

In 2012, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) granted the voluntary group Barnsley Art on Your Doorstep (BAYD) £50,000 for a two year learning programme culminating in this exhibition. Support from Barnsley Arts, Museums and Archives Service and Barnsley Adult and Family Learning Service has also helped make it possible.

Most of the artists were born in Barnsley borough and many achieved national, or even international recognition. Yet despite this, their Barnsley life and origins have been forgotten.

Dame Jenni Murray was amazed when seeing one of the series of artists' booklet BAYD has been writing: “ Wow! Names that are so familiar from my childhood in Barnsley – Cawthorne, Stanhope, Wortley – connections with the pre-Raphaelites..terrible accidents, tragic deaths..bigamy – and wonderful art – in my home town. Brilliant”

Hugh Polehampton Chair of the group said: "This has been a fascinating journey. Five years ago we thought that we would have fewer than ten past artists to tell people about. Now we have nearly thirty.”

Who for example knew that a school master's son from St John's School Park Road became famous in Canada? He was a portrait and landscape painter. And yet in England he has never been exhibited. He is Barker Fairley.

Who knew that many iconic decorative schemes across the country (e.g. Harrods Meat Hall) were designed by William J. Neatby, son of a Barnsley timber merchant?

Hugh Polehampton said: "These past artists were involved in every aspect of Barnsley's history, including its industrial history. Artists came from glass-making, coal mining and linen weaving families. They came from every level of Barnsley society. They became painters, sculptors, designers of glass, tiles, wall paper and costume and were also illustrators."

Many aspects of the exhibition are unique in that many artists have never before been exhibited in Barnsley and some never before in the UK for example:

- John Wood Shortridge, Barnsley born, friend of the English novelist George Gissing – the first time his work has been exhibited
- William Tate, pupil of Joseph Wright of Derby, the first time his work has been exhibited in Yorkshire
- John Spence Ingall, Barnsley born founder member of the Staithes Group, never before exhibited in Barnsley
- Sheila Graham, Barnsley born, the first time her costume work for theatre and film has been exhibited in the UK

Works have been borrowed from as far afield as New Zealand, from artists' relatives and from galleries and museums in the UK. They will show a unique digital re-creation by Barnsley College students of Gawber Glass House.

Notes to editors

BAYD is a voluntary organization. As part of the Hidden Art Project to date, BAYD has worked with over 30 schools and colleges and youth groups. The group have given talks to local organizations and a local student has made a twenty minute film portraying aspects of the artists' lives. The group have run four competitions involving young people and the winning entries will be on display at the exhibition, as will the creation of a yurt hung with textiles made by Barnsley students. A series of talks and workshops runs in conjunction with the exhibition.

Find out more at the Facebook page.

Further information

The Hidden Art of Barnsley exhibition between 7 June - 30 August 2014,

The Cooper Gallery, Church Street, Barnsley
Admission Free
Gallery opening times Monday-Friday 10-4, Saturday 10-3, Sunday closed.

Hugh Polehampton, BAYD Chair on 07778 423 470 or Jen Kiernan, BAYD Project Administrator on 07882 520 865 or email: bayd2014@gmail.com.