

Bolton Art Circle's Historical Anecdotes

1. The Circle is not the first Art Society to be formed in Bolton. It had a predecessor, Bolton Art Guild, which was formed in 1897, and had the Member of Parliament for the Borough, George Harwood, as President.

2. Can you remember, when during the interval at local cinemas, slides advertising local firms, shops and products were flashed onto the screen? In 1953 the Art Circle advertised itself in this way and slides were being shown at the Queens and four other cinemas.

3. At a meeting to make preparations for the Arts Ball in 1954, "it was decided that instead of a tub and pole in the centre of the room as at first proposed, the model of Eros which had been made by Mr. Watson, should be suspended from the roof, in a cage, if possible.

4. In 1970, a dinner was organised to be held at the Brooklyn Hotel. The cost would be 25 shillings (£1.25) and formal dress was requested.

Invited were:- The Mayor and Mayoress

The Director of the Museum and Art Gallery

The Keeper of Art

Toasts were to be:- The Gallery and the Corporation of Bolton

The Bolton Art Circle

5. In 1966 a group of members proposed that a change of name for the Art Circle would be appropriate. The suggested alternatives are not recorded, but after a full discussion, it was decided not to pursue the matter any further. However, at one time, there was a group of avant-garde artists in the Circle who called themselves "The Croal Contemptibles". (The river Croal being the one which runs through Bolton town centre.)

6. In 1961 the Secretary reported to the Committee that there had been 94 new members in the last three years. He expressed regret that so many of the older members had been struck off for failing to pay their subscriptions. Had they all paid up, membership would have been over 300 instead of 182.

7. One member smoked a pipe continuously whilst painting in oils, dividing the paint equally between the canvas and his own person. During the course of an evening he had to be constantly cleaned up with turps. On one particular evening he was so impregnated with turps that some lady members were concerned about his safety, and he was warned not to light up his pipe when he got in his car in case the whole lot went up in flames.

8. In 1969 members entered a "Prestige Exhibition" in Salford Art Gallery. One picture was sold and the artist received all of £6.

9. 1960, and the Circle had resigned from the North West Federation of Art Societies. The Secretary reported that the Federation Treasurer felt, "that as notice to resign had not been given before the close of the year, we were still liable for the 1960's subscription". The Circle's Treasurer was empowered to pay this. But, interestingly, the Federation's Treasurer was also a member, and even past Secretary, of Bolton Art Circle.

10. A very active member of the Circle for many years, was well known for his wry sense of humour. He had experienced many occupations and ended up as a bus driver. On one occasion when the work of John Nicholson was being praised by an admiring group, he remarked to those present, "They are very good. But can he drive a bus?"

11. Some of the Circle's problems were unconnected with matters of art. In the minutes of the Committee meetings the following are recorded:-

1969. "As the Caretaker was waiting to close the building, discussion had to be curtailed and the meeting closed"

1970. "The meeting was then closed as the Caretaker was waiting."

Was it an impatient Caretaker OR too much talk?

Art emblem mystery

IN the days when John Gauld was President of Bolton Art Circle, a competition was held to design a symbol or emblem, to grace letter heads and posters and anything else relating to the Circle and its appurtenances.

The competition was won by a lady — but no one can remember now who she was. Which is a pity, for the Circle has just received a letter from "The Artist" a distinguished magazine devoted to all matters artistic.

The letter informs the Circle that it has won the first prize in an Emblem Competition and the prize is a pantograph, which is a device making pictures larger and very useful if your drawings tend to come out a bit small.

The magazine says that it is a very professional emblem. What a pity we don't know who designed it.

This report appeared in the Bolton Evening News in 1978. The designer was found to be Monica Bond.



The present "emblem" which was designed by Betty Walsh.

12. A delicate matter arising from the 1969 Annual Exhibition.

"It was reported that one artist whose work had been sold had had further enquiries as a direct result of an introduction by the Secretary. A discussion followed as to whether commission should be charged and it was felt that, although no demand should be made, nevertheless it was hoped that the artist would voluntarily make a contribution to the Circle."

13. When, at the AGM in 1996, Roland Arthur said that he was not prepared to do another year as both Secretary and Chairman, there was a deathly silence. Eventually, after he'd stood his ground, Denis Jackson asked what was entailed and subsequently took over the Chairman's post for several years.

14. Early in 2002, the Secretary started to send a single A4 News sheet called "In Touch" to members who, for various reasons were no longer able to attend any of the Circle's functions.

15. Unfortunately, records of membership do not go back to the start of Bolton Art Circle. However, it would appear that over 600 people from Bolton and district have been members of the Circle at sometime during the last 25 years.

16. In January 2005, so many members wanted to receive "In Touch", that it was decided by the Committee to send it to all members. By this date, over 70 members could be contacted by email.