

# FRIENDS OF THE WILSON NEWS UPDATE



Friends of the Wilson  
Cheltenham Art  
Gallery & Museum

## In this issue...

- A full programme of exciting FoTW events up until the end of June 2026.
- We have more fascinating talks planned for the Friends. On Wednesday 22 April Christopher Hotten will be talking about the **Gordon Russell Museum in Broadway**. He has long been associated with the Museum and the Gordon Russell story. We would then like to suggest (and gauge interest for) a **visit for Friends to the Museum** on Wednesday 27 May at 2pm for a guided tour and to see the Metalwork Exhibition at a cost of £13pp entrance. The options for travel would be self-drive (and possibly car-share) or bus 606 from Cheltenham to Broadway. On **Wednesday 6 May Helen Brown**, who worked at The Wilson from 1986 to 2013 and curated the first ever **Winchcombe Pottery** exhibition at the museum in 1998, will tell us about the pottery's story. And **Wednesday 17 June** is the rescheduled date for **Lucy Abel Smith** to talk to us about the biennial **Fresh Air sculpture show** in Quenington.
- **If you pay your subscriptions by Standing Order please ensure payment amounts are correct.**

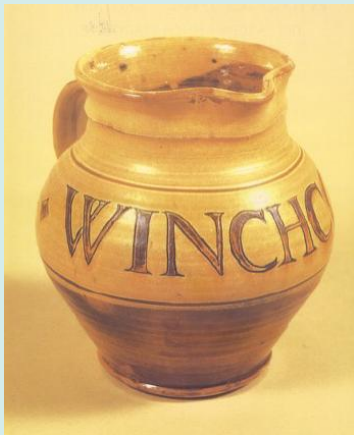
- Save the Date - The **2026 AGM** will be on Thursday 25 June. Details to follow.
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Wednesday 22 April 2pm. Talk: The Gordon Russell Museum with Christopher Hotten

[Book now](#)

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Wednesday 6 May 2pm. Talk: Celebrating 100 years of Winchcombe Pottery with Helen Brown

[Book now](#)

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Wednesday 17 June 2pm. Talk: Lucy Abel Smith and the story of the biennial Fresh Air sculpture show

[Book now](#)

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### **News from the Trustees**

Our talks are proving popular particularly since they moved to Wednesdays. We were treated to a fascinating talk by former Chief Constable of Gloucestershire Tim Brain in January on the somewhat colourful life of Edward Elgar. Most recently we had an excellent talk by Fiona James, a former Ladies' College teacher, on the domestic building projects of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Just three examples were cited, which were challenging in all aspects. Emma Ferry also kindly stepped in at short notice in February for another great talk, when we learned about the hidden history of Mrs Lucy Orrin Smith. The talks are complemented by tea and coffee and some wonderful cakes, baked by our own Sue Reeves with catering ably supported by Alison Pascoe. Thank you Sue and Alison our unsung heroes !! Please come along and support events now the days are longer, lighter and warmer.

Once again we'd like to remind members that our membership fees increased last year. While many members updated their standing orders at the time, our records show that some standing orders are still set at the previous rate. We kindly ask all members to check their standing orders and update them to reflect the current membership fee as soon as possible.

Joint membership is £40

Single membership is £25

Under 25s is £20

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

### **News from The Wilson**

#### **Exhibition : Paula Rego: Visions of English Literature**

**Until 10 May 2026**

If you haven't been yet, please visit this high profile exhibition which is sure to challenge, if not delight. The exhibition brings together three of Paula Rego's most ambitious and poignant print series – Nursery Rhymes, Peter Pan and Jane Eyre. Rego's work invites viewers into a universe where innocence and cruelty, fantasy and reality coexist in vivid tension.

The Wilson is putting on various Paulo Rego events including:

**9 May:** Sarah Middleton Lecture on Women Artists: [Groundbreaking Women in Art - The Wilson Museum](#), 3 -4pm

#### **Exhibition : Whispers on the Wall**

**Until 31 May 2026**

A participatory exhibition exploring storytelling through 'collective mark-making'. Whispers on the Wall invites visitors into a space where stories are constantly changing, shaped and sensed through the traces of those who came before. At the heart of the exhibition, an evolving artwork asks audiences to become co-creators, shaping an installation through shared imagination and mark-making.

Drawing directly onto fabric with graphite of varying thicknesses, visitors respond freely to gesture, texture and instinct. A modern retelling of the fairytale *Baba Yaga* by local artist Dougal Kirkland runs quietly through the space, offering fragments of narrative rather than a fixed script.

## **Cheltenham's BIG Museum Project: Test Space**

### **Until July 2026**

With renovation work almost complete The Wilson will have four large modern collection galleries which will become your new museum. In this exhibition, you will find different temporary museum displays – a test space – designed to spark conversations with our communities.

## **The Wilson reopening in October 2026 and a major refurbishment of the Arts and Crafts Gallery**

In October The Wilson is planning to open the refurbished and redisplayed museum galleries. They will be temporarily closing the Arts and Crafts gallery from June 2026 for much needed repair and refurbishment. Key objects from the collection will be displayed in other areas of the museum whilst an ambitious redisplay of the collection is undertaken.

The ambition is to present a major exhibition on the Arts and Craft Movement in June 2027, including items from other collections, that will offer fresh perspectives on the Movement. The Wilson aims to reopen the permanent Arts and Crafts gallery in 2028 following a fundraising campaign.

## **Volunteering at The Wilson - is it for you ?**

Volunteering at The Wilson Art Gallery & Museum offers a rich and rewarding experience that goes far beyond simply giving your time, it is also an excellent way to expand personal knowledge and develop new interests.

Appreciation for volunteers is shown through small but thoughtful perks such as complimentary drinks and snacks while on shift, and discounts across Cheltenham Trust venues and cafés. Volunteering at The Wilson is a fulfilling way to give back, meet new people, and enjoy a deeper connection with Cheltenham's cultural life.

Please see further information at [Volunteer - The Wilson Museum](#)

**Best wishes**

**The Trustees**

*Friends of The Wilson*

[www.friendsofthewilson.org.uk](http://www.friendsofthewilson.org.uk)

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