

Evans, Gareth (2011) "Doubts held over Turner painting vanish in the mist; after 50 years art work at museum is declared genuine", *The Western Mail*, 01/08, p.15, accessed 01/08/2011 at, <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2011/08/01/doubts-held-over-turner-painting-vanish-in-the-mist-91466-29154179>

FOR more than 50 years suspicions have lurked that it was a fake, but now experts have ruled that a classic Turner painting owned by the Museum of Wales is almost certainly genuine.

*Off Margate*, which has just gone on show at Oriol y Parc Gallery in St Davids, was bought by the museum in 1908, but since the 1950s a debate has raged over whether it was actually the work of Joseph Mallord Turner or just a brilliant fake.

Now, after consulting staff at London's Tate Gallery, which houses the bulk of Turner's work, it has been established that the oil-painting is "entirely characteristic" of Turner's work.

Turner remains one of Britain's most celebrated artists.

His work is instantly recognisable and remains, some 160 years after his death, among the most sought-after in the world.

National Museum curator Beth McIntyre said: "This painting was part of a large bequest to the museum in 1951 and shortly after it arrived, an expert questioned its authenticity.

"In those days, working out authorship wasn't a question of science as it can be today, it was a question of 'this doesn't quite feel right'.

"This Turner – along with six others in the same bequest – is quite small and while it was identified as a Turner, the 'late' style was questioned at the time."

Ms McIntyre felt the paintings should be seen by the Tate experts, and the decision paid off.

"We knew this painting had good historic provenance – we could trace its ownership back a long way," she said.

"However, Turner's work was copied in his own lifetime so it was very difficult to be certain. So now we have confirmation from today's experts that it is a Turner which is great news."

The precise value of *Off Margate* is unclear, but a painting by Turner depicting a Welsh castle drenched in the orange glow of a sunrise last year fetched more than £500,000 at auction.

The watercolour sketch over pencil of Flint Castle, which dates from the early 1830s, sold to a private collector at Sotheby's for £541,250.

A piece by another English artist depicting what some regard as a quintessentially English view of Wales – William Dyce's *Welsh Landscape with Two Women Knitting* – sold for more than £500,000 in 2009.

It is believed Turner learned to paint in Wales and as a teenager, walked around the countryside with sketchbooks – experiences that led him to produce several classics of Dolbadarn Castle, Harlech Castle and Ewenny Priory.

Other works on display at Oriol y Parc include an oil painting by Ben Nicholson, a figure study by Edward Burne Jones and several works by Graham Sutherland, whose bequest led to the opening of the gallery. Sutherland first visited Pembrokeshire in the 1930s and, profoundly inspired by its landscape, returned on numerous occasions to work in the region.

His works form a permanent part of the rolling exhibitions at the gallery.

Manager Paula Ellis said: "The Stories of the Sea exhibition has proved extremely popular with Pembrokeshire residents and visitors alike since its launch in the spring of this year.

"We are delighted to now have this outstanding exhibition enhanced with yet more Graham Sutherland works and of course this newsworthy Turner.

"We look forward to welcoming even more people to share the excitement that this class-A gallery in West Wales now has to offer."

Also on display at Oriel y Parc is a series of paintings by television personality Rolf Harris, created as part of the BBC Wales TV series Rolf on Welsh Art.