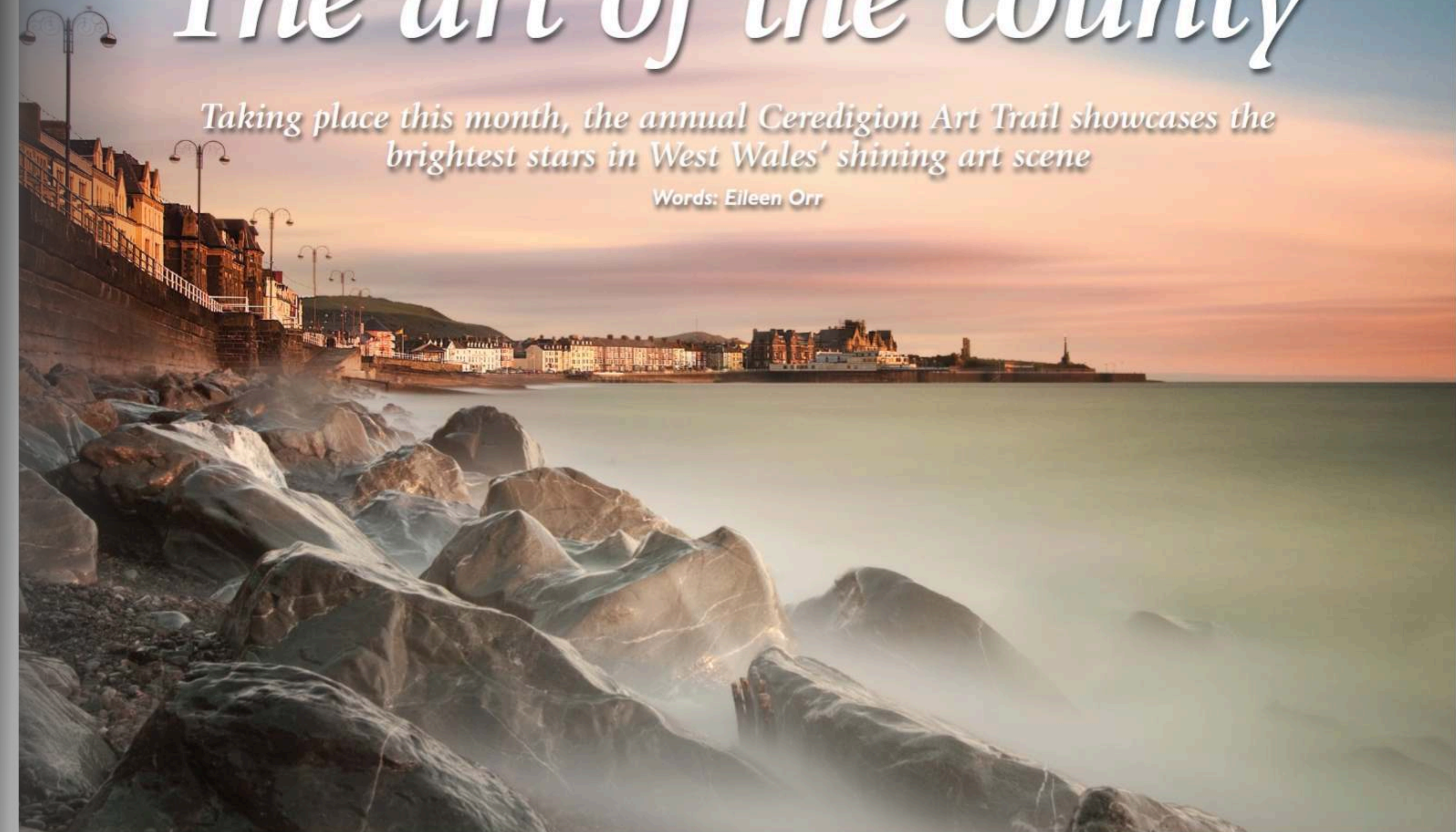


The art of the county

Taking place this month, the annual Ceredigion Art Trail showcases the brightest stars in West Wales' shining art scene

Words: Eileen Orr



A painting with your pint, photos with the cheese shopping? The contemporary arts scene lights up all over coastal West Wales this month as the Ceredigion Art Trail bursts into life for the third year running, displaying all kinds of artwork – sometimes in unexpected places.

Bigger and better than ever, 200 artists, creators and makers will be showcasing their talent across 70 venues in a welcoming way that includes pop-up exhibitions and open studios. From Cardigan to Borth, from Aberaeron to Pontrhydfendigaid, the place will be awash with art. "Not many people get the chance to see artists at work and there aren't many galleries or other outlets in the area," says coordinator Peter Jackman. "So this is a fine opportunity for the public as well as a boost for artists."

While the Gas Gallery in Aberystwyth is central to the action with a Trail Hub Exhibition running all month, there are dozens of other venues, eight of which are home to Taster Exhibitions in places you might not expect to see artwork displayed, such as the local inn or the Da Mhile Distillery, famous for its cheese and whiskies.

A further 11 group exhibitions will each be showcasing the work of several artists

across a variety of disciplines and techniques, and the Open Studios Trail begins on 16th August, when visitors are welcome to drop in, watch individual artists and makers at work in their own space, talk, see techniques and maybe even buy.

Gently but firmly harnessing so many artistic temperaments and ensuring that such a massive, long and multi-venue event will actually happen surely takes an enormous amount of organisation? "We began last September," grins Peter, a creative photographer who's taking an artistic part in the trail himself (see page 65). The lure of the coastline brought him and his wife to live near Penbryn Beach nine years ago. Previously a research microbiologist and businessman in scientific software, photography was his hobby; now he's retired, it's much more.

"It was the wilder aspects here that attracted us to this area," he says. "It seemed a good combination of rural and coastal. We specially liked the number of beaches you get to only by walking. And with photography, you can really capture the colours and textures that generate the seaside atmosphere."

Peter seems to love his work whatever he's doing. As a Trail contributor, his photos include a centenary tribute to Dylan Thomas.

As coordinator he's enjoyed getting to know the artists and admired how willingly people volunteer to get involved.

A dazzling array of artworks will be spread all over the area: paintings, textiles, sculpture, stone carving, printworking, ceramics, photography, jewellery design, you name it... Every sort of creativity imaginable, the trail covers myriad topics in beautiful, thought-provoking and sometimes humorous ways. Definitely worth exploring and, as these pages show, many of the artists are inspired by, and reflect pride in, Ceredigion's glorious coastline.

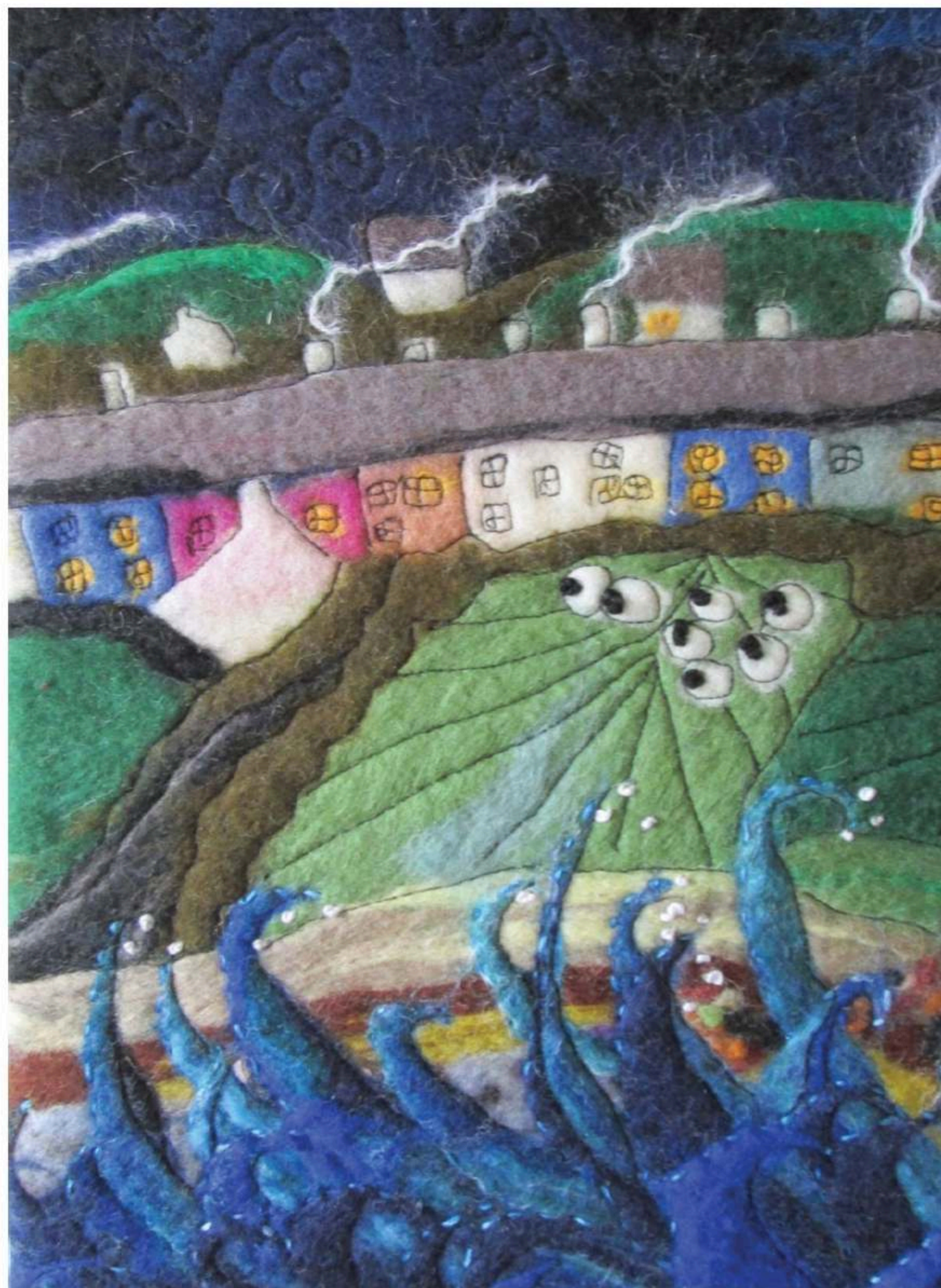
↑ IZZY STANDBRIDGE, ABERYSTWYTH ON THE ROCKS

"This is a long exposure shot of Aberystwyth sea front, taken from the rocks on North Beach. I love long exposure photography for the other-worldly effects that can be achieved – water becoming mist, skies smoothing out and colours intensified. It was late summer and the sea was stormy as the tide came in at sunset – my equipment got very wet! I love coastal photography, in the right conditions – and that can be a long wait."

↘ ANDREW FRANCIS - LLANGRANNOG

"If you're not actually walking the glorious Wales Coast Path – the legs either side of Llangrannog are sublime – the second best thing you can do is stop and have a beer and some fish 'n' chips overlooking the beach. This painting captures for me a perfect summer evening by the seaside – good food, a good pint and good company. We've only been lucky enough to live within striking distance of the coast for a year now so I'm new to seascapes but I'm becoming increasingly enthusiastic!"

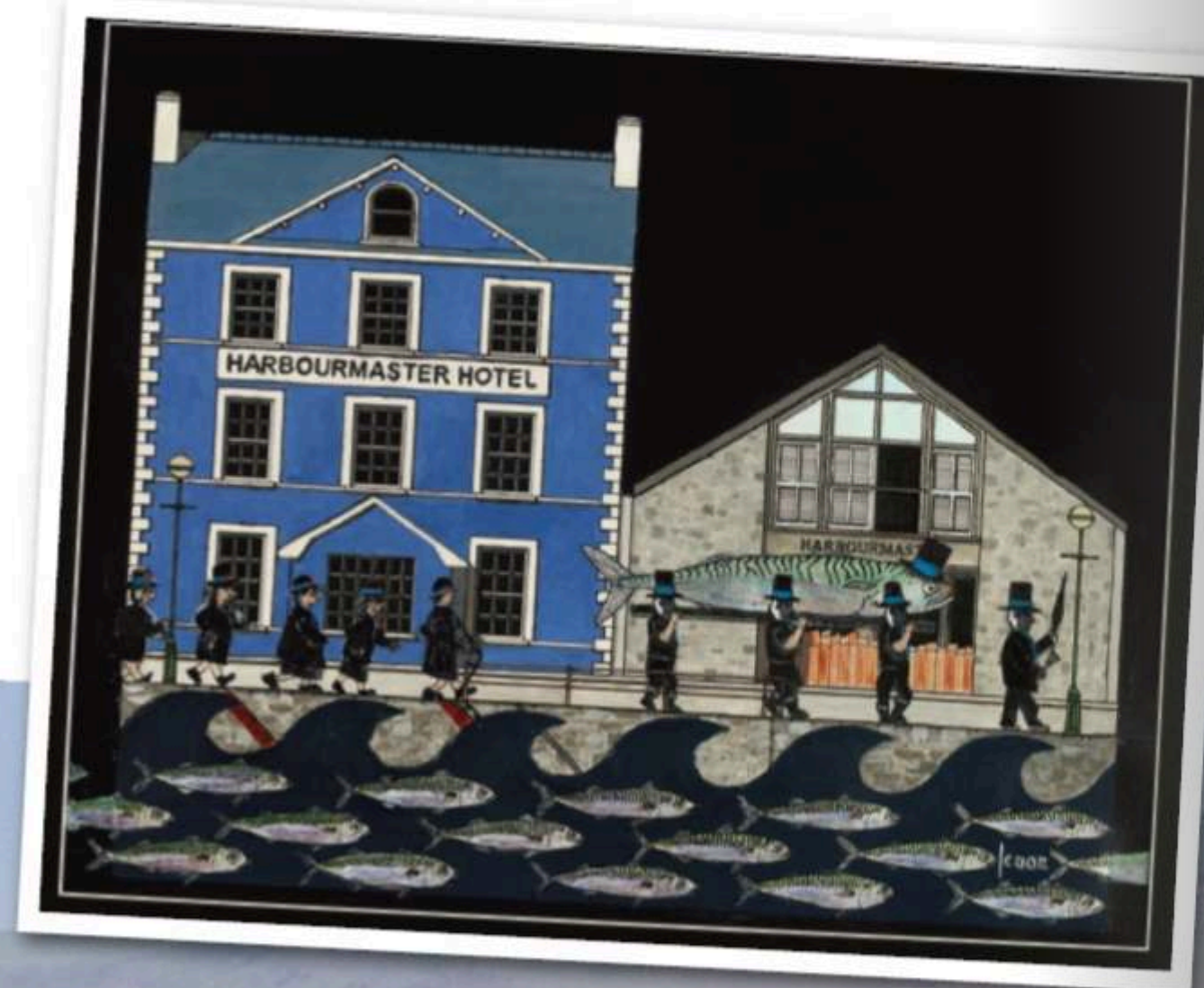




INSPIRED BY THE SEA

← **SUE FOREY, STORMY SEAS**
 "This handmade felt painting was inspired by the stormy weather we had in January. I went for a walk along the beach and discovered the sea had breached the sandbank and flooded the fields beyond, leaving chaos behind. I felt angry the sea had tried to reclaim the land and began making this at once. I think my anger is reflected in the spikiness of the waves. Most of my work is influenced by our coastal landscape and usually has a happy atmosphere; this piece isn't typical!"

↓ **IEUAN LEWIS, YR HARBWRFEISTR**
 "This acrylic and ink painting is of the Aberaeron Mackerel Festival in front of the iconic Harbourmaster Hotel. I like the larger than life characters involved who are trying to encourage local traditions, conservation and the return of the mackerel. I've painted several coastal subjects and by reflecting Wales, its language and its traditions in this way, as treasures to be appreciated and preserved, I hope my paintings assist in achieving that goal. Iechyd da (good health)!"

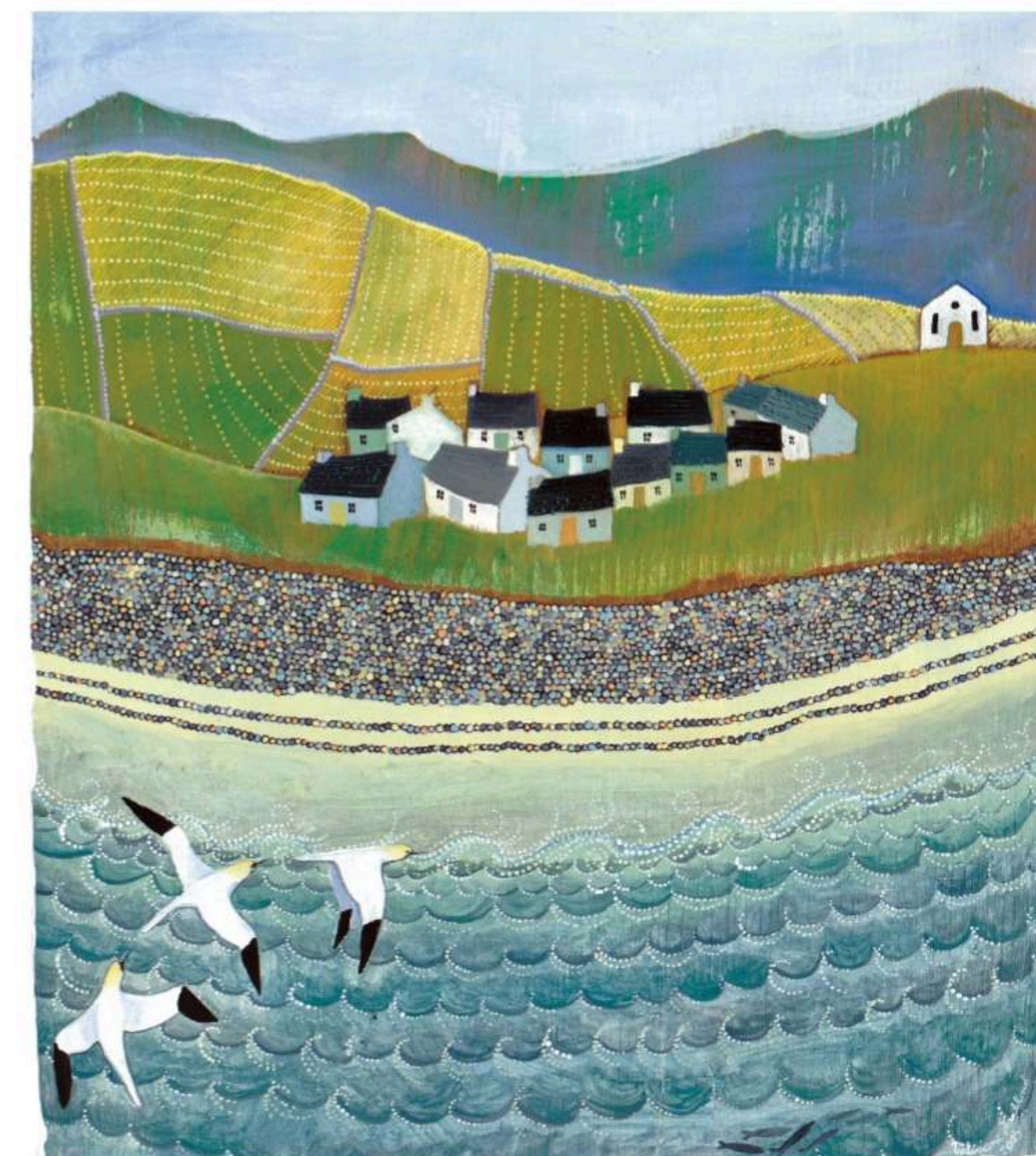


↗ **PETER JACKMAN, SURFERS FRESHWATER WEST**
 "I liked the combination of the hot sunny day and remnants of sea mist in this photograph, and the way this group returning from surfing had straggled out to form an attractive pattern, making a very nice composition. It's good going out when the weather's changing – I constantly revisit places to get the variations of light and mood at different times."



↖ **STEPH KERBY, FISHING BOATS**
 "I like the shape of fishing boats and shapes formed by blocks of colour, so combining the two was a natural thing to do. I'd noticed the boats tied up in New Quay harbour, so I took several photos and did the picture back in my studio. I used a palette knife, not a paint brush, which gives a different feeling."

→ **VALERIANE LEBLOND, O NA FYDDA I'N HAF O HYD**
 "The title's from a famous Welsh song or poem, which translates as 'If only summer could last forever', and I love how many feel that about the coast. This is painted on a piece of reclaimed wood with green scale paint. None of my work is done on location or from photos, it's all from my imagination and inspired by local landscapes, seascapes and architecture. I enjoy painting nature and drawing connections between the sea, sky and earth, wildlife, people and places through colours, textures and shapes."



About the Ceredigion Art Trail
 This year's event will be taking place from 16th-31st August, with 70 artists showing their work in 49 studios, although there'll be Trail Taster Exhibitions and Gas Gallery Trail Hub from 1st-31st August. There's free entry to all venues except Llanerchaeron (£6.45, including house tour). For further information on all exhibitions, opening times, maps and directions to venues, tel: 01239 654387 or visit www.ceredigionarttrail.org.uk