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ERICA BROOK reports on Woodcroft First School's Art Week *In My Shoes* - paintings and ceramics exhibited at the Foxlowe Arts Centre

For the second time, Woodcroft First School has been awarded the biennial Art Mark Gold qualification for its high standard of creativity in the arts - dance, music, painting, and ceramic work.

Children, from four to nine, come into their own through the sensitive encouragement of their Head Teacher, Ruth Cartlidge, and her dedicated staff.

This year's Art Week, has the theme, *In My Shoes*, inviting the children to engage with the concept of *Empathy*.

The paintings on show in the hall at the Foxlowe Arts Centre are the work of children aged eight and nine, all of them in Mrs Bev Carareni's class.

The children, under my direction as visiting painter, combined the two approaches of observed drawing and painting with experimenting with print-making techniques.

This approach becomes a background to the work where they imagine themselves into the lives of children in Leek during Victorian times. They then combined the two.

The plates (in the corner cabinet in the Cruso Room) are inspired by looking at the work of two folk artists, John Muafengejo from Africa and the Aboriginal artist Yirawala.

With the help of local potter, Vivienne Ross, assisted by Anne Bailey, the children then had to design their own plate, paying particular attention to the patterns and marks they found in the work of the folk artists.

The plates are made from a red earthenware clay, using the simple process of press-moulding. They are then painted with a white slip. The decoration is achieved with plaster stamps as well as by scratching through the slip using a variety of simple tools (also known as *sgraffito*).

PETER KENT-BAGULEY went to Woodcroft to meet some of the young artists

The sheer delight and fulfillment the young people derive from the Creative Path that is the central warp of the educational experience at Woodcroft was summed up for me by Harvey: "We are so lucky to have art at school because I love it so much."

Headteacher, Ruth Cartlidge welcomed me with a tour of the whole school which was not only an excellent introduction for me to the central importance of creativity in the curriculum at Woodcroft First School but an extravagant generosity of her valuable time.



The Situation returns Friday 6 July

Friday 6th July sees the return of local music promoters *The Situation* following their summer break, and they're coming back with a bang.

The Situation's Chairman (and 6 Towns Radio presenter) Simon Edwards said: "We've had our big summer hols, we're sun-bronzed, rested, and coming out firing on all cylinders - let's go! This month, we have, for your delectation, three fine examples of local wonderfulness."

The evening starts with gravel-voiced Leek blues merchants, Roach Ends, followed by Leek's solid indie-rockers, Vertigo Fish, and headlining are the fantastic rockers, *Hypothesis*, from Stoke.

"We've just completed our first year of putting on original music events as *The Situation*, and could not be more pleased with the response we've had in these first twelve months." continued Edwards: "I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who's been involved so far, from the many bands and solo performers, to our fabulous audiences, and all our friends at the Foxlowe Arts Centre - thank you!"

The Situation's band-booker, Steve Hammersley, added: "We have been hard at work, finding new bands and making plans for the future. Our aim is to carry on raising the creative bar, and to this end, big changes are planned in the autumn. Watch this space!"

Tickets for the Friday 6th July event are £4, and are available from the venue, the bands, Colloco, Leek, and on the door on the night. Doors open at 8-30pm.

The head had arranged for me to meet Abigail, Molly, Kyle and Harvey with her in the staff room. "I was really happy to know that our paintings would be displayed at the Foxlowe Arts Centre." Abigail said.

Harvey confided: "When I started mine it didn't look as though it was going to be my best piece but in the end I was really proud of it."

Molly exuberantly recounted her bewildered first sketches of the various skylines of Leek from the Roaches to the excitement of a picture well made!

Kyle clearly found the challenge of responding creatively to what kind of people had worn different shoes very exciting.

Woodcroft school's celebration of creativity, is for me, the central purpose of education. Being human is being creative.

Phoenix Singers' annual Summer Concert

CAROL HEMSWORTH

For this year's Summer Concert on **Saturday 21 July**, The Phoenix Singers will be joined by their junior choir Young Phoenix and by musicians from Keele University's Concert Band in a varied programme that should appeal to all ages. As usual the concert will be held in **All Saints' Church, Compton, Leek** and will start at **7.30 p.m.**

The contribution from Young Phoenix will include Michael Hurd's Cantata-Musical **Jonah Man Jazz**, which tells the story of Jonah and the Whale in a jazz-form musical for children. Musical accompaniment by Concert Band musicians.

The senior choir's contribution will include a performance of Dutch composer Jacob de Haan's **Missa Katharina**, a setting of the Latin Mass to music arranged for choir, organ and concert band. Choir accompanist Jordan Meakin will be playing the organ part. The piece was given its UK Premiere last November when The Phoenix Singers and Keele Concert Band collaborated in a concert held at Keele Chapel.

It was the success of that venture which has prompted a 'return match' to be arranged in Leek this year.

Jacob de Haan was delighted to be sent a recording of the original

concert, and has arranged to meet the members of the Concert Band this summer in Utrecht, when the Band visit the city as part of their summer tour to the Netherlands. It also seems that our taste in music is shared by our counterparts in Leek's twin town of Este - when the Amazing Gospel Choir visited Leek recently for the 10th Anniversary of the twinning, we heard that they had independently discovered how good the *Missa Katharina* was, and had performed in the Italian Premiere of the piece!

Tickets: £8 (£2 under 18s) available from:
Leek Tourist Information;
Picton Street Post Office;
Picture Book, Stanley Steet;
By telephone: 01538-385579;
and via the website:
www.phoenixsingersleek.co.uk

Children's weaving workshops through the summer

Leek has a rich textile heritage, both in manufacturing and the associated creative arts. The works of Elizabeth Wardle's late C19th Embroiderers' School are highly prized and world famous. Their version of the Bayeux Tapestry, the donation of which to Leek was infamously rejected by the Town Fathers and hence it found its way into the possession of Reading Council: an enduringly sad loss for Leek.

Marxist William Morris, co-founder of the Arts & Crafts Movement and the SPAB - the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the oldest heritage organisation in the world, frequently stayed with Thomas and Elizabeth Wardle at the Old House, St Edward Street, during the 1870s when he was researching and developing natural dyes.

The members of the Leek Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers continue that tradition of creativity and skill, gathering fleeces not only from local farmers but from all corners of the country, spinning and blending, creating natural dyes from a seemingly endless range of possible plant life and weaving in a myriad ways to produce the most exquisite cloths for clothes, wall hangings, rugs and all manner of articles.

Guild member Virginia Kent-Baguley will be offering small workshops for young people, in the approximate age range 8-12yrs, to run over 4 mornings each for one hour at the Foxlowe Arts Centre during the schools' summer holidays.

The fee for the week's four sessions will be £5. Looms and yarns will be provided. "I did a dummy run, as it were during half term with a neighbour's nine year-old son and he very quickly acquired the basic art of weaving and produced a well woven scarf during the four sessions. There will be five weeks of 4 sessions each week, thus providing for total of 20 young people so booking is essential. Email virginia@kent-baguley.co.uk or complete a registration form at the Foxlowe cafe.

Grateful thanks to the Leek Soroptomists for their generous grant of £400 for the purchase of small looms and other materials.

Land and Sea Exhibition

ERICA BROOK introduces the artists showing their work in the new exhibition at the Foxlowe Arts Centre.

Our sixth exhibition hosts the work of Ivan Taylor, Judith Donaghy and Darren Stevenson, a show which promises something to delight, and possibly, challenge, everyone.

Staffordshire painter Ivan Taylor, popular depicter of land and sea scape, has painted professionally for eighteen years. Initially studying Fine Art and Graphics at Stoke and Stafford Colleges, he then worked as a graphic artist in industry, becoming Head of Graphics for the county's Education department. Widely exhibited both nationally and internationally, Ivan Taylor continues to be a local favourite with his delicate and subtle pictures.

Darren Stevenson from Nottingham, born in 1966, studied technical perspective engineering drawings before he turned to painting, utilising his acquired skills in his close observation of his subject matter, travelling the coasts of England and France in his search for the 'perfect spot'. Painting in oils, he builds up layers of texture on his canvas, in a traditional process under an impressionistic guise.

By contrast to Ivan and Darren, Judith Donaghy, although with a common starting point of land or sea scape, then may be studio-based as she explores and responds to, the developing painting, sometimes leaving the work for days, or weeks, to return, reassess everything, reworking, sometimes towards abstraction, until her painting is resolved. Her work is exhibited across the UK on a regular basis.

The exhibition is at the Foxlowe Art Centre **7 July - 5 August**, open **Wednesday - Saturday 10am-4pm; Sunday 11a,-4pm.**



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The trustees, co-ordinators and volunteers at the Foxlowe Arts Centre offer their sincere condolences to our film co-ordinator Maureen Wiskin and daughter and son Hannah and Daniel on the sudden death of husband and father George Wiskin
20 June 2012

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