

A Brief History of Bolton Art Circle

Forward

Artists have always played an important part in drawing attention to the different aspects of the world we live in. Bolton has been fortunate in the number of people with such a talent.

This History chronicles over half a century of promoting art in Bolton and outlines the achievements, heartaches and various characters involved with Bolton Art Circle. Since the founding just after the Second World War, almost every Boltonian involved with visual arts has at some time been a member. However, just as our appreciation of art changes with time, so has Bolton Art Circle developed into a movement that opens its doors to everyone who has either a sporadic or longer-term practical interest in art.

By staging an exciting International Art Competition and Exhibition in July 1996 to celebrate its half-century, the Circle offered the whole community an opportunity to become involved in its aspirations, which are to bring the appreciation of the visual arts into everyone's life.

The History was researched by the late Alan Brooks, who delved into the archives and taxed the memories of many long-standing members and produced a fascinating booklet, which was in great demand.

The following is primarily Alan's "Brief History", but has been edited and updated for this website by myself.

Roland Arthur, Honorary Secretary

October 2002

1. The Start

The initial impetus for the formation of the Circle came from a discussion held in the Process Department of Tillotsons Ltd., (Bolton Evening News), where four people talked about the idea of forming a group for the practice and furtherance of art. Mr James Smith, one of the persons at the discussion, then wrote letter to the Bolton Evening News, which probably outlined the aims and publicised a meeting to launch the idea.

1.1 The Inauguration

This inaugural meeting was held at the Camera Club Rooms on 19th October 1945, and the minutes of the meeting read: -

"Mr Smith called the meeting to test the feeling of the general public of Bolton regarding the formation of an art circle. Mr. Smith opened the meeting and explained in detail his reasons for such a circle being formed. His remarks being favourably received, it was decided that those present should forthwith elect a Chairman, Mr. John Gauld being elected.

With Mr. Gauld in the chair, he asked for nominations for temporary officers. The following Ladies and Gentlemen were duly elected.

Mr. F. R. Woods. Hon. Sec.

Mr. Lewis W. Crowther. Treasurer

Messrs. James Smith, Herbert Booth, John Craig, Leslie Kay, and Mrs. W. Crowther and Mrs. C. Howarth. Committee

In a general discussion the scope of the society was to be as wide as possible, taking in not only the more conventional aspects of the graphic arts, but textile design, architecture, stage décor, and such crafts as needlework, pottery, etc.

The meeting closed at 9.30 with a remark from Mr. Gauld that he felt that the society had a future that was well worth working for."

It is not certain how many people attended this meeting, but on some scribbled notes which have survived, the following names can be deciphered: -

Mr. Bradshaw, Mrs. Brownrige, Mr. Brown, Mr. Chapman, Mr. P. Court, Mr. Gray, Miss C. Howarth, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Myers, Mr. Parson, Mr. Phipps and Mr. Taylor.

So the Art Circle came into being and the indications are that it attracted a great deal of interest from many sections of the Bolton public.

1.2 President/Chairman

Very early on efforts were made to appoint a "figurehead" president to give the Art Circle a degree of status. Mr. Fred Tillotson was approached but declined, and subsequently a list comprising Lord Leverhulme, Sir John Barlow, Mr. G. Tillotson and Francis Dodd R.A. was drawn up. Sir John Barlow was asked first, but apparently efforts in this direction did not succeed. No record exists of further developments and it was eventually decided that the "Chairman" be renamed "President". Despite the title, for almost fifty years the President acted as Chairman of the Council of the Art Circle. In 1993 the then President, Phil Parker, suggested that it was more appropriate that he be called Chairman and that we should find some eminent person to take up the position of President. (*We are still seeking that person in 2002.*)

1.3 Membership growth

There are only sketchy details about what happened during the remainder of 1945 and it was not until 1946 that the Circle really started to become established and grow. The first Annual General Meeting, held on 17th February 1946, proved that the Circle was now firmly in being. The meeting was attended by 50 members and officials and the rapid growth of the Circle is reflected by these numbers. One item of real note from this meeting was a resolution regarding membership and reads: -

"Any person desiring membership of the Art Circle must be proposed and seconded by a member of the Art Circle and passed by the Committee."

This unanimous ruling was enforced for a good many years and there is no record of it ever having been rescinded. However, times have changed and the Circle now welcomes beginners as well as the more proficient and accomplished artists in the area without any official vetting. Applications for membership appear regularly in the early meetings of the Committee and one can only conjecture about the background behind some of them. E.g.: -

"Mr. W. Dyke Carter, A.R.C.A. (London). F.R.S.A., Prince Henry's Grammar School, Otley. (1948)"

and

"An application for membership from Mr. E. Dambergs was deferred to the next meeting." (He was duly accepted at this meeting.)

2. Social Events

Social events were of prime importance during the early years of the Circle with dances and dinner functions being regularly held. Evidently this was not to everyone's liking for there was a suggestion that: -

"Whist drives should be held from time to time as a consideration for the non-dancers of the Circle."

And, in 1951, in preparation for a Social and Dance to be held at the Lymefield Rooms: -

"The programme was then discussed and it was decided that whist and dancing be held separately until the interval after which there should be games and dancing."

2.1 The Arts Ball

The main social event of the year was given the prestigious name of "The Arts Ball". Russell Young, still an active member of the Circle until his death when Chairman on 25th January 1999, recalled, *"....that they were very grand affairs held at the Empress Ballroom in Mealhouse Lane. Fancy Dress or Evening Dress was the rule and most people came in Fancy Dress."* Older Boltonians will probably recall seeing photographs in the Bolton Evening News of dancers dressed as Harlequins, Pierrots and even Chimney Sweeps. Russell played a big part in organising these events and his responsibilities in 1952 included an authorisation: -

"To buy 1 gross balloons at 15/- (75p), 1 gross of hats at 36/- (£1-80), and 10/- (50p) worth of streamers."

3. Extra mural Activities

A strong Social Committee in the early years was also responsible for organising a full programme of summer activities. During the summer of 1946 the following visits were arranged: -

May Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester.

May Outdoor Sketching to Turton and Entwistle.

June Lady Lever Art Galleries, Port Sunlight.

June Visit to Whitewell and Chipping.

June Visit to Towneley Hall, Burnley.

July Visit to Anglezarke.

August Visit to Downham.

August Visit to Fletcher Moss Museum, Manchester

September Visit to St. Michael's on Wyre.

September Visit to Manchester Art Gallery.

In 1948, the Social Committee comprised nine members: -

Mrs. Crowther, Miss. P. Bond, Miss J. Taylor, Miss Whitworth, Mrs. Bradshaw, Mrs. Mitchell, Miss M. Bond, Miss C. Howarth, and Mr. J. Cort. One wonders what role the solitary male played.

Organised groups for outdoor sketching were held for many years and were very successful. In 1964 it was recorded that: -

"The outdoor sketching group broke new ground and extended their activities. With the use of private cars they were able to go to places further afield and to gain more time for the actual painting."

As late as 1968, there were two "secretaries for outdoor painting." Mr. W. Knowles and Mr. J. Archbould. But circumstances changed and in February 1975 it was reported that *"the outdoor sketching classes had been a complete flop and were to be discontinued."*



Ellen Bate

One time model for Bolton Art Circle.

Photograph of the front of a book of her poems, entitled

"Thorn is the Rose"

published by Poetry Publications,
Cambridge.c1958

4. The Annual Exhibition

At the first Annual General Meeting, held on 17th February 1946 was the inauguration of what was eventually to become the Annual Exhibition. A proposed exhibition to display and sell members' work was planned to be held at the Technical College on 5th October 1946, *"providing it did not clash with the Bolton Wanderers at home day."*

Evidently football was the winner on this occasion for the date was changed to the 19th October at the Art School. It was reported that this exhibition was a success, and again two years later when the minutes record: -

"The (Art Circle) Council were pleased to have a good attendance at the official opening in October despite the fact that Bolton were playing at home."

It was in October 1947 that the Annual Exhibition was first held in the Bolton Art Gallery. Unfortunately, this new venture met with poor support and many members did not submit pictures due, it was stated, to poor communications. Worthy of record in the Committee minutes is the mention that: -

"One member entrusted her pictures to her son but, the latter, unfortunately, remembered them only after the judging."

In that year it was also decided that: -

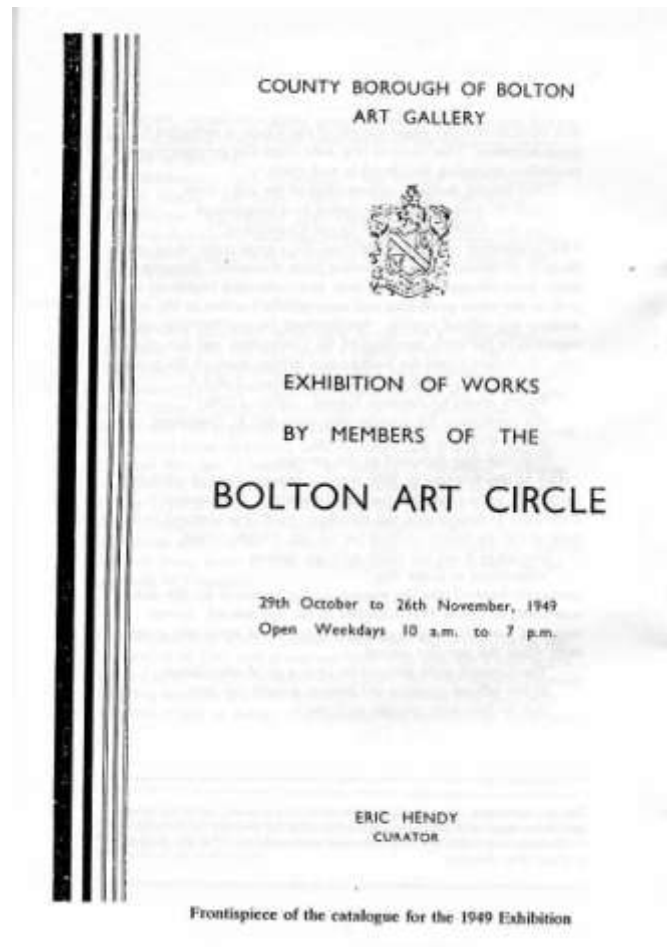
"All work submitted for the exhibition will be submitted to an outside judge whose decision would be final."

This policy of appointing an outside, judge was deemed to be the only way in which a fair and independent assessment could be made and over the years many notable artists have carried out this function. Perhaps the most noted of these was L. S. Lowry who judged the work in 1957, and a comment on this was recently given by Stella Platt of Pooley Bridge, one of the few surviving Founder members. She recalls that, *"he said that he hadn't two pennies to rub together in the early days and didn't care whether he sold or not in later years."*

Outside judges have continued to be appointed and for many years it was the Committee who decided on the person chosen. As the years progressed however, it seems that differences of opinion were becoming an embarrassment and it was left to the President alone to make the choice. Nowadays the Chairman decides on the judge and keeps the choice a close secret until after the event.

The success of the Annual Exhibition seems to have fluctuated a great deal in the early days and in 1948 the Secretary commented: -

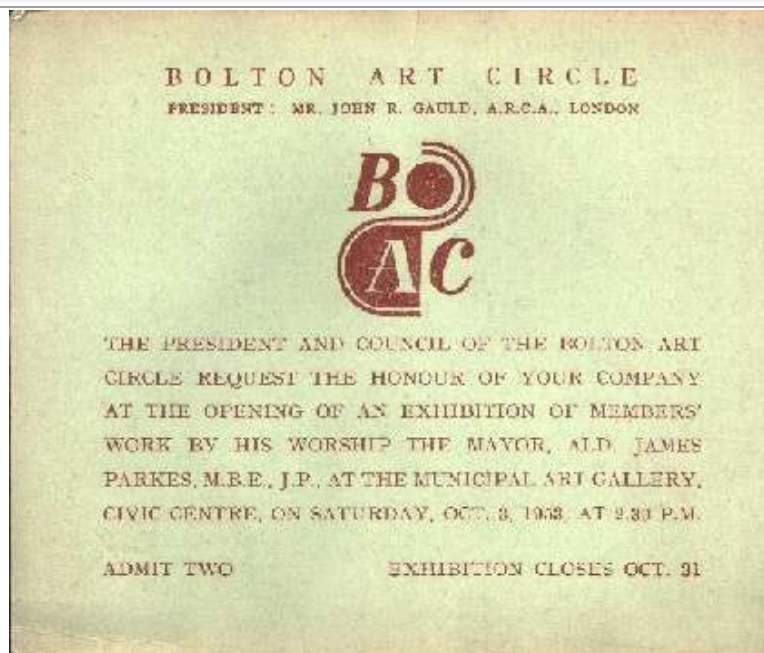
"Unfortunately for the Exhibition, Bolton has tight purse strings. Boltonians would appear to like the Exhibition as a spectacle but are not sufficiently aware to seize the chance to snap up the work of a future master. Although Bolton has a population of 180,000 only one work was sold"



In 1950, there was an improvement with three works being sold. This was the third Exhibition to be held and the first time that the word "Annual" was used in connection with it. A comment on the 1950 Exhibition stated that: -

"The number of oils submitted was 14 less this year.

Is this an indication of the cost of living?"



Ticket from the 1953 Exhibition - courtesy P. Battersby

And again in 1951 there was another mention about the low number of oil paintings exhibited. The mixed fortunes continued with only one work being sold in 1953 and in 1954 none at all. Thereafter, things improved and in 1959 the Secretary proclaimed that a record number of twelve pictures had been sold.

For many years the Exhibition had a three or four week showing at the Art Gallery and then, to bring it to a wider public, the whole exhibition moved to Pennington Hall, Leigh, for a further four weeks. The Curator of the Hall said that the exhibitions were appreciated by the people of Leigh and were usually well attended, but there is no record of any pictures being sold. Perhaps Leighians were cast from the same mould as Boltonians. This arrangement continued until 1960 when Pennington Hall was closed and demolished. Afterwards experiments were tried in transferring part of the exhibition to libraries in the Bolton area; mainly Farnworth and Harwood. But this never proved to be very successful and it was eventually discontinued.

TITLE OF WORK AND ARTIST

Nos.

1	Cornish Landscape. D. Dakeyne	8
2	Firwood Fold, Bolton. Henry Hill	15
3	Bird Trap, Skokholm Island, R. L. Mason	
4	Bridge Scene. Kenneth A. Bromley	14
5	Ainsworth Church. J. E. Abraham	5
6	Summer Bloom. Mrs. M. A. Harris	10
7	Sunflowers. Vera Lowe	15
8	Chrysanthemums. Mrs. M. A. Harris	10
9	Portrait. Ruth Tasker	7
10	Houghton Street, Bolton. W. Grew	N.F.S.
11	Gatehouse, Cartmel. John Nicholson	15
12	Wells Cathedral. D. Dakeyne	25
13	Old Lady Sleeping. Irene Wilson	N.F.S.
14	Parlick Pike. Mrs. M. H. Bishop	7
15	Deane Church, Bolton. W. Grew	6
16	St. Annes on Sea. W. Grew	15
17	Lymm Canal, Cheshire. Clifford Smith	8
18	Light Fall, Bottom o'-th' Moor. J. W. Baines	10
19	Devil's Bridge, Kirby Lonsdale. Mrs. M. H. Bishop	7
20	Evening Shadows. Inez Abbott	N.F.S.
21	Spring Morning, Tockholes. Carl Osborne	6
22	Silverwell Street Court. W. D. Billington	10
23	Frosty Day near Rufford. J. W. Baines	10
24	The Berrystead, Oundle. R. L. Mason	
25	Loch Lochy. Canon K. M. Bishop	N.F.S.
26	Friar's Crag, Derwentwater. Marilyn Scotson	N.F.S.
27	Quarry Road, Kinsley. Mary Thornley	12
28	Solitude. Mary Thornley	12
29	Boat Houses, Brightlingsea. J. W. Baines	10
30	Yosemite Park, California. Marilyn Scotson	8
31	Kynance Cove. Carl Osborne	6
32	Barrow Bridge Road. Kenneth A. Bromley	9
33	Manor House, Longsight. Clifford Smith	10
34	Demolition, Halliwell. D. Dakeyne	8
35	Chelsea House Boats. W. Grew	N.F.S.
36	On the Hodder. R. V. Brown	10
37	Tulips. Gertrude Swift	5
38	View of St. George's Church. Kenneth A. Bromley	9
39	Hoewich Parish Church. J. W. Baines	8
40	Kilchurn Castle. Fred. W. Bowen	N.F.S.
41	Biccardale. Mrs. M. H. Bishop	7
42	Nesting Time, Doffcocker. Henry Hill	8
43	Fishing Boats, Scarborough. James Fray	12
44	Westwards. James Fray	12
45	Catterline, Kincardine. Stella Platt	30
46	Polperro. Albert Royle	10
47	Falls of Dockart. A. Wood	8
48	Country Road, Yugoslavia. Frank Cowburn	8
49	Village Station. Mrs. T. Cottam	8
50	Back Kay Street, Bolton. F. True	20
51	Study in Green. Mary M. Moon	N.F.S.
52	The Evening Shift. Mrs. C. Pomfret	N.F.S.
53	Before the Rain, Lincoln. Mary M. Moon	N.F.S.

A section of the catalogue for the Annual Exhibition
11th. October to 1st. November 1969.

	TITLE OF WORK AND ARTIST	Gns.
54	Moor Bottom, Holcombe. Vera Lowe	15
55	Thole. H. G. Bradshaw	N.F.S.
56	Hardy Mill Road, Winter. Brian Barlow	10
57	View from Park Road, Bolton. John Nicholson	18
58	Peaks, Pines and Peace II. Albert V. Parker	15
59	Tarn Hows, Lake District. John Nicholson	28
60	Lighting Up Time, Harwood. Brian Barlow	
61	Bolton Parish Church from Dorset Street. Peter Penrick	N.F.S.
62	The Severn near Newtown, Montgomery. John Nicholson	20
63	The New Horizon. Mrs. C. Pomfret	N.F.S.
64	Salford Storm. Heather Taylor	N.F.S.
65	Country Lane. John Cowburn	10
66	Farm, Edgworth. Brian Barlow	10
67	Park Mill. Heather Taylor	15
68	House at Moniavie. Mrs. A. F. Davics	10
69	The 'Crown & Thistle' Inn, Nr. Darwen. R. V. Brown	16
70	Autumn. Albert Massey	6
71	Moment of Eventful Birth. Ellen Bate	90
72	Pink Orchids. Mrs. E. Bellis	7
73	Avon Bridge, Christchurch. Anne Lonsdale	N.F.S.
74	View from the Ruins. Mrs. Pauline Davidson	5
75	Journey Contemplated. Ellen Bate	75
76	Ceremonial Drum Dance, Thailand. Walter J. Foster	100
77	Winter, Lightbounds. Brian Barlow	10
78	A Night Scene, Old Liverpool. Margaret Huyton	15
79	Old Building. Ruth Tasker	9
80	Summer Evening. H. Williams	9
81	Street Scene. Heather Taylor	15
82	A Devonshire Village. Frank Cowburn	8
83	Beddgelert. Vera Lowe	15
84	Bay, Cornwall. E. Millard	15
85	The First Snow. Carl Osborne	12
86	Snowdonia. Vera Lowe	20
87	Trafford Park. Ruth Tasker	7
88	The Old Oak, Scorton. Stella Platt	20
89	Little Switzerland, Walker Fold. F. True	10
90	Old Mill. John Cowburn	10
91	Trees & Traffic Lights. Margaret Huyton	15
92	Snow and Sun. F. True	8
93	Hooper's Diary. Mrs. M. S. Dickinson	15
94	The Corner Shop. D. Dakeyne	9
95	Sunday Afternoon, Tatton Park. J. E. H. Mitchell	10
96	Sodium Silhouette (White). Dorothy Rosbottom	10
97	Starlings. Mrs. M. S. Dickinson	12
98	Galloway Farm. G. N. Thackrah	6
99	The Flower People. Steven Dycr	15
100	Angela. Joyce Davis	10
101	Homeward Bound. Henry Harper	8
102	Doffcocker in February. H. A. Porter	5
103	Norfolk Pastoral. Mary M. Moon	8
104	Pennington Hall Park, Leigh. T. J. Cnlshaw	8
105	Tugs. T. L. Loveday	8
106	Please Do Not Disturb. J. E. H. Mitchell	N.F.S.

Altogether there were 135 works on display.
Note that prices were still being quoted in guineas.

The Annual Exhibition always seemed to be the topic of lively discussion among members and a lot of time was devoted to it at meetings. Should members be allowed to have work automatically exhibited? This question was continually raised and debated but no decision was ever reached and the "Status Quo" remained. There was a big discussion on the matter in 1978 which led to the President John Nicholson addressing the Annual General Meeting in the following terms: -

"It was explained by the President that the Circle accepts for membership anyone interested in fine art and there is no acceptance committee to which interested members must submit their work. Every member must accept judging and no one had a right to exhibit. This was necessary to maintain the standards expected by the Bolton Art Gallery."

Every year there seem to have been comments and complaints about the Exhibition. These sometimes revolved round the facilities offered by the Art Gallery, ranging from lack of space to poor hanging, including one complaint that abstract work was being hung next to representational work.

A problem was highlighted by Lonsdale Bonner in 1957 when he: -

".....suggested that the Circle was thriving at the time of the Exhibition and not at other times and called for more support at its regular meetings. He warned members of the danger of it becoming a professional as opposed to amateur circle."

A more specific problem arose in 1971 when we read from the minutes of the Committee meeting: -

"The Exhibition was discussed and difficulties over refreshments aired. These chiefly arose from the number of outsiders who gate crashed just in time for refreshments." (Presumably at the Preview)

The outcome of this discussion is not recorded.

The Exhibition was moved out of the main Art Gallery in 1997, onto the landing, which was renamed the "Portico Gallery". However, in 2002, the Annual was held in the Bar of the Octagon Theatre, Bolton, with a promise by Bolton Metro that we should be returning to the Art Gallery in 2003.

But despite all the problems associated with the holding of such an Exhibition it has continued until the present day with considerable success, becoming a prominent event in the cultural life of the town.

5. The "Intimate"

Very early on in the history of the Circle it became the practice to hold an "Intimate Exhibition" each year. This exhibition was usually staged over one day or evening and was limited to members only. It was held at various venues; the Art School at first and then, for a number of years, at Brandwood Street School, (where Les Huyton was Headmaster). Other venues have been Melbourne Road School, Bank Street Chapel and the Age Concern Building on Moor Lane Bus Station. Since 1960 it has been held in the Club Rooms. This annual event has always been successful giving members the opportunity to display their work without any conditions and also the chance to meet other members socially.

6. Other Exhibitions

6.1 Bolton Hospice Exhibition

When Bolton Hospice was opened in 1992, the Circle offered to have a permanent exhibition in the corridors with at least one third of the sale price of any pictures going into Hospice funds. This ended after ten years when the handling of the sales monies proved to be too difficult.

6.2 Royal Bolton Hospital Exhibitions

Since autumn 2005, we have run two permanent exhibitions at the Local hospital. One, where around 25 pictures are for sale with a 3 monthly turn over. A percentage of the sale price goes to the hospital. The second displays over 100 works (not for sale) along corridors of the hospital.

6.3 Last Drop Open Art Fairs

Once every month since April 1999, the Circle has run an Art Fair at the Last Drop Village Hotel, Bromley Cross, Bolton. This attracts art societies from across the whole of the North West of England and still thrives to date. 85 Fairs had been staged by April 2006. On average, each month, about 500 pictures are displayed on 40 stands, with some 40 artists variously taking part.

7. Premises

It was always the aim of the Circle to have suitable premises of their own. The requirement was two-fold: a room in which talks, meetings and demonstrations could be held, and an area that was suitable for practical work to be undertaken. In 1947 all efforts to find a suitable meeting place had proved unsuccessful and we read that the Education Officer was unable to offer a room because of evening class pressures. This was a time when adult education and leisure classes were very much on the increase and premises at a premium.

7.1 Bolton Art School

Mr. John Gauld, the President, was also the Principal of the Bolton Art School and he offered the weekly use of a room at the Art School. But this had its drawbacks and was not really satisfactory as the Circle were shunted around from room to room and many times had to suspend activities because there was no space available. There also seemed to be a feeling that many members did not wish to be linked with the Art School and in 1949 a comment was made by Mr. J. Smith *"that the Circle was run to a great extent by the Art School."* He said that members had left on that account.

By 1950 there was still no progress regarding premises and the Wednesday meeting could no longer be held in the Art School. So further representations were made to the Local Authority to acquire some suitable accommodation, which resulted in: -

"Negative reply from the Mayor.

No reply from the Libraries Committee.

No accommodation available from the Education Department.

No reply from the Entertainments Committee.

Parks Committee had no rooms under their jurisdiction."

In 1952 the new Principal of Bolton Art School, Mr. John Nicholson, was accepted to membership of the Circle and through him classes were again arranged on two evenings a week at the Art School. This continued for some considerable time but there must have been a break in the arrangements for in 1957 *"indoor classes at the Art School were restarted."*

The up and down fortunes of this practical side of the Circle's activities continued and in 1964 it was again reported that there had been no success in finding a room and that the Art School was still being used. In 1969 it is recorded that: -

"Indoor winter club and classes were held at Bridgeman Street each Thursday and 29 people had enrolled. There had never been less than 10 present on each evening."

The use of the Art School for practical activities continued on a fluctuating basis until other premises were found.

7.2 Atlas Mill

It was not until January 1972 that the Circle was able to find a room in which to be based. Mr. Robert Mason, a manager of the company which had taken over the buildings of Atlas Mill, part of Musgraves Cotton Spinning Mills on Chorley Old Road, had become a member of the Art Circle and he offered the use of a space in this building. Presented with a completely empty mill floor, Officials of the Circle were asked to decide where they would like to have an area. A suitable corner having been chosen, it was then partitioned off into a room, free of charge to the Circle. Art equipment was obtained from the recently disbanded Eagley Art Society and was installed in the room. Everyone was pleased with the move. An extract from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting in 1972 reads: -

"Undoubtedly the main interest during the year has been the acquisition of a club room. This has been a dream ever since the Circle was formed after the War, so we had a long time to wait. Our indebtedness is to one of our own members, Mr. R. L. Mason, who is renting us the room and to the North West Arts Council for their grant towards the cost."

Although the Circle was now settled in their new clubroom, there were inevitably some problems and after they had been in it for a year, disappointment was registered: -

"that more use had not been made of it. The Committee was considering if the expense of it was worthwhile."

But it was decided to carry on and the indications were that it was slowly becoming a worthwhile asset. In 1975 it was reported that the room was now being better used and a full programme of meetings on alternate Mondays had been carried out. In 1977 the room was repainted and curtains were put up.

Initially the rent of the room was very reasonable, but changes in management of the Atlas Mill Complex led to this being increased considerably. In 1981 the rent was raised from £104 to £208 per annum and in 1982 further increased to £228. Then in 1984 the owners proposed to install electricity meters and charge accordingly.

By 1986, members were becoming increasingly aware that the premises were far from ideal. Elderly members especially, found access to the clubroom rather daunting, with a choice of facing the prospect of two floors of formidable mill stairs, or coping with a lift which had a mind of its own. Discussions were held amongst members to try and *"find premises which would be more suitable to the needs of the Circle."*

7.3 Wolfenden Street Community Centre

Eventually alternative accommodation was found at the Wolfenden Community Centre in Wolfenden Street off Halliwell Road and the Circle moved into this in March 1990. At the time it was a good move and everything went well, but problems arose over changes of rooms resulting in tables and chairs having to be moved at each meeting. This was overcome with good-natured effort at first but inevitably it became an irksome chore. The only advantage was that the cost of using the Centre was £10 per annum.

Once again efforts were made to find a more suitable place in the Bolton area. The Bolton Evening News did an article saying that Bolton Art Circle was looking for a "new home."

About six organisations, mostly Churches, responded. The Secretary, Roland Arthur and the Treasurer, Betty Walsh, visited several premises, but most of them were either unsuitable in the terms of space or facilities; or the cost was too high. Finally contact was made with Bob Bruce, Chairman of the Highfield Hall Community Centre off Plodder Lane, Farnworth, and a very suitable room was offered to the Circle. The room, the John Davies Room, was to be shared with other users but was ideal.

7.4 Highfield Hall Community Centre

This Community Centre was a fairly new establishment and had been developed in a large converted barn, which was originally a part of Highfield Farm. The room, had exposed roof beams and a certain amount of character and was considered to be eminently suitable for the use of the Circle and after due deliberation by the rest of the Committee it was decided to go ahead. Some doubts were expressed as to the wisdom of moving away from the centre of Bolton, but any move, anywhere, was bound to affect someone. In the event some members were lost, but others were gained and after two years it was generally agreed that the move was a good one. The changeover was swift and completed by March 1994. This new clubroom was available for use on three occasions each week – Monday and Wednesday afternoons and Thursday evening. Attendances were soon so good that the Circle requested to be moved into the Bruce Room, which is half as big again as the John Davies Room.

Since September 1997, the Circle has used the Bruce Room for its workshop sessions but still uses the John Davies Room for the monthly demonstrations.

Lectures and demonstrations to open up wider aspects of art to members have always been a feature of the Circle's programme. In the early years these meetings were often the only way in which members could get together because of the difficulties in finding a room for practical work. The Circle has always offered a good programme of talks and demonstrations and though support does tend to fluctuate, there is generally a very good turn out for them. For the past few years eight meetings a year have been organised covering a wide range of topics.

In keeping with modern media methods, a library of Art Videos was introduced after the move to Highfield Hall. At the same time a Book library was developed. These have proved very successful and there were, at the turn of the Millennium, about 150 Videos, and some 400 books on all aspects of art, in the two Libraries. Videos in particular are very popular and loaned out on a weekly basis to members. The collections are updated and added to each year.

8. Roll of Honour

The Art Circle has been well served by excellent Officials and Committee members and its growth and success has been mainly due to the dedicated service of these people and the efforts they made to keep the Circle thriving. Several people have held office for lengthy periods and this has helped to build up the continuity of the Circle. But during its history five persons stand out and warrant special individual mention.

JOHN RICHMOND GAULD was President of the Art Circle from 1945 to 1961 and was one of the persons responsible for its formation. Well known, respected and admired in the world of art, he is remembered as one who sought to recognise and encourage sound lines in the teaching of art, and his quiet presence and constructive remarks will long be recalled by those who knew him. For twenty-one years until 1951 he was Principal of the Bolton College of Art. He exhibited at the Royal Academy and other galleries and also in France and the USA as well as holding innumerable one-man shows. His services as lecturer, judge and art critic were always in demand. In March 1963 the Art Circle organised an In Memoriam Exhibition at the Bolton Art Gallery.

"Works were loaned by six public galleries and a number of private owners, as well as selections from the works still in possession of Mrs. Gauld. Watercolours, oils and lithographs were included and they covered both work from his earlier painting days and later work. Many viewers, to whom only his later works were known when he painted in watercolour, were astounded at the variety of his talent."

It was mainly due to his leadership and guidance that the Circle became well established and prospered.

JOHN NICHOLSON has been the longest serving official of the Circle, having held the office of President for twenty-five years. He succeeded John Gauld as Principal of the Bolton Art College in 1951 and immediately took an interest in the activities of the Circle, becoming a member in 1952 and joining the Committee the same year. For many years he worked for the Circle using his influence and experience to keep it in a flourishing position. On the retirement of John Gauld, he was the obvious person to take over as President and was elected to this office in 1962. He held this position with honour and distinction and after he retired as Principal of the Art College in 1967, devoted a large amount of his time to the work of the Circle. He was also a very accomplished and versatile artist and had his work exhibited all over the country. Ill health finally led him to relinquish the Presidency in 1987.

LESLIE HUYTON had the distinction of being the Secretary of the Art Circle for twenty-two years from 1956 to 1977. He became a member of the Circle in 1948 soon after its formation and served on the Committee before becoming Secretary.



During this long period of office he was at the centre of all the activities of the Circle and was always willing to carry out the many duties expected of him. A Councillor and Headmaster of Brandwood Street Junior School, he was well known in the Borough and had many contacts that were of advantage to the Circle. He was also an artist of considerable ability. His wife was also an artist (in Les's words, "Better than me".) and it was in her memory that he donated the Margaret Huyton Trophy, which is presented each year at the Annual Exhibition for the best picture by an artist who can claim to be a novice and has not been a member of the Circle for more than three years.

In 2000 Les donated the Jubilee Trophy, which is presented at the Annual Exhibition to the work of art, which, in the opinion of the Judge, is the best in the show.

On February 8th 2008 Les celebrated his 102nd Birthday. He died on May 24th 2008.

The following are (slightly) edited versions of an Open Letter and Notes from Les, (perhaps better described as Memoirs,) about the "earlier years of Bolton Art Circle", written during the summer of 2004.

Dear Roland

Stella Platt's husband (Jack) was the man I took over from as Secretary. He was a Solicitor with an office in Manchester. I moved to Southport. Stella has a history of starting art groups everywhere she went.....one in Preston was particularly successful.

A friend of mine has a computer - I haven't - and has sent me pages and pages about Bolton Art Circle from it. It is quite obvious to me that there are big gaps in the amount of information you have. (This) must be because my records being thrown away from Atlas House.

I would like to meet you and compare notes - there are many comments in the History that I could amend. The writer (Alan Brooks) was not even a member in my day thus had to guess in many places in the book. I should like to pass on all I can remember and for which there is no written statements before I die. In the meantime I will send what I can.

Les

I must write to you about the Art Circle's H.Q. - no, not Hilden Street, but Hilden Street's Haulgh Hall, next door Pop(?) Bradshaw's home for 90 years...there is a consecrated chapel in it.

Every meeting (of) the Art Circle was there.

When Mr. & Mrs. Bradshaw both collapsed and were taken late at night to Hospital, neighbours in the street phoned me to come and lock it up. But I did not have their key and I had to phone Brian, their son in South Africa. He was Professor of Fine Art in Grahamstown University. [That is a story in itself.] What a night that was!!!! - but I had forgotten all about it until this moment's sudden flash of memory. I do not think there is any written account of that night anywhere.

"The Early Years of Bolton Art Circle as known to Leslie Huyton"

I came to live in Bolton in March 1948. I came from Liverpool to take up the Headship of a local school, and, apart from school contacts, knew no one.

My wife Margaret was very artistic and was trained at Liverpool Art School. So when she saw a notice in the Bolton Evening News that there was to be an Art Exhibition at Bolton School, she was immediately interested and wished to know more.

I knew Mr. John Gauld (the Head of Bolton Art School) through school contacts; so I phoned him. He told me it was the Annual Intimate Exhibition of Bolton Art Circle and was for Members only. But, in view of her interest, he would be pleased to invite my wife to the Exhibition as his guest. We both attended, enjoyed it tremendously, and made many new friends and my wife continued to attend meetings of the Circle.

There was a vacancy on the Committee, and because of her Liverpool experience, she was invited to fill it. We both attended the Annual Meeting of Bolton Art Circle held soon afterwards. At this meeting the Secretary, Mr. J. K. Platt, announced that he and his wife Stella were leaving Bolton and going to live in Southport, so he would have to resign as Secretary of the Circle. This caused some consternation and Mr. Gauld from the chair tried to find a replacement without any success. Finally he turned to me and said, "Mr. Huyton, with all your experience, can't you help us out?"

Not a little put out I said, "I can manage secretarial work but I am only new to Bolton and know nothing of the Art Circle, so I cannot do it."

There was a stalemate. So I said, "If Mr. Platt will continue as Secretary, I will act as Assistant and do all the actual writing, after directions from him, over the phone from Southport." This was accepted and it worked surprisingly well for four years during which I took over more and more of the actual work without direction from Mr. Platt.

Finally, Mr. Platt, a solicitor in Manchester, asked me to take over the title of Secretary as well as doing the work, whilst he, working from his office, took over the post of President of the North West Federation of Art Societies. (When the Federation held exhibitions, the exhibits were stored in his office.)

I knew nothing about the actual founding of the Art Circle since I was not living in Bolton at the time, except for what I heard by word of mouth - chiefly from Mr. John Gauld and Mr. James Fray, (always known as Jimmy) who was a tower of strength to the Circle. He was at the first meeting and actually attended all other meetings too. He it was who later approached Mr. Robert Mason at Atlas Mill; conducted all the negotiations; chose the site for the new club room and its furnishing and supervised its first classes. But he would never accept any formal office in the Circle.

Jimmy Fray was an exceptional artist. He worked for Bolton Buses which produced a monthly Magazine, the frontispiece of which was always a full page reproduction of a scene in Bolton and district drawn by Jimmy. I made a wonderful collection of these and they were

stored in Atlas House together with all our earlier records until an over enthusiastic member in a search for more easels, threw them out with other papers. This was a tragedy for the Circle for there was much paper work thrown out which could not be replaced. A collection of Membership Cards, Exhibition Catalogues, Membership Lists and much more. There were far reaching consequences of this.

Jimmy Fray had also been a seaman and he painted in watercolour large paintings of fully rigged ships always faultless as regards the sails and rigging - no mean feat and which very few achieve. Some were hung in Atlas House and now lost.

Jimmy knew Mr. Smith, who called the Circle's first meeting and understood the friction between him and Mr. Gauld.

After it was formed, the first Chairman of Bolton Art Circle was Mr. John Gauld ARCA(Lond) who was head of Bolton School of Art in Hilden Street. It became famous when one of its students, Brian Bradshaw, won the "Prix de Rome". Only one of these was awarded each year and the award was open to the whole country. It led to a year's study of art in Rome and Europe with big cash grants.

Mr. Gauld regarded the title "School of Art" as the name of a movement, like "The Dutch School" or "The Italian School", as well as the name of a building, and was proud of it.

When Mr. Gauld retired, Mr. John Nicholson was appointed Head. He was equally a good artist but had quite a different style and specialised in quick watercolours as distinct from life-size oils of John Gauld, including nudes. Mr. John Nicholson, too, enlarged his School with many new subjects - technical as well as art and it grew so big that he expanded to take in more space from the Technical College. The name was then changed from "School of Art" to "College of Art".

The Bolton Art Circle was still made very welcome but now had to move from Hilden Street to the Technical College building. In this building, difficulties for the Art Circle commenced, but only after Mr. John Nicholson retired.

Mr. Nicholson, as had Mr. Gauld before him, had always taken good care of the welfare of Bolton Art Circle and there was always a room available for our classes and a friendly welcome. This was not so when a new Principal took over. I had personally written to him inviting him to join the Circle, but our invitation was firmly rejected. We were allowed a room free of charge in the Annex, as formerly, but it was not supervised and frequently Art Circle members had to clear up Day Students work before they could start their own. It was only then that we started to look for other accommodation and Jimmy Fray went with Mr. Mason to Atlas House to look for alternative accommodation there.

We moved in there and gave up our connection with the College both as regards free accommodation and free staff - never to renew it.

Both Mr. Gauld and Mr. Nicholson fully supported and helped the Art Circle after retiring from their Official posts.

Leslie Huyton 1st April 2004

Further notes on the earlier years of Bolton Art Circle by Leslie Huyton.

The Circle only succeeded by its reliance on the School/College for its staff and buildings in the beginning. In these later years the Circle has branched out and can now survive without the College and run its own activities; but not so earlier.

It is a completely different organisation nowadays and more in keeping with the type of organisation Mr. Smith wanted rather than one built on Mr. Gauld's ideas.

Mr. Smith did not remain a member for long and resigned together with his staff at Tillotsons.

One of the big differences is to be noticed in the Annual Exhibitions. Mr. Gauld set the fashion by always exhibiting life size oils - frequently nudes. He was supported in this type of work by other members of his staff and artists from outside Bolton including a work by the President of the Cambrian Academy and Heads of other Art Schools. Mr. Bradshaw and his son Brian also entered large works. These artists would only exhibit if the standard was high and Mr. Gauld saw to that. It was the reason new members had to submit to "being approved" - as mentioned in Mr. Alan Brooks' History - where he could not understand it. (sic)

We had two galleries - the large one for oils; the smaller one for watercolours and the centre of the big gallery had the largest exhibit in the centre of each side wall - with others tapering off to the ends.

I, as Secretary of the Circle, was invited each Spring to name the dates I wanted for our exhibition and it was always granted. Year after year we opened for four weeks starting the second Saturday in October.

In the History of Bolton Art Circle by Alan Brooks, no mention at all is made of the whole period when I was Secretary, and some facts in it, though correct, are out of time scale. This seemed quite strange until I realised that all the records of that time were destroyed when Atlas House records were all thrown out and so not available to Mr. Brooks.

When we first took over Atlas House there was a huge draughtsman's table with huge drawers - ideal for our records. So I stored them there. They were there for years and years and grew more and more important and included membership records and catalogues. Then one dreadful night I found that the table and all its contents had been thrown out without trace.

One of our members - a very good artist - always used an easel and gathered round him a class of his own with more and more easels bought until the room was full of them. Too full said many. Someone, never traced, decided that an easel was more important than a table and threw it out altogether with its contents. A complete disaster.

At first the Catalogues for Art Circle Exhibitions were printed and sold by the Gallery. But then they stopped doing it and we had to do without them or do them ourselves. I personally wrote them out and printed them on jelly pads - the only way schools could use in those far off days. It is difficult to believe in these computer days. All these efforts by me have gone with the others. A friend of mine has just shown me computer records of the Art Circle. I am old and not used to these ideas.

So. I have only just realised how short of facts the Circle must be. I find writing a very big strain these days but feel I should write down what I can remember before it is too late.

I will let you have what I have had the energy to write and will write again if I find the energy and remember anything else.

Les. Huyton

(Les makes a separate point, somewhat out of context (on the back of the above) that the Art Circle "most decidedly did not want to be called Saturday Afternoon Painters." This is possibly a reference to a statement in Alan Brooks' History.)

The above was typed on 24th April 2006 by Roland Arthur from manuscripts received from Les Huyton during 2004/5

RON CLOSE, member of the Circle from 1968 until his death on 5th June 2003, was Secretary of the Circle from 1978 until 1981. A prolific artist, his naval background often showed in his choice of subjects. Detailed work was Ron's trademark and whether it was the reflections on a Guardsman's Tuba, or the portholes on a ship, you could guarantee "it was all there". He enjoyed visiting galleries all over the North West and took a keen interest in other artists' endeavours.



He won many accolades during his time with the Circle. But he was very modest about his skills and loved nothing more than helping others. His patience came to the fore when he assisted "beginners" on the road to success, often abandoning his own work to spend time with less accomplished artists.

In his Memory, Ron's family presented Bolton Art Circle with the "Ron Close Trophy", which is now awarded annually.

STELLA PLATT is an Honorary Member who was very active in the Circle, with her husband (*John - Secretary from 1948 - 1955*) in the past.

The following is an extract from an article published on 26 May 2006 by Wes Wright of the Bolton Evening News and reproduced by his kind permission.

The article refers to paintings in Bolton Museum and Art Gallery by John Bratby (1928 - 1992). In particular one called Flowers in Pots.



Fiona Salvesen, Keeper of Art at Bolton Museum and Art Gallery said, "The painting (*Flowers in Pots*) contrasts nicely with the rather dark and sombre Bicycle Interior by Bratby painted around 1958, which Bolton acquired in 1991."

Wes then goes on to say: -

"This painting (*Flowers in Pots*) was given to Bolton Museum and Art Gallery in 2005 by Mrs. Stella Platt. She chose the painting as a birthday present instead of the fur coat which her husband had thought she might like. It was purchased from an exhibition of the artist's work in a gallery in Preston around 1963.

Stella Platt was born in Bolton at Deane Clough in 1913. Her family owned five mills in the town, but when the cotton industry collapsed the family lost the business. She studied at Bolton School of Art and Southport Schools of Art, the Harris Gallery in Preston, and the Manchester and Salford Art Galleries.

She was a member of Manchester Academy of Fine Art and Vice-Chairman of the North West Federation of Art Societies. Her own work was exhibited in London, Paris, Edinburgh and the main provincial galleries.

Bolton Museum and Art Gallery purchased an oil painting by Stella Platt in 1959 called Still Life, showing a blue jug, apples and a cactus plant. There are other examples of her work in the Atkinson Art Gallery, Southport, and Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery.

Mrs. Platt had such fond memories of the town that she decided to give the Bratby work to Bolton Museum and Art Gallery so that local people would be able to see this beautiful painting. It was displayed in 2005 in the "Recent Acquisitions 1995-2005" exhibition but will not be seen in public again for some time."



The following piece about Secretary Roland Arthur, (who runs this website,) was written by Chairman George Hull in October 2003.

ROLAND ERIC BROUGH ARTHUR. *Following Les Huyton, a number of members filled the various offices for relatively short times. Then, in the early 90's, a "young(ish)" much talented Structural and Civil Engineer with a penchant for portraiture joined Bolton Art Circle and was almost immediately drafted on to the committee and very quickly into the Secretary's chair. This was Roland and Bolton Art Circle took on a new and dynamic image.*

We moved to a new headquarters in the refurbished Highfield Hall Community Centre, a book library was established together with a video library. New equipment was purchased, demonstrations took on a broader spectrum and membership rose.



Our Golden Jubilee Exhibition was a tremendous effort, run as it was by a dozen members with Roland as both the guiding light and driving force.

One year, Roland had the dual role of Secretary/Chairman, just to make life more interesting. Since then he has organised monthly exhibitions at the Last Drop Village Hotel, with profits going to Bolton Hospice, and more recently, the Outdoor Art Exhibition at Bolton's August Bank Holiday Festival, all with the enthusiastic support of the committee and members.

The 'In Touch' monthly magazine and this web site are just the latest ventures of Bolton Art Circle and who knows where next!

Roland is helped by his eternally supportive wife, Pat, the inspiration of his artist mother Edith, (1905-2004) and his computer whiz-kid children. His sister, Valerie Christine Harbird,(1934-2005) was also a very accomplished artist.

George Hull, Chairman

8.1 Honorary Life Members / Vice Presidents

Over the years, several members, who have given long and dedicated service to the Circle, have received special recognition by having the title "Honorary Vice President" (until 1996) or "Honorary Life Member" bestowed upon them.

Miss. F. E. Balshaw	Sir T. D. Barlow	T. S. Barlow
L. Barton	Alderman W. H. Bateson	P. I. Bell
P. R. Bird	J. Bold	F. W. Bowen
H. G. Bradshaw	Miss A. M. Brown	
Ron Close	Frank Cowburn	Jack Cowburn
Dorothy A. M. Colvin		Miss M. Deakin
Mrs. E. L. Harding	W. H. Hayward	J. Hewitt
Arthur Hollas	A. F. Holt	Les. V. Huyton
G. Keogh	R. Kearsley	Alderman C. H. Lucas
R. L. Mason	C. J. McDerby	W. B. McKelvie
Dr. J. R. Monks		Barry Gadsden
Alderman J. Parkes	J. K. Platt	Stella Platt
Miss. M. Rhodes	Hubert J. Rigby	Mrs. D. Rossbottom
Hugh Rutherford		
Frank Singleton	J. Smith	V. C. Smith
Alderman G. Sykes		Alderman E. Taylor
George H. Taylor	F. L. Tillotson	Mrs. A. Tong
Betty Walsh	W. Whitehead	
denotes Honorary	Members who are still active artists	

In the years up to the 50th Anniversary the Circle went through many changes with social patterns often playing a big part. In the early days the Circle had a certain amount of standing in the local scene and it is fair to say that many people became members because they felt that it was to their advantage to belong to such an organisation. Many people used the Circle as an outlet for their work rather than as a society to belong to. This was especially so when the Circle had no headquarters and the percentage of members attending practical sessions was relatively small. From what can be gathered from minutes and reports, the lectures and social occasions were the only events, which attracted a representative selection of members. When the Circle acquired its first clubroom it eventually attracted an increased number of people taking a more active interest in the practical side of art. Also, when it was able to offer practical facilities on several occasions each week, more people, especially those who wanted to improve their work, came together. At one time in the 80's, when the clubroom was in Atlas Mill, any member could have a key to gain access to the room at any time.

Another factor in the pattern of membership has been that many members from the early days, as they became older, still retained their membership, but ceased to play an active part in the life of the Circle. As the Circle moved into the 1980's, the proportion of active members increased and by the 1990's it had stabilised at a fairly constant level.

Social trends have resulted in the daytime activities becoming more popular, especially with the older, retired, members, who nowadays prefer not to go out in the evening. But the evening lectures and demonstrations are still well attended. Also, in common with a lot of similar societies, the average age of members has become higher, with not as large a proportion of younger people as there used to be. The early retirement common these days has also led to an increase in those who are able to attend daytime sessions. Even so, the Circle is still one of the largest societies in the north of England and in 1995 was in a healthy position.

Alan concluded his "Brief History" by saying: -

It is difficult to forecast the future, but the signs are that for many years to come, this position should be maintained.

Alan Brooks 1995

(A limited number of Alan's "Brief History" booklets, A4 size, are still available from the Secretary – price, including Postage and Packing, £1.00)

Into the 21st Century

The end of the 90's was, as Alan Brooks predicted, a stable period for the Circle. There were some changes and the following brings you up to the end of 2003.

From 6th to the 28th July 1996, the Circle took over the Albert Hall and several other rooms in Bolton Town Hall and staged the largest event it had ever done in its 50-year existence. It was the 50th Anniversary National Open Art Competition and Exhibition. With prizes totalling some £5000 and two prizes of £1000, this attracted artists from all over the country as well as from our twin town in Germany, Paderborn. There were over 1200 entries and 922 artworks were displayed. Several schools took part and there was a large room devoted to the sculptures. Ten judges spent a day selecting their choices. The exhibition could not have been run without the support of about 50 members who spent many hours planning, managing, stewarding, designing and making 80 stands, and erecting and dismantling them, hanging pictures and handling all the finance and administration that goes with such an exercise. The event put the Art Circle on the map and was talked about for many years after. The stands were put to good use after the Exhibition and over half are used on a monthly basis at the Last Drop Art Fairs. They have also been loaned to other societies and schools.

A spin-off was that links with Paderborn developed and the Secretary, Roland Arthur was invited in 1997 to open an exhibition in the "Adam und Eva Haus" in Paderborn.

In 1997 an attempt was made to run a similar event during 1998. This was to no avail and was abandoned in January 1998. Undaunted, later in the same year, the Circle tried to arrange a Millennium Art Exhibition. Lottery funds were sought. But, although Bolton Metro was again fully behind the idea, no money was forthcoming and by the start of 2000, it was decided to abandon the idea.

A change of Officers in the Museum and Art Gallery meant that the Annual Exhibition was moved out of the Galleries in 1997, and onto the landing area, which was renamed, "The Portico Gallery". This situation remained until, in 2002, the "Annual" was moved into the bar area of the Octagon Theatre, with a promise that in 2003, Gallery No 2 in the main Art Gallery would become available to the Circle once more.

Following an approach from John Hurst at the Last Drop early in 1999, the Circle embarked on a new venture. On one Sunday each month the Circle were asked to run an Art Fair in one of the suites at the Last Drop Village Hotel. This attracts art societies from across the whole of the North West of England and still thrives to date, with some 75 Fairs having been staged by April 2006. On average, each month, some 500 pictures are displayed on 40 stands, with some 40 artists variously taking part. 15% of all sales go to a charity chosen each year by the Committee, with approximately £7000 having been donated by April 2006. For seven years, the Last Drop Hotel permitted the Circle to use rooms at reduced rates, as the event is non-profit making. However early in 2006 they decided to levy a £50 charge to cover costs of heating and lighting.

With the change of name of the President to Chairman in 1993, it was thought in May 1998 that the Circle should seek a "proper" President. The Committee must have been very adventurous in their thoughts on the matter as the list the Secretary was asked to write to included Prince Charles, The Duke of Norfolk, Sir John Hall, Sir Ian McKellen and Sir Nat Lofthouse. None of this came to fruition, so the idea was left sine die.

Attendance at the Tuesday evening demonstrations started to drop off in the late 90's and it was apparent that people were not happy going out in the winter evenings. Consequently, in 1999, the pattern was changed and these are now run from March to October each year. Numbers increased with some 30 to 40 members now attending each session.

Workshop attendances are also up and at the Annual General Meeting in April 2002, the Secretary recorded that during the previous twelve months: -

Roughly 80% of our membership attended workshops during the year.

A total of 55 of our members have attended Monday Workshops, with an average of 28 people per session, the highest attendance was 36. 28 members have attended Wednesday Workshops with an average of 10, maximum of 13. However, Thursday evenings continue to be the most popular and 81 members have attended Thursday Workshops, averaging 32 each session, with 40 on several occasions. Thursdays can, however, be quite noisy, as several people spend the entire evening just chatting.

We occasionally struggle to find enough space on Monday afternoons and Thursday evenings as the Bruce Room tends to feel overcrowded when more than 40 artists are present. It is felt by some members that we should make more use of the Wednesday afternoon workshop. There is no reason why some "Wednesday" artists cannot do other than portraiture.

108 members have participated in our various Exhibitions (other than the Last Drop), whilst 40 members have participated in the Last Drop Art Fairs. 54 members variously attended Demonstrations.

However, 15 people have not been involved in any activities but remain loyal members. These tend to be "country" members, or artists who have enjoyed the Circle in the past but can no longer attend events for a variety of reasons.

In 2002, the Secretary moved Bolton Art Circle into the technological era by creating this Website and dealing with as many matters as possible by e-mail. However, it may be some time before he is able to communicate with all the members over the Internet. In October 2002, only about 20 of the 180 members had e-mail addresses. By October 2003 this had risen to 39 and by August 2006, some 75 members had email addresses.

The Circle were pleased to be back in the Main Gallery at Bolton Central Art Gallery in for the 2003 Annual Exhibition.

Roland Arthur, Honorary Secretary

November 2003
