

# FRIENDS OF THE WILSON NEWS UPDATE



Friends of the Wilson  
Cheltenham Art  
Gallery & Museum

## In this issue...

- **Don't forget the 2026 AGM on Thursday 25 June.** It's your meeting and is at 5.30pm for 6pm. You will have received details by email.
- **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 Rodmarton Manor on Monday July 20 - Places are limited!
- **This 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 events coming up** — *full details to follow soon.* — a talk on the Golden Valley development (*non-members welcome*) plus in **October** — A celebratory FoTW dinner marking the opening of our new museum project.

- **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 now open - **The Art of Looking: from Dutch Masters to Modern Britain**
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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](#)

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

[Book now](#)

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

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**Tuesday 11 August** Save the date! We are planning a visit to Museum & Art Swindon, with a tour of the Studio Pottery led by Kirsty Hartsiotis.

[Further details](#)

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**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](#)

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[News from the Trustees](#)

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.

### **News from The Wilson**

#### **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**

**Until 3 January 2027**

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.

### **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 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*

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