

Welcome to the latest edition of the Newsletter. Before we get on to the main topic for this month, you will be pleased to hear that because of ongoing Covid disruption, membership to the Art Society will once more be free for this year. We will review the situation before April 2022 when fees will become due again.

Those of you watching the BBC 2 series 'The Story of Welsh Art' will have enjoyed the revelation of a cultural treasure trove that is sophisticated, radical, international and, until now, largely untold, as well as surprising details along the way, for example that modern landscape painting was invented in Wales. This month's main article is by Paul Barrett who explores two paintings by Welsh landscape painter - Richard Wilson.

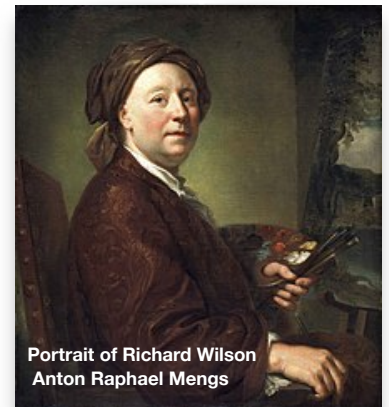
Richard Wilson - Two Images of Snowdonia

Today Snowdonia is popular but the contrast with 250 years ago could hardly be greater. Then it was viewed as oppressive, threatening and ugly and by no means enjoyable or beautiful. A variety of writers, travellers and artists in the late 18th century unable to take the Grand Tour of Europe played their part in changing the general perception of the area to the one that prevails today.

Richard Wilson (1714 - 1782) the son of a clergyman was born in Penegoes, Powys to a family in comfortable economic circumstances. An apprenticeship and period in London as a portrait artists, was followed, between 1750 and 1757, by travels and work in Italy as a landscape artist. His art at this time reflected the fashion for idealised Italianate landscapes, some with illusions to classical literature, as exemplified by Claude Lorrain. On his return to Britain he gained many commissions to depict the estates of the aristocracy and became the first major British painter to concentrate on the depiction of the landscape for its own sake.

In the late 1760's / mid 1770's he produced a series of paintings following a tour of Wales. In 'Snowdon from Llyn Nantlle' he retained some features of the Italian landscape - the warmth of the sunlight, the prominent trees filling the scene with sinuous trunks and careful rendered foliage, and a group of foreground figures enlivening and humanising the scene as a whole. A degree of artistic license has been applied to the composition. Various elements lead the eye towards the mountain summit which is more pyramidal than in reality. The height and slope of the lower part of Y Garn - the mountain to the right - has been amended for dramatic effect. The same applies to the pyramidal peak accepting the middle ground. The depiction of the Snowdon massif is not overpowering or threatening, but is rendered as a 'picturesque' subject of peaceful and orderly contemplation in the 18th century manner. As such it is a well structured, successful and resolved painting, one which proved influential in the development of a more realistic style of landscape painting.

In contrast is the view of 'Lyn - y - Cau, Capel Idris' viewed from the wilder and more rugged parts of the mountain. The image is entirely focussed on the dark blue waters of the lake and especially the exaggerated dark toned height and steeples of the cliffs of Craig Cau. These are dominant and central to the drama of the scene at the expense of the rest of the painting. The bulk and expansiveness of Craig Cau have been sacrificed to create a strange, powerful and essentially 'sublime' image, more a circular volcanic crater and lake than an accurate depiction of the glacial scenery. The remainder of the landscape is bathed in a closely toned Mediterranean light with the long line of the horizon providing a sense of stability within the image. The foreground boulders and cattle owe more to the imagination than the actuality but the inclusion of human activity appears to imply that one can be at home in, and appreciate, such an environment. Overall, in my opinion, this is a less successful painting than the view of Snowdon; it appears to be more of an attempt to overawe and impress the audience.



Portrait of Richard Wilson
 Anton Raphael Mengs



Snowdon from Llyn Nantlle



Lyn - y - Cau, Capel Idris

Richard Wilson was influential, in 1768 becoming a founder member of the Royal Academy and recognised as a pioneer in British art of landscape for its own sake. He is described on the Welsh Academy Encyclopaedia of Wales as the 'most distinguished painter Wales has ever produced and the first to appreciate the aesthetic possibilities of his country'.
An accolade well deserved.

Paul's challenge for members:

To email us photos of your paintings of Snowdonia, past or new work, to feature in the next edition.

QUIZ

Here are 7 Welsh or Wales - based artists. Match the artist to their birthplace and their artwork. Answers below.

Artist						
Ernest Zobole	Will Roberts	Glyn Morgan	Charles Burton	Josef Herman	David Mainwaring	Evan Walters
Birthplace						
Treherbert	Ponytypridd	Warsaw	Ruabon	Treherbert	Ystrad	Llangyfelach
Artwork						
The Doubler	Miners Singing	Miners	Bethania Chapel, Porth	Ton Pentre	Ystrad & People	Rhodda Mountain
Trumpets of the Dead	Evenfall, Ystradgynlais	Brass Candelsticks & Pears	St Davids, Gwenflawdd, Penclawdd	Milkman with Horse & Cart	Rock, Cwmafan	Artist's Mother
Pennard Castle	Digging for Roots	Porth, Rhondda	Landscape Around December	Abstract Heads in Grey	Farmers on Horses	

A Blast From Our Past by Colin Robins

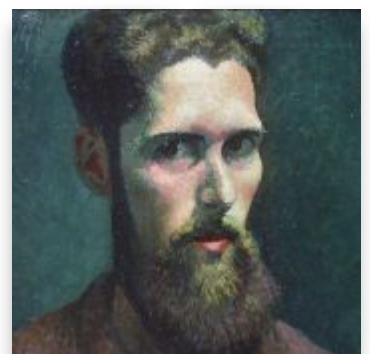
The Glenys Stone Journals are a remarkable record of the work of Llanelli Art Society between 1953 and 1992. They were presented to LAS by the nephew and niece of Glenys Stone (1923 -2014), who had been a member of the LAS committee for over forty years. The earliest item, we have, is an invitation to a private viewing of the LAS exhibition, which was formally opened on March 21st, 1953, at Llanelli School of Art (now Pen Tip School, Pembrey Road). The invitation is interesting because it links two people who made an important contribution to Art in Llanelli and throughout Wales.

Derrick Pratt, Principal of the School of Art, 1924-1951, was a founding member of Llanelli Art Society in October 1927. Once the art college had acquired new premises at the Pen Tip site, LAS was invited to mount exhibitions at the art college.

John Petts (1914 - 1991) who opened the show, was a Londoner by birth, but is regarded as a Welsh artist. His talents were far-ranging: portraitist, sculptor, wood engraver, glass engraver, printer, teacher, and publisher. He was well-connected to writers and other artists in Wales, and worked for the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council. He lived in North Wales, Llansteffan, and Abergavenny.

In 1963, he organised the funding and design of what became known as The Wales Window, which was installed in the 16 Street Baptist Street Church, Birmingham, Alabama, USA, following the bombing of the church by white supremacists. Four black teenage girls were killed in the bombing. All over Wales, people donated half -a-crown each to finance a memorial window for the church. The window depicted a black Christ.

More works by Petts



John Petts - Self Portrait

Quiz Answers

Artist, number of artworks, and birth-place.
Ernest Zobole - 3 - Ystrad.
Will Roberts - 3 - Ruabon.
Glyn Morgan - 3 - Ponytypridd.
Charles Burton - 3 - Treherbert.
Josef Herman - 3 - Warsaw.
David Mainwaring - 2 - Treherbert.
Evan Walters - 3 - Llangyfelach.