

FRIENDS OF THE WILSON NEWS UPDATE



In this issue...

- **A full programme of exciting FoTW events up until the end of September.** Whilst most talks are in the daytime we have on Wednesday September 2 an evening talk at St Luke's Hall, Cheltenham at 19.15. We also have a private tour of Rodmorton Manor on Monday July 20 - Places are limited!
- On **Wednesday 17 June Lucy Abel Smith** will talk to us about the biennial **Fresh Air sculpture show** in Quenington. Sadly 2026 will be the last show, although the Old Rectory commitment to the arts is to continue but in a different form.
- **We have two special members-only events coming up** — full details to follow soon. In **July** — an exclusive evening talk on the Golden Valley development plus in **October** — A celebratory FoTW dinner marking the opening of our new museum project.
- A review of the enjoyable **Friends' April Study Tour to Northumberland.**

- **If you pay your subscriptions by Standing Order please ensure payment amounts are correct.** Unfortunately, approximately half of standing orders have not been updated.
 - A new exhibition at The Wilson - **The Art of Looking: from Dutch Masters to Modern Britain** opening Friday May 29.
 - The **2026 AGM** will be on Thursday 25 June. The meeting will start at 17.30 for an 18.00 start. Meeting details will be emailed to members.
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Wednesday 17 June 2pm. Talk: Lucy Abel Smith and the story of the biennial Fresh Air sculpture show.
The Last Blast of Fresh Air - Fresh Air Sculpture was launched in 1992 by Lucy Abel Smith and her late husband David as a biennial exhibition celebrating contemporary art in the beautiful riverside setting of their garden at the Quenington Old Rectory near Cirencester. Now, Lucy and the Trustees have decided that the 17th show, Fresh Air Sculpture 2026, is to be the last. Come and hear its story.

[Book now](#)



Wednesday 15 July 2pm. Talk: Freddie Gick:
Cheltenham's newest and smallest World War I museum

[Book now](#)



Monday 20 July Afternoon visit to Rodmarton Manor
with private tour led by Fiona James

Book now



Wednesday 2 September 7:15pm Evening talk
From Birmingham to Byzantium to the Cotswolds:
stories of Ernest and Sidney Barnsley with Kirsty
Hartsiotis

Book now

[News from the Trustees](#)



Friends' Study Tour to Northumberland April 2026

The Friends of The Wilson had a very successful and enjoyable study tour to Northumberland, helped by some welcome spring sunshine, and ably led by Sue Reeves and Irene Finlayson. The itinerary included a guided tour by Annette Carruthers, an Honorary Friend formerly in charge of the Arts and Crafts collection at The Wilson, of St Andrew's Church, Roker, known as the Arts and Crafts Cathedral of the North East.

Click [here](#) to continue reading our review of the trip.

While many members updated their standing orders at the time, our records show that around half 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.

Holst Victorian House are holding a fundraising party on 30 May. We would like to extend an invitation to Friends of The Wilson. The website link is: [Fundraising Party - Holst Victorian House](#).

News from The Wilson

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 Art of Looking: from Dutch Masters to Modern Britain

29 May – 3 January 2027 | Admission Free

This exhibition, in two spaces, celebrates the richness of The Wilson's collection from the forty-three paintings gifted to Cheltenham in 1898 of the de Ferrières collection, through to 20th century artists including Stanley Spencer, Graham Sutherland, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Lynn Chadwick.

The Wilson's de Ferrières Collection, is a rare and focused group of European artworks which span the mid-17th to the mid-19th century. In contrast, a second exhibition space highlights modern painters and sculptors. Rather than simply recording what they saw, they experimented with perception, memory, and metaphor. Together, the two periods form a conversation about attention. Whether rendered with meticulous detail or bold stylisation, each artwork asks us to pause, to look again, and to discover how much more becomes visible when we take the time to truly see.

Dining with the Dutch Masters

May 28 18.00-21.30

The Wilson is hosting an intimate evening where art and gastronomy come together in perfect harmony. Take the opportunity to have an early glimpse of their newest exhibition paired with an exclusive 6 course meal. Tickets are priced at £75. [Dining with the Dutch Masters - The Wilson Museum](#)

The Wilson is 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. ***Look out for an exciting programme of events.***

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. The ambition is to present a major exhibition on the Arts and Craft

Movement in June 2027, including items from other collections. 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.

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

Best wishes

The Trustees

Friends of The Wilson

