

# PAF NEWS

A bi-monthly newsletter for the Friends of the Polperro Arts Foundation

## Introducing Steve Morton

In June we welcomed Steve Morton who has joined us as a guest artist. This is how he creates and presents his ceramic work in a wide variety of styles:

"I have created a space for my work at our home in Porthallow, above Talland Bay, in a light bright studio with views over our garden and a neighbouring valley. A track leads down to Rotterdam Beach, where slate, with hues of purple and sandy ochre surround the shoreline. Sapphire strewn cliffs rising high above the beach where fulmars nest in June and July. I'm very lucky to find myself in such a beautiful location.

I work in white and toasted stoneware, white, black and terracotta earthenware and experiment with some found clay from the garden, rich in iron and organic



material. Based around throwing on an electric wheel, moulding using found shapes fired in an electric kiln, my pieces show influences of the Far East and Scandinavia, with organic moulded functional pots and dishes, hand shaped stamped textures and simple glazes.

My interest in pottery was ignited at grammar school, using a simple kick wheel. A four year course at Birmingham College of Art followed in three dimensional design with a first class honours degree

in Interior design, a subject which I continued as a career in practice specialising in commercial licensed leisure and hotel design for the next 30 years. Moving to Looe in 2010, and after 40 years away from clay, Plymouth College of Art refreshed my interest and technique and I continue to develop and learn with every turn of the wheel. As a guest of Polperro Arts Foundation, this is the first opportunity for displaying my work in a gallery. It's an enjoyable experience providing focus, which I hope continues."



## Polperro's Art History - the war years

*More notes from David Tovey's book, Polperro – Cornwall's Forgotten Art Centre (2021)*

Chapters 6 and 7 of the second volume of David's book cover the years from the late 1930s until 1945, a period when a surprising number of artists worked in and around Polperro in spite of the impact of the war on freedom of movement and on the market for art work. First up is Sir Francis Cook who gets a six-page chapter to himself. Cook was from a titled family who owned and farmed land in the Porthallow area of Talland, including Porthallow Old House; this served as his home and studio, and after he sold it in 1947 it became what is now the Talland Bay Hotel. Cook established his



*Sir Francis Cook, The witch ball, Porthallow-fantasy*



*Alice Boyes, Flowers in Chapel Studio window*

reputation from his still-life work, portraits and nudes but he also painted local scenes which David includes and which remain quite recognisable. After leaving Porthallow Cook moved to Jersey where Jersey Heritage maintains a collection of his work and a gallery is named after him.

In spite of his established artistic reputation there seems to be no evidence that Cook was a member of the Polperro Art Society which was set up in 1938. In this first incarnation the society only lasted for a year or so and was no doubt affected by the start of the war, but it was notable as the first attempt by local artists to put on their own exhibitions of Polperro art. These were staged in the Foresters' Hall overlooking the inner harbour, the home of our present Polperro Arts Foundation until 2020. Contributors included members of the Plymouth Arts Club such as Jamison Howell. The main local artists involved were Emeline Sarah Stokes who David describes as the principal moving force behind the society; Marian Harbord, Alice Boyes and The Reverend John Timberlake, the vicar of Talland.

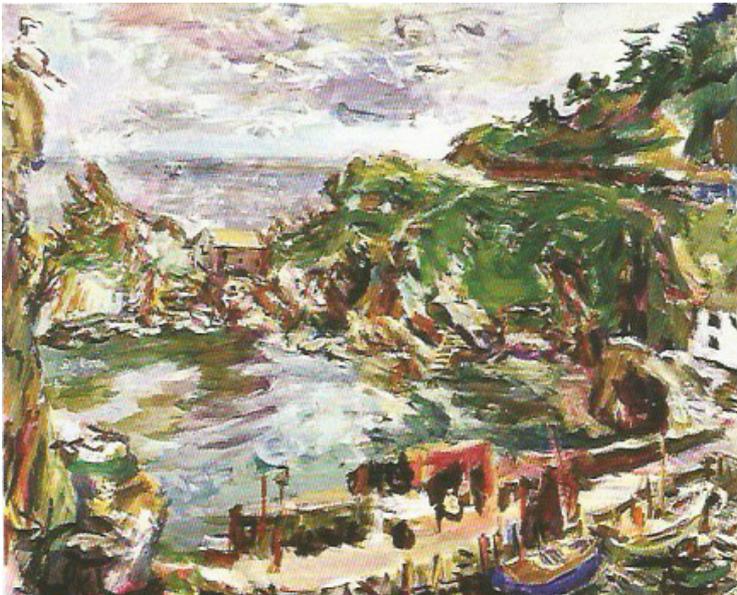
As an interesting reflection on the nature of the growing tourism market in the village at this time David includes three paintings by Herbert Truman, an exhibiting St Ives-based artist who was commissioned by a Polperro shop and museum to produce four postcards showing views of the harbour and coast.



*Herbert Truman, Polperro - back of harbour (postcard)*

Probably the best known Polperro artist of this period was Oskar Kokoschka and David includes a 10-page account of his life and several examples of his very distinctive work. Kokoschka was an Austrian artist, poet and playwright who had moved to Prague and then fled to England to escape the expected invasion by Nazi Germany. It is not clear why he chose Polperro as his temporary home, but his choice would seem to be another indication of how well

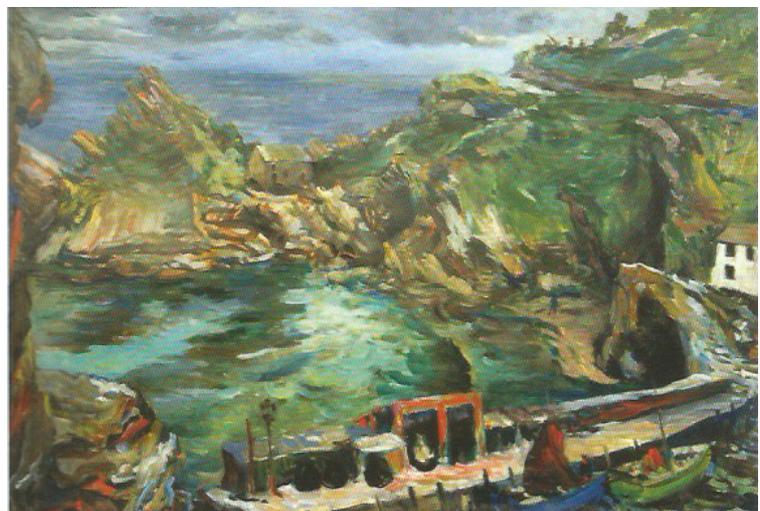
known the village was within the British and even the European artistic community.



*Oskar Kokoschka, Polperro III*

Kokoschka lived in Cliff End Cottage overlooking the outer harbour and Peak Rock and several of his paintings are of the view that he would have seen from his window every day. He seems to have appreciated the workmanlike, unpretentious nature of Polperro and no doubt shared a similar strongly anti-Fascist political view with local radicals such as Arthur Wragg who we have met in earlier chapters, and his particular friend

the sculptor Uli Nimpscht. David includes a painting by Frederick Roberts Johnson which mimics Kokoschka's style and which underlines the respect that other local artists had for him. Sadly, his stay was cut short for political reasons; Polperro was declared a Protected Area and as an 'enemy alien' Kokoschka was told to leave the village, which he did, hurriedly, in June 1940.



*Frederick Roberts Johnson, Polperro (after Kokoschka, Polperro III)*



*Gordon Grant, Two fishermen, Polperro*

who visited in 1940. And David introduces Frederick Cook and his wife Margaret Rosemary Clare Anyon who visited briefly in 1942. Together with Frederick Roberts Johnson who was already based here, Cook and Anyon went on to become leading lights in the Polperro art world after the war and we will meet them again later.

*David Tovey's two-volume, 600-page work can be purchased from his website <[www.stivesart.info/art-in-polperro](http://www.stivesart.info/art-in-polperro)>. Copies are available in the village at the Post Office and in our PAF gallery at the village hall. After his exhibition in the Falmouth Art Gallery earlier this year, David's personal collection of historic Polperro art has been moved to the Methodist Chapel where some of the larger pieces will be on permanent display within the main body of the Chapel while others will be stored and made available for occasional exhibitions.*

## About the Foundation

The Foundation was set up in 2001 to support and promote local established and aspiring artists and to increase awareness of locally-produced art and the long history of art in Polperro. After 19 years at the Chapel Rock gallery in Foresters Hall overlooking the inner harbour, in 2020 the PAF moved to our present site in the Polperro Village Hall next door to the Crumplehorn Inn. Any surplus from sales of our work is used to support supplementary art-related activities in the Polperro School.

### *Our Team*

Currently we have nine exhibiting members all of whom live and work locally: **Rachel Brown** embroiderer; **Barbara Ellis**, artist; **Sandy Horton**, glass; **Paul Lightfoot**, photographer, writer, newsletter editor; **Sue Lord**, artist; **Charles Summers**, artist and fan-maker; **Babs Taylor**, artist; **Tracy Watts**, graphic designer and illustrator; and **Lisa Woollett**, author and photographer. **Jennie Hale** and **Steve Morton** both work in ceramics and are our guest artists. **Marian Joyce** kindly volunteers for us.

Let us know if you would like to join us as an artist or volunteer.

### *Contact us*

The gallery in the Polperro Village Hall is open daily from 11am until 5pm. We are always available by email at <[polperroarts@gmail.com](mailto:polperroarts@gmail.com)> or through our website: <[www.polperroarts.org](http://www.polperroarts.org)>