

STOP PRESS

ROLF HARRIS *on the ROAD to* PORTHCLAIS

It is 11 February 2011, and Oriel y Parc Landscape Gallery in St Davids is buzzing: today sees the opening of Rolf Harris's exhibition, which will remain there for the next six months. Richard Howells, Chairman of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and Simon Hancock, ex-chairman of National Parks and now Chair of the Oriel-y-Parc Committee, spoke briefly about how the works came into being. Veteran broadcaster and artist Rolf is central to a series of BBC programmes starting on 16 February, which will explore Welsh Art and its history and relevance to the world art scene. He stayed in St Davids in 2010 whilst creating his version of the Graham Sutherland painting *Road at Porthclais*.

As part of St David's community, the mayor, Mr John Lloyd, opened the exhibition. There is currently a project running at Oriel y Parc linking local schoolchildren with elders of the parish.

Both groups are working together in the arts centre and, as Richard Howells emphasised, it feels particularly important that they are there on such occasions, for they are the future of art.

Rod Williams gave a brief but informative taster talk on Sutherland, in particular outlining the background to the image of which Rolf painted his own version. He explained that the 1678 sketch of Tenby, also exhibited in the gallery, was one of the first known images created *in situ*, and was the forerunner of sketchbooks like those of Sutherland, which contain the original un-worked picture of Porthclais, drawn in 1935. The painting was made in 1975, and Sutherland was able to recall 'the whole of Pembrokeshire, which he held within his head'. The artist could see Porthclais set in all of Pembrokeshire's hedgerows and lanes. His works were about the character of the county and its history: there is, for instance, a square building in this painting which was the original gas house for St Davids city!

Sutherland's original sketch shows standing stones in the field lit by sunlight at the top of the image – in actuality they have never been there, and Mr Williams said, 'the work is a statement about the things Sutherland loved. He uses artistic license when placing the things he loved about Pembrokeshire where he wanted them to be to illustrate this'. The artist used elements like 'the sun with its strands symbolising the rays blessing the land with warmth and an ability to grow'.

Sutherland became personally involved in creating the Picton Gallery, which initially housed his bequest; in particular, he chose features like the marble floors. He came to think that the sketchbooks were of insufficient size for the gallery, and so worked on and created 15 new works on Pembrokeshire which he donated to the collection. Several of these are on display at Oriel y Parc. Sutherland's paintings were a vote of thanks to Pembrokeshire.



Paintings as part of Rolf's Exhibition at Oriel y Parc Image © Raul Speek

For details, see www.orielyparc.co.uk email julier@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk or call 00 44 (0)1437 720392. 'Rolf on Welsh Art' starts on BBC One Wales on Wednesday 16 February at 7.30 p.m.; the Sutherland appears in the last show, on Wednesday 9 March.