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The Dewi-Prys Thomas Prize 2012

The triennial Dewi-Prys Thomas Prize is Wales's prestigious award that recognises the importance of good design to the quality of life, identify and regeneration of Wales. The 2012 Prize – a silver medal generously sponsored by **Tata Steel** – will be presented by Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas at a ceremony in the Education Room at Ruthin Craft Centre at 18:30 on Friday, 30 November 2012. This will be the fourth time that the Prize has been awarded and the first time that the ceremony will be held in a building that has previously won the Prize. The first winner in 2003 was the Great Glasshouse at the National Botanic Gardens of Wales at Llanarthne in Carmarthenshire, the second in 2006 was The Senedd in Cardiff Bay. Ruthin Craft Centre was the third winner in 2009. The Dewi-Prys Thomas Trust thanks **Ruthin Craft Centre** for hosting the ceremony and its support for this year's Prize and for the sponsorship by **manorhaus**, Ruthin of the celebratory dinner that will be held after the ceremony.

Dewi-Prys Thomas, after whom the prize has been named, was an inspirational teacher, a talented architect and a passionate advocate for Wales and the Welsh environment. For over twenty years he was the head of the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University. The prize named after him is given to the scheme which, in the judges' opinion, has contributed most to improving the Welsh environment or our understanding of it over the period 2009 to 2012. After the launch of the 2012 Prize at the Vale of Glamorgan National Eisteddfod in August, nominations/entries have been received that cover works in architecture, urban design, public art and landscape. In addition, the longer-term contributions of individual and organisations involved with environmental issues in Wales have also been brought to the attention of this years judges:

- Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas PC AM
- Sian Bailey, Artist/illustrator
- Rhys Llwyd Davies, Architect and a trustee of the Dewi-Prys Thomas Trust
- Jonathan Vining, Honorary Secretary of the Dewi-Prys Thomas Trust.

In all, fifty-two nominations/entries were received from which the judges first selected a long list of fourteen. This was then narrowed down to a short list of seven from which the winner will be announced at the award ceremony. The short list, in no particular order, is as follows:

ORIEL MOSTYN, LLANDUDNO

Visitors who have previously attended this art gallery's impressive exhibitions will find little difference to the building's existing Edwardian façade, unless they look up at the newly-gilded steeple. Inside, however, the designer, Ellis Williams Architects, has transformed the former gallery and added new dramatic display and support spaces. This extensive restoration is both modern and imaginative and has many brilliant architectural touches including a dramatic new stairwell and cafeteria space.

GRAFFEG BOOKS

Peter Gill of Graffeg Books has produced an extensive series of books that have dealt with aspects of contemporary life in Wales. Each book has focused on a particular interest: landscapes, food, lifestyle, heritage, architecture, festivals, music, arts, sport and culture. They are all beautifully produced, clearly written and always illustrated with wonderful photography. The books tell the story of Wales today in all its colourful variety and appeal to those who live here and the visitor alike.

GRAHAM BROOKS

For over fifty years the architect Graham Brooks has practiced his distinctive, modern, Scandinavian-influenced designs in the south Wales area. His work has consistently won awards, mainly for housing, the first being the Esteddfod Gold Medal as far back as 1968. While many of the homes he built were one-offs for individual clients, his greatest contribution has been in the design of small groups of houses where he showed economic alternatives to the mediocre conventions associated with many private housing estates. Affordable, modern and attractively grouped they offered light, privacy, seclusion and elegant community living. They won the affection of their inhabitants and design awards but never, unfortunately, influenced volume house builders to change their ways.

ROCH CASTLE, near ST DAVIDS

Pembrokeshire-born Keith Griffiths, a director of a Hong Kong-based architectural practice Aedas International, with the local architect Acanthus Holden, have carried out a £6 million transformation of the thirteenth century, landmark Roch Castle. The early twentieth century conversion and extensions have been reconfigured and better constructed in sympathy with the materials of the original tower. A large glazed sun room, adjoining the main living space, now peeps over the battlements of the 1920s extension and the bedrooms have been revamped with top quality material and furnishings. The luxurious result is that a Welsh castle that had been lived in intermittently for over eight centuries has been reborn now as a six-bedroom, 5-star venue available to an international, if elite, corporate clientele.



CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT (CRiBE)

Under Professor Phillip Jones the Centre for Research in the Built Environment (CRiBE) consists of a group of researchers based mainly at the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University. They work within four areas: sustainability, energy and environmental modelling, energy performance and building construction and have produced environmental prediction models for both cities and individual buildings and strategy models for recycling and waste. While their approach has always been academically rigorous, their concerns have been towards the pragmatic and practical. The researchers are in partnership with a group of other Welsh universities through the Wales Energy Research Centre (WEREC) and they collaborate and advise the Welsh Government which has funded large energy projects – the Low Carbon Research Institute (LCRI). They also work closely with other academic groups throughout Asia, particularly China.

WISE BUILDING, CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY, MACHYNLLETH

The new Wales Institute for Sustainable Education (WISE) building is a substantial addition to the established complex at the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) at Machynlleth. As would be expected of this client body and its architects, Pat Borer and David Lea, the sustainability credentials of this distinguished new building are impeccable. Low-energy materials – earth, wood, hemp and lime – are used throughout. The transparency and openness of glass technology in roof lights and windows allow the building to respond to the changing patterns and effects of daylight and sunlight. The building acts as both a residential college of further education and a conference centre and consists of a series of study bedrooms, classrooms, seminar rooms, teaching offices a magnificent circular, rammed-earth walled lecture theatre. The layout is a collegiate style series of courtyards, cloisters and verandas that step up across the dramatic hillside site. As a demonstration of the issues that are taught in the institution, the rainwater system cascades, spouts and pools, sunlight powers solar collectors and warms the working spaces that are naturally ventilated. The building, while complex, is deceptively simple for the user, warm, intriguing and humane. It is artful, yet in an unselfconscious way.

ARCHBISHOP MCGRATH CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, BRIDGEND

On an elevated site in the heart of the Brackla estate in Bridgend, this new faith school designed by HLM Architects draws its cohort from a wide catchment area. A distinctive, uncompromisingly modern building, it consists of two flanks of three-storey teaching accommodation surrounding a spectacular, triangular-shaped full height entrance foyer – the heart of the school. This contains a wide waterfall staircase that cleverly doubles as tiered seating, and which may be opened up into the adjoining assembly hall to increase the audience when required. While the teaching areas of the school are carefully and colourfully designed



they are conventional in form: it is the foyer/heart that is an effective and radical approach to school design in that offers a different way to bring the school together as a community and offers an additional facility to the local community outside the school itself. This school design demonstrates that each new school project should be thought of afresh in order to bring out the unique character of the school's teachers and pupils, the site and its local community.

ENDS (1,309 words)

Sponsors/supporters

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RESTAURANT WITH ROOMS • RUTHIN & LLANGOLLEN

Notes to editors

The Dewi-Prys Thomas Prize is an award that recognises the importance of good design to the quality of life, identity and regeneration of Wales

The prize builds on the work of the Dewi-Prys Thomas Trust in celebrating the life of this inspirational teacher and advocate for Wales and the Welsh environment. Dewi-Prys, who died in 1985, cared deeply about Wales and the Welsh environment and the prize seeks to capture this inspirational and passionate spirit.

Celebrating good design, and passion for good design, in the built environment in Wales

Many things go to make up the environment in which we live, and the Dewi-Prys recognises projects of excellence in a wide range of fields:

- Architecture
- Landscape design and public spaces
- Environmental improvements, sustainability projects and civil engineering
- Public art.

The Trust believes that the debate about, and understanding of, good design in Wales is as important as the realisation of built projects. Accordingly, the Dewi-Prys rewards not only completed projects but also insightful contributions to understanding the built environment. Examples might include:

- The representation of Welsh landscapes and buildings in art and photography
- Inspirational but unrealised designs
- Published works that make a difference to the quality of design in Wales
- Campaigning, educating and contributing to better design.

In all of these areas, the Jury will seek to reward projects and initiatives that display the following characteristics:

- Excellence: demonstrating the highest quality of thinking, design and execution
- Utility: fulfilling their essential function simply and brilliantly
- Originality: finding new ways of working in the built environment
- Inspiration: making a difference in the quality and appreciation of design in Wales.

Prize ceremony

The Dewi-Prys Thomas Prize of an engraved silver medal – generously sponsored by **Tata Steel** – will be presented at a public ceremony by Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas in the Education Room, **Ruthin Craft Centre** at 18:30 on Friday, 30 November 2012. This will be followed by a private, celebratory dinner at, and sponsored by, **manorhaus**, Ruthin.

Previous winners

2009 Winner

Ruthin Craft Centre
Architect: Sergison Bates architects

2009 Commendations

Sue Essex

The Buildings Books Trust

2006 Winner

The Senedd, Cardiff
Architect: Richard Rogers Partnership.

2006 Commendations

Bill Davies.

Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth.

2003 Winner

The Great Glasshouse, National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire
Architect: Foster and Partners.

2003 Commendations

La Scala, The University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Artist: Mark Pimlott
Engineer: Nick Hanika.

Touchstone magazine
Editor: Patrick Hannay
The Royal Society of Architects in Wales.



For more information

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