

***The Bevin Boys – War’s Forgotten Workforce***  
**Mining Art Gallery**  
**28 March - 30 September 2018**



The Mining Art Gallery in Bishop Auckland will present a temporary exhibition *The Bevin Boys - War’s Forgotten Workforce*, focusing on art by four former Bevin Boys Ted Holloway, Tom McGuinness, David McClure and John Tipton, from 28th March - 30th September 2018.

The exhibition commemorates 75 years since the Bevin Boys scheme began. It also marks the 10 year anniversary of the Bevin Boys’ formal acknowledgment by the UK government. In 2008, former Prime Minister Gordon Brown awarded commemorative badges, featuring a pithead and profile of a miner, to 27 men who were conscripted to work as miners during the Second World War.



The title of the Gallery’s new temporary exhibition, *The Bevin Boys - War’s Forgotten Workforce*, takes its name from the group of men who were conscripted to work in coal mines during the Second World War. In 1943, Great Britain had been at war for four years, the mining industry had lost 36,000 men to the armed forces or other war time industries, and coal supplies began to significantly decrease. The government estimated that there were only three weeks of vital coal supply left. Minister

for Labour Ernest Bevin tried to persuade workers to sign up for a job at the coalface, but when they did not respond he was forced to set up a compulsory conscription scheme.

Every month, for 20 months, Bevin's secretary drew numbers from his distinctive homburg hat. If the number drawn matched the last digit of a man's National Service number, he was sent to the mines. Four out of every ten men appealed against their assignment, with some even choosing a prison sentence in protest, only to find they were still sent to the mines to work once their prison sentence was over. By the end of the scheme, 48,000 men from all walks of life had been thrust into the world of coal mining. In response to their experiences some Bevin Boys created art, drawing and painting this world, which was unlike anything they had known before. While the war ended in 1945, many Bevin Boys were not demobilised until 1948 because of the continuing coal shortage. They went unrecognised until a national campaign saw them finally acknowledged by the UK government for the vital role they played in the war effort.

Artworks by former Bevin Boys Ted Holloway, Tom McGuinness, David McClure and John Tipton will be featured in the exhibition. When the Second World War broke out, Holloway's National Service number destined him to spend his time underground in the mines. He travelled 300 miles north, from rural Hampshire to a prefabricated Nissen hut in Annfield Plain, County Durham. His sketches on display, made between 1983 and 1987 as he looked back on his experience as a Bevin Boy, record powerful memories from his time underground. The respect he had for his fellow miners is clear from the way he portrays the superhuman strength they seem to display when setting a prop or heaving a tub.

Similarly, Tom McGuinness was also sent for training in Annfield Plain and was assigned to Fishburn Colliery. While at the colliery he was encouraged to take up formal art tuition and enrolled in art classes at the Darlington School of Art and joined the sketching club at Spennymoor Settlement. His etchings feature trademark hunched, distorted figures, as recognisable in this medium as they are in his oil paintings.

Tipton, like McGuinness, also enrolled at Darlington School of Art soon after arriving in Durham to work in the mines. He was based at Dean and Chapter Colliery in Ferryhill where he progressed quickly and was soon training new Bevin Boys in their role underground. He spent his spare time sketching and painting the surrounding countryside and landmarks such as Durham Cathedral. He would often submit designs and safety cartoons to national publications, including *Coal* magazine and even though they were not accepted, this set him in good stead for his future career as a graphic artist at *The Observer* newspaper.

Scottish artist David McClure found himself swapping the pen for the pit helmet when he left Glasgow University to become a Bevin Boy in 1944. Arriving for his training at Townhill Colliery in Dunfermline, Scotland, he was given the standard issue steel-toed boots and pressed cardboard helmet and set to work. Safety procedures were not the main concern for the men he worked with; getting their quota of coal became the highest priority. McClure recalled how he spent one entire shift alone in the dark, pumping water out of a flooded part of the pit. The selection of pen and wash drawings that will be exhibited follow on from earlier mining works that formed part of his application portfolio to Edinburgh College of Art where he went on to study after leaving the mines.

## **Angela Thomas, Mining Art Gallery Curator comments:**

*“We are thrilled to be launching this new temporary exhibition at the Mining Art Gallery, to celebrate and shed light upon the heroic workforce of men who served this country by working in mines during the Second World War. It seems remarkable that it was only 10 years ago that the Bevin Boys were formally acknowledged by the UK government, however, we thoroughly look forward to raising awareness about their history and cultural significance in the UK, particularly in relation to Mining Art.”*

To coincide with the exhibition, The Auckland Project will be hosting a series of printing press workshops at No.42, Bishop Auckland, from March to December 2018. The workshops will be led by Tom McGuinness' former student, Elaine Kenyon, who will use a printing press owned by McGuinness. Participants will be given the opportunity to sketch out their design before inscribing it on a printing plate which will be put through the press by Elaine, to create a unique print. Please see the notes to editors below for further information.

**- ENDS -**

## **MEDIA ENQUIRIES**

For all press enquiries please contact Zara Doshi at Flint on [zara.doshi@flint-pr.com](mailto:zara.doshi@flint-pr.com) / 0203 470 0094.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About the Mining Art Gallery**

Last October The Auckland Project launched the UK's first gallery dedicated to Mining Art. The gallery reveals how miners responded to their experiences creatively, from the conditions they endured underground to the pit communities they returned home to. In addition to a programme of temporary exhibitions, the gallery holds a permanent collection of over 400 works of mining art, including paintings, prints and drawings, called the Gemini Collection. The Mining Art Gallery represents mining art across the UK, but has a particular focus on work originating from the nearby Spennymoor Settlement, home to renowned artists Norman Cornish and Tom McGuinness.

### **About The Auckland Project**

The Auckland Project is an arts, faith and heritage destination in the town of Bishop Auckland in north east England. With the medieval Auckland Castle as its centrepiece, The Auckland Project will encompass the UK's first Faith Museum, Spanish Gallery and Mining Art Gallery, along with the Auckland Tower welcome centre, Walled Garden, parkland, hotels and restaurants. £200m has been committed to date, with 750,000 regional, national and international visitors expected annually to Bishop Auckland by 2024.

The Auckland Project began in 2012, when Chairman Jonathan Ruffer decided to buy Auckland Castle, and a remarkable series of twelve paintings by the Spanish master Francisco de Zurbarán that were housed there, to keep them in trust for the people of north east England. As the project has developed beyond the Castle walls, local people have remained at the centre of the mission to revitalise Bishop Auckland, and bring about real change in the region. At the heart of The Auckland Project is a mission to reinvigorate the future of this former industrial town through employment, training and education, increasing opportunities and aspirations for local people and businesses alike.

2018 marks two key milestones for The Auckland Project - the opening of Auckland Tower on 21 July and the reopening of Auckland Castle on 1 December. Auckland Tower, a purpose built welcome centre designed by award-winning architects Niall McLaughlin, will allow visitors to discover more about The Auckland Project, buy tickets and enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding area from the 29-metre high tower. Auckland Castle, the former home of the Prince Bishops of Durham, will reopen this year following a multi-million pound conservation programme returning the Castle's State Rooms to their Georgian Gothic splendour, as designed by renowned architect James Wyatt.

For more information, and a full list of The Auckland Project's supporters, please visit [aucklandproject.org](http://aucklandproject.org).

## **Printing Press Workshops - Further Information**

A unique piece of County Durham history is being used to offer art lovers the opportunity to step into the shoes of one of the region's best-loved artists.

A printing press, owned by mining artist, Tom McGuinness, has been installed at No.42 - a community engagement and exhibition space in Bishop Auckland - for a special series of art workshops. The press is on a long-term loan to The Auckland Project throughout 2018 as the monthly printmaking workshops get under way and will be in use at No.42.

For decades, Tom used the large, cast-iron press to make powerful artworks, reflecting his experiences of life underground and in the mining communities. Now, guided by his former student, Elaine Kenyon, artists of all ages and abilities can follow Tom's creative processes. Participants will sketch out their design before inscribing it on a printing plate which will be put through the press by Elaine, to create a unique print.

Each session will be run by Elaine, so budding printers can return to develop their skills and learn new printing techniques. She will be running the two-hour workshops on the selected dates detailed below.

## **Printing Press Workshop Dates:**

Thursday, 8 March.

Thursday, 26 April.

Thursday, 3 May.

Thursday, 28 June.

Thursday, 16 August.

Thursday, 27 September.

Thursday, 15 October.

Thursday, 15 November.

Thursday, 6 December.



***10am – 12pm for those with experience in printing and 1.30pm – 3.30pm for beginners.***

***No.42, Bishop Auckland.***

***£5 per person, booking essential.***

***16+, under 16-year-olds may take part with prior agreement from the workshop leader and if accompanied by an adult.***

For more information or to book a place, email [bookings@aucklandproject.org](mailto:bookings@aucklandproject.org) or call 01388 743 797.

## **Auckland Lates - Night Shift - Thursday 17 May, 4pm – 8pm**

To mark Museums at Night, Mining Art Gallery is hosting Auckland Lates – Night Shift, an opportunity to view the gallery outside its normal opening hours, enjoy music inspired by mining and try a complimentary Temperance cocktail.

### **Ticket prices**

Adult: £4, Concessions: £3 (over 60s, full-time students, unwaged)

Under 16s: Free

Carers: Free\*

Groups: Buy 10 and get the 11<sup>th</sup> ticket free

Arts Pass / Historic Houses members: Free

\*If a visitor requires another person, as their companion or carer to enable them to access the museum, then this person is admitted free of charge.

For more information call 01388 743750 Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm or email [enquiries@aucklandproject.org](mailto:enquiries@aucklandproject.org)