



FRIENDS of MUSEUM & ART SWINDON

Newsletter - May 2025

On Thursday 29th May, members of the Friends gathered in the council chamber in the civic offices for the monthly talk, in which Mark Golder gave a fascinating insight into the book cover illustrations of Stephen Russ. I think we all went home and checked our bookshelves!

Our next talk is on Thursday 26th June and features Michael Gray talking about the art of the Tarot cards. Promises to be interesting. More information here:

🌐 [Tarot Art by Michael Gray 26 June 2025 - Friends of Museum & Art Swindon](#)

The Gharial is back! A few of the Friends gathered at MAS recently for a sneak peek at the recently restored and returned Gharial. From the moment that MAS opened its doors, almost a year ago, 'is the croc back?' was the question on many, many lips - and pretty continuously since then. So it's great to see her back where she belongs. I'm hoping to take my grandchildren to see her in the summer!

And, with only a bit of contorting, a croc selfie is still possible. Well - sort of. Photo credit: Claire Parsons.



I won't lie - I and others weren't keen on Georgina going in a case. But I take it all back - it all looks fabulous. 🌐 [The Swindon Crocodile Returns - Born Again Swindonian](#)

The great and the good were out in force as you can see below.

From left to right: Heidi Alexander MP, Andrew Cross (Friends Chair), Frances Yeo, Cllr Jim Robbins (Leader of SBC) and Deputy Mayor, Cllr Neil Hopkins.

Photo credit: Claire Parsons



Also forthcoming

From the 16th to the 19th of June there's Art B.R.U.T - After the success of Swindon Arts Fringe 2024, the Fringe is back for 2025, this time displaying at Museum & Art Swindon! The Swindon Arts Fringe is set to bring an exciting summer full of art for the Swindon community. Find out more here: [🌐 Art B.R.U.T - Swindon Arts Fringe](#)

And the Out on the Town: Entertainment in Swindon sounds fun. It's on from now until the 18th October. More info here: [🌐 Out on the Town: Entertainment in Swindon](#)

Other news

Salubritas et Industria by Harold Dearden: Harold Dearden's paintings are in poor condition having been rolled up for many years. Conservation or renovation would cost tens of thousands of pounds and the Friends have asked MAS whether high resolution digital copies are available for a potential digital renovation.

Henry Orlik acquisition: Museum and Art Swindon (MAS) is endeavouring to acquire a work by the reclusive Swindon artist Henry Orlik. He's experiencing a resurgence in his popularity with a recent exhibition in London and a current exhibition in New York. The Contemporary Art Society (CAS) has provided the majority of the funding and following CAS approval, the Friends have offered to donate additional funding to help achieve the goal. A successful acquisition will culminate in an Orlik exhibition at MAS.

Fossil hunters exhibition: The Friends are pleased to be able to donate funding to help support a loan of artefacts for Oxford University for the fossil hunter's exhibition being planned by MAS. The exhibition will have strong educational links with schools and families through workshops, teacher training and creative activities.

What else?

Friends' Visits to the Holburne Museum, Bath

Twenty members of the Friends visited **Impressions in Watercolours – Turner and his Contemporaries** at the wonderful Holburne Museum. Around sixty works, from the rarely seen Hickman Bacon Collection, including Turner and Cotman, marked Turner's 250th anniversary. For those with a passion for Turner, myself included, the exhibition provided a stunning insight, accentuated by the Holburne curator, into the precursor of impressionism by way of Turner's expressive and luminous watercolours. For those who haven't visited, the exhibition includes Turner and eight of his contemporaries and is thoroughly recommended. You've got until September to catch it. More info here:

🌐 [Impressions in Watercolour: Turner and his Contemporaries - The Holburne Museum](#)

Andrew Cross, Chair of the Friends



The signage saga:

'The lack of signage to Museum and Art Swindon continues to be an obstacle. Both to finding MAS and to raising awareness that Museum and Art Swindon actually exists for Swindon residents. The problem is well-documented in visitor feedback.

The Friends' committee has, since July 2024 (when MAS reopened in Euclid Street) been urging SBC to address the signage issue. A lack of progress led the committee to send SBC a proposal to fund a volunteer-supported renovation of the road-facing sign and local signs around MAS. The committee reiterated the offer at a liaison meeting later in March. To date there's been no response from SBC to the offer.

We should though point out that the sign you see in the image below has recently appeared on the notice board at the front of the building. Whether this is intended as a precursor to more effective

and professional signage or is considered *mission accomplished* remains to be seen. We'd like to think it's the former.



Other organizations

The Friends has a close relationship with both the Arts Society Kennet and Swindon and **the Friends of Lydiard Park**. If you want to see what the latter is up to you'll find them here:

🌐 Working to Conserve & Enhance Lydiard Park - Friends of Lydiard Park

Meanwhile **the Arts Society Kennet and Swindon** is here: <https://theartsociety.org/kennet> Their next lecture, An Introduction to the Newlyn School (1880-1910) is on Monday 16th June at the Ellendune centre in Wroughton at 11am. Info etc here:

<https://theartsocietykennet.org.uk/Lectures/FutureLectures.aspx>

Social Media

If you're the social sort you'll find us on Facebook here: 🌐 Friends of Museum & Art Swindon and on Instagram here: <https://www.instagram.com/friendsmuseumartswindon/>

If you use either of those platforms do give us a Like/Follow!