

From Aberdare to Swansea and a magical Merlin, eminent paintings accepted for the nation

The Glynn Vivian has also acquired two dramatic pastels which were accepted in lieu from the estate of his widow, Eleonore Marie Herman.

Albert Irvin was a prolific abstract artist. After a spell in the RAF as a navigator during World War 2, he returned to his passion for art and began a career spanning over 50 years. He became well known for his use of exuberant colours and energetic brushstrokes in his vibrant pieces.

The acquisition of Merlin 1987 is a welcome addition to Amgueddfa Cymru's impressive collection of abstract art. The Museum already has one of the UK's most important collections of modern and contemporary art, but until now this did not include work from Albert Irvin. The vivid and bold painting will feature in changing displays of twentieth century British art in the Museum's modern galleries, as well as temporary exhibitions from the collections in the Museum's new wing for contemporary art which opened in 2011.

Andrew Renton, Keeper of Art at Amgueddfa Cymru, said:

“We are delighted to now represent Albert Irvin in our collections and Merlin will join the Museum's outstanding collection of post-war abstract painting. We are very grateful to the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme which is one of the most important ways of developing Wales' national collection and ensuring our audiences have access to the very best art.”

The Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea was also successful in its bid for another painting by Albert Irvin from the same offer – Aberdare 1988. This wonderfully colourful piece will sit alongside modern painting and sculpture by Hepworth, Nicholson and Nash. The allocation of 'Aberdare 1988' enhances the Glynn Vivian's dynamic exhibitions already on offer to the public. It will be displayed as part of a rolling programme of exhibitions.

The Glynn Vivian Art Gallery has also been successful in securing a further allocation through the Acceptance in Lieu Scheme. Two pastels which represent rare scenes of village life in Ystradgynlais, Swansea Valley during the 1940's by artist Josef Herman have found a permanent home there.

Josef Herman was born in Warsaw in 1911. As a Polish Jewish Émigré he fled Nazi Europe to escape anti-Semitism and arrived in Britain in 1940 where he settled in Glasgow. In 1944 he visited Ystradgynlais on holiday – and made it his home until 1955, he said. 'I stayed here (in Ystradgynlais) because I found all I required. I arrived here a stranger for a fortnight; the fortnight became 11 years'. He became a big part of the local community and

he was fondly nicknamed 'Joe Bach'.

Herman is perhaps best remembered for his dramatic observations of the coal mining industry and communities in South Wales during the post war period, The two pastels complement the Glynn Vivian's existing holdings of his work and its wider collection also includes work by many important artists in Wales who were Herman's contemporaries, providing a unique history of Welsh art in the 20th century.

Prior to the acceptance and permanent allocation of the Herman pastels to the Glynn Vivian Gallery, they had been on loan and have been exhibited in the main gallery since May 2017. The pastels are currently not on display but the public can make applications to see them in the accessible stores. A planned programme of exhibitions will see the Josef Herman works reinstalled in the gallery in due course.

Jenni Spencer-Davies, Curator at the Glynn Vivian said:

"We are delighted to welcome these important works into the Gallery's collection. Josef Herman and his wife, Nini, often visited our gallery, and two beautiful pastels are testament to his love for painting working people, especially miners and those close to the land. It is therefore very meaningful that these works will now be enjoyed by our communities in Swansea.

"I first met Albert Irvin, in 1990, when we presented a major exhibition of his work which had been curated by the Serpentine Gallery in London. I recall Bert talking about his visit to Aberdare, so it is very special for us to be gifted this wonderful large-scale abstract work, entitled Aberdare (1988), inspired by his visit to Wales. This was the period when the artist had reached his prime, and following the exhibition, he visited Wales often, lecturing with incredible passion on his love of colour and the processes in his paintings."

Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Lord Elis-Thomas, said:

"It's a pleasure to accept these important works for the nation and I'm delighted that they will further enhance the excellent collections that already exist at both Amgueddfa Cymru and the Glynn Vivian. The Acceptance in Lieu Scheme has been of significant benefit to the people of Wales. A diverse range of collections, objects and archives have been acquired in recent years by Amgueddfa Cymru, local authorities and the National Trust in Wales. These items will be preserved and enjoyed in to prosperity by all."

Edward Harley, Chairman, Acceptance in Lieu Panel. Said:

“Josef Herman made a great impact on the art of South Wales during his 11 years in Ystradgynlais. These two pastels make a significant and appropriate addition to the Glynn Vivian’s collection and will help tell the story of European refugees living in Britain during the Second World War. It is also fantastic to see the first work by Albert Irvin enter the Welsh national collection where it will join a rich holding of 20th century British art. It is an immense pleasure to see the Acceptance in Lieu scheme used to secure such important works for the nation.”

“New online PGCE can make Wales a world leader” – Kirsty Williams

The addition of this new alternative route into teaching, announced today by Education Secretary Kirsty Williams, is the latest in a series of reforms designed to revolutionise the way ITE is provided in Wales. These also include new full-time ITE programmes.

The new part-time PGCE would provide a high quality alternative to full-time study and remove the need for students to travel just to attend their chosen course.

Students could instead interact with their lecturers and fellow students online, just as they would in the soon-to-be accredited full-time ITE programmes. This would remove any barriers that might be caused by their location or distance from a university.

In addition to the new PGCE, the Education Secretary also announced a new Employment Based Route (EBR), which would see a student teacher employed by a school from the outset. This would be targeted to help regional consortia address teaching shortages in schools region by region.

Both the part-time PGCE and EBR would enable student teachers to maintain their current commitments, including employment and income, whilst studying to be a teacher.

The students would also be able to take advantage of opportunities afforded by Wales’ new student finance arrangements. From the 2018-19 academic year, all Welsh students – whether studying undergraduate full or part time – will receive support for their living costs equivalent to the UK national living wage.

Announcing the changes today, Kirsty Williams said:

“An education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and our new curriculum cannot be delivered without a well-supported, aspirational teaching profession.

“The new part-time PGCE has the potential to completely transform the way Initial Teacher Education in Wales is delivered, complementing our equally high quality full-time ITE programmes.

“New students who may previously never have considered a career in teaching or been put off by costs or their location will have access to an academic qualification and programme that is of the very highest standard while also being flexible and easily accessible.

“It’s by harnessing technology in this way that we’ll attract highly-talented, experienced people with the higher level skills needed by both the teaching profession and our wider economy.

“I am confident that along with the step change in our soon to be accredited full-time ITE programmes the new part-time PGCE and EBR, together with new Professional Standards for teaching and accreditation criteria for initial teacher education, will allow us to raise standards across the board and make Wales a world-leader.”

The Education Secretary also confirmed today that an HE provider, or partnership of providers, will be procured to deliver the proposals by working with schools and education consortia across Wales.

Brexit poses threat to NHS, Health Secretary warns

Mr Gething will tell the Assembly later today (Tuesday, 26 June) that the Welsh Government is working with the UK and Scottish Governments to deliver as smooth a transition as possible. However he warned several areas need to be addressed urgently to avoid damaging the NHS in Wales.

He said: “EU nationals make up an important part of the NHS and social care workforce. Every single employee must be made to feel welcome and valued for the role they play in delivering services which benefit the people of Wales and the wider contribution they make to our communities.

We will continue to press hard for unambiguous permanent residence status to be granted to all EEA health and social care workers and

their families currently working in the UK We also need assurance that we can continue to recruit medical staff from Europe through quick and reliable systems.

Decades of cooperation and harmonisation of standards on medicines and medical technologies have produced proven benefits for EU citizens. Any restrictions on trade, customs checks and trade tariffs are likely to reduce the availability of medicines, lead to delays in the supply of drugs and vaccines and potentially increased costs to the NHS in Wales.”

The Health Secretary also set out the benefits and needs for continued cooperation with Europe on diseases control, food safety standards and medical research.

He added: “The UK Government must take notice of these concerns. We will continue to work with them constructively to ensure that all those affected are provided with as much certainty as possible over their future rights and status. Many of the risks I have highlighted to health and social care in Wales would be mitigated or removed altogether if the UK Government secures a sensible Brexit founded upon reality. If they do not, it may have real and lasting health and wellbeing consequences for individuals, families and communities across Wales.”

Pioneering project delivers Ultrafast broadband for Welsh rural community

With internet speeds averaging 4Mbps villagers in Michaelston y Fedw, west of Newport, decided to form a Community Interest Company to bring ultrafast Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) broadband to residents and businesses with an upload and download speed of 1Gbps or 1000Mbps.

The community project has employed contractors to do some of the work, while teams of volunteers have taken part in activities such as digging chambers, fibre splicing, laying out ducts and fitting out the village’s communications hub.

Villagers raised the money required to build the network in the knowledge that once built, the connections would be eligible to be funded by the Welsh Government’s Access Broadband Cymru scheme or Ultrafast Connectivity Voucher once the speeds had been reached. Both schemes are available for premises which cannot currently access superfast broadband.

The village pub, community hall and church are already connected to the ultrafast broadband and work is underway to connect over 175 premises in total in the community.

Leader of the House with responsibility for digital Julie James called into Michaelston y Fedw to see how the villagers pulled together and used the Welsh Government's voucher schemes.

Julie James said:

"While our programme Superfast Cymru has transformed the digital landscape in Wales, with over nine out of ten premises now able to access superfast broadband as a result compared with just over half when we began, we know there are communities which are not able to access it.

"It's great to see how the community of Michaelston-y-Fedw have spotted an opportunity to use the Welsh Government's voucher scheme along with real community spirit to achieve an increase in broadband speed which is a real game-changer. They are now able to benefit from some of the fastest internet speeds in the UK, which is a credit to all those involved in this project.

"Earlier this year I announced proposals to bring faster internet to communities in Wales which were not part of the Superfast Cymru or commercial rollouts, and this includes looking at what communities can do together. I'm pleased to see what has been achieved here, which shows that community power coupled with government support can really make a difference."

David Schofield a director of the Michaelston y Fedw Internet Community Interest Company said:

"Ultrafast internet is now a reality in Michaelston y Fedw. This has been achieved through a huge amount of effort by local volunteers who have turned out in all weathers to help build our network. Without them, the support of landowners, the village hall, local investors and the Welsh Government grant schemes this would never have got off the ground. We now have internet speeds that are world class, and this makes all the effort worthwhile."

Caroline Hill and Ben Longman of the Cefn Mably Arms pub said:

"As proprietors of the Cefn Mably Arms public house, we are proud and grateful for the connection to the newly created Michaelston y Fedw Ultrafast Broadband. As a very busy country pub in an era of doing business by the internet, we can spend less time with behind the scenes operational matters such as working with suppliers,

banks, marketing etc. With fast upload and download speeds we can spend more time overseeing what really matters about our business, which is being with our customers and staff, ensuring we give the highest standards of service for all our patrons. Similarly, our patrons will enjoy the free high-speed Wi-Fi for all aspects of modern communications whilst enjoying a visit to our pub and village.”

Windrush Day welcome chance to thank Welsh migrant community

On the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Empire Windrush and her 492 passengers from the Caribbean, Ministers will today join friends from Race Council Cymru and Black History Month Elders at an event at the Senedd to acknowledge the contribution the Windrush generation have made to our country.

Leader of the House, Julie James will host the celebration, as part of a week of events to mark Refugee Week, to commemorate Windrush Day and recognise its wide historic and present-day significance.

The recent outpouring of support for the Windrush generation reflects the respect Welsh people hold for those who answered the call all those years ago to make Britain their home. While racism and discrimination still occurs within Wales, Julie James says we must continue to promote and safeguard our principles of fairness, inclusivity and equality.

“Today we pay tribute to the contributions made to Wales by the Windrush generation and their descendants, as well as the other migrant communities who came before and after. We thank them for their efforts and sacrifices over the generations. We will continue to welcome and embrace those from other places who seek to improve our communities and we will challenge discrimination faced by these communities wherever we find it” she said.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething, who is also speaking at the ceremony, said,

“Refugees have brought a wealth of experience and a range of skills and abilities to Wales, and our health service has benefitted immeasurably for it. 2018 is also the 70th anniversary of the NHS and it is difficult to imagine the continued success of our health system without the vital support of migrant communities and their

descendants.”

Uzo Iwobi, CEO for Race Council Cymru and Chair of the All Wales Black History Network, said,

“It is gives us great pleasure to work with Welsh Government and all the partner organisations to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Windrush migrants arrival and their contributions to Wales. It has been bitterly disappointing to see the manner in which some Windrush migrants are being treated by the UK government in recent months. This event is hosted by the Leader of the House and Chief Whip Julie James AM to set a marker in the sands of time that makes a clear statement that Wales celebrates and values the contributions of our Black History Elders, the Windrush elders and their families who have given years of selfless services to the Welsh Society over the past 70yrs and more. Race Council Cymru also applauds the work and contributions of all commonwealth migrants and all migrants who continue to serve their communities, public, private and third sector organisations across Wales. Join us for a free event to celebrate our Windrush Elders and their families at the Senedd on the 22nd of June 2018.”

Margaret Thomas, UNISON regional secretary said,

“UNISON Cymru Wales is a proud sponsor of the 70th anniversary Windrush commemorations. That generation and their children have enriched Welsh life. The NHS also has its 70th birthday this year and we pay tribute to the contribution African-Caribbean workers and all immigrants have made to Welsh public services. The dedication and compassion they have shown throughout their lives contrasts with the unforgivable treatment the Windrush generation received at the hands of the UK Conservative government. That government has destroyed livelihoods and families threatening British citizens with deportation.

“In UNISON we aspire for the best, treating people with dignity and respect. We’re proud that Wales is a compassionate nation. We must continue to be tolerant and welcoming. We thank the Windrush generation for their support and contributions to our union, our communities and our country.”

Rocio Cifuentes Director of Ethnic Minorities Youth Support Team (EYST) said,

“EYST Wales welcomes this event to mark the arrival of people from the Caribbean to the UK. Caribbean people have made a huge and positive contribution to the UK and Wales, and we are very pleased to be supporting these important events in Cardiff and Swansea. We

are pleased that Welsh Government and Local Authorities are also willing to contribute to these as this sounds an important message of solidarity and welcome to the diverse communities of Wales, which is so important particularly in current times when a divisive narrative can often be the loudest.”