



Cardiff Castle

Cardiff and South Wales

Monday 08 - Friday 12 May 2017

MONDAY 08 MAY 2017

We will meet at Cardiff railway station at 13.00 (Royal Academy representatives will wait for the train arriving from London Paddington at 12.52). Our local coach will be waiting for us and after loading our luggage we will travel a short distance to **Le Bistrot Pierre** where **lunch** will be taken.

This afternoon will begin with a visit to **Llandaff Cathedral** for an art and architecture **guided tour** focusing on the Cathedral's intriguing mix of Norman, Early Gothic and modern architecture, and the wonderful Pre-Raphaelite art, Victorian and modern windows, with artist's such as Rosetti, Burne Jones, Piper and Madox Brown represented.

Located in the ancient "City of Llandaff", now a suburb of Cardiff, the present cathedral dates from 1107 when Bishop Urban, the first Bishop appointed by the Normans, instigated the building of a much larger church, there already being an edifice on the site. The Cathedral was extended and widened and a new West front built in around 1220; the front is judged by many to be one of the two or three most notable mediaeval works of art and architecture in Wales. For over 200 years following the reign of King Henry VIII the building fell into a state of near-ruin, however, in the early 19th century, growing prosperity in the Diocese made possible a fresh restoration undertaken by

J F Seddon and John Pritchard.

Following our visit we will rejoin our coach for the short journey to the 4 star **New House Country Hotel**, where we will check in for 4 nights' accommodation. After some time to freshen up, **dinner** will be served in the hotel restaurant.

TUESDAY 09 MAY 2017

The morning will be spent at **Cardiff Castle**, where we will enjoy a **special tour** with curator, Matthew Williams, one of Britain's leading experts on the Victorian architect William Burges. Matthew trained as an art historian and carried out postgraduate studies in museology, and has been Curator at Cardiff Castle since 1990. He has lectured and published widely on the subject of Victorian decorative design and has recently completed the Pitkin Guide to William Burges.

The castle began life as a Roman fort but is now better known as a wonderfully ornate 19th century mansion. Particularly notable features include the richly decorated banqueting hall, the library, the Octagon Tower with its scenes from the Canterbury Tales and the gilded ceiling of the Arab room. Matthew will also give an introduction and background to Castell Coch and during our visit **coffee/tea and Welsh cakes** will be served.

We will continue on foot to **The Potted Pig** Restaurant for **lunch**.

This afternoon there will be the opportunity to visit **Castell Coch**. This will be an optional visit as access is difficult and there will be steep climbs at the site. Friends may prefer to enjoy some free time in central Cardiff.

Castell Coch was built in the 1870s, upon the remains of a genuine 13th century castle. Castell Coch was commissioned by the immensely wealthy 3rd Marquess of Bute to a design by the eccentric genius William Burges. Burges was given free rein by his paymaster to create a rural retreat to complement the opulence of his main residence, Cardiff Castle.

The castle is constructed of rough rubble sandstone, which gives the building its name Castell Coch, or 'Red Castle' and stands upon a platform commanding the gorge of the River Taff, surrounded by a moat, with imposing views of the adjoining valley. This visit will be self-guided by audio-guide.

We will return by coach to central Cardiff to meet the remainder of the group and continue to The **Senedd**,

housing the debating chamber and three committee rooms for the National Assembly for Wales and also known as the National Assembly building.



The Senedd

Our **guided tour** will examine the architecture of the Senedd, and the focus on using Welsh materials where possible. The building was designed, by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Richard Rogers, to be sustainable with use of renewable technologies and with a focus on energy efficiency. Opened in March 2006 by Queen Elizabeth II it was awarded an "Excellent" certification by BREEAM, the highest ever awarded in Wales. The Senedd was also nominated for the 2006 Stirling Prize. We will also learn about the scope of the National Assembly's powers, the legislative processes, and have a chance to view a plenary session.

We will return to our hotel by coach and **dinner** this evening will be taken in the hotel restaurant.

WEDNESDAY 10 MAY 2017

We will be met this morning by our local coach and travel to **Tredegar House**, one of the architectural highlights of Wales. The original stone house dates to the late 15th century. Although between 1664 and 1672, William Morgan substantially rebuilt and enlarged the property, creating a red brick house in the Carolean style. Inside, the rooms feature fine oak panelling with exceptional carving and ornate plasterwork, moulding and gilding throughout. The Gilt room retains the only surviving 17th century plaster ceiling; featuring a central wreath of vines and flowers and a scrolled acanthus frieze and mask in the manner of Inigo Jones.

Our exclusive **private guided tour** led by the House and Collections Manager will unpack Tredegar's history, architecture and artworks. We will learn about the relationship Tredegar House has with Dulwich Picture

Gallery, who have lent a number of paintings to the National Trust to evoke the appearance of the original interiors. These include two portraits of Queen Henrietta Maria after originals by Anthony Van Dyck, and a set of portraits of English kings and queens c.1618, commissioned by Dulwich College founder Edward Alleyn. We will return to central Cardiff by coach where there will be free time for lunch.

This afternoon we will visit the **National Museum Cardiff** for an **introductory talk** about the history, role and scope of the museum by the Keeper of Art, followed by **tours of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist collection**. Our visit will be led by senior members of the curatorial and conservations teams.

The museum is one of Europe's finest and here we will be able to examine 500 years of magnificent paintings, drawings, sculpture, silver and ceramics from Wales and across the world, including one of Europe's best collections of Impressionist art including Venetian scenes such as *San Giorgio Maggiore at Dusk* and examples from Claude Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* and *Water Lilies* series. Post-impressionism is represented by Van Gogh's late work *Rain at Auvers*, and by Paul Cézanne's *The François Zola Dam*, the first painting by the artist to be displayed in a British public collection.

The art gallery also houses works by all of the notable Welsh artists, including landscapes by Richard Wilson and the pioneering Thomas Jones, and a collection of 20th century art comprising of works by sculptors Jacob Epstein, Herbert Ward and Eric Gill. Painters represented include Stanley Spencer, the British Impressionist Wynford Dewhurst and L. S. Lowry among others.

The tour will finish with a chance to view **behind the scenes in the conservation studio**, followed by time to explore the collections independently and for **tea/coffee and cake** to be taken in the gallery café.

We will return to the hotel for **dinner** and overnight accommodation.

THURSDAY 11 MAY 2017

This morning we will depart the hotel and travel by coach to **Stradey Castle**, a wonderful Victorian mansion house located in the outskirts of Llanelli, and home to Patrick and Claire Mansel Lewis, who will lead our **private tour**. The

Castle, built between 1850 and 1874, contains a blend of architectural and interior design styles, which include eccentric crenellation, a wonderful Victorian screen, and wooden paneling along with regency style furniture and modern chandelier.

Charles Mansel Lewis, Patrick's great grandfather was an artist, and good friend and pupil of Hubert Herkomer RA, a prominent German born painter of the late 19th Century. Stradey Castle holds a large Herkomer collection, including a number of early works depicting the lives of the peasant poor in Bavaria, for which he is most famous, despite primarily being a portrait painter. Charles Mansel Lewis had two works accepted to the RA Summer Exhibition, which are on display in the Castle and will be examined during the tour.

By special arrangement we will view a selection of drawings and etchings by Charles Mansel-Lewis, as well as a selection of books from the library, including those on Reynolds and Turner with illustrated plates.

Coffee/tea and biscuits will be served prior to our tour which will focus on the restoration work completed by the current owners and their plans for the future. We will also discuss the ways in which they have worked with organisations such as the Historic Houses Association.

Lunch will be taken at the nearby **Stradey Park Hotel** prior to an afternoon visit to **Glynn Vivian Art Gallery**. Founded in 1911, this handsome Edwardian gallery offers a broad range of visual arts from the original bequest of Richard Glynn Vivian (1835-1910) to art of the 21st century. In 1854 Richard Glynn Vivian inherited his share in the family's famous Swansea copper works and he travelled the world, collecting art throughout his lifetime. In his old age he bequeathed his collection to the people of Swansea ensuring that this delightful art gallery was built to house his artworks.

The 20th century is particularly well represented with paintings by Hepworth, Nicholson and Nash alongside Welsh artists such as Ceri Richards, Gwen John and Augustus John.

The gallery re-opened in October 2016 following a major refurbishment programme and our visit includes an **introductory talk** about Richard Glynn Vivian and highlights of the collection followed by free-time to explore its broad spectrum of treasures including works by a wide range of artists, from Old Masters to paintings by Claude

Monet, Stanley Spencer, Lucien Pissarro and watercolours and drawings by Richard Wilson, Thomas Gainsborough and John Sell Cotman. The gallery also houses an international collection of porcelain and Swansea china.

We will continue with a visit to **Fonmon Castle**, a fortified medieval castle near the village of Fonmon in the Vale of Glamorgan and a Grade I listed building. With its origins rooted in the 12th century it is today seen as a great architectural rarity, as it is one of few buildings that was drastically remodeled in the 18th century, but not Gothicized. The castle is believed to have remained under the ownership of just two families throughout its history; from Norman times the St Johns and from 1656 the descendants of Colonel Philip Jones.



Fonmon Castle

The Castle contains a collection of artworks purported to be by Reynolds, Van Dyck and Lely, as well as a number of rare books, which we will view on our **private guided tour**. Sir Brooke Boothby, the current owner will lead our tour of the Castle, focusing on the art and architecture, and will also discuss the family's role in opening up Fonmon as a heritage attraction. After the tour we will enjoy a **drink** in the stunning garden, followed by **dinner** in the Castle's beautiful library. We will return to our hotel by coach.

FRIDAY 12 MAY 2017

We will check out of the hotel after breakfast and travel by coach to **Llanvihangel Court**, a well-restored Elizabethan/Jacobean mansion with its old stone façade of six spacious bays that gaze across the sweeping valley of the Monnow towards the English border, backed by the slopes of the Black Mountains. Originally built in 1559 by Rhys Morgan,

son-in-law of the mighty Herbert family, the house has gone through various architectural changes and several owners but the interior is remarkably of a piece, that of a 17th century manorial residence in which original and restored features are in harmony. **Coffee/tea and biscuits** will be served on arrival.

Our **guided tour** with the current owner, Julia Johnson (a descendant of much earlier owners), includes the stunning features such as the staircase, made entirely of yew, which rises through the entire house to the attic and the stair landing which gives access to what would have been the old great chamber above the hall. We also visit several chambers richly beamed, some with fine linenfold panelling and the kitchen which still has a charcoal precursor of an Aga, dated 1679.

Lunch will be taken at **The Walnut Tree Restaurant**, near Abergavenny, a fine-dining restaurant for over 30 years. Shaun Hill, the Head Chef here since 2008, has forged a unique style winning many accolades and awards including Restaurant of the Year for Wales some nine months after he took it over. He gained a Michelin star with the restaurant in the 2010 guide which he still holds today.

This afternoon we will make a brief visit to **St Mary's Priory Church**, highly significant as it contains many fine monuments but most importantly it contains the famous Jesse carving. This unique 15th century representation of King David's father, Jesse, is carved from one solid piece of oak, the base of a magnificent reredos which depicted all of Jesse's descendants on various branches of a tree, culminating with statues of the Virgin and Child and Christ in Glory at the top. Probably between 20 and 30 feet tall, it was originally highly coloured and has been described by art historian, Andrew Graham Dixon, as '*the only great wooden figure to survive the wreckage of the British cultural revolution*'.

We will rejoin our coach and travel to **Newport** railway station for the return journey to London which is due to depart at 16.39 and arrive at London Paddington at 19.02.

Please note that as this tour has been prepared many months in advance the final itinerary may vary slightly from the above.

