

Pilton Arts Group

Newsletter, Summer 2017

Here we are in the middle of July, with another year speeding past. The Summer weather seems to me to have alternated between steaming hot and that driving Devon drizzle that mists up one's glasses and generally makes the world look a bit miserable.

Once again it looks as though I shall fail to get outside into the country to paint, although we did visit Guernsey in June and do a couple of watercolours.

Membership

The declining membership continues to be worrying, 48 active members and 9 life members at the last count. Various forms of sickness, ill health or injury have struck down many of our number recently, largely because we are all in that age bracket.

Sandra has been off with a broken bone in her foot; Jacqui Brown has resigned with health and problems with other commitments; Megumi has just returned after a long illness, the list goes on and on.

Colin Newton has had to resign from the committee, and we shall miss him dreadfully as he has been our building manager for years, knows the building inside out and all of the tradesmen who keep it up to scratch for us. Colin has assured me that he will act as consultant on any problems for as long as he is able, which will be very welcome.

Geraldine Ashford has very kindly taken over from Heather as Membership Secretary, as well as continuing in the Company Secretary role.

Unfortunately the business of managing the organisation does not decrease as the membership decreases!

Your committee has started to address how we might reverse this trend, which will undoubtedly require some innovative thinking and maybe some changes in the way that we operate. Ideas and suggestions are always welcome, so please do not hesitate to bring them to our attention.

Subscriptions will be due at the beginning of September, and Geraldine will be sending out notices shortly. Please note that if you currently pay by standing order, or wish to do so, we have changed banks and you will need to contact Sandra for the bank details (we are reluctant to publicise them through the newsletter)

Money

After 3 years of extensive maintenance on the exterior of the building, costing a total in excess of £13,250, our bank balance has slipped from £11,900 down to around £5,300. This is about as low as we can safely let it go, although we do have savings of £13,600 to call on in a real emergency.

On becoming a limited company last year, Lloyds were not prepared to set up a free banking account with us, and Sandra has spent a full year in transferring all of our accounts to National Westminster. What a job that turned out to be!

Thankfully all are now up and running.

We are now looking for several years without any major spend on building repairs to get our bank balance up into the healthy region again, but with costs increasing on just about everything, the committee considered it essential that we increase the subscription to £25 from September.

The Building.

Bearing in mind the comments above, there are no major building works planned. However, for some time members have complained about the existing gas heaters, which run off bottled gas, and are sometimes difficult to operate, can smell of gas, and are expensive to run. They are 30 years old and spare parts are no longer readily available. We would like to address these problems

We consulted the manufacturers of the current system and it transpires that there are modern form and fit replacements that run off natural gas, these would not require any building modification apart from a new gas feed. All up cost was estimated to be £4,500.

In view of our financial position, we decided to approach charitable Trusts for a grant towards this expenditure and applied for a grant from the Bridge Trust in January this year.

I had just about abandoned hope, when a cheque came through for £1000 in early July. Good news and bad news! We had a grant, but still have £3,500 to go.

It has given us the incentive to continue to try to raise the required sum, and if anyone can recommend a possible source or contact who might be able to help, PLEASE let us know. Money raising is laborious and extremely time consuming and any help will be warmly welcomed.

Exhibitions.

With the complete refurbishment of the Countryside Centre in Braunton, the management were keen to hold an art exhibition to coincide with the formal reopening. Dickie Wakeford, God bless him, offered to liaise with the other groups involved, provide some of our stands, set it up, and generally organise the whole affair. Our ulterior motive being to hold a longer term exhibition in the Centre later in the year.

Dickie did all this magnificently with very little assistance, and it produced a nice, but small display of work by our members and some from other local groups.

This turned out to be a precursor for our main annual Green Man Day exhibition in the studio on 13th and 15th July. This was the first time that we had introduced a £5 per artist entry fee, and 10% commission on sales.

After a bit of cajoling we eventually hung 86 pictures (somewhat down on last year), but the studio looked magnificent thanks to the hard work by all those involved.

The preview evening was disappointing, certainly compared to last year, a relatively small number of people attending, almost outnumbered by members. However, on Green Man day itself, we were blessed with damp weather, that kept people off the beach and encouraged them to come indoors!

Over 300 people visited, and we sold £340 worth of paintings and cards. I am sure that all of those who exhibited work were justifiably proud of the overall display and their own contribution to it. Well done everyone!

Courses.

The series of member-lead courses is proceeding magnificently, those giving the tutorial have all worked hard to ensure that it met expectations, and those attending have all said how much it has been enjoyed.

Recently we have had portraits, watercolours, calligraphy, to name a few, and coming up we have pen & ink, and pastel.

Danny continues to come to us once a month, and the new format is that he gives a tutorial on a chosen subject, often linked to a practical exercise, followed by individual mentoring. If you have not been before, come along and learn from a true professional who will help you to see your work in a new light.

The next session is on **Friday August 11th** from 10:00am til 3:30pm, and the topic will be **“Composition” (Note the new date).**

Pauline Ralph hosted a painting day in her garden which was well attended and much enjoyed.

Enjoy your Summer holidays, and a sincere thank-you to all of you who work to make this a successful Arts Group.

David