### ST IVES – THE STORY OF PORTHMEOR STUDIOS

#### Marion Whybrow

Situated with unintentional perfection where the modest stone cottage of Alfred Wallis and the modern architectural triumph that is Tate St Ives rub shoulders, lie the Porthmeor Studios. From here, looking out on the Atlantic blue, successive waves of artists have cemented the continuity of one of the world's most enduring and influential art colonies. In recent times the importance of the studios has been underlined through a major programme of renovation that has secured their future both as working studios while retaining their traditional use by local fisherman.

The first artists to arrive in St Ives at the end of the nineteenth century were of independent means. Their paintings, often picturesque scenes of harbours and seascapes, were frequently exhibited at the Royal Academy alongside the more dramatic paintings of their Newlyn contemporaries. It was not until the 1930s that changes began to take place with the rise of Nazi Germany and its anti-progressive art movement, the closing down of the Bauhaus and the fleeing of avant garde artists to Britain and America. Modernism had arrived. Many of these artists, now famous names, came to St Ives and developed their painting and sculpture with a feeling for place and spirituality, acknowledging and interpreting the power that Cornwall exerts on creative people. Often without the financial means of their predecessors, these artists sought studio space in fish lofts and cellars, many by this date abandoned by a fishing industry in decline.

In 1947 when the artist Borlase Smart, a stalwart of the art colony, died the Borlase Smart Trust was established, purchasing the studios and securing their use for the future. Patrick Heron, Bernard Leach, John Park, Ben Nicholson, David Cox, Leonard Fuller, Karl Weschke, Breon O'Casey, Sandra Blow, Terry Frost and Wilhelmina Barnes Graham are just a handful of names of those who occupied the studios in the post-war period.

In the present day the renamed Borlase Smart John Wells Trust was able to raise funds to form a 'regeneration' programme and save the studios, and also the net lofts occupied by the fishermen, from a state of dilapidation to a joyful renaissance that will ensure the future for both artists and mariners. This book looks at the work of artists past and present. It is both a reminder of the rich past of the Porthmeor Studios and a celebration of their future, now secured.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Marion Whybrow writes about painters, potters and sculptors, drawing on the rich culture of St Ives as an art colony. Her book *Borlase Smart. St Ives Artist - Man of Vision* was published by Halsgrove in 2012. She is married to the artist Terry Whybrow. They moved to St Ives from London in 1980 to pursue their chosen careers in writing and painting. They have two daughters who have joined them in the West Country.

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#### HALSGROVE TITLE INFORMATION



Format:	Hardback, 144 pages, 238x258mm,	
	including over 100 illustrations, many in colour	
Price:	£24.99	
ISBN:	978 1 906690 50 2	
Imprint:	Halstar	Ă
Published:	September 2013	



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# PORTHMEOR STUDIOS $\bigcirc$ STORY HH IVES ST





Fishermen on the Pier 1900



Above: Porthmeor Studios and Fish Lofts with Improvements

Right: 20th Anniversary. Tate St Ives 2013

Below: Clare Wardman and Iain Robertson in No.7 Porthmeor Studios





Above: Alfred Wallis's Cottage

Right" St Ives Arts Club 1895. Louis Grier, founder member seated left. Standing Alexander, John Bromley, Harewood Robinson. Seated centre Maria Robinson, Helen C Ludby, unknown man, Lily Kirkpatrick, Daisy and Sarah Whitehouse, Lowell Dyer





Richard Nott (studio 6)	
I start with a basic white emulsion paint. I build up the layers with	constructed. The larger ones are slightly more chaotic.
kts of PVA, could be cement, varnishes; build up the texture with cement powder and bitumer. White spirit brings the bitumen	Titles are done at the last minute.
through. During the process I take the work outside.	Everything seems to happen in the studio. I work on a lot of ideas at once and in a series of ten or twelve. When I came here
I detech the pointing in white spirit and bum the surface. It biliness the pointing, it is spin a big time but the biliness comes through clearly. Things develop. They have a quality, to do with goology granitis, nature and walking around 34 trees and failering these resperiments. Absoluting the spirit of the arous and realising an understanding of how you fit into the world. Eventually sometiming interesting hyperses. The pairings	I started quinting but new lawid eils and actylics and attack the surdars with anoten, blow tracker, chemicals and inductrial materials, which can create have and involves a fight to bring something to the surface which lancer to be threw. A plaining is finished when low cognise myself in it. Itatind as a sciptor, and this underplan my whole precise of working. J still think about working in three dimension.
become quite meditative. Sometimes they are quite angry pieces and then they get toned down. The smaller pieces of work take longer to resolve than the bigger pieces. They are more tightly	Born: St East, Commutt: Studied Laucashire Polytechnic. Lines in St frees



THE PORTHMEOR ARTISTS

Example of a double-page spread.