John Turkington's work on the Programme are listed on page 1.

The next committee meeting will take place 21st September, when it is hoped to meet at the Museum in person. If there is anything you wish to bring to the committee's attention, please contact one of the members.

Mike Millward (Acting Secretary)

Money matters

Money may be the root of all evil, but it does have its positive side, particularly if it is to provide support and encouragement for an important project. Our project is to see that the Museum and Art Gallery are able to call on us when they need to, to contribute to new artefacts, conservation, and other essential work, 'For money has a power above the stars'. So keeping track of the money is vitally important, and therefore the person who looks after the money has enormous power and influence. After 15 years, I shall be leaving the post of Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary in November 2022. I should therefore like to encourage one of you to consider taking on this role. It is, as I've intimated, a very satisfying and important role, both for the Friends and for the Museum and Art Gallery. Please see me if you have even the smallest inkling that you'd like to be involved.

Last year was a strange one because we suspended the need to subscribe while we saw the Coronavirus work its way through. However, many of you did subscribe, enabling us to cover our costs, so very many thanks to you. The following is a rough guide to this year's income and expenditure:

Income, October 2020 to August 2021: subscriptions £585; donations (including a very generous one from Madge Thornton's will) £1074; Gift Aid £158.

Expenditure, over the same period: £576 (on insurance, web site, and postage).

Giving us a total in the bank of £10,298 in the current account, and £3,173 in the savings account.

Jeff Cooper (Hon Treasurer)

Richard Weisbrod (1906-91) – Silk Manufacturer and Artist

by Mike Millward, from research by Philip Crompton with help from Blackburn Library

In 1932 Richard Weisbrod, from a wealthy Swiss silk manufacturing family, left Zurich

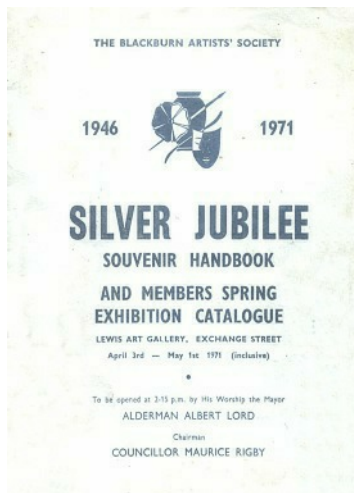


R Weisbrod: *Railway Yard*. Purchased 1964
Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery

to set up a silk weaving mill - "Lancashire Silk Mills" - in Moss Fold Road, Darwen and stayed locally to run it. With him came twelve short term Swiss workers who installed machinery transferred from a Swiss factory, having been taught to speak English prior to their arrival. The Swiss firm, which was one of the largest silk manufacturers in the country, had diversified into England to help counteract the effects of the Great Depression. There was also a sales company: "Zurrer Silks."

married Lucette M H Glardon in Blackburn. They had four children born between 1938 and 1945 (Annette, Jacqueline, Ronald and Denise) and lived in Feniscowles until

In January 1934 Weisbrod moving to 17 Gorse Road, Blackburn in 1945.



Thursday evening. We have used that same room for the last twenty five years.

The first elected officers of the Society were:-

President: Mr. G.A.N. Reed, A.R.C.A.
 Vice President: Mr. John Yates, J.P.
 Hon Secretary: Mr. T. McLean.
 Hon. Dep. Sec.: Mr. K. Wardle.
 Hon. Treasurer: Mr. A. Asplin.
 Committee: Messrs. A. Brown, W. Calverley
 E. Isherwood, T. Lord, H. Vipond and F. Ward.

In addition to the above the following artists joined at the inauguration and are recorded as "Founder Members"

Mr. J.H. Aitchison	Mr. A. Henshaw
Mr. J. Ashworth	Mr. J.L. Higson
Mr. H. Bagshaw	Mr. E. Mercer
Mr. A. Bates	Mr. G.W. Spencer
Miss A. Bolton	Mr. T.F. Swarbrick
Mr. R.A. Cammack	A.R.C.A.
Mr. J. Crabtree	Mr. R. Tyson
Miss J. Gandy	Miss I. Walton, A.R.C.A.
Mr. H. Hall	Mr. F.S. Watson
Mr. J.T. Hall	Mr. R. Weisbrod
F.S.A.M.	

A list of present members for the year ending January

About 1960 he converted the derelict Calf House, Abbott Brow, Mellor into a splendid residence, incorporating a studio/theatre room which could accommodate an audience of 70.

Weisbrod, a self-taught painter and a founder member of the Blackburn Artists Society in 1946, was prominent in the post war

Blackburn Artists' Society Silver Jubilee Souvenir, Handbook with the section listing Richard Weisbrod as a founder member

Manchester art scene, and was a member of the Manchester Society of Modern Artists and the Manchester Group. He counted as friends the artists L.S. Lowry and Theodore Major and the art dealer Andras Kalman.

At some point he became involved with Jose Christopherson, a Manchester-born artist who had studied in Manchester and London, including with Iain MacNab at the Grosvenor School of Modern Art. She was a talented painter and an active member of the Society of Women Artists in the years following WW2. Heavily involved in the Manchester art scene,



Richard Weisbrod and Jose Christopherson



Jose Christopherson: *Zebras*, ca 1969
Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery

Vaud, Switzerland shortly afterwards. He married Jose and they



Diana Dors holding her newly purchased Weisbrod in 1952

she exhibited with the Manchester Group. At the Mid-Day Studios, Margo Ingham and Neil Owens' gallery in a basement opposite Manchester City Art Gallery on Mosley Street where, like Weisbrod, she became friendly with L S Lowry who had had his first one-man Manchester show there in 1948. Richard had a show there in January 1949 which was reviewed in *The Observer*.

He divorced Lucette in the early 1970s and returned to Switzerland until she died aged 100 in 2014.

Richard's daughter Annette became a concert pianist. His son Ronald went on to run the firm in Switzerland. It still exists in a much reduced form, having been seriously shaken by the 2008 economic crisis. The Darwen operation seems to have closed at about the same time.

Weisbrod has works in the collections of Manchester City Art Gallery and Rochdale Touchstones, Christopherson at Bolton as well as here at Blackburn. He exhibited at a number of Royal Academy Summer Exhibitions. Works by both artists appear regularly on the art market, but do not command particularly high prices. He did, however occasionally sell to the stars.



Annette Weisbrod LP cover

Richard Weisbrod's Exhibitions

- 1948 Lewis Gallery
- 1949 Mid-Day Gallery, Manchester [see review on left]
- 1952 Crane Gallery Manchester 16 pictures shown
- 1952 & 1954 Paris
- 1954 Manchester City Art Gallery
- 1955 Leger Galleries, London
- 1957 Crane Gallery Manchester 34 pictures shown
- 1957 Salford City Art Gallery
- 1957 Galerie Andre Weil Paris
- 1960 Darwen Library Lecture Hall
- 1960 Mid-Day Studios Manchester
- 1964 Lewis Textile Museum Blackburn

Exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition

- 1955 Winter Landscape (Gouache)
- 1957 Honfleur Harbour (Water Colour)
- 1959 Dunkerque
- 1959 Snow Scene
- 1963 Still Life

Continued overleaf

OBSERVER

February 25th, 1949

ONE MAN SHOW OF PAINTINGS IN MANCHESTER.

On Saturday, January 29th, a very interesting exhibition of paintings was opened in Manchester at the Mid-day Studios, 96, Mosley Street, by Mr. J. J. Huber, our Vice-Consul, who with a very appropriate and brilliant address introduced the artist, Mr. R. Weisbrod, of Blackburn, and his works, and conveyed to us all the virile qualities of Swiss Art.

Taking into account that Richard Weisbrod started only a few years ago to take painting more seriously, our impression is that the results already have achieved a standard commented on by the *Manchester Guardian*: ". . . they have qualities . . . which are not to be found on every studio wall — grace, ease, and a gift of making effects with a gesture rather than a blow".

At this particular exhibition the artist shows us a fine collection of paintings and particularly his landscapes, inspired by his journeys to Switzerland, France and England are most impressing, and convey to anyone with an open mind to the untouched beauties of nature a sense of freshness and brightness. They are attractive in pattern and colour and the style is very individual and modern without falling to the sometimes tempting exaggerations of modern time.

Specially here in the North where nature has not been very generous and where climate and industry have added to the monotony and dullness of every-day life, we think that it could be a real pleasure and joy to sit by our home-fire which very often is our only sunshine and rest our eyes longingly on some of Richard Weisbrod's bright and sunny landscapes.

We all join wholeheartedly our Vice-Consul in wishing our dear friend and compatriot the best of success on his artistic future.

Ermanno B.



THIRD AUTUMN EXHIBITION

will be held in the
LEWIS TEXTILE MUSEUM
NOV. 6th to DEC. 4th, 1948

Opener:
DR. E. TYLER, D.Sc., M.Sc., F.Inst.P.,
A.M.I.E.E., A.F.R.A.S.

Chairman:
JAMES DOLBY, Esq., A.R.C.A.

Artist	Title	Price
36 J. Crabtree		£ 8 8 0
37 K. Wardle, A.I.B.D.	Darwen Landscape	13 13 0
38 H.W. Addison	Indian Head	8 8 0
39 E. Wood	Still Life	10 10 0
40 J. Gould, A.R.C.A.	Mother and Child	31 10 0
41 H. Wood	The Students	20 0 0
42 J. Crabtree	Gossip	18 18 0
43 Miss J. Gandy	The Calder at Hacking Boat	11 11 0
44 Miss J. Gandy, A.T.D.	In Donegal	5 5 0
45 R. Weisbrod, A.T.D.	Donegal Bay	5 5 0
46 J. E. Woodman	Hollyhocks	20 0 0
	Eileen	5 0 0

Blackburn Artists' Society exhibition catalogues with Richard Weisbrod's pictures listed



Artist	Title	Medium	Price
1 H. Thompson	Students Seven	Oil	£ 4 0 0
2 Michael J. Moon	Medieval Interior	Oil	£ 6 0 0
3 Richard Weisbrod	Still Life with Lobster	Gouache	£ 3 6 0
4 Michael J. Moon	Fingal's Cave	Oil	£ 18 6 0
5 Harold Bulcock	Yorkshire Lead Mines in snow	Oil	£ 18 6 0
6 Michael J. Moon	Meditating Figure	Oil	£ 12 6 0
7 Richard Weisbrod	Harbour Scenery	Oil	£ 12 6 0
8 Harold Bulcock	Waggonettes on Beach	Oil	£ 12 6 0
9 Harold Bagshaw	Emmor's Mill, Chobham	W.C.	£ 5 0 0
10 Ada Belton	Melior	W.C.	£ 5 0 0
11 F. S. Watson	Car Bells, Derwentwater	W.C.	£ 5 0 0
12 I. G. W. Marchant	Portrait	Oil	£ 7 0 0
13 H. Vincent	Pendle Hill	W.C.	£ 7 0 0

Attendants Catalogue

No.	Artist
1	H. Thompson
2	Michael J. Moon
3	Richard Weisbrod
4	Michael J. Moon
5	Harold Bulcock
6	Michael J. Moon
7	Richard Weisbrod
8	Harold Bulcock
9	Harold Bagshaw
10	Ada Belton
11	F. S. Watson
12	I. G. W. Marchant
13	H. Vincent

EXHIBITION

LEWIS TEXTILE MUSEUM

APRIL 4th to APRIL 25th, 1961
(inclusive)

Open Mon., Tues., Thurs., & Sat., 10 a.m. — 5 p.m.
Wed., & Fri., 10 a.m. — 7.30 p.m.

- Works held by local Museums and Art Galleries**
- Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery
- Snow Scene*
- At Carro*
- Railway Yard*
- Preston Station*
- Manchester Art Gallery
- Harbour*
- Touchstones Rochdale
- Winter near Clitheroe*



Richard Weisbrod: At Carro
Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery



Richard Weisbrod: Preston Station
Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery



Richard Weisbrod: Lancashire Snow Scene, 1961
Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery

New Acquisition for the Museum



Craig Easton: *Carol*
Photographic print from the “Banktop” Series

We have recently acquired the series of ‘Banktop’ from photographer Craig Easton. It was this series of work which saw him win The Sony World Photography Organisation Photographer of the Year 2021. ‘Banktop’ was a collaboration with writer and academic Abdul Aziz Hafiz and is a result of the Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery initiative *Kick Down the Barriers*, a project instigated in response to media reports portraying the town as the ‘the most segregated in Britain’. Seeking to challenge this narrative, the museum invited artists and writers to collaborate with residents of various neighbourhoods and create a robust and authentic representation of their communities.

Craig’s work is deeply rooted in the documentary tradition. He shoots long-term documentary projects exploring issues around social policy, identity and a sense of place. Known for his intimate portraits and expansive landscape, his work regularly combines these elements with reportage approaches to storytelling, often working collaboratively with others to incorporate words, pictures and audio in a research-based practice that weaves a narrative between contemporary experience and history. (www.craigeaston.com)

A book of this work will be published in November 2021.

Medieval Iron Smelting on Holcombe Moor

Robin Heywood of The Holcombe Moor Heritage Group

Holcombe Moor Heritage Group is an independent organisation dedicated to researching, documenting and communicating the history of Holcombe Moor, just North of Bury. Each year we run an archaeological excavation, and as most of the moor is MOD land it has hardly been disturbed since before WW1. From 2013 to the end of 2017 the group excavated an “engine house” by Red Brook. This turned out to be a small scale undertaking, known as “Bottoms”, probably working with cotton and powered by a water wheel. It was first seen in the records around 1790, but in the 1820s was converted into three cottages when a mill was built 200yds downstream. During the excavation we found some shards of medieval pottery and pieces of slag, a by-product of iron smelting.



Bottoms



Gritty ware pottery

An English Heritage pottery expert had identified the pottery as a local variety of gritty ware and named it depending on the two colours found, Holcombe Orange Gritty ware and Holcombe Buff Gritty ware.

When the time came to decide on where to dig next, those unexplained finds were uppermost in the plans. Was there a medieval iron smelting site nearby? The engine house had been a building on the land of Cinder Hill Farm, which was first established late in the 16th century. Could “Cinder Hill” be a clue, as “cinder” covers many waste products, including slag. Stories from very distant memories recalled a mound in the adjacent Cinder Hill Field, and then the LIDAR [Laser Imaging, Detection, and Ranging] image of the field showed up an oval raised “enclosure” there, hardly visible on the ground because it was completely overgrown. Before we are allowed to dig anywhere on Holcombe Range the army have to “sweep” the area for possible munitions as there has been a lot of firing in over a century of use. The detecting equipment went off the scale on one spot, his spade hit something very solid and he had to be restrained from destroying potential archaeology! The fragment that he broke off with his spade looked promising.

Out of a dozen sites that we had asked to be tested the only one that we could go ahead on was Cinder Hill Field; thank goodness for small mercies! Our leader and organiser, Neil, worked out carefully where he needed the digging trenches, particularly in relation to the “hot spot” and the Lidar oval. Digging got underway in May 2018 and the top of the suspected bloomery was soon identified. Other trenches were also producing better samples of the pottery.



Bloomery just showing

Holcombe orange gritty ware



The bloomery was only just covered by the grass, its heat hardened ring clear to see. A bloomery is a means of smelting iron and was in use from the beginning of the Iron Age until around 1500 AD, when blast furnaces began to be introduced. It consists of a clay chimney 140 to 170 cm high and 40 to 60 cm diameter. Alternate layers of charcoal and roasted iron ore are introduced from the top, with bellows-driven air introduced at one side about 20 cm from the bottom. This air creates the hottest point in the bloomery, with semi-solid, impure iron collecting at the bottom while the slag waste is tapped off there to run into a tapping pit via the tapping channel.

Over the course of that digging season (to mid-October) the bloomery was defined, recorded and photographed. We were visited by a specialist in historical metalworking techniques as well as two archaeologists from Salford University. Bloomeries in reasonable condition are not found very often, so we have quite a rare find. When it was full excavated the hardened slag at the beginning of the tapping channel from the last firing, was still in place and there was some charcoal nearby.



Bloomery 2019



LIDAR feature

That charcoal was sent away for carbon dating, but came back with a date just before the Norman Conquest. The bloomery operators prefer to use oak for the charcoal, but that oak may have been in use elsewhere for a long period before it was turned into charcoal, so the date given would be the date when the tree was felled. The date expected was nearer the 13th century, so likely a misleading result for over £400. A trench across a section of the Lidar feature revealed a consolidated band of slag.

2019 saw the discovery of what was interpreted as a smithing hearth and post hole for a substantial wooden stump anvil.



LIDAR feature



Pizza Oven?

The “bloom” of hot iron had to be taken from the bloomery, placed on the anvil and hit hard with hammers to expel as much of the remaining impurities as possible. It would be necessary to reheat the bloom a number of times in the smithing hearth. There was also the discovery of a large flat stone surrounded by a channel and a number of uniform holes in the clay. Lots of speculation as to what it could be included a medieval pizza oven, but the final conclusion was mole activity leading us up the garden path. Right at the end of the season the top corner of a new bloomery was discovered, not enough time to look further, so we had to cover it up again.

Of course we couldn't do anything in 2020 because of the pandemic, the suspense thinking about the new bloomery was building up. Discussions with the MOD meant that we were able to start the 2021 season at the end of May, as long as we were socially distanced. That meant de-turfing eight trenches!

Continued overleaf

As digging got underway we were pleased to re-find the new bloomery. Work has progressed well, but as the main trench is quite deep and there are inquisitive sheep in the field, we have had to erect a substantial fence in order to protect both the archaeology and the sheep. There is a lot more uncovering and investigating yet to do this season, after we've baled all the rainwater out of the trenches, whereas only a few weeks ago, the hot weather made the ground rock hard.



Bloomery 2019



Bloomery 2021

The new bloomery is larger and in better condition than the first. It has a number of differences, in that the tuyere (air inlet) is oval, there are stones lining the tapping channel and the tapping pit is actually smaller. However, we still need to excavate around most of the outside, and hope to find some arrangement to support the bellows, where they would be at the left of the photo.

This trench will be extended to give a better idea of the area around the bloomery. We are searching for any signs of a structure, as post holes for a lean to over the furnace would make the site even more special. Our advisers are very interested and hope to visit before long.

If you wish to keep up to date, then after every few days of digging a Dig Diary is produced and appears on the group's website. There is also a Facebook link. It really is a lovely place to be as long as the weather is reasonable, if it becomes too extreme then we retreat and leave the field to the sheep.

<https://www.holcombemoorheritagegroup.org>

Science in Blackburn, Pendle and the Ribble Valley by Patrick Gavin

Every marsh bird praises his own marsh (Russian proverb)



Eyre Crowe (1824–1910) *Jeremiah Horrocks making the first observation of a transit of Venus in 1639*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

The most important observation made in our area was made at Much Hoole between Preston and Southport in 1639 by Jeremiah Horrocks (1619 – 1641). He observed the *Transit of Venus*; the dark spot of Venus passing across the face of the Sun. From this observation Horrocks was able to give a good estimate of the Earth – Sun distance, so that for the first time a quantitative calibration of the Solar System could be made. Horrocks had made the difficult calculation predicting precisely the timing of the transit while at Cambridge. At Much Hoole he was a curate and tutor. His friend in Salford William Crabtree (1610 – 1644) also followed the transit and there is a fine picture of him making the observation in the Main Hall at Manchester Town Hall.

Several members of the Towneley Family are mentioned in the annals of Lancashire and Richard (1629 - 1707) made several contributions to Science. He designed a *Rain Gauge* and made systematic observations. When studying gases he took a mercury barometer – typically the column is 76 cm high- up Pendle: as he went up, the level of the

Toricellian Vacuum came down. Introducing air at the top, again as the pressure decreased, the volume increased. Boyle reported these results to the Royal Society as “Mr Towneley’s Hypothesis”. We now know it as “Boyle’s Law”. He made several contributions to Astronomy: he observed a *Transit of Mercury* and his detailed observations of the 4 satellites of Jupiter were used by Newton. Working with Gascoigne he invented an ingenious micrometer which, when attached to a telescope, enabled accurate measurements of the size of the Moon to be made: the Moon’s orbit is elliptical.



Sir Jonas Moore (1617 – 1679) was born at Whitelee in Pendle and was fortunate to have the patronage of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe. He did not attend university, but after working in Durham he became a teacher of Mathematics and moved to London. He became known for his books on maths and was associated with the early Royal Society. He is particularly remembered for his work surveying the fens prior to drainage.

John Webster (1611 – 1682) is interesting and exasperating. A child of his time, the Civil War and The Commonwealth, he was a man of many parts and changed allegiance several times. He was born and brought up in Yorkshire, in the Parish of Coxwold . He studied Chemistry in London and published a book *Metallographia*. He was ordained in the Anglican Church, but was disposed to Puritanical views. He wrote against witchcraft. In the Civil War he was a Chaplain and Surgeon in Colonel Shuttleworth’s regiment. He was for a while a Minister, not Vicar, at Mitton Church and taught at Clitheroe Grammar School. In Clitheroe he was known to be very

argumentative. There is a memorial in Clitheroe Parish Church.

Another person who is closely associated with Clitheroe is Captain James King, hence “King Street”. He joined the Navy and was sent by the Navy to Oxford to study Astronomy. King was appointed Astronomer on Captain Cook’s 3rd voyage to the South Seas. After Cook was killed on Hawaii, King took command of *Discovery* and brought the expedition home. For his Astronomical work he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society. He died in Nice.

One of the great experiments of Physics is “The Geiger and Marsden Experiment” carried out by Hans Geiger (1882 – 1945), of *Counter* fame, and Ernest Marsden (1889 – 1970). Marsden was brought up in Rishton and attended QEGS in Blackburn.

At Manchester University Ernest Rutherford was establishing the world’s leading research team in what was to become Nuclear Physics. Geiger had come from Germany to join Rutherford’s Group. Geiger and Marsden, still an undergraduate, were given the task of examining the effect of thin gold foil in stopping alpha particles. Surprisingly some alphas were reflected back, and a few were even reflected right back, 180 degrees. Rutherford realised that this result implied that the positive charge of the atom must be concentrated in a very small nucleus, not dispersed throughout the space of the atom. This is the model we have today. Later Marsden went to Rutherford’s home country New Zealand, and was influential there in establishing Physics in Higher Education.



Boulby Sundial at Walton Hall near Wakefield

At Marsden Park in Nelson there is a fine example of a scientific curiosity, a Boulby Icosahedron (20 sides) Sundial. There is also one at Stonyhurst, by the lily pond and the “old” Observatory, and one at Walton Hall near Wakefield.

References:

- Allan Chapman *Manchester Region History review* 2007 18 pp 19 – 40
- *Under a Lancashire heaven: William Caobtree, Jeremiah Horrocks and their circle, and the origins of research astronomy in seventeenth-century England*
- The Dictionary of National Biography

Committee Meetings

We meet 4 times a year and, despite our formal Charity Status structure and formal agenda, the meetings are surprisingly brief and informal.

There is a brief report on the last meeting on page 7.

The most important person present is actually Rebecca Johnston. Rebecca isn't officially a member of the Friends or the Committee but she keeps us up to date on plans for exhibitions and activities and for refurbishing the building. This means we can liaise on the best ways to support the Museum, whether financially or by promoting and attending events.

Naturally, we then consider our finances and Jeff Cooper presents his summary of the state of our bank accounts. The majority of our income is from membership fees, which then leads us to consider the perennial question of how to increase membership numbers. Jeff has announced his firm intention to resign as treasurer in 2022 - see "Money Matters on page 7.

And that in turn means looking at publicity (or our lack of it). Philip Crompton, who already organises distribution of our posters and flyers, is now arranging for some pop-up display stands to be created.

We also plan each year's programme. John Turkington is the principal organiser here, but we all need to suggest topics and speakers to ensure a varied and stimulating programme. John then sorts out the dates and bookings. As everyone is acutely aware, the last year did not go as planned! The last part of the 2019-2020 programme had to be cancelled, followed by the eventual cancellation of the whole of the current years planned events.

Our Secretary, Sarah Gill will be retiring at the AGM. Mike Millward has offered to stand as her replacement and is currently acting secretary.

The money we raise from members is sometimes used for 'boring' things which are easy to overlook. We recently contributed towards the cost of reframing a series of Contemporary Arts Society prints, ready for exhibition.

Committee Members

Jeff Cooper, Hon Treasurer and
Membership Secretary
Geoff Coulthard, Member
Philip Crompton, Member (Marketing)
Joy Heffernan, President
Rebecca Johnson, ex-officio
Bruce Kitchin, Member
Gillian Mason, Member
Sarah Gill, Hon Secretary

Valerie Miles, Chairman
Mike Millward, Co-opted member
(Acting Secretary & newsletter)
Janine Monaghan, Member
Robert M Svarc, Co-opted member
John Turkington, Member (Programme,
Outings)
Mary Waters, Member
Raymond Watton, Member

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The Friends of Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery is a registered charity.
It was founded in 1982 with the aim of promoting and supporting the
Museum

Subscriptions for the year are: Individual membership £10