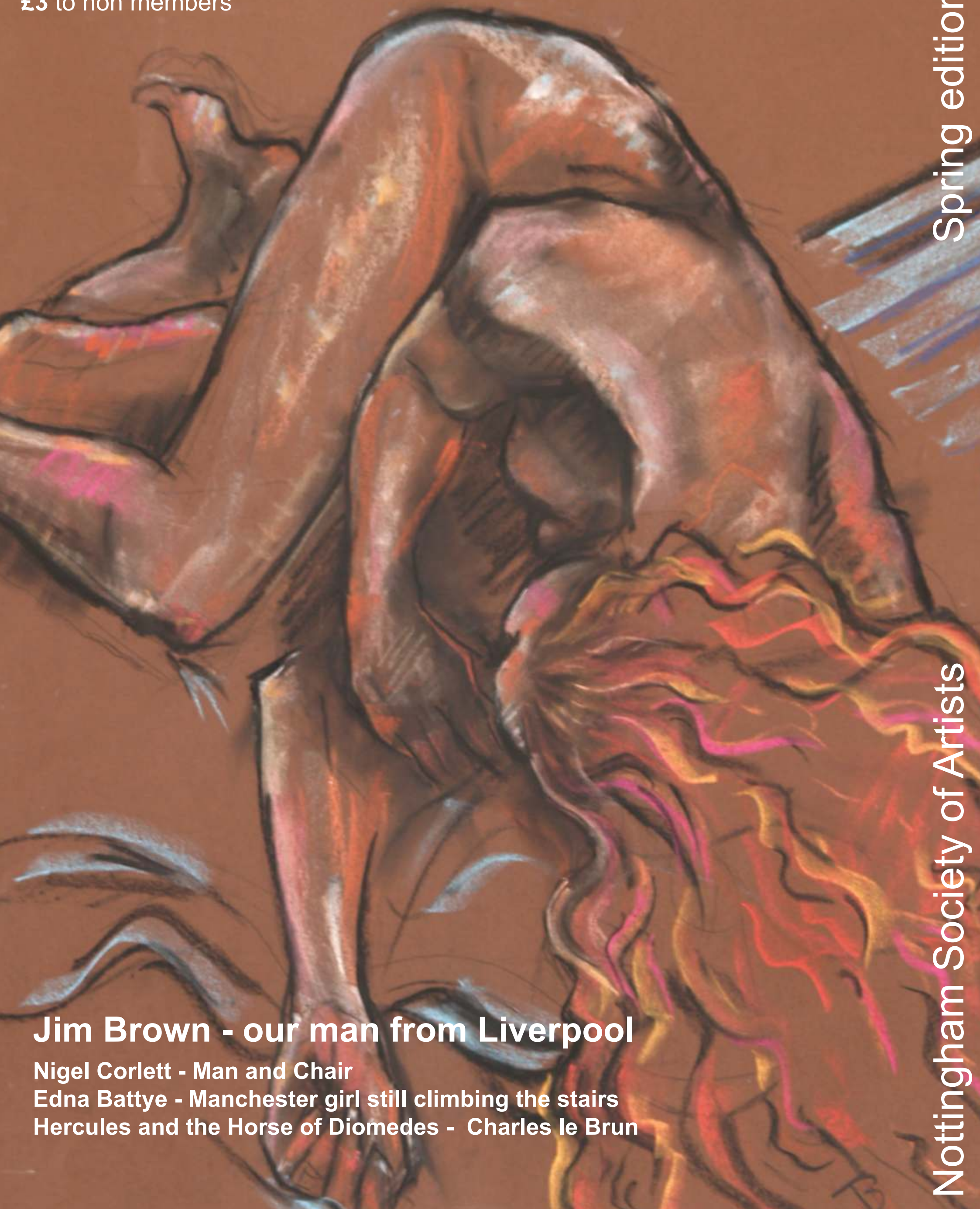
ourart

Issue 4 The magazine of the Nottingham Society of Artists

£3 to non members

Spring edition 2018



Jim Brown - our man from Liverpool

Nigel Corlett - Man and Chair

Edna Battye - Manchester girl still climbing the stairs

Hercules and the Horse of Diomedes - Charles le Brun

Nottingham Society of Artists

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Cover image:
Life drawing in Pastel - Jim Brown



Remembering heroes of WW1.

One of several works by Alan Gardner on temporary display in the gallery window recently.

Welcome

to Issue 4 of OurArt magazine.

This is the fourth issue of our magazine. By now you will be familiar with the range and variety of articles and the big picture layout.

Following our last autumn issue Members Exhibitions have been extended to two week shows which gives more time to invite Friends and family. We can also have a mid-show Saturday party. The stewarding support for a two week show is most encouraging.

Joining in with the City wide **'Light Night'** event was hugely popular with the public. (See page 3) As in previous years, members were there demonstrating their skills in pastel, acrylic painting, paper tearing and sketching. Thanks to all who took part and supported the event.

We are hoping to have an Intern programme starting up this summer in conjunction with Nottingham University. Hopefully this will bring new enthusiasms and viewpoints to our activities.

You may have noticed improvements to our 'Office Area' in the studio kitchen and better storage in the ground floor gallery kitchen. We hope they will facilitate more and better organisation to running the show.

Whilst mentioning management please view the **'Operations Manual'** which is there to help answer any questions or how to do problems you may have. You can find a full hard copy on the office desk in a ring binder. On the gallery desk are sections from the manual on how to run exhibitions. You can also view the whole manual on line in the Members section. It is designed to be viewed and printed off in sections. So you can just view the bit you need relevant to the task or information you want.

If you do think of improvements or missing information we are expecting constant adjustments and would like you to comment.

The manual will tell you how to silence the burglar alarm when you set it wrongly!

We now have over 230 members registered. The virtual gallery on the web site gives an opportunity to display ten of your pictures. Details can be added along with a sale price and soon will be linked with the TV monitor in the gallery window.

For most of the winter it was Jim Brown's pastel portraits displayed on the monitor. That display and the new recruitment window poster have had a significant effect on membership. It has been noticeable how many people stop and look. It has resulted in several new members joining.

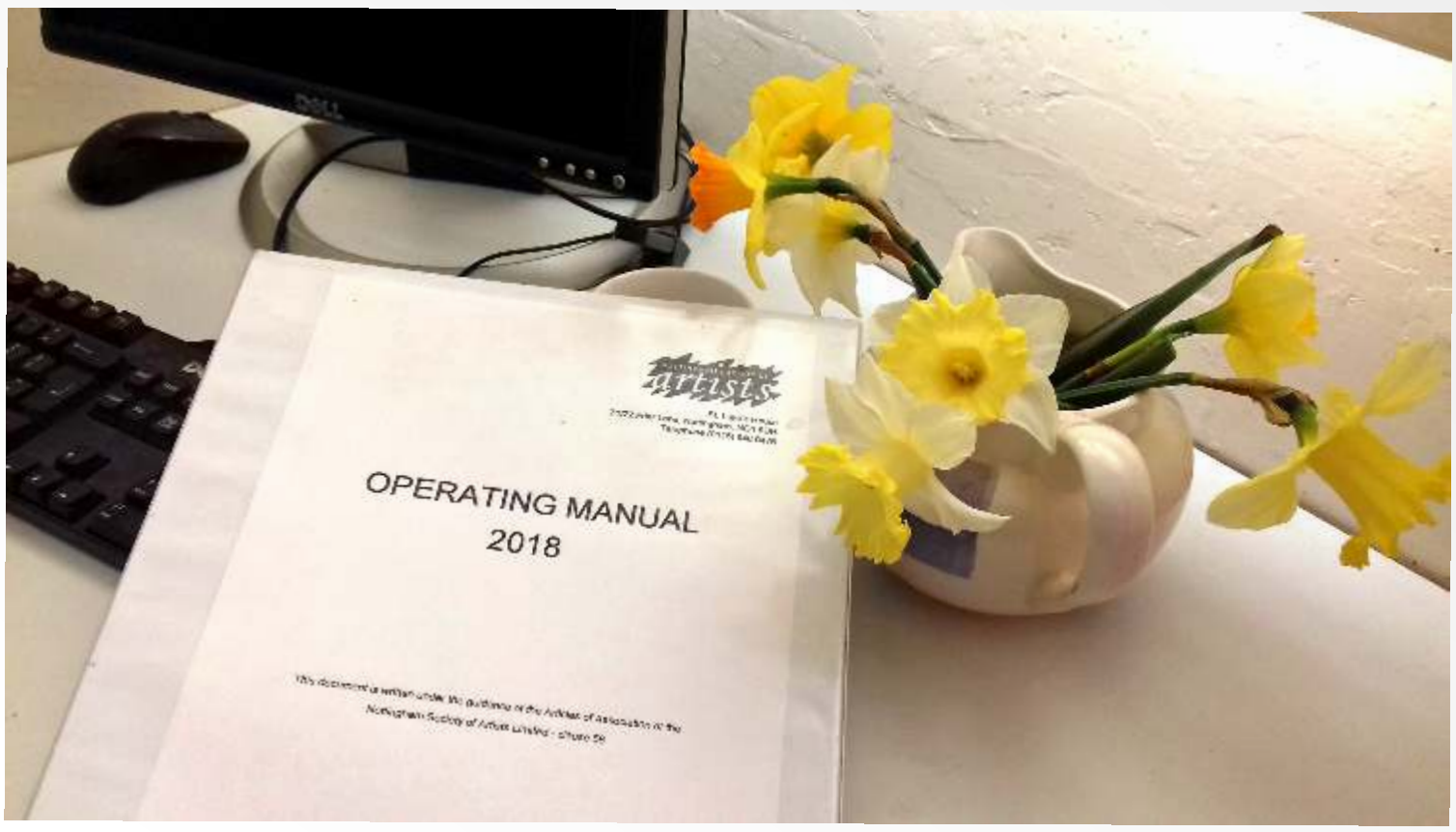
The challenge of the Castle closing for renovation and improvement is about to start. There have been delays to the start of their building contract. It is going ahead and will take two years to complete.

Ok, so Chair of the Board is supposed to be a strategic position just organising a few meetings every year to keep things running. But it is far too tempting or impossible to ignore getting involved… I write the meeting minutes – sometimes I even read what I am supposed to do before the next meeting and same goes for the others! It is good to remind one another what we set out to do before the next meeting!

Like for all the Board and a few others, the reality is picking up pieces when enthusiasm wanes. Carrying furniture round the building. Answering the phone when in the building. Counselling members when the alarm system won't set. Buy or fit the lamps when lights go out, organising the builder when the roof leaks. You might notice the building behind us is being turned into student accommodation. There are ongoing improvements to overview which effect insurances - to the courtyard adjoining our gallery fire escape.

This apart, hearing that all is well with group running, encouraging new ventures and activities and looking to support long running assistance are the fun bits. Meeting so many people and getting involved in events outside the Society helping make our presence more relevant and noticed (see other news pages) I must say if we did again have a President that is what the role would be about.

Alan Gardner











Light Night 2018

Light Night is our most popular public event of the year. We attracted more than eight hundred people to the gallery this year, of all ages from small children to grandma.

In front of me a dozen or more small children sat impossibly still so I could draw a portrait sketch of them which they took home.

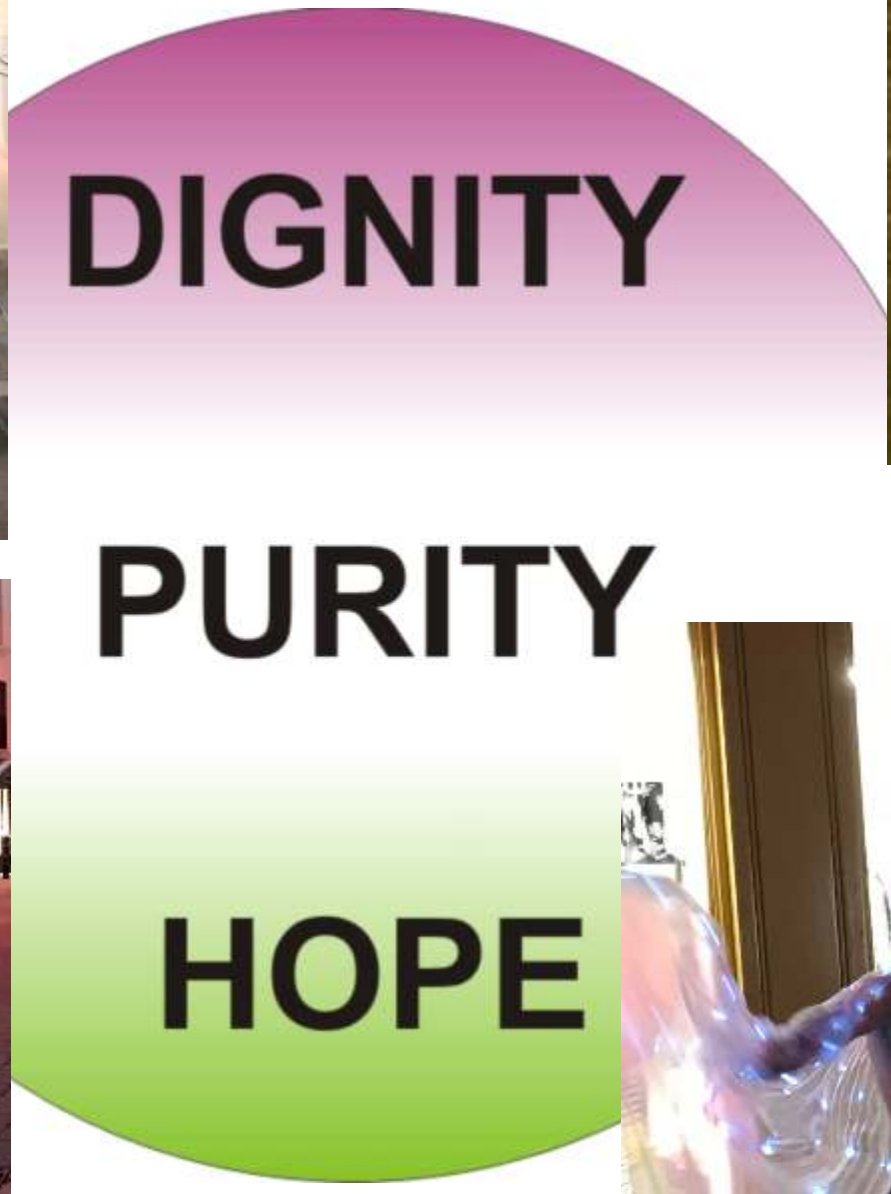
We celebrated the vote for women which was granted 100 years ago the very same week. We had model Fleur dressed as a suffragette to be sketched by Jill Salter. Colin Treliving, Barbara Maslam and others in front of a large admiring crowd. How strange it is to feel the in drawing breath in watching concentration just behind you and at your shoulder as you put the pen to paper and the lines appear!

This was hugely popular. The public crowded round fascinated by the ‘artist at work’ They started piling through the door at 5.30pm and we literally had to lean the door shut to stop the flow at 10pm at an exhausting but rewarded close.

We projected slogans pictures and the suffragette colours of green white and purple from our first floor windows onto the wall of the hairdresser’s on the opposite side of the street. They did suggest we did it and they did wave back as the hair colour lit up in the windows!

The two week long supporting members exhibition to the Light Night event was well attended and a reasonable number of pictures and cards were sold. **AG**





Pictures by Lysle-Anne Renwick

Manchester girl still climbing the stairs….



The NSofA is proud and fortunate to have at least four members who are over ninety. But none of them has been climbing the stairs at Friar Lane for as long as Edna Battye.

She celebrated her 95th birthday last year and continues to attend regularly, taking an active part in group activities.

Greatly reluctant to be written about at all, a good deal of persuasion had to be used before she agreed to even this small tribute appearing in the magazine.

She was born in Manchester in 1922, the youngest of three girls – 'an eternal triangle from which we all escaped by joining the forces!' She was just nineteen.

Her role in 'helping to keep Hitler from our shores' was by working as an intercept operator, an important and highly secret part of the war effort.

When she moved to Nottingham, by this time married and with a son, she discovered the (old) Art College on Goldsmith Street and enrolled on a part-time drawing and painting course. Her tutor was the widely regarded Ronald Thursby.

She later trained as a teacher, specialising in art and design and she taught for ten years in Nottinghamshire schools.

Two friends introduced her to the NSofA and she joined in 1984.

It was Edna who, later, started the Wednesday Morning Group. She felt the need for a clothed model class and was encouraged to start one. Worried at first that it wouldn't be popular, it thrived and the studio has buzzed every Wednesday morning since.

Edna has a way with words. She can still provide an apt quotation, a limerick or a snatch of song lyrics, to illustrate a point. Combined with a great sense of humour, this is often a source of laughter from whichever corner of the Studio she is in at the time.

We hope that she has some idea of the affection and esteem in which she is held.

It may not come easily to her to be regarded as a shining example of how age is no bar to making great pictures, or how 'simply soldiering on' is the best way forward.

Thank you for setting the gold standard, Edna - *Long may it last!*
MC



The Tax Office
- of a small village in France - oil



Braunstone Wildflower Farm - Oil

Hercules and the Horse of Diomedes

by the French master Charles Le Brun

"The Grand Manner in The Long Gallery"

As members of The Nottingham Society of Artists many of us will have experienced a challenging and demanding session of life drawing in the studio perhaps confronted by a particularly difficult pose. We will have endeavoured to come to terms with the fundamental issues of composition, viewpoint, perspective, movement and anatomy. At the conclusion of such a rigorous session, a visit to the Long Gallery at the castle may prove to be an instructive and salutary experience for those seeking further inspiration and instruction.

Passing through the gallery from the direction of the temporary exhibition rooms one encounters a variety of portraits and figure subjects before eventually arriving at the far end wall where hangs a monumental canvas which exerts a powerful and compelling attraction. This is, of course, "Hercules and the Horse of Diomedes" by the French master Charles Le Brun painted around 1640 when the artist was, incredibly, about twenty years of age.

The picture is certainly one of the most important in the Castle Museum collection, if only because works by this artist are relatively scarce in the UK. Charles Le Brun (1619 – 90) was an artist of great significance in France who commanded enormous respect and authority during his illustrious career. In his early period Le Brun enjoyed the patronage of the all powerful Cardinal Richelieu and in 1642 he travelled to Rome in the company of Poussin and was able to study works of classical antiquity in addition to those of the Italian masters in particular Raphael and the Carracci. In 1648 he was instrumental in the formation of the Academie Francaise, later becoming director. Eventually Le Brun was adopted and promoted by first minister Colbert and began to assume a position of supreme control over art and design throughout France. He became one of the principal architects of the so called "Grand Manner", a style which exemplified the arts during the reign of Louis XIV. Le Brun produced an enormous quantity of work particularly in the period 1661 - 83 when he enjoyed the favour and support of Colbert. His most celebrated works are the great decorations at Versailles though his influence spread far beyond France through his theoretical writings. Le Brun was one of the great proponents of Academicism and as such his ideas continued to shape European art beyond his own life time and as far as the nineteenth century.

The Nottingham Castle picture is an early work, painted as an over mantel decoration for Richlieu's residence in the Palais Royale and is, of necessity, hung rather low in the long gallery, being designed for a more elevated position viewed from below. The painting depicts as its subject one of the twelve labours of Hercules, a scene from classical mythology where the hero overcomes tremendous adversity and his enemy is vanquished. Diomedes, King of Thrace, is slain by Hercules and his remains are fed to his own stable of vicious carnivorous mares. This violent and gruesome scene is conveyed through Le Brun's remarkably robust, energetic design and dynamic composition. The picture is an astonishing tour de force by a precocious artist at the outset of his career and gives a convincing indication of achievements which lie ahead.

In Le Brun's powerful composition the drama of the scene is effectively communicated through a variety of formal, pictorial devices. The image is constructed through a series of intersecting arcs, forceful diagonals and interlocking forms. Space is compressed, every passage of the canvas is animated and nowhere is the eye allowed to find repose. The action is played out in a wilderness against ruined architecture and amongst the debris and remains of conflict. Clouds race across the stormy sky, vegetation rustles in the wind, fabrics billow and animals pound the earth with their hooves. The monumental figure of Hercules in typical "contrapposto" pose is a representation of super human strength, violence and aggression. Hercules wields his weapon and the tyrant is slain. Diomedes lies prone, lifeless, seen in severe foreshortening with colour draining away. The hero overcomes adversity, the enemy is vanquished, retribution is exacted and the divine order prevails.

This type of mythological or historic subject had widespread currency and great appeal amongst the patrons of art in sevententh century Europe. In the royal and aristocratic courts and in the great institutions of church and state these images of classical mythology were frequently employed to serve a particular narrative. By means of such images, opponents and rivals were reminded that no challenge to authority could be contemplated and that overwhelming force and strength would overcome all opposition. Works of art such as this picture by Le Brun and countless others produced during the Baroque era served as reminders of a mythological past but also more significantly as reinforcement of a very real political present. These works served to celebrate authority and to warn those who would seek to subvert or to challenge that authority.

A brief survey of the life and works of Charles Le Brun would lead one to suppose that his entire career as an artist might be (conveniently and superficially) summarised by the description "Classicism and Academicism in the service of Absolutism" and of course this description could equally well apply to the careers of many great artists of the period. For the present day museum visitor however when contemplating a picture such as "Hercules" perhaps thoughts of classical antiquity, seventeenth century European politics or even the significance of patronage in an autocratic age are not uppermost in one's thoughts. What captures the attention and fires the imagination is the ambition of the compositional idea and the conviction of the draughtsmanship, which brings me back to the life class …….!

DWM



By kind permission from the collection of Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery

Jim Brown – A personal obse

. . . by Gordon Dryden

Jim was born on November 28th 1945, in Bootle, where he followed in his father's footsteps, working in Liverpool docks from 1971 until 1984.

All that can be stated with certainty about this period is that he undertook numerous training courses, moving into skilled jobs in the docks, was an active trades unionist and Socialist and a keen Everton supporter. When he left the docks, he remained in Liverpool for a further six years where he became increasingly committed to working as an artist.

In 1987 he undertook a pre-diploma course at Liverpool City College, which included a GCSE in Critical Studies in Art and, and an Advanced level GCSE in Art. This was followed in 1988-89 by a Foundation course at Liverpool Polytechnic and a move in 1990 to Loughborough where he began a degree course in Fine Art. Some of the work from his student days at Loughborough is in the NSofA online catalogue and shows the impressive technical skill, developed at a time when colleges tended to downplay technical ability, especially life drawing. At the end of the course Jim was one of several Art students at Loughborough who founded the Artspace group that continues to meet over twenty years later.

Despite his involvement in Artspace and the Nottingham Society of Artists, Jim remained a very private person. He would arrive a bit late for morning sessions at the NSofA studio, quietly set up an easel and, in what was barely over an hour, he produced the works that are shown on the Society's website. His lateness for morning sessions was a result of the restriction placed on senior citizens' bus passes that meant starting out from Loughborough after 9:30 rather than a casual attitude to the work in the studio. Even in the limited time available he followed a disciplined approach to his work, measuring, establishing the composition and then working freely into the drawing. The results imply a freedom that belies the underlying discipline. He attended groups at the NSofA in the time left available from his part time work as a litter picker in East Leake where he was a popular character and where there are plans to hold an exhibition of his work in addition to the exhibition in our gallery

He was sociable and happy to talk to colleagues during coffee breaks and, although he concentrated intensely on his drawing during work periods, this didn't stop him humming along to the music from the radio. He was a keen and knowledgeable classical music lover. He was also a keen walker along the footpaths around Loughborough's surrounding villages and woodlands and in the Peak District and Lake District. He invariably took small notebooks that he filled with sketches, presumably as a matter of practice since he rarely attempted landscape painting.



Jim was a reflective person who thought at length about Art and Politics, the main topics of our conversations on the drive back to Loughborough from Nottingham after the Big Picture Group. He was a committed socialist with a deep loathing of Thatcher and an equally deep contempt for Blair but this didn't displace his enthusiasm for Everton. Despite his political views he bought the Daily Mail because it had better football coverage. It is no surprise then that his highest regard was for his fellow workers; not members of the NSofA but the models whom he regarded as co-workers in the business of life drawing and portraiture. The first group of people that he wanted to share his work with is the models who sat for his work and only then the friends he had made amongst members at the NSofA. This perspective is central to Jim's work. He made it clear that his work was about a culture that showed ordinary people and ordinary objects rather than producing objects for sale. Although much of his work is very attractive, he was resistant to exhibiting and gave away more work than he sold.

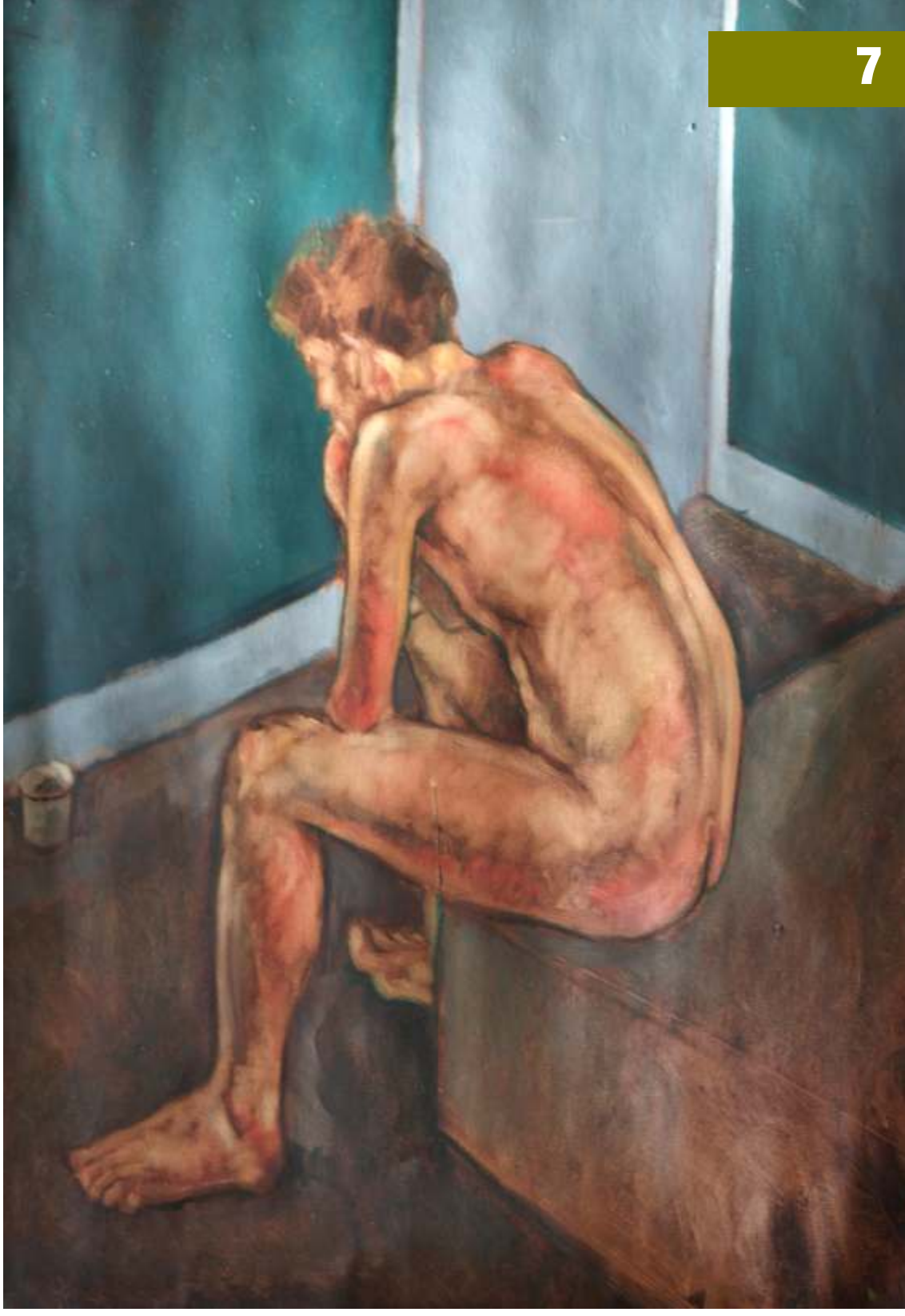
Gordon Dryden

A catalogue of Jim's work can be viewed on the NSofA website at:

nottinghamartists.org.uk/jbhome







A small selection from Jim's considerable backlog of drawings, pastels and paintings are shown on these pages and overleaf including a rare landscape (below)













Thanks Jim..!









Centenary Congratulations



In April this year Audrey Johnson celebrated her 100th birthday.

We send her our very best wishes for a very special occasion.

Audrey was the President of the NSA from 1986 to 1988, having joined the Society in 1967.

Older members will have lovely memories of her, a warm and witty lady with a ready smile for everyone. She provided some extremely funny anecdotes for the second edition of the **Very Joy of Art.** Anyone unfamiliar with the book is urged to have a look at Audrey's entry; it's very entertaining.

So, we hope that her special day brought her delight and once again we say,

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Arty Eating & Drinking on Your Doorstep

The only tea you get at our gallery is like builders in a bag.
What! You want something better? Where better you might say?

If you want to splash out without severe damage to your wallet, here are a few cafe/coffee houses within 5 minutes walk.



Cafe Sobar
Friendly laid-back atmosphere.
Good range tea/coffee and food. Great breakfast!.

Kitty Cafe
Feline entertainment while you drink! Coffee is around £2.50 and cake about £3. There is an entry charge (unless you are a kitty)





The Speciality Coffee Shop
Passionate about coffee - they're Italian! Great Brunch too..



Chocolate Utopia
Hand made chocolates and dreamy drinks from £2.80
- Difficult to resist…..

Tuckers
Excellent bacon & egg cob! Fast and cheerful, good value.

Costa
Always reliable

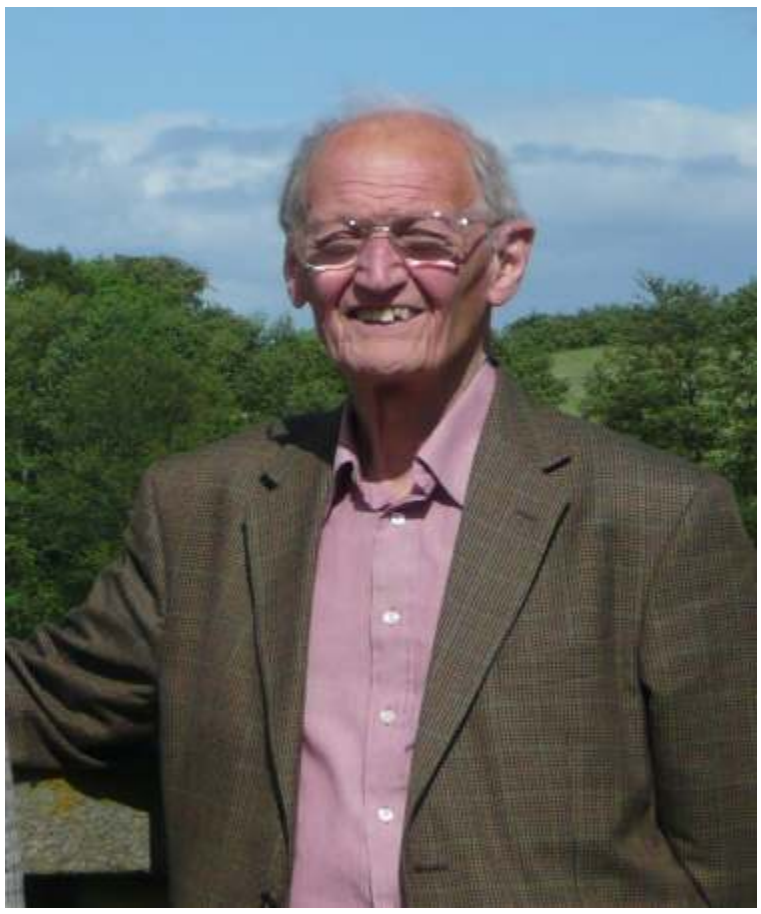




Nigel Corlett- man & chair

Nigel has been a member of the Society for twenty-three years, seventeen of them as a Fellow. During that time he has played an important role in its affairs. He was a member of the group that steered through our transformation to charitable status. This involved contacts with officialdom, including a trip to Liverpool to meet with the Charity Commissioners. Once we had achieved charitable status he became one of the original Trustees.

In 1998 he started our first in-house magazine, which many of you will remember. 'The Bulletin' was a quarterly publication, edited and produced by Nigel until 2005, after which new editors ensured that it ran until summer 2015. Its legacy is our splendid new magazine 'OurArt'.



Many members are familiar with the history of the first hundred years of the Society because of the book 'For the Very Joy of Art'. It covers the period 1880-1980. Nigel proposed that a second edition should be published, to be a thirty-year update covering the period 1980-2010, when our 130th anniversary was celebrated. This was recognised as being a very good idea, so he set about making it happen; obtaining permission from the copyright holders of the original book, then writing, editing and publishing it. The result makes a fascinating read.

All this activity has followed an immensely interesting and varied professional life which included the posts of Professor of Industrial Ergonomics at Birmingham University, Professor of Production Engineering at Nottingham University, Visiting Professor at the Universities of Toronto, Canada, and Massachusetts, Amherst and Purdue USA.

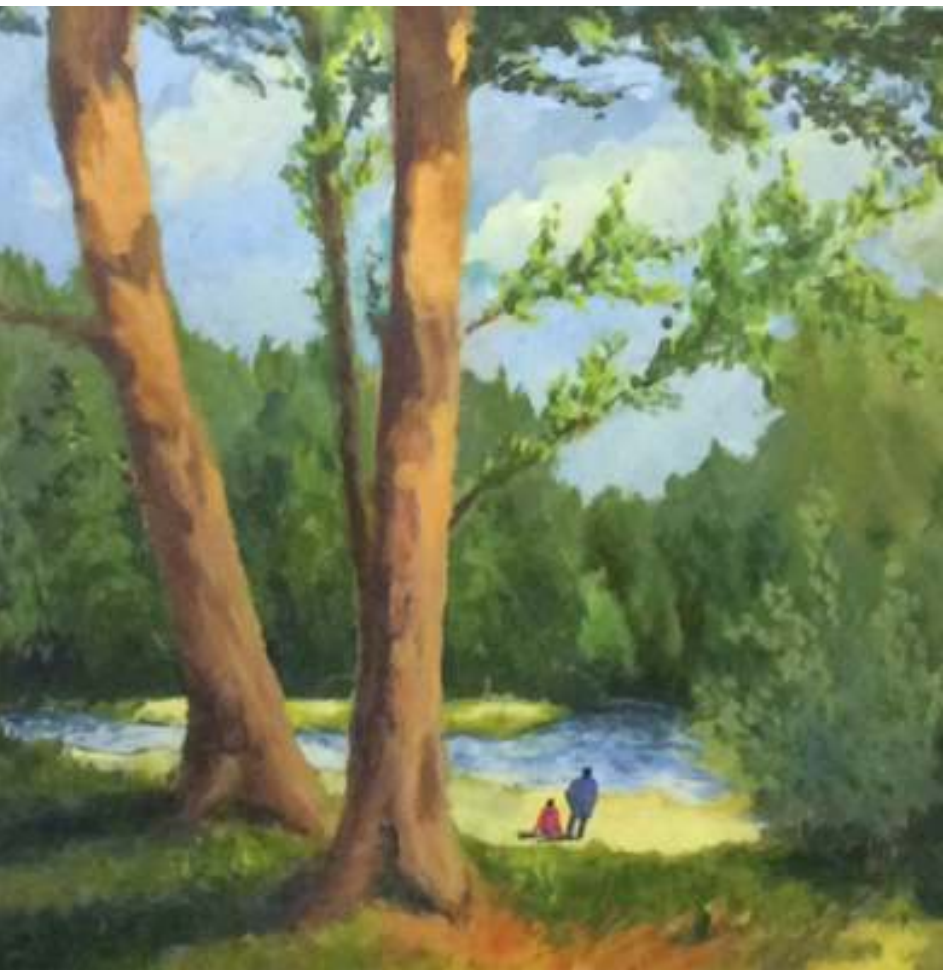
Can you start us at the beginning, Nigel, and tell us about your early life.

I was born in Great Yarmouth, the younger of two boys. My father, who was a schoolmaster, was always interested in art. My brother had a real talent for it and went to an art school in his teens. I was interested, for sure, but was much more technically minded, so in 1939 I started my first job in the drawing office at Armstrong Siddelly in Coventry. The war had started, of course, and the factory was heavily involved in making torpedo engines. In the great blitz of the city, the factory, along with many other buildings, was completely flattened.

A carpet factory in Halifax was commandeered and a small group of employees, including me, went up there and got the place up and running as a torpedo-engine production plant.

Throughout all this, I was keen to get into the forces, but wasn't called up because I was in what was called a Reserved Occupation. I managed it, though, by calling into a recruiting office one day, where they were advertising for people to join the RAF. It was a three-storey building; the Air Force on the top floor, the Navy in the middle and the Army at the bottom. I went to the top floor first as I really wanted to fly. However, when they heard my stammer they politely told me that they couldn't accept me. I went down a floor to the Navy and fully expected the same response. However, either they didn't notice the stammer or, to them, it didn't matter, but the happy result was that I went in a civilian and came out a member of the Fleet Air Arm.

I was in uniform from 1943 to 1945, retiring properly from the forces in 1946.





'THE' chair

So how did you move from there to the academic side?

At the end of my wartime service I was asked what I'd like to do next and I said I'd like to do an engineering degree. Loughborough College, as it was then, was affiliated to London University and offered such a course. So I went there for three years and got my first degree in Mechanical Engineering.

My first job after that was with a washing machine company called Servis. It was a British company and I was developing designs for new machines.

The company was very successful and was exporting to Australia. It was decided, eventually, that it would be much cheaper to export only the internal workings and have the carcasses made and the machines assembled in Australia. So I went out and spent ten months there, setting up a factory.

I was with the company for nine years, becoming Head of Design and Development.

From there I went to Birmingham University as a lecturer in Mechanical Engineering.

I'd become more and more interested in trying to connect people on the Arts side with those in the Sciences, so I proposed and set up a



course linking the two. This hadn't been tried before and it proved really successful.

By this time I'd met and married Elaine. She saw an advertisement for someone to do a three- year research project on a subject of their own choosing. I got the job and was able to study, in depth, the integration of people into industrial management, which had interested me for a long time.

The work I did here became the basis for what eventually became part of a degree course I set up in ergonomics. It was, in fact, the first M SC course in the UK and linked ergonomics, work organisation and industrial applications.

***What exactly is ergonomics*?**

In a nutshell, it's a scientific discipline concerned with understanding the interactions of people with other elements in a system. It applies theory and principles of good design to optimise people's well-being and overall performance at work. (In America it's known as Human Factors.)

When you headed the department at Nottingham University you designed The Nottingham Chair. Can you tell us something about it?

Its purpose was as a working seat for offices, schools, factories and other business places like checkout stations. The design was based on what happens to the human anatomy when we sit down. Its unique feature is the curved surface, which allows well-supported sitting, with clearance for the thighs and the retention of the lumbar curve.

A London furniture company, making office seating, was interested in the chair as a commercial venture. Because it had many features enabling it to be adjusted to the sitter's individual requirements, it was more expensive than others in the store so, after the initial run, no more were made. I have the last one of the line, given as a gift by the manufacturer.

In all this time had you been doing any painting?

I'd always done a bit whenever I could, but it was only when I retired and joined the NSA that I picked it up properly.

I used watercolour and oils and enjoyed doing landscapes, portraits and still life. For about ten years I shared a studio on Fern Avenue in Sherwood with four friends; we called it the Atelier Fern. It was a good time for us all and we got lots of work done. Sometimes we would be there alone. On those occasions I'd try my hand at self-portraits and I was pleased with some of the results.

Some years ago we moved into a smaller house and I had a studio built as an annexe, not quite the Atelier Fern, but it suits me nicely.

Are there any particular artists that inspire you or whose work you particularly like?

Not really; there's actually something to learn from everyone. I admire their skill and effort.

Nigel celebrated his 95th birthday on Christmas Eve. What a milestone after such a fascinating life, which has not lacked his own skill and effort. He has been extraordinarily busy and productive and retains a keen interest in people, politics and ideas. The Society has been enriched by his contribution over the years.

Thank you Nigel and many more Happy Birthdays! MC

(If you are interested in buying For The Very Joy of Art, it's easily available by visiting out website and clicking on the links.)





What can you do?

Do you have a skill, a knowledge or some experience that might be of benefit to the society?
Short term, long term, shared with someone else or in a team! **We need**

- Someone to help bring in advertising or sponsorship for the Society's magazine **OurArt**.
- People to contribute or write articles for the magazine (especially stories and pictures from **your** group!)
- We need someone to take on the role of researching and processing grant applications.
- We always need volunteers for DIY work and we will definitely need a working party for the Basement clearing and refurbishing. (Urgent)
- Help with exhibitions - teams to be responsible for hanging and publicity.
- Someone to organise any catering requirements.

Or maybe you have some other expertise or interest that would help in the smooth running of the society?

Please talk to Alan Gardner or a member of the Board. Get involved!

Coming up..

MAY

Rufford Art Society
1 May - 6 May

Make Colours Sing
8 May - 13 May

NSofA Spring Exhibition
16 May - 27 May

Nottm. Trent University - Degree Show
29 May - 10 June

JUNE

NSofA Studio Groups Exhibition
20 June - 1 July

JULY

Schools Exhibition
18 July - 22 July (Dates to be confirmed)

Charity Exhibition
25 July - 29 July (Dates to be confirmed)

AUGUST

In8 Group
27 Aug - 2 Sept

SEPT

Illusion - Ala Bashir
4 Sept - 9 Sept

OCTOBER

NSofA Autumn Exhibition
17 Oct - 28 Oct

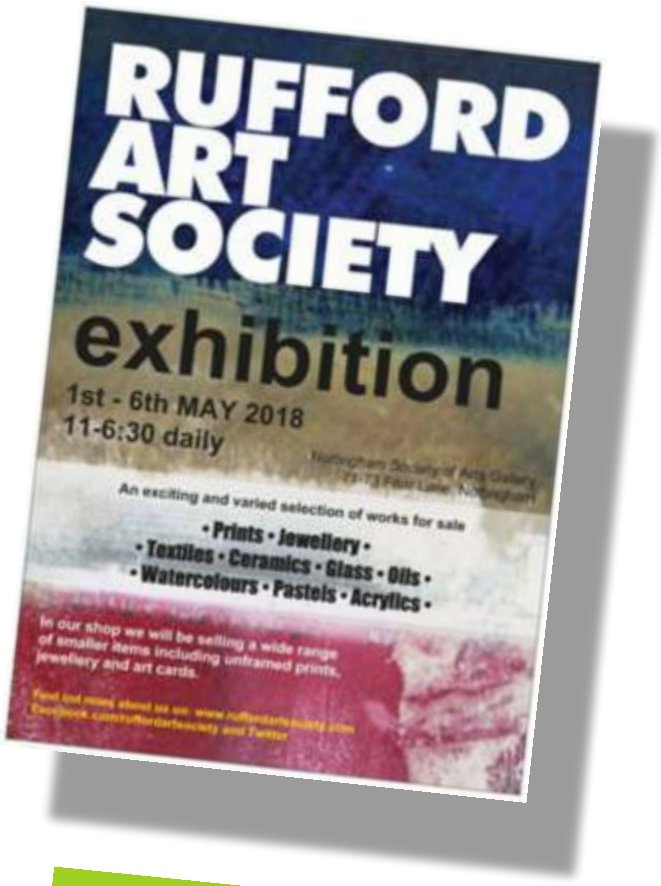
NOVEMBER

David Ross Abstractions
6 Nov - 18 Nov

Shooqi Atrabi
20 Nov - 2 Dec

DECEMBER

NSofA Small Pictures Exhibition
4 Dec - 16 Dec







Gallery Rental

Our gallery is open all year round, the studios are used daily and most evenings

The main gallery is available for exhibitions from £60 a day. Facilities include a kitchen and cloakroom. The lighting is excellent.

Education & Studio

Available for courses, exhibitions and meetings. £40 a session. Facilities include a kitchen and cloakroom. There is a screen and digital projector available.

Outreach gallery

Chapel Gallery

Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum
Good size gallery giving exhibition space to 3 artists for 3 monthly periods. Some NSofA stewarding required.

Join us

Membership is open to all aged 18 and over. There are Sponsors and Supporters, Members and Fellows. All receive event invitations, this magazine and website access.

Members can have painting membership and exhibition membership.

Join online
www.nottinghamartists.org.uk/join
or by telephoning 0115 948 0476

ourart4

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