

NEWSLETTER

NO.12 – AUTUMN 2014

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Methodist **Modern**
Art Collection



*A Tribute to Michael Edmonds
Centenary of Eularia Clarke's birth
The Collection visits Lancashire and Yorkshire*

DEAR FRIEND

I trust that you will feel that we have again managed to produce a Newsletter that is both topical and informative. It is with real sadness that we have to report the death of Michael Edmonds, one of our Collection artists. A full tribute appears on the facing page.

Our autumn edition carries detailed reports on three recent, very successful, exhibitions of the Collection in the North of England.

As we celebrate the centenary of the birth of one of our more popular Collection artists, Eularia Clarke, we are delighted to share the news that the Trust, recently established in her name, is likely to result in public access to her considerable body of work that has been hidden from view for the past 44 years.

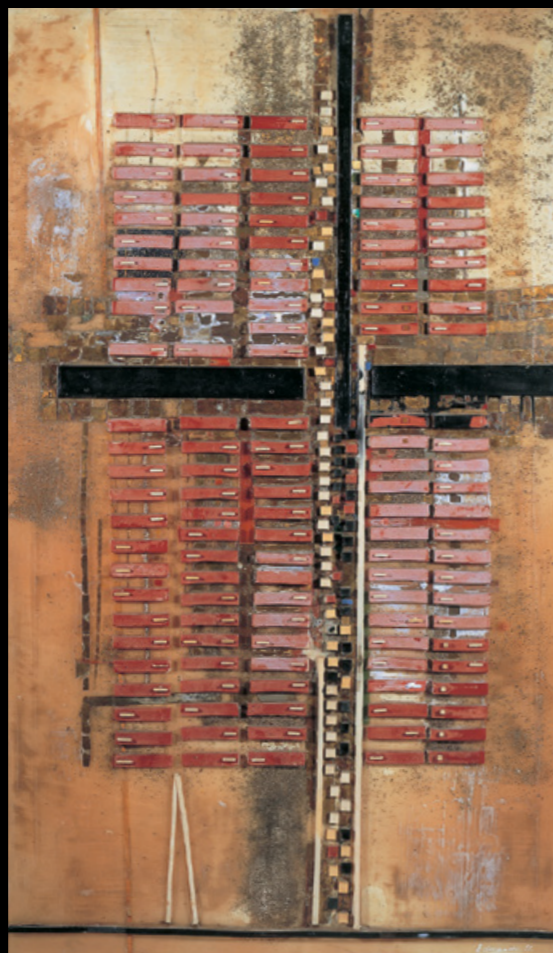
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INTRODUCE A FRIEND

Can you persuade a friend to become a Friend of the Collection? We are enormously grateful to our loyal core of Friends but, with ever increasing expenditure very much in mind, we are keen to increase our numbers. The Secretary is always delighted to receive new Applications! The appropriate forms are, of course, available at exhibition sites – or may be downloaded from the Methodist Church in Britain (Friends of the Collection) website.



Left: Michael Edmonds (1926-2014), *Cross over the City*. 1962. Polyester, brass and mosaic, relief panel. From the Methodist Modern Art Collection

Front Cover: Eularia Clarke (1914-1970), *The Hole in the Roof*. 1966. Oil. Copyright Eularia Clarke Trust/ Photography Geraint Lewis

Opposite:
Michael Edmonds:
Contemplative Sculpture.
Prayer Chapel of Trinity
Methodist Church, Penarth.
C.1963. Cast aluminium,
Perspex and timber.
Photo: Sarah Middleton

A TRIBUTE TO

Michael Edmonds

1926–2014

Michael Edmonds trained at the Royal West of England School of Architecture in wartime Bristol. He was then deployed, as a Bevin Boy, to the coalmines of South Wales as his contribution to the war effort. His experience there, both above and below ground, was described in a recently-published fragment of autobiography *War Underground*.

Following the end of the war, and living in Penarth, his work in his trained discipline as an architect led to a series of building design commissions for the National Coal Board. Subsequently, having moved to the S.E. of England, he was heavily involved in designing schools and community centres, much of this for the GLC. He was also regularly called upon to work on Methodist chapels, whether updating or building from new.

Michael Edmonds was an active member of the 56 Group of artists who were engaged in promoting avant-garde art in Wales. Much of his early work is best described as abstract although in his retirement years, back in Wales, he typically produced representational

pieces in watercolour and inks (often hurriedly completed) some of which reflected his enduring interest in the coal industry, geology and nature. The liberal Christian faith that he held, often shows through in his work. His relief panel *Cross over the City* (polyester, brass and mosaic; 1962) was bought, for the Collection, by Douglas Wollen, in 1963.

There is a further example of Michael Edmonds' work, dating from 1965, to be seen today in the Prayer Chapel of Trinity Methodist Church, Penarth. Ten years ago, together with some works from the Methodist Collection, it was exhibited at the National Museums & Galleries of Wales in an exhibition, 'An Art accustomed Eye', which celebrated the picture-collecting of the late John and Sheila Gibbs. Peter Wakelin, who wrote the catalogue to that exhibition, described the sculpture's links with the former Methodist International House of South Wales at Sea Roads, Penarth and said 'The sculpture is mounted on two massive timbers that suggest the wood of the cross. On this is placed a cross of cast aluminium in organic shapes like



bones and joints that bring home the mortality of Christ. The cavity within is also loosely cross-shaped and contains another cross; the enduring succession of crosses within one another ends in a luminosity within the carapace that hints at the Resurrection'.

(A comprehensive Obituary, by Peter Wakelin, appeared in the 14/04/14 edition of *The Guardian*).

Managing Trustees

of the Collection

**OUR TRUSTEE IN PROFILE IS JOHN GIBBS,
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES FOR THE PAST FOURTEEN YEARS**



As children of John and Sheila Gibbs, my four brothers and I grew up surrounded by 20th Century paintings in the Modernist house that my parents had built in Penarth, outside Cardiff. As may be imagined this has immeasurably informed my interest in art and artists – although my profession is that of a scientist – a researcher on tree diseases to be precise.

While at University in the early sixties, I was aware that my father had taken the initiative to create what has become the Methodist Modern Art Collection and that he had invited the Revd Douglas Wollen to take the lead in selecting the works. However, I did not see any of the exhibitions in the famous ‘Church and The Artist’ tour up and down the country that Douglas organised between 1963 and 1965. Indeed my first real interaction with the Collection did not occur until after its long, relatively fallow period between 1970 and 1990. In this latter year, it was ‘rescued’ and brought to South Wales for an exhibition that my father organised at the Turner House, Penarth as part of a Festival of Christian Art. And there I was able to see it and appreciate its riches.

Not long afterwards, the Collection was re-located in the corridors of the Methodist Church’s Department of Education and Youth at Muswell Hill, North London and became available for touring again (this under the helpful eye of a great friend of the Collection, Brian Sharp). Stimulated by knowledge of this, in 1993 I arranged for ‘Churches Together in Farnham’ (in which town my family and I were then living) to host an exhibition of the Collection at the local community arts centre, the Maltings (Ann Sumner, now a fellow trustee of the Collection, was living in Farnham at the time and helped greatly with the design of the ‘hang’). A year or so later I was able to help secure for the Collection our two pictures by Mark Cazalet *Nathaniel (asleep under the fig tree)* and *Fool of God (Christ in the Garden)* having first seen his work at an exhibition in the crypt of St Paul’s Cathedral.

Given this background, it is perhaps not surprising that when a working party was created in 1997 to explore possibilities of finding a new home for the Collection, I was asked to participate. This resulted in the Collection being based at Westminster College, Oxford, now part of Oxford Brookes University. And when the team of Managing Trustees was appointed in 1998, to maintain and promote the Collection, I was asked to take on the role of Chairman, a position that I still hold today. It has been a most interesting and rewarding experience. If I can pick out one event (apart from the commissioning of *Christ writes in the Dust* described under ‘Trustee’s Choice’), it would be the opening of the splendidly curated exhibition at ‘Wallspace’, All Hallows on the Wall, during the summer of 2010. Richard Cork, the eminent art critic, was present both to open the exhibition and to launch the ‘Guide to the Methodist Collection’ for which he had written the foreword.

A work in focus

TRUSTEE JOHN GIBBS NOMINATES HIS CHOICE

I have chosen the painting by Clive Hicks Jenkins’ *Christ writes in the Dust: The Woman taken in adultery*, at least partly because of my involvement in the commissioning process.

The commissioning of art is a tricky matter - someone is often dissatisfied or upset: witness Winston Churchill’s response to the Graham Sutherland portrait of him that had been commissioned by members of both Houses of Parliament. By contrast, although very few of the works in the Methodist Collection have been commissioned, it is good to be able to note that where this has happened, the experience has been a positive one (the Iselin *Elements of Holy Communion* and, more recently, Ghislaine Howard’s *The Washing of the Feet*). And so it has been with *Christ writes in the Dust*.

My wife and I have known and admired the paintings of Clive Hicks-Jenkins for well over 10 years and, indeed, I showed some images of his work to my fellow trustees in about 2005. However, it was not until two benefactors announced their wish to sponsor a work that demonstrated the readiness of Jesus to take a non-judgmental stance - ‘neither do I condemn you’ - that the opportunity to talk seriously to Clive about a commission arose. In October 2009, he and I travelled to meet the donors and a most rewarding discussion ensued about the chosen subject. Terms were agreed and then began the rather worrying process of waiting to see how Clive would accommodate the commission among his many other commitments, including the necessity to produce paintings for gallery exhibitions and the opportunity to be ‘artist in residence’ at St David’s Cathedral in Pembrokeshire. Eventually we heard that the painting was nearing completion and a handover was arranged for 22 February 2011 at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts,



Clive Hicks-Jenkins (b. 1951),
*Christ writes in the Dust: The
Woman taken in Adultery*. 2011.
Acrylic on panel.
From the Methodist Modern
Art Collection

University of Birmingham. Trustee Ann Sumner was at this time Director of the Institute and it was a convenient location for the donors. Some 15 people assembled and the picture was unveiled – almost still wet as Clive had been working on it up until 2.30 am that very morning!

It was a memorable day: the picture making the impact in terms of exciting interest and stimulating discussion that it has continued to do wherever it has been shown. For further comment on the work, I cannot do better than quote from the description of the picture that I have prepared for a Supplement to the 'Guide to the Collection' that the trustees hope to produce shortly. The artist has 'frozen' the story at the point where Christ distracts the crowd's attention from the woman to himself by writing in the dust. Clive Hicks-Jenkins has commented:

'I worked out the figures of Christ and the woman in separate, detailed studies and, relatively late in the day, I decided to use mirror images of the two, their shapes almost interlocking.

I gave a great deal of thought as to how Christ might be portrayed. Christians and non-Christians alike have strongly preconceived ideas about his appearance and I hoped neither to pander to those preconceptions, nor to tackle them head on. I felt the subject should be approached in a way that didn't make Christ the immediate or obvious centre of attention. This is a narrative painting, with other elements that have to bear equal weight. I placed him in the position he now occupies so that viewers have to turn their heads almost upside down to see him the right way up.

When they do they'll find a young man with dark eyes and with cropped dark hair and beard. But they probably will have looked at the painting quite hard before they upend their heads to see his face, and by then they will have already entered the world of the painting and have become at least a little accustomed to it, and to him'.

When it came to the woman, Clive has said 'Other artistic interpretations portray her as contrite, ennobled and, as a result, easy to forgive. I wanted her to be more streetwise, older, flaunting – a bit like the ladette culture of our city centre - so she would be more difficult to forgive'. The accusers in the foreground are even in tone, so as not to detract from the central characters. The stones are hidden behind their backs. People viewing the picture find themselves ranged with them.

The background is based on sketches of Montclar in Catalonia which the artist visited in the spring of 2010. It is a charming and picturesque village but with darkness beneath, relating to events 70 years ago in the Spanish Civil War. Truth-telling, reconciliation and forgiveness have not occurred. The artist has said 'It was the drawing of Montclar that gave me the composition that would knit everything together'.

A REMINDER:

Guides to the Collection are available from the Friends' Secretary - £5, and P&P free to Friends.

GLEANINGS AND REFLECTIONS

ALONG THE WAY

Ellesmere Port, on The Wirral.
(6 March – 27 April 2014)

A commitment, back in 2006, to bring the entire Collection to Ellesmere Port in the spring of this year was something of an act of faith. Eight years ago the very future of Trinity Methodist Church was in doubt. In the interim, a remarkable collaboration with the Ellesmere Port community saw the germ of an ambitious plan: to promote a 'Port Arts Festival' and transform a number of buildings as key venues. Similarly, there was an effective campaign to galvanise a support network of local organisations to ensure the provision of a large team of trained volunteers. Trinity Methodist itself, the hub venue, had been transformed from a distinctly gloomy Victorian church with fixed pews and a gallery, into a light, multi-purpose community space, featuring a healthy, living café and meeting area complete with 'labyrinth'. All timed to dovetail perfectly with its 2014 Centenary.

The use of Michael Edmonds' painting, *Cross over the City*,* (at The University C.E. Academy), as a 'flagship' exhibit, was an inspired decision, linking very neatly with the Festival theme 'Along the Way'; both titles offering us the opportunity to consider both Christ's and our own life journey and also to meet people and engage in a mingling of traditions found on any high street and urban area.

Thus the 55 works that currently comprise the Collection were unveiled to the Ellesmere Port community at the four venues (West Cheshire College and the Paperboat Gallery being the other two) and continued for a bravely ambitious eight weeks. Over this period there was a rich assortment of activities which included a programme of weekly Lenten Reflections and a talk, at Trinity, by Ghislaine Howard (*See report following*). Further talks took place at the College (Nicholas Mynheer) and at the Paperboat Gallery (Adrian Sumner). The Young Offenders Group worked on their version of *Cross over the City* and a very moving evening event, featuring Colin Parry of Foundation for Peace, was held at the Port Arcades Shopping Centre. There was also an opportunity to view a complementary display of panels from the Quaker Tapestry (*Later to appear in Bath. Ed*).

The 828 recorded visitors to the exhibition were predominantly from Cheshire, Lancashire, The Midlands and North Wales but those from further afield included folk from London, Devon, the Isle of Man – and even Dubai and Western Australia! Bob Crompton, the Mayor of Ellesmere Port, managed to attend every event throughout the Festival; an admirable achievement.

Trustee Geoff Cornell spent some time in Ellesmere Port over the duration of the Arts Festival and made the following observation:

'The Exhibition is a striking example of how the Collection is a vital tool for the Mission of the Church. The simple fact of such wonderful works being offered into a deprived area is very much of the Gospel. The partnerships, the conversations that the works are able to generate across civic and cultural and educational divides is remarkable. The impact of individual works on individual visitors is, we know, considerable – and, as I witnessed with the School visit, can generate understanding, insight and awe. However, I was struck by the same old problem of biblical literacy affecting the visual as much as the textual and oral depiction of the Christian story: simply, only the people connected with church know the stories that the artists are working with. How much supporting information should we be providing and what lines of approach can we offer that are helpful but not too prescriptive...?'

AN EVENING WITH GHISLAINE HOWARD

Trinity Methodist Church, Ellesmere Port.

Within the programme of supporting events was an evening featuring a dinner and illustrated talk by Ghislaine Howard. She spoke both about the wider range of her work and *The Washing of the Feet* in particular. It was most interesting to learn more about the materials used in this painting, always a favourite when the Collection is on tour. Keen to achieve a real sense of depth and movement within this work, Ghislaine embraced the use of charcoal, PVA glue, sand and, of course, acrylic paint.

An artist gifted with enormous energy, her output is prolific. She is listed as having exhibited (both solo and group shows) in over 60 different, and often prestigious, venues over the past 20 years. Her *Stations of the Cross*

series has been shown, often on more than one occasion, in our cathedrals in Canterbury, York, Exeter, Gloucester, Lichfield, Liverpool (both Anglican and Metropolitan), Derby and Manchester. Ghislaine's most recent work has focused on the theme of 'Seven Works of Mercy', common to all the main religions. One painting from within this series, *Return of the Prodigal*, is to find a home in St. Anne's Church, St. Anne's Square, Manchester. Her work can be viewed on line at ghislainehoward.com

We are fortunate to have a CD recording of Ghislaine's address. Friends who might like to hear more about her views and what inspires her work are welcome to request a loan of this CD. Ed.

As we report elsewhere, Michael Edmonds died at the age of 87, in March of this year, rather poignantly at the time that his painting, *Cross over the City* had enjoyed such a high profile during the Ports Art Festival in Ellesmere Port.

Learning all about the Collection at Holy Trinity
Photo: Geoff Cornell



SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTERS WITH GREAT WORKS OF ART

For a period early in the summer Collection trustee Geoff Cornell enjoyed and put to good use a well-earned Sabbatical. He kindly allowed us to 'listen in' on a day spent in pursuit of some keenly sought after answers...

I find myself thinking...

He writes - I am in the National Gallery in London. I ducked in to avoid the crowds of football supporters packed into Trafalgar Square but it doesn't seem much better in here. It is full of parties of people, many of which are schoolchildren and any number from overseas. They are sprawled on the floor, sketching their response to a painting, or just passing time like me. I find a seat and sink gratefully into the plush leather. I find I am sat opposite a large work entitled *The Finding of Moses*. It doesn't look very Egyptian. It consists of confused alabaster ladies pointing, either to the baby in the centre or off stage. I know the biblical story of course, so I assume the lady in a golden dress is meant to be Pharaoh's daughter, and that the coarsely clad are perhaps Moses' mother or the Hebrew midwives. But it says nothing to me at all. I find a space on the other side of the bench and discover I am opposite Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus*. I can barely see it for the crowd, some of which are gathered around an enthusiastic and rather long-winded guide. It is a magnificent work, not least for his use of light and the wonderful ordinariness of all the characters. It depicts, of course, a moment of revelation, an apocalypse when the two recognise that their companion on the journey, and at their meal, is the risen Jesus. The cook stands listening intently but he is not caught up in the wonder of the discovery. And I find myself thinking...

Works of art that really speak to us

What is it that creates moments of revelation when people encounter works of art? How is it that some impress them, some pass them by, but, from time to time, one really speaks to them? How does seeing a work of art turn from 'what on earth is this all about?', a bit like the couple on the journey to Emmaus, into 'this is really speaking to me', into an encounter, a revelation, that straddles centuries and cultures, a bit like when Jesus broke the bread in their house? This is clearly different from the art appreciation lecture. The guide is pointing out symbolism and balance in the painting, telling the history of the artist and the work. It connects deeper, more viscerally. Would understanding more about the painting increase the likelihood of such revelation – or would it detract from an immediate gut response to it? Similarly, would my being a believer assist such a moment,

or would it produce a religious reverence or a knowledge of the story that inoculate me against the simple jaw-dropping moment? Would it help if there were fewer people here, if it was more like a church and less like a bazaar? Would it help if it were not just one among many packed onto the walls in gallery after gallery miles away from its country and situation of origin, if it were more in its context rather than just a work of art that I am supposed to appreciate, to reverence, by an artist I have heard of, rather than Gentileschi, who painted *The Finding of Moses* opposite? And would it help if I were more engaged with the paintings rather than annoyed at the crowds and only here in the first place because I didn't want to sing football chants?

'The wind blows where it will...'

My thoughts are about a spiritual encounter with a painting: spiritual in its broadest sense of my spirit in conversation with the spirit of the work. It's about inspiration, the breathing in of the spirit, rather than instruction, the conveying of truths or insights. It's about moving below the surface of the mind, engaging with feelings rather than analysing what the work looks like, even what it is supposed to be saying. It might be quite difficult to articulate my response – it's not about liking or disliking, it is about whether there has been any connection. And I have to accept that there may be no connection at all – or there may be a connection one day and not another. 'The wind blows where it will and so it is with the spirit'.

A story beloved of Christians

I return to the Caravaggio. One of its distinctive features is a Christ like anyone else, perhaps a bit plumper than I reckoned on, and the bread insignificant compared to the mouth-watering but simple meal the cook has prepared. The Emmaus Road story is beloved of Christians because it summarises their own journeying and uncertainties, the moments of revelation sparse, perhaps long ago. We know it to have been real – but it also happens to us and not to others. The cook is patient but sees nothing special in the stranger breaking the bread, whereas the other two are nearly falling off their chairs. There's an elusive element to this revelation, almost a particularity. I find him, the cook, a compelling figure for people who have heard something of the Christian story but who have not made the journey of faith, have not immersed themselves in the stories. The cook doesn't 'get it'.

God speaking in powerful ways – or simply pictures on a wall?

And so I find a further question. Given that art seems to have this capacity for spiritual encounter, so that people

of any faith or none can be moved by it in ways they find hard to describe, does religious art also have the capacity for religious encounter, taking people into some kind of faith, or at least removing an antipathy to faith? This takes me into the difficult territory of what is religious art – which seems to be less the religious belief of the artist than the subject being depicted, but even the most secular of subjects can also have a religious feel to them at times. And when we get to Modern Art, often non-representational, then the lines are blurred indeed. I have an interest in these questions, because I am one of the Trustees of the Methodist Modern Art Collection. It is regularly exhibited: is it evangelistic in that it engages people afresh with the Christian story; is it devotional in that it enables people to encounter God speaking to them in powerful ways; or is it simply pictures that are hung on a wall?

Marvelling at the insight of Caravaggio

To return to the Caravaggio *Supper to Emmaus* at the National Gallery, the disclosure moment came for Cleopas and his companion as Christ broke the bread. But theirs had been a long journey – not just the seven miles from Jerusalem but also in walking with Christ in part of his ministry, not least the traumatic final week in Jerusalem. Moreover they had had their minds opened and their hearts set on fire through the unknown companion explaining the scriptures to them. They were ripe for the moment of revelation! The servant in the room has not had that experience. Christ may be present but the servant is aware of nothing beyond a stranger invited to supper, an extra mouth to feed. He is present at a critical moment, but because he does not know the story he sees just a fraction of what is going on. He could serve as representative of modern western society's distance from the Christian narrative. Would it be entirely fanciful to wonder whether he thought his master and mistress had taken leave of their senses, had become caught up in some kind of religious euphoria? Or had he watched wistfully as they understood and he did not? I marvel at the insight of Caravaggio who includes this character in the scene - unlike the two paintings of it in the Methodist Modern Art Collection!

STOP PRESS:

It is with great sadness that we have to report the sudden death of the Revd. Geoff Cornell on 12 October 2014. Indefatigable in his work for the Collection and widely involved across the Methodist world, his passing will be keenly felt. Our thoughts and prayers are very much with his wife, Christine, and family and friends at this time. A full tribute to Geoff will appear in our Spring Newsletter. Ed

THE COLLECTION ON ITS TRAVELS...

The Methodist Modern Art Collection comes to Yorkshire. Ann Sumner reports...

'ARTISTS OF FAITH'

Bronte Parsonage Museum, Haworth.
(1 May - 27 June 2014)

The eyes of the world were on Yorkshire this summer when the Tour de France went through on the weekend of 5 - 6 July. This great sporting event was a tremendous showcase for the landscape, villages and towns of Yorkshire – sometimes called 'God's Own County'. The Bronte Museum was delighted to be able to play host to the Methodist Modern Art Collection at this particular point in time. The Collection has visited Yorkshire previously of course, most successfully at Ripon and at York where it was displayed in the Cathedral and Minster as well as Methodist churches. This time, with the profile of the county so high, the Collection was on view in two very different and groundbreaking venues, both of which were to see the Tour de France pass through, Haworth in West Yorkshire and Leyburn in the Yorkshire Dales. So this year was a first in many ways – it is the first time that the Collection has been curated in an historic house setting and the first time it has been shown in an auction house.

Highlights from the Collection, including the works by Elisabeth Frink, Patrick Heron, Ceri Richards and Graham Sutherland, were initially displayed at the iconic Bronte Parsonage Museum in Haworth where they were seen by international tourists, at the height of the summer season. The showing was curated by Nick Cass, Research Associate at the University of Leeds. Nick is currently writing his PhD on the contemporary artistic interventions at the Parsonage over the last ten years. This kind of academic curatorial collaboration is also a first for the Collection. He carefully selected ten works, seven of which were displayed in the historic rooms where the Bronte sisters had actually lived.

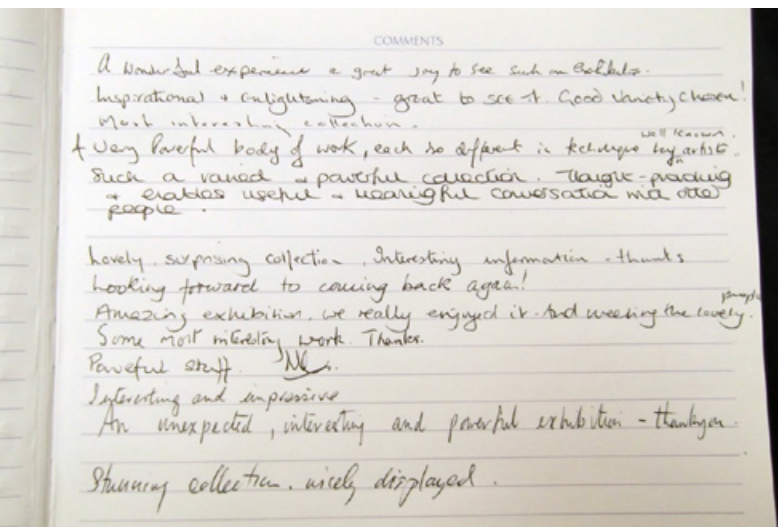
'Methodism touched the lives of all the Brontes' says the Oxford Companion to the Brontes. The Revd Patrick Bronte met his wife Maria when he was examiner at the Wesleyan Methodist Boarding School in 1812. Maria and her sister Elizabeth who, after Maria's death, raised the Bronte siblings and was known as Aunt Branwell, were both from a family of devout Methodists in Penzance, Cornwall. Elizabeth Gaskell wrote in her *Life of Charlotte Bronte* that the Branwell family 'were Methodists and, as far as I can gather, had a gentle and sincere refinement and purity of character'.

Nick Cass discussed the role of Methodism in the Bronte writings but placed the works in the rooms not only to draw connections between the Brontes and Methodism but to ask wider questions about belief, spirituality and social responsibility, so much of which is still relevant to the tourists who visit the Parsonage today.

The exhibition was opened, on 1 May by Revd Ruth Crompton, Superintendent of the Airedale District, with speeches by Sally McDonal, Chair of the Bronte Society and Nick Cass and some 50 people attended this evening event. Over the Bronte Society's AGM weekend and June Festival, Melissa Hardie Budden gave a morning talk on *The Cornish Connection: the Branwells, the Carnes and the Wesleyan Tradition* in Cornwall. The exhibition continued until the end of June with overall visitor numbers an impressive 14, 857.



Opposite: Eularia Clarke (1914-70),
The five thousand 1962. Oil. From
The Methodist Modern Art Collection



A page from the Visitors' Book.

'SEEING IS BELIEVING'

Tennants Auction Centre, Leyburn.

17 August – 21 September

By mid August the whole of the Collection was being hung in completely new surroundings thanks to the perseverance and enthusiasm of Revd Alan Coustick, the outgoing Superintendent, who worked with our Secretary of Trustees, Revd Graham Kent. The entire exercise enjoyed the whole-hearted support and generosity of Tennants auctioneers. Rodney Tennant, Chairman of the Group arranged for the exhibition to be hung in the new auction centre, an impressive building.

It was here that the grand opening of the exhibition took place on a gloriously sunny 17 August. A warm welcome was extended to the 300 folk present, by Rodney and the Revd Janet Park, the new Superintendent for the North Yorkshire Dales. A joyful service, conducted by Janet, then took place, with the Leyburn Brass Band accompanying the hymn singing. During the service images from the Collection were used for the purposes of contemplation.

I was asked to add a few words by way of introduction to the Collection and stressed the illustrious history of the Collection and the important relationship between the art world and our trustees which helps ensure that we are able to continue to expand and enhance the Collection today. The hang of the exhibition was very effectively themed by Alan Coustick, moving from the nativity of Christ, through to his ministry, resurrection, and revealed glory.

Excellent dedicated leaflets were available and two talks were organised by Barbara Morden, a cultural



L-R (as viewed): Alan Coustick, Prof. Ann Sumner, Rodney Tennant, Revd. Janet Park. Photo: Shaun Parker

historian and author of the new Laura Knight biography, with a further lunchtime tour led by Graham Kent. Related church services were also organised at Richmond, Leyburn and Middleham Methodist churches with two more taking place at Tennants Auction Centre.

On most days there were more than 50 visitors with the numbers occasionally reaching the 100 mark (usually on auction days) and there were a number of dedicated coach visits such as that by retired Unison Trade Union members. It is clear from some of the complimentary comments in the Visitors book that the Art Collection has reached new audiences – (See photo above). It was particularly interesting to see just how frequently the word **powerful** appeared within these comments. A team of volunteer stewards, which has included Alan and Janet, have reported back on the sheer enthusiasm of visitors.

The lead image at both the Parsonage and Tennants Auction Centre for all publicity was Eularia Clarke's *The five thousand*. At the Bronte Parsonage Museum Nick Cass spoke of the links he saw between the sense of community instilled by her 1962 painting, depicting tourists eating fish and chips on Canvey Island in Essex, and the concerns the Brontes had in their day for food poverty which continue today in Yorkshire. It is easy to miss the priest at the top of her painting. Also, the two bicycles, at the left side – making it an entirely appropriate lead image in cycling-mad Yorkshire over the summer of 2014!

My thanks to Ann for her in-depth reports on these two recent exhibitions of the Collection. Ed

'A PAINTER OF RELIGION' - EULARIA CLARKE: CENTENARY EXHIBITION

The Oriental Club, Marylebone.

(4 October 2014)

Friends will be well aware that, when on exhibition, our two works in the Collection by Eularia Clarke (1914-1970) are invariably voted favourites by the viewing public. What they may not quite appreciate is their rarity value in that they were two of the very few that the artist agreed to sell back in 1965. (We are indebted here to Douglas Wollen for his considerable powers of persuasion!). The artist was very keen to keep the body of her religious works together as she wanted them to be seen, holistically, as a witness to the living gospel in our daily lives.

Since her death the body of her work has been in the hands of her family who are now in the process of forming a Trust both to protect these paintings and, most encouragingly, make them available for viewing once again. Friends were informed of the Centenary Exhibition at the Oriental Club, in Marylebone, on 4 October which marked both a celebration of the centenary of her birth and re-launching the Collection.

Eularia Clarke had studied Theology at the University of Oxford, but found the subject somewhat dry and uninspiring. She preferred the life classes she took in her spare time at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art but was only inspired to start painting seriously after a pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1960. Over the next ten years she produced 93 canvasses and exhibited regularly in the south of England before her untimely death in 1970, aged just 56.

Her paintings of the gospel stories, always in a contemporary setting, unfailingly have a vitality and immediacy about them. The works – which were compared to those of Spencer and Nash by art critics of Clarke's day – represent an important collection of religious art emanating from one of the greatest periods of change in the Catholic Church, the 1960s.

This small show, of just 20 works, exhibited together, as they were, made for a moving experience. The event was well reviewed in the 10 October edition of the Methodist Recorder.

To view her work in online gallery, go to www.eulariaclarke.com.



Eularia Clarke (1914-1970), *Come down Zacchaeus* 1967. Oil. Copyright Eularia Clarke Trust/Photography Geraint Lewis



Eularia Clarke (1914-1970), *Preaching from the Boat* 1967. Oil. Copyright Eularia Clarke Trust/Photography Geraint Lewis

ELSEWHERE IN THE ART WORLD...



THE QUAKER TAPESTRY COMES TO BATH

The Quaker Tapestry tells a story, a story which captivates, delights and challenges. In words and images, stitched on hand woven woollen cloth, it portrays 350 years of Quaker history, from the renowned work of Elizabeth Fry and prison reform, the establishment of Pennsylvania by William Penn and the Friends Ambulance units in time of war to the less well known work for peace, criminal justice and humanitarian relief.

The tapestry (though strictly speaking an embroidery like the Bayeux) was made in 15 countries by 4,000 men, women and children and consists of 77 panels; with more on the way to tell of new stories. Bath Friends are currently working on their own panel depicting Bath Quakers past and present. This summer 20 panels were displayed for several weeks in the Abbey and the Friends Meeting House in Bath. This coincided with over 2,000 Quakers attending a gathering at the University of Bath. The newly refurbished Meeting House proved a fitting and aesthetic venue and was visited by about 2,500 people.

It is easy to forget the degree of persecution suffered by Quakers in Britain in the late 17th Century; both George Fox and Margaret Fell suffering periods of imprisonment for falling foul of the Law as it then was. This darker part of the Quaker Story is well represented on the panels.

Elizabeth Fry visited her Gurney relatives in Bath and

worshipped with Friends there. Her political lobbying is well known, but her practical good sense led to women prisoners being given a 'bag of useful things' to enable them to sew patchwork quilts on the long journeys of deportation, enabling them to demonstrate their skill or sell their work. The children's drawings illustrating this panel are delightful.

Quaker integrity led to the establishment of banks in the mid 18th Century. One of the Bath panels tells of the Backhouse Bank (1774) and the attempt of Lord Darlington to bankrupt the Quaker owner because he supported the building of the railway which would have cut through his fox coverts; he failed!

Because Quakers valued education they set up schools from an early date, some of which survive to this day; one panel details some of these. Quaker children were encouraged to have enquiring minds and, denied access to universities, continued to educate themselves and pursue knowledge. The Quaker scientists panel includes details of John Dalton, Kathleen Lonsdale and Arthur Eddington and the many Quaker botanists appear on another panel.

A further result of Quakers denied access to public life led to their extensive involvement in commerce. This included iron smelting (as at Coalbrookdale), brass founding and metal casting, boot and shoe making, weaving, printing, pottery and food production, especially biscuit and chocolate making. Some of these are portrayed in the panel of 'Innocent Trades'.

Industrial welfare emerged alongside these activities, one of the best known being Bournville in Birmingham.

The Quaker Tapestry has inspired the making of other community embroideries and the Bradford on Avon Millennium Embroidery, depicting the history of this ancient town near Bath, was shown alongside the Quaker Tapestry to much acclaim.

Selecting 20 panels to bring to Bath proved challenging, many people said that they were inspired to visit the other 57 panels which can be seen at the Friends Meeting House in Kendal, Cumbria which is currently open for much of the year (www.quaker-tapestry.co.uk)

Again, I am most grateful to Ann Warren, of the Bradford-on-Avon Friends Meeting House, for contributing this report. Ed

'INTRICATE IMAGE':

ANGELA DEWAR - TEXTILES

Bleddfa Centre for the Creative Spirit, Knighton, Powys. (4 - 25 October)

It is good to know that former Trustee, Angela Dewar seems to be as busy as ever in the creative field, as evidenced in her latest exhibition in Mid-Wales. Her felted and stitched images are invariably inspired by a love of landscape and associated cultures. A number of you will be familiar with Angela's work, which ranges from small pieces to large scale commissions and includes wall hangings and



pictures, vestments and soft furnishings for churches, art quilts and greetings cards. As a member of the Society of Designer Craftsmen and the Embroiderers' Guild, her work may be seen in Truro Cathedral, Westminster Methodist Central Hall and other locations around the UK. For more information about Angela and her work see her website at www.angela-dewar.co.uk.

SANDHAM MEMORIAL CHAPEL RE-OPENS

Friends who are devotees of the Channel Four News may well have caught the fascinating discussion (31/07/14) between Jon Snow and Stanley Spencer's daughters, Unity and Shirin. The sisters, now well into their 80s, were seen re-visiting the newly restored Sandham Memorial Chapel, generally reflecting on their father's legacy and specifically his role as a war artist.

Jon Snow was in lyrical mood, in using a publicity quote that describes Sandham as 'Britain's Sistine Chapel' and Spencer's work housed therein as 'the most remarkable series of 20th Century murals in Western Europe'. Praise indeed!

Officially re-opened to the public at the beginning of August, visitor numbers to this NT site near Newbury are likely to increase over the WW1 Centenary Commemoration period. Access will be by timed entry tickets – and do check opening dates/ times prior to travelling.

A review of the recent travelling exhibition – 'Heaven in a Hell of War', when the Sandham Chapel murals were to be seen at Somerset House, London and Pallant House, Chichester, appeared in our Spring 2014 Newsletter. Ed

Left: Angela Dewar (b.1939), *Good Friday*, 2014

Opposite left: Five Panels on display in Bath Abbey.

Opposite right: The Tapestry being viewed at the Friends Meeting House, Bath.

FORTHCOMING TOUR PROGRAMME FOR THE COLLECTION

2014

29 September – 23 October 2014

Banbury Circuit

St Mary's Church, Horse Fair,
Banbury OX16 0AA
Contact: Mike King, 01295 678958
Email: mpk_mcb@hotmail.co.uk

2015

Mid January – end March

Wrexham

Wrexham Methodist Church,
Regent Street, Wrexham,
North Wales, LL11 1RY

Oriel Sycharth Gallery, Glyndwr University

Mold Road, Wrexham, LL11 2AW
Contact: Revd. Richard Sharples
01978 361 489
rvsharples@phonecoop.coop

1 May – 19 June

Ballymena, N Ireland

20 June – end July

Belfast

1 August – mid September

Dublin

2016

(tbc)

8 February – 2 April

Lincoln Cathedral

9 April – 22 May

Ealing

(tbc) Autumn

Bury St Edmunds

2017

(tbc) January – March

Canterbury

A THOUGHT TO LEAVE WITH YOU....

*'Paintings and other art forms have long held a vital role
in society because of their ability to trigger emotions'.*

— Mark Pagel (A quote from his book – 'Wired for Culture')