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The Dewi-Prys Thomas Prize 2015

The triennial Dewi-Prys Thomas Prize is Wales's prestigious award that recognizes the importance of good design to the quality of life, identity and regeneration of Wales. The 2015 Prize – an engraved silver medal crafted by JHF Castings of Birmingham – will be presented by Menna Richards at a ceremony in the Education Room at Ruthin Craft Centre at 18:30 on Friday, 27 November 2015. This will be the fifth time that the Prize has been awarded: 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; and in 2012 the WISE Building at the Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth scooped the main award. 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 2012 to 2015. After the launch of the 2015 Prize at the Montgomeryshire and the Marches 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 matters in Wales have also been brought to the attention of this year's judges:

- Menna Richards
- Simon Fenoulhet, artist
- Rhys Llwyd Davies, architect and a trustee of the Dewi-Prys Thomas Trust
- Professor Rhiannon Evans, trustee of the Dewi-Prys Thomas Trust.

In all, forty-one nominations/entries were received from which the judges first selected 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:



LLANDEGFEDD VISITOR CENTRE AND WATERSPORTS CENTRE, MONMOUTHSHIRE

The new visitor centre at Llandegfedd Reservoir, by Hall + Bednarczyk Architects, has been an immediate public success since its opening earlier this year. It was commissioned by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water along with a new watersports centre nearby – and the duet of buildings add significantly to the reservoir’s popularity and effectiveness in providing public access to its facilities. The stand-out feature of the visitor centre is its zinc-clad roof, the asymmetric curves of which poetically mirror the gentle hills that enclose the 1960s reservoir. Inside, the first floor café, which opens out on to a cantilevered balcony, provides panoramic views across the water. The watersports centre is a somewhat different proposition with its timber cladding and pitched roof. Its apparent simplicity is challenged when closer inspection reveals a high degree of detailing and craftsmanship that, both inside and out, adds depth to its functional appearance. The two buildings have distinct identities but share a common sense of craft and refinement.

BLAENAU FFESTINIOG TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

The public art scheme in Blaenau Ffestiniog by Miller Research, MacGregor Smith and Howard Bowcott is an imaginative reorientation of public space which takes into account the viewpoint of visitors arriving by train as well as those travelling through the town by car. The public art elements of the scheme have been seamlessly incorporated into the landscape, which is evidence of a close collaboration between landscape architect Tim Rose and artist Howard Bowcott. The use of slate helps to tell us something of the story of Blaenau Ffestiniog and its surrounding quarries, using local materials to create a narrative thread that connects the station to the car park with new sight lines and pedestrian routes into the town centre. This project was conceived for economic reasons as a physical regeneration scheme and its aesthetic quality can only help to make the town more attractive to visitors.

HAROLD CARTER

Former Gregynog Professor of Human Geography at Aberystwyth University, Harold Carter has made a profound contribution to the understanding of the urban and cultural geography of Wales through his research and publishing in both Welsh and English. Author of a seminal geographical study of the towns of Wales published in 1965, his later work *The Study of Urban Geography* (1972) became recognized as the most coherent and extensive account of the subject area, ran to four editions and was widely translated. He was editor of the iconic *National Atlas of Wales* (1989) and has published books on Welsh language data from three censuses. In his mid-eighties, he wrote *Against the Odds: The Survival of Welsh Identity* (2010), which sought to position Welsh identity against the concept of ethnicity and culture. However, for many today concerned with the study of the condition and morphology of urban settlement in Wales, *The Towns of Wales* is still the first port of call even fifty years after its publication.



GALILEE CHAPEL, ST ILLTYD'S CHURCH, LLANTWIT MAJOR

Davies Sutton Architects has transformed a roofless ruin at an ancient Vale of Glamorgan church into a tranquil and luminous space to house a remarkable collection of early Christian stone crosses. The building works have integrated a new building envelope with the existing stone walls of the chapel, while innovative and sensitive selection of materials and detailing ensures it is clearly distinguishable from the original fabric and provides a twenty-first century phase of construction to complement and enhance those of previous eras.

THREE HOUSES, SOUTH WALES

Over the last three years, Loyn & Co has designed three award-winning private houses in different contexts in south Wales. Stormy Castle near Llanmadoc is an unashamedly modern house sunk into its hill-side Gower landscape; Westra Nook, the 'upside-down' house in Dinas Powys, where, unconventionally, the living accommodation is placed at first floor level to take advantage of the outstanding views; and Millbrook House in the Cardiff suburb of Lisvane which is a tour-de-force in the interrelationship of internal and external space. Three contemporary responses to particular situations that meet imaginatively the needs and aspirations of the client, and continue Chris Loyn's championing of modern architecture in Wales.

NATIONAL THEATRE WALES

Wales's national English-language theatre company proudly states that 'the nation of Wales is our stage'. Since it was established in 2010, National Theatre Wales, under its artistic director John McGrath has made imaginative and thrilling use of what Dewi-Prys Thomas described as 'Wales – this country of magic landscapes'. Because NTW has no permanent theatre it uses the country's rich and diverse landscape to tell the nation its stories. Deep in the Brecon Beacons a Ministry of Defence training site was the location for a retelling of a lost battle and its aftermath in Aeschylus's *The Persians*. Bleak landscape and derelict buildings used to chilling and disquieting effect. The town and beach of Port Talbot, as well as its civic buildings, were the scene of the re-creation of *The Passion* with Michael Sheen, an event that involved thousands of members of the public grappling with imagining a familiar environment in a different way. Snowdonia and its rugged slopes was the setting for Gillian Clarke's *The Gathering*, a chronicle of the harsh lives of farmers and annual sheep gathering, again making demands on the audience in relation to its environment. Farmland in Usk was the site of *Mametz* by Owen Sheers – a moving and troubling glimpse of life in the trenches and on the battlefields of the Somme. Again, using the landscape and existing farm buildings, the company offered its audience an immersive experience, turning a familiar and tranquil



environment into something entirely alien and frightening. All these productions are examples of finding new ways of working in the landscape and built environment to tell some of the most powerful stories of our time.

CARDIFF AND VALE COLLEGE COMMUNITY CAMPUS, DUMBALLS ROAD, CARDIFF

Cardiff and the Vale College's new city centre campus is an ambitious educational project aimed at providing inspirational learning facilities for individuals, communities and employers in the capital region. The college provides opportunities to develop skills in industry-standard facilities in numerous fields including music technology, salon and spa, restaurant and kitchens, and a strength and conditioning gym. BDP Architects' design is gritty, light, and accessible, while the building successfully brings real energy and life to this site, bridging former industrial land with the city centre.

ENDS (1,422 words)

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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

Described by Patrick Hannay, the editor of *Touchstone: the magazine for architecture in Wales*, as 'Wales's most important architectural award', the triennial prize celebrates the life of Dewi-Prys Thomas, an 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 appreciates 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 – crafted by JHF Castings of Birmingham – will be presented at a public ceremony by Menna Richards in the Education Room, **Ruthin Craft Centre** at 18:30 on Friday, 27 November 2015. This will be followed by a private, celebratory dinner at, and sponsored by, **manorhaus**, Ruthin.



Previous winners

2012 Winner

WISE Building, Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth
Architect: Pat Borer and David Lea architects.

2012 Commendations

Graham Brooks.

Centre for Research in the Built Environment, Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University.

Graffeg.

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

Please contact:

- Jonathan Vining
Trustee
The Dewi-Prys Thomas Trust
c/o WYG Group
Floor 5, Longcross Court
47 Newport Road
Cardiff
CF24 0AD

Tel: 029 2032 0739
Mobile: 07774 471445
E-mail: jonathan.vining@wyg.com
- Rhys Llwyd Davies
Ymddiriedolwr
Ymddiriedolaeth Dewi-Prys Thomas
c/o 29 Stryd Fawr
Y Bala
Gwynedd
LL23 7AG

Ffon: 01678 521450
E-bost: rhys@rhysllwyddavies.co.uk