

Clifton Arts Club
1906-2006

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History of the Clifton Arts Club 1906-2006

The Clifton Arts Club (CAC), founded in 1906, is one of the most prestigious in the West of England. The following brief history has been compiled from the Club archives and from researches in Bristol Reference Library.

The Club has a very good archive collection - programme cards extending back to 1906, minute-books going back to 1920 and a wonderful collection of log books made between the wars by Donald Hughes, Chairman of the Club for 40 years from 1928. These log books contain newspaper cuttings, programme cards and pastel sketches of speakers at Club meetings made by Donald Hughes. Further log books were compiled in the sixties and seventies by Marjorie Paterson, Secretary of the Club for 17 years. There is also a superb collection of photographs made by Bill Weaver, Chairman from 1978-88.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank John and Joan Dale for a great deal of help in the preparation of this booklet; Susan Bartlett for helping to bring this edition up to date; Mrs Betty Thomas for memories of Romilly Fedden; Mrs Violet Hughes for her vivid memories of the Club in the twenties; Eileen Hartly Hodder for her memories of the thirties; Francis Greenacre and Donald Jones for help with the centenary edition, and John Case for his help with the photographs.

Front cover.

"Clifton Arts Club members painting" by Beatrice Kerry. Oil. 24"x28". 1914.

1906-1923

The Clifton Arts Club was founded on the 1st April 1906 to further interest in the arts in Bristol. Although it was founded by painters and almost all of its early programmes were for painters, from the very beginning it was an "arts" club, with some events devoted to music, literature, and other arts.

The founders and many of the early members were professional artists and all four founders later became artist members of the Royal West of England Academy (RWA). From the beginning, the Club was particularly interested in modern French art. In 1906 this was very avant-garde indeed. The name "Post-Impressionism" had not yet been coined, and the Fauve exhibition had been held only the year before. Not many people in London knew the work of Cezanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin, painters who were certainly not known in Bristol.

The first President, Jacques-Emile Blanche was a fashionable French portrait painter, who was a friend of many of the Impressionists and of Walter Sickert, and had been a founder of the avant-garde Salon d'Automne in Paris, where the Fauve exhibition had been held.

Romilly Fedden, one of the founders, later said that the Club was "looked on in Clifton as rather 'modern'". From the beginning Club exhibitions contained some "advanced" pictures by members. Catherine Hughes RWA (Donald's sister) said in 1933, "before the Club was founded, Bristol had never heard of modern art".

The Four Founders would probably have been in their thirties in 1906:-

Miss Alice M Willway ARWA. The Club was her brainchild, the group originally meeting in her studio before 1906. "It was the chief interest in her life for 20 years" according to her nephew Philip Lace (who himself was a member for 63 years).

Miss Amy E Krauss RWA. She was Secretary of the Club for the first eight years and was on the Committee until 1924, when she moved to Dorset to set up a pottery. She was probably the most "modern" of all the early members. An exhibition of her pictures in 1914 was described in the press as "Post-Impressionist work in its milder form" (fig 2). She appears to have been a strong character, for Donald Hughes wrote of her "dynamic personality and strong and

positive painting." He said "she was looked on by some as a stormy petrel". When she left the Committee, the minutes record "her enthusiasm and high standard of efficiency together with her determination to move with the times made her of great value on a committee". In 1955 she was still alive though frail.

Romilly Fedden RWA RBA (1875-1939). (He was an uncle of Mary Fedden RA PPRWA, who was herself a member of the CAC from 1936-8 after coming down from the Slade [fig 11]). He studied at Herkomer's in Bushey, Herts and at the Académie Julien in Paris. He married Katherine Waldo Emerson, an American and lived mostly in France after the first war. In 1929 he was living near Paris and in the winter teaching watercolour on the Riviera. He wrote "*Golden Days - from the fishing log of a painter in Brittany*" about fly fishing in Brittany before the Great War and also "*Modern Watercolour*". In 1936 during the Spanish civil war, Romilly and his wife were crossing Spain by train. On the train were German mercenaries. The train was blown up, Romilly was killed and his wife badly injured. She was taken to a Spanish monastery where she also died. Their only child, Robin was Historic Buildings Secretary of the National Trust for 23 years and wrote "*Chantemesle*" describing life with his parents in France.

Miss Octavia Cox RWA. For many years she helped with the hanging of Club exhibitions, and was on the Committee from 1906 to 1933, when she was made Vice-President until she died in 1946.

The President

from 1906 till World War I was **Jacques-Emile Blanche** (1861-1942). He was a fashionable portrait painter and although French, was very fond of England and lived part of each year in both countries. According to a press report of a retrospective exhibition, he was a "friend of Proust, who he painted... 1895 painted Aubrey Beardsley (in National Portrait Gallery)... friend of Sickert... 1935 painted James Joyce. The intimate of D H Lawrence, Gide... in Manet's studio aged 21... painted Thomas Hardy... painting uncomplicated by the aesthetic revolution which took place during his lifetime." (So he did not himself paint in a modern manner). "His pictures make one think of long Edwardian summers... the charm of a gay, leisured, intelligent society". His parents were friends of Degas (fig 1) and Manet. Between the wars, Blanche became the recognised authenticator of Manet's work. At his house in Dieppe he gave hospitality to Renoir, Monet, Pissarro and Whistler. He taught at a studio in Paris which was attended by Duncan Grant and Henry Lamb. It is not known why he agreed to be the Club's first President. It is possible that one of the four founders attended his classes in Paris or Normandy, where there were many English students. ("*Portraits of a Lifetime*". Jacques-Emile Blanche. Dent. 1937)

The Chairman

from 1906-09 was **Henry Dare Bryan**, "an original and clever architect" (according to Donald Hughes), who was Artist Secretary of the Bristol Fine Arts Academy. He introduced the Arts & Crafts style to Bristol and designed Downleaze in 1891 as well as several houses in Downs Park East and West in 1905-6. In 1904 he designed Clevedon Pumping Station, and in 1905 he designed Western Theological College in Hampton Road in the Arts & Crafts style. He planned the alterations which were eventually made to the Fine Arts Academy in 1912, several years after his sudden death in 1909 aged 41.

The Chairmanship was taken over for the next twenty years by **Dr John S Griffiths DL**, a general practitioner. "Under his care the Club blossomed out" (Donald Hughes).

Venues

Between 1906 and 1910 meetings were held in the basement of **24 Richmond Terrace**, which according to Donald Hughes was "cosy though modest, with decorations suggesting a night club... The outer room was decorated in red with a black ceiling... So cosy were some of the corners of the Club and so seductive the sofas that there might have been some justification in changing the name to the Clifton Hearts Club".

In 1908 the Club's exhibition was held at the **Bristol Fine Arts Academy**. In 1913 this institution, after extensive rebuilding, was renamed the **Royal West of England Academy**. Thus began the Club's long association with the RWA, which has had many ups and downs over the years. From 1910 till 1912 the Club had permanent use of a room in the RWA. Between 1912 and 1913 the Club was homeless because of the rebuilding. In the plans for the rebuilding, originally made by Dare Bryan, the room in the basement, now occupied by ceramics, was labelled "Clifton Arts Club". From 1913 onwards it occupied this room and another in the basement of the RWA for all activities.

In 1920 the first signs of trouble appeared. In that year the Club's rooms in the RWA were sublet on certain days of the week to the newly-formed School of Architecture of the Bristol Society of Architects. The CAC made a profit because they paid the RWA less than the £65 they charged the architects. The RWA quickly put the CAC rent up to £75. Then the CAC found that "the woman" (as she was called in the minutes) had to do extra cleaning because of the activities of the architecture students. The architects were incensed at being asked to pay an extra 4/- a week for cleaning, as they said that the enormous rent they were paying the CAC was supposed to include cleaning. Later the architects wanted to put a bookcase in one of the rooms to house the architecture library. The CAC refused because they wanted the wall space for their exhibitions. Relations had so deteriorated that in January 1922 a letter was received from the RWA giving

the CAC two months notice to quit. The minutes record furious indignation. The Club called a Special General Meeting and appealed to the RWA Council, who let them stay a further three months and allowed them to hold their 1922 exhibition in the RWA side galleries, but after that the Club was compelled to leave.

The Programme

at first was slanted much more towards painting than to the other arts. There were spring, summer and autumn programmes, of sketching (from life or composition with a set subject), criticisms, talks and occasional musical events, all held on Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons. For the first few years, evening dress was worn at evening meetings, which were held from 8.30 to 10.30 pm. It would not have been considered proper in Clifton at that time to have dined any earlier than 7.30 pm. Clifton society was fairly snobbish, although the Club was relatively democratic, having "top people" (eg Henry Strachey and Lewis Fry) as well as working artists among its members.

The programme cards give a vivid picture of leisure activities among the middle classes in Edwardian days. There were "at homes", literary evenings, occasional theatricals, picnics, and country dancing. In 1908 there was a talk on Women's Suffrage (perhaps the influence of Amy Krauss). The 1914 summer programme included sketching at Chelvey Court "trains leave Temple Meads 1.33 & 2.32", and sketching at Hanham "by train or steamer from Bristol Bridge". After World War I, summer sketching outings seem to have been discontinued and were not started again until 1953.

Exhibitions

were arranged each year. Until 1926, exhibitions were only for those ordinary members who had been accepted by the Committee as exhibiting members, and for non-resident exhibiting members. To become an exhibiting member, people had to show some pictures to the Committee.

In every CAC exhibition at this time, as well as pictures by the exhibiting members, there were extra pictures on loan from various well-known painters. In 1928 Donald Hughes wrote to Romilly Fedden asking if he would loan some of his pictures for the 1929 exhibition. Romilly Fedden replied that he would be delighted for the Club to borrow some of his pictures, adding that (some time between 1906 & 1911) "I got together a really fine loan collection in Paris which when it came to Clifton was not at all approved of. The pictures that aroused most contempt were two nocturnes by **Whistler** and two charming little landscapes by **Claude Monet** and I was reproached on all sides for hanging such "daubs" when there was so much excellent local talent to draw on. Clifton was heart-breaking in those days." The press report of the Third Annual Exhibition in 1908 said: "When they held their first exhibition two years ago

they were content with their own rooms at Richmond Terrace. At that time their membership didn't warrant a more ambitious undertaking... They are now able to engage two rooms at the Fine Arts Academy... The exhibition will be opened by the Duchess of Beaufort... So far the history of the Club is one of progress... Bristol Art is being roused from a state of stagnation". The list of artists loaning pictures included **George Clausen** and **John Lavery**. There was a portrait by **Jacques-Emile Blanche**.

In June 1914, the Club really excelled itself. The **CAC Seventh Annual Exhibition** was held in two side galleries at the RWA and was joined by the First Bristol Exhibition of Modern French Art in the third side gallery. **Roger Fry** had brought Post-Impressionist pictures to Bristol. Roger Fry, painter and art critic, came from a Bristol family. ("*Roger Fry*". Frances Spalding. Granada. 1980). His father lived in Failand House, and his uncle, Sir Lewis Fry MP, in Goldney House in Clifton. His first cousin was Lewis Fry (junior) RWA RBA, a keen member of the CAC in its earlier days, who had hung the 1908 exhibition. Roger Fry is famous in the history of modern art for coining the name "Post-Impressionism" and for bringing the two Post-Impressionist exhibitions to London in 1910 and 1912 - the first time most people in Britain had seen modern French art. The Bristol exhibition was hung by Romilly Fedden. It included pictures by **Derain, Vlaminck, Marchand, L'Hote, Friez, Vanessa Bell** and **Duncan Grant**, and by the Scottish colourist **John Duncan Fergusson**. During the exhibition, Roger Fry gave a lecture "*The Modern Movement in Art*".

Post-Impressionism had caused a furore in London, so the effect on Bristol can be imagined. The press cuttings at the time make interesting reading:- "Doing violence to Clifton's good taste". "The collection of members' work was greatly admired, though the Post-Impressionist work caused more surprise and wonderment than admiration". "That it has received any recognition in a sane art world is to be wondered at". "Can the word art be applied to those multicoloured masses of ghastly abortions apparently produced by the erratic wanderings of a paint brush dipped at random in one vivid colour after another?" "Whether the nightmare of colours and the eerie puzzling subjects will find many admirers is another matter". There was one more favourable comment - "Considerable discussion has been evoked by the courage of the Clifton Arts Club in the inclusion of work by Post-Impressionists." According to Donald Hughes "one of Fergusson's pictures - some dancing nudes of ampler girth than is usual in such subjects - shocked some who saw it... it was moved in disgrace to our premises below, where crowds flocked to use their own judgement about it".

In 1917 as well as the annual exhibition of paintings, there was held in December an exhibition of **arts and crafts** and thereafter this continued every year. It usually included contributions from outside bodies, such as The Wye Valley Weavers. In fact crafts seemed to have played a large part in the life of the

Club between the wars. In 1921 the disabled soldiers in Ashton Court were invited to contribute to the craft exhibition. Between 1918 and 1938 there was an exhibition of framed pictures every spring, of unframed sketches every autumn, and of arts and crafts every November.

At the 1922 spring exhibition, the invited loan exhibition included works by **Augustus John, Stanley Spencer, John Fergusson, John and Paul Nash, and Wyndham Lewis**. A member resigned "because she objects to the sort of picture we are having down from London this year".

Constitution

Although in the archives there is no constitution earlier than the 1928 one, it is probable that the original constitution was similar, with two black balls excluding from membership, possibly also with the same subscriptions - ordinary members: one guinea, and non-resident members: 10/6, with an extra entry fee of 10/6 on joining. One guinea would have been about £35 in 2006 money. There were also honorary members.

The number of members

in 1906 was about 50. The exhibiting members were mostly professional for in 1914, of 77 artist (presumably exhibiting) members, ten were RWAs, eight were ARWAs, two were RWSs, one RI and one NEAC. There were slightly more men than women, so the excess of women after World War I had not then occurred. In 1923 there were 163 ordinary and 22 non-resident members, so the 1914 war did not seem to have affected the total number.

Some members:

Marjorie Watson-Williams (of the family of the ear, nose and throat surgeons) studied at Bristol Municipal School of Art 1909-12, and then in London, where she became an illustrator. She went in 1926 to Paris, where she joined the Group Abstract-Creation and became famous painting under the name of Paule Vézelay (after the French town whose church she admired). For four years she lived with the surrealist painter **Andre Masson**, until he became too violent. She was a friend of **Arp** (whose work she influenced), **Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Miro, and Paul Nash**. Her work, which was by then entirely abstract, was much admired by French critics (fig 3). Apart from Jacques-Emile Blanche, she is the only member of the CAC mentioned in the *Encyclopaedia of Art*. She was a member of the London Group, President of Groupe Espace in Britain, and exhibited in international exhibitions all over the world. She is better known in France than in Britain. Just before she died in 1984 she had a

retrospective exhibition at the Tate Gallery and she appeared in a television programme ("*Women of our Century*". Leonie Caldecott. Ariel. 1984).

Beatrice Kerry was a founder member. The Club owned two charming pictures painted by her of CAC members painting about 1914. - One was given by the CAC to the RWA; the other is still owned by the Club. It shows five girls in overalls down to their ankles painting at easels similar to old blackboard easels (see front cover).

Henry Strachey studied at the Slade and was art critic of the Spectator from 1896 till 1922. He hung the 1922 and 1923 CAC exhibitions. He lived at Clutton and so probably came from the Strachey family of nearby Sutton Court (Lytton Strachey's family).

Norman Garstin RBCS and his daughter **Alethea Garstin RWA** both exhibited in the 1914 exhibition, and so must have been exhibiting members, although according to the catalogue of the retrospective exhibition of their pictures held in 1978, they do not seem to have exhibited in any other CAC exhibitions. They were well-known impressionists, who lived in Cornwall.

Mrs Abigail Macready Chute and her son Desmond. Mrs Chute was descended from the Victorian actor-manager William Macready. She was the powerful manager of the Prince's Theatre in Bristol. **Desmond Macready Chute** (1895-1961), brilliant, spoiled, delicate, Catholic, charming, enigmatic, neurotic, had been briefly to the Slade, but in 1914 returned to Bristol. "One of the cleverest young artists who belonged to the Club" (Donald Hughes). In 1915 he befriended **Stanley Spencer** who spent nine months as an RAMC orderly at Fishponds Mental Hospital, which had been turned into Beaufort Army Hospital (now Glenside). Desmond took Stanley Spencer to his home and to an at home where Mrs Daniell and her daughter sang. This may have been at the CAC, for Mrs Daniell organised the music at the CAC. In 1918 Chute joined **Eric Gill's** community at Ditchling and became Gill's greatest friend. In 1927 he was ordained as a Catholic priest and spent the rest of his life in Rapallo. "An Aubrey Beardsley figure, tall, languid, aesthetic."

Doris Hatt RWA was a student at the Royal College of Art and in Vienna. She later lived in Swiss Valley, Clevedon in a house (Littlemead) which she designed herself in 1922. Albert Ruthersten said that her work stood out from the rest of the CAC as an artist of distinction (fig 4). She was internationally known, with one-man shows in the RWA, London, Paris and the USA. She was a CAC member for 45 years from 1920 and died in 1969. The Club owned two of her pictures. One was given to the RWA and the other sold.

1923-1938

This covers the period when the Club leased rooms in Charlotte Street. The premises were used for all CAC exhibitions and the activities of the Club increased enormously, particularly on the dramatic side. In fact drama gradually took over from painting as the chief activity of the Club. The number of members also increased greatly reaching 288 in 1931. The Clifton Arts Club was dubbed by the press "the Latin Quarter of Bristol". It is extraordinary that although these years are often looked on as the Club's heyday, the Club was in financial difficulties during the whole of this period and twice almost closed down because of this.

The President

from 1928 to 1959 was **Joseph E Barton MA** 1875-1959, known as "JE", Headmaster of Bristol Grammar School for 21 years. He wrote several books and in 1932 he gave a series of talks on modern art for the BBC. According to the press his "wit and fecundity of imagination... opened windows of the mind"; "a virile speaker"; "the best after dinner speaker in Bristol". He gave many lectures on art to the CAC, including several series of lectures open to the public.

The Chairman

from 1928 till 1968 was **Donald Hughes RWA**, (1881-1970), painter (chiefly in pastel), poet, and actor, who held many one-man shows of his paintings (fig 14). He was a larger-than-life character, who had attended Club meetings since the Richmond Terrace days. He was an estate agent in the family firm started by his grandfather. He published various collections of his (mostly comic) verse, such as "*Birdsworth*" (which is in the CAC archives). Like his successor, Bill Weaver, he did cartoons. Violet Hughes (no relation) describes him as wearing plus-fours made of tweed woven by his sister Margaret. He was a witty speaker and his talks as well as his verse contained frequent puns. The transcription of a talk he gave in 1929 on the history of the Club is in the archives. It is full of puns. He ran the Club for 40 years and kept it going during

the difficult period of the war. The press said "he has long waved a magic wand of personality over the Club. Its lively and adventurous character owes much to his benign guidance" and "he is one of the leading spirits in this community of Bohemians". He died in 1970 and left £500 to the Club. A model's chair and an anglepoise lamp were bought with the money. The Club also received a picture by Donald in his memory.

The Secretary

from 1923 to 1929 was **Miss Methven Brownlee**, a professional photographer. The press said "Miss Brownlee has an arresting personality and is usually seen wearing a flowing green cloak." Violet Hughes recalls that she usually also wore a wide-brimmed black hat and had been a suffragette. She was a keen member of the dramatic section, and was on the Committee for the whole time the Club was in Charlotte Street. She died of burns after catching her clothes on an electric fire. On the way to the hospital she said that it was the first time she had been warm that winter.

In 1929 the Secretaries were **Norman Skelhorn** (later Director of Public Prosecutions) helped by **Daphne Pearson**, who was later the first woman to receive the George Cross. In 1940 she was a corporal on the medical staff at RAF Detling. A bomber burst into flames on landing. Daphne plunged through a fence, nettles and a ditch, and reached the pilot on board and he told her that the plane was carrying its full bomb-load. She managed to pull him clear of the wreckage before the petrol tanks exploded, when she covered his body with hers and covered his head with her steel helmet. After he had been put in an ambulance, she went back to the plane, despite further explosions, only to find the wireless operator dead. This was reported by Winston Churchill to the House of Commons. Daphne was awarded the Empire Gallantry medal, which in 1940 was changed into the newly-instituted George Cross. She was painted by Laura Knight, and in 1959 went to Australia. Her name is on a memorial in the RAF church in the Strand. She died in Australia in 2000.

An American poet, **Dr Walter Peck PhD**, was responsible in nine months of 1931 for a curious interlude in the Club's history. He became Secretary of the Club (with an honorarium) in January 1931 and Hon. Chairman of the Library Section, which he started. He also instituted poetry reading and a poetry class. Then he formed "The West of England Academy of Dramatic Art and Literature" to be held in one of the Club rooms in Charlotte Street. In the elaborate prospectus many of the Club members, such as Cyril and Nora Roberts, Barry Thatcher and Rex Hopes, are listed as Lecturers in the "Faculty". There is an extensive description of the curriculum of the two-year course.

There is no indication as to whether any of the courses ever actually took place for by October 1931, when the third term is supposed to have started, Dr Peck had returned to America. Did Walter Peck abscond with the students' fees? Marjorie Paterson called this "The Grand Deception" and Philip Lace felt that this adventure greatly exacerbated the Club's difficult financial position.

From 1932 to 1940 the Secretary was **Hope Hughes**, Donald's wife, who was wise, witty, kind and altogether a lovely person. They were married for 40 years until she died tragically in 1951 just after returning from a trip round the world with Donald. The funeral tribute is in the Club archives - "after braving the dangers of travel by land, sea and air and arriving safely home, Hope meets her death while engaged in dusting a room." She was shaking a mat out of the window of their house in Berkeley Square and fell out to her death.

Venues

For one season - 1922 to 1923 - the Club were temporarily housed in the studio of Miss Kathleen Chivers (known as "Chip") in **79a Park Street**. Then, in August 1923 the Club moved into **17/18 Charlotte Street** and the "heyday" of the Club began. Number 17/18 was on the corner of Charlotte Street and Park Street on the same side as St George's Church. The CAC's rooms were over number 71 Park Street which in the 1990s is the site of a book shop. The CAC had a large room with a stage, a smaller room and a kitchen, the rooms being entered up some steps from a door in Charlotte Street.

The Club soon settled in, various members providing a bookcase, cushions, a poker, tongs, and an inkstand. Amy Krauss had lived there since 1921. Miss Brownlee, the professional photographer and Club secretary, had her flat and photographic studio on the top two floors.

Further up Charlotte Street, in the same building was **Douglas Cleverdon's** antiquarian bookshop. He started the shop in 1927 on coming down from Oxford, and he was later a publisher and broadcaster. He became a keen member of the CAC. The signs on the shop were painted by his friends **Roger Fry** and **Eric Gill**. That painted by Eric Gill became famous in the history of typography, for it was done in his new sans serif lettering. Douglas Cleverdon was a favourite nude model of Eric Gill's until Cleverdon's mistress put a stop to this. Eric Gill often stayed with Douglas Cleverdon in the flat he rented from Methven Brownlee. The shop and Miss Brownlee's studio became a regular meeting place for a group of young intellectual CAC members ("*Eric Gill*". Fiona MacCarthy. Faber. 1989).

Programme

On moving into the Charlotte Street premises, the Club started many new activities, giving a wonderful glimpse of middle class leisure between the wars. There were several separate sections, each with its own secretary and sub-committee. The **Artists Section** organised twice-weekly life classes and the exhibitions. The **Craft Section** arranged the Craft exhibitions. The **Dramatic Section** produced frequent plays and introduced classes in drama and play-writing. Later, play-reading was made into a separate section. The **Music Section** organised many concerts, mostly of chamber music and singing, but at one time there was a CAC orchestra and choir. For a short time there was a **Dancing Section** with weekly ballroom dancing to a band. The same modern outlook shown by the painters was also found among these other groups - there was a wide range of styles in music and plays, some of which were very modern.

On the **social side**, there were At Homes on Saturday afternoons with different members acting as hostesses. During these there were many different activities - ping-pong contests, whist drives, pencil games, community singing, progressive lexicon, a demonstration of eurythmics. The Club acquired a darts board "for Wednesday evenings". Other social events included a Halloween party, May Day Revel, Fancy Dress parties, an Old World Tea with candles and guests in 18th century costume. There was a char-a-banc trip to Stratford, which was enthusiastically enjoyed.

The Club put on **cabaret shows** and revues, which were open to the public and ran for several nights. "Between the wars burlesque pantomimes were features of the social life of Clifton" (fig 7). In 1928 the Dramatic section broadcast on the **BBC** a programme of sketches, songs and verse written and performed by Club members, called "Clifton Arts Club Hour". A picture of the Club rooms appeared in the Radio Times. This must have been a success for the Club was asked to broadcast on three more occasions in the next few years. Although not specifically under the aegis of the Club, several Club members used to broadcast regularly - the President J E Barton gave talks on modern art; Alec Cranfield Abbott acted in radio plays in the twenties and thirties; Douglas Cleverdon gave talks at least until the fifties; Vivian Ogilvie, Club Chairman and President in the fifties, was a professional broadcaster; and Janet MacNeill wrote radio plays broadcast in the sixties.

In 1929 Mr Barton brought 100 modern pictures (some were reproductions) to the Club and gave a lecture on them, a cause of great interest since at that time most people had no access to modern art in books or exhibitions. Famous visitors included **W B Yeats**, who read his poems and answered questions; **Walter de la Mare**, who came to a Saturday tea; and **Horace Annesley Vachell**, who presented the Dramatic Contest trophy.

Perhaps someone in the Club had contacts with the Bristol press (possibly Bob Bennet, who was an Evening Post cartoonist as well as a Club member), for between the wars the Club had an enormous amount of coverage in the local press. Not only photographs and reports of plays and exhibitions, but reports of talks and even of future programmes, were all in at least three local papers - the Evening Post, the Evening World and the Western Daily Press.

Yearly from 1930 to 1939 and in 1944, booklets of poems were published - "*Songs from the Ship and Castle*" by Donald Hughes, Rex Hopes, and other Club members. There were (presumably solicited) testimonials from **John Masefield** and **Edmund Blunden** for these. Copies of these are in the archives.

Between 1926 and 1938 the Club ran the **Dramatic Contest** - an international one-act play competition. According to T H Hitchings - "entries from all over the world were judged in actual production in the Club's own theatre in Charlotte Street by eminent figures in the theatre world." For instance in the 1934 Dramatic contest, 72 plays were entered, and nine plays were actually acted, some by the CAC and some by local groups. In 1934 the Club bought a figure in ebony made by a member, Miss Rhoda Nott, to give as the trophy for the Dramatic Contest. This "Oscar" is still among the Club's possessions.

The Dramatic Section produced frequent plays apart from the contest; for instance in 1930, 24 plays were produced, 17 written by Club members. The Dramatic Section must have been accomplished, because they won many drama competitions. At Welwyn Drama Festival they won the cup three times in five years. In 1935 the Club won the divisional final of the British Drama League and went through to the national final, where they obtained third place with a silver cup. In 1931 a play written by a member was produced at the Little Theatre, and a play written by another member was produced in London after first being produced by the CAC.

There was something magical about the Charlotte Street era. Everyone looked back on it with enormous fondness. **Violet Hughes**, who was a member as a young girl from 1923 to 1930, said that after she joined she gave up all other activities and went to the Clifton Arts Club almost every day. Although she had moved house ten times since, she had never thrown away her mementoes of the Club. She was a member of Douglas Cleverdon's "gang", and also a member of a dance troupe - The Puppets - and still had part of her costume. She recalled a "studio rag" one New Year's Eve, when afterwards they all went dancing around the top of Park Street singing Auld Lang Syne, wearing the flimsiest of clothes on a freezing night. They felt they were Bristol's answer to the Chelsea Arts Ball. Violet Hughes bequeathed her CAC scrapbook to the Club, as well as some woodcuts by Doris Hatt, which the Club has given to Bristol City Art Gallery.

Craft Exhibitions

Descriptions of these give a strong flavour of the twenties and thirties. For example in 1928 there were artificial flowers, painted glass and china, enamels, bookbinding, an illuminated manuscript, linocuts, etchings, pottery, and in 1931 embroideries, fur craft, lingerie, leather work, painted woodwork, pewter, weaving and woodcuts. The Secretary of the Craft Section for 20 years between the wars was **Miss Edith Harding**. Donald Hughes said of her "her energies are immense... she turns fish bones into chic hat ornaments (cod's heads preferred) and limpet shells into hollyhocks". Another year the press reported that she had exhibited "models of Belgian peasants with faces cleverly carved out of chestnuts, ashtrays made from shells picked up in Cornwall, kettle stands made from horse shoes, pewter brooches set with old stones, and hat ornaments made from coloured stones collected from the sea shore with leaves to match".

Miss Harding was also famous for making large "arty" dangling earrings. She had been awarded a medal at the Brussels exhibition of 1910. She later became Vice-President and died in 1960, leaving the Club £100.

Exhibitions of paintings

seem from photographs to have been rather crowded in the Charlotte Street rooms. About 170 pictures were usually hung. In 1925 and 1926 the loan exhibitions included pictures by **Paul and John Nash, Cedric Morris, J D Fergusson, Robert Bevan, Winifred Nicholson, and Christopher Wood**. The press talked of "strong criticism because of their advanced and futurist nature." There were no loan exhibitions after 1930. In 1932 Douglas Cleverdon put up an exhibition of reproductions of modern art in the Club. There were some scathing newspaper reports. There were still "modern" painters among the Club members, for at the 1936 exhibition the press reported "there are the usual number of grotesque productions, which may be clever, but do not strike one as likely to become valued decorations in anyone's house". Later in the thirties the Club arranged exhibitions of Russian and then of Indian arts, and the press said "Clifton Arts Club is fast becoming to Bristol what Burlington House claims to be for London - a centre for loan exhibitions of representative art from various quarters of the globe."

Members

The "vetting" of members to see whether they were good enough to become exhibiting members had stopped. All members could now submit to the exhibitions.

In the twenties and thirties the membership was young. In the log books there

are reports of children's parties (one for 60 children of members), and several wedding photographs. Several members, such as Marjorie Paterson, Phyllis Denton, Kit Gunton and Philip Lace having joined when young in the Charlotte Street days, continued to be members for 40, 50, or even 60 years.

Some members:

Several of Donald Hughes brothers and sisters belonged to the Club. **Catherine Hughes RWA**, was a painter; **Ellard Hughes** was in the same family firm of estate agents and was a painter and wrote verse and essays; **Margaret Hughes** was an expressive dancer, painter and weaver.

Barry Thatcher from 1925 till the 40s acted as Exhibition Secretary. He organised life classes and was on the Committee till the 1960s. He was a painter, who in the early 20s spent some time in London in charge of decor and advertising for a film company. He designed stage sets and scenery for CAC plays and wrote sketches. He painted murals in a late night snack bar run by some CAC members in Park Street. He made a "great contribution on the social, dramatic and artistic sides" of the Club. He died in 1968.

Cyril Roberts and his wife **Nora** were the moving spirits in the Dramatic Section for years. He taught History and English at Bristol Grammar School and won many prizes for plays he had written. After the war he became a film script writer in London. Nora Roberts produced most of the CAC plays. She trained with Sir Frank Benson's school, touring America and the British Isles with him. After the war she became casting director for Alliance Film Studios. Both the Roberts acted in the CAC plays.

Arnold Robinson RWA and his son **Geoffrey**, stained glass makers from the Bristol Guild, were both members at various times. Arnold joined in 1923. In 1959 on the death of Arnold, Geoffrey took over as director of the Bristol Guild aged 23. In Tyndall Baptist Church all the windows were made by Arnold, except one made by Geoffrey as a memorial to his father.

Eileen Hartley Hodder was an enthusiastic member from the mid-twenties till 1939. She ran a well-known drama school in Bristol for many years.

Phyllis Denton joined the Club in 1929 and joined the Committee soon after. She was Secretary from 1931 to 1932 and Exhibition Secretary from 1932 to 1936. She served on the Committee again from 1938 till 1967. She wrote and illustrated children's books and did some art teaching. She died in 1989, having been a member for 60 years.

Arthur E (Hamish) Milne RWA, DA Edinburgh College of Art, joined in 1931. In the Great War he survived the Dardanelles, Gallipoli and Ypres, but was gassed, so thereafter became "Hamish the soft-voiced Scotsman." From 1928 to 1958 he was a director of Chivers and Thomas, builders. He was on the RWA

council and helped on the premises of the RWA till 1974 when he was 85. He continued painting till six months before he died in 1981 aged 91. "Lively mind... great sense of humour... proud of his ancestry, he used to wear his kilt for social functions... talented, versatile and much-loved man"

Donald Milner OBE, MA, ARCA, PPRWA and his wife were members from 1935-8. He was Principal of the West of England College of Art till 1959 (fig 12), and was told before coming to Bristol that the CAC was a very live body doing good work. Following his Presidency of the RWA, he remained an Honorary Vice-President of the RWA till his death in 1993.

John Whitlock Codner RWA was a member between the wars. In the fifties and sixties he helped the Club with exhibitions.

The Finances

of the Club were in a parlous state through the whole of this period, chiefly because in 1923 the Club spent £100 refurbishing the rooms at Charlotte Street with "sublime faith" according to Donald Hughes - putting in a pantry, lavatory, a dance floor and a stage. In addition the lease was about £80 a year. This resulted in an overdraft of between £100 and £150, which continued for twenty years until 1945. It was guaranteed for £150 by **Frank Cowlin** (a member), and various lesser amounts by other members.

The Treasurer from 1925 to 1928 was **Howard Garmston** who was always worrying about the size of the overdraft. He thought the rest of the Committee did not take this seriously enough, and kept trying to get members to pay their subscriptions (some more than two years in arrears). He worried about sloppy accounting by members of subcommittees. He complained of what an enormous amount of work he had to do as both Assistant Secretary and Treasurer and kept putting in his resignation.

Various things were done to try to help the perilous financial state, including on two occasions direct appeals for money to members. At different times, rooms were sublet to various organisations including the Practical Psychology Club, Music Club, Banjo Club, Gallic League, Theosophical Group, and the Bristol Vegetarian and Health Culture Society.

There were several money-raising ventures. In 1933 a Fete at Rodney Lodge, Clifton Down (now part of the university) home of Miss Worsley, a later treasurer, raised £22.

In 1934 there was a big Fete at Rex Hopes at Redland Hall, ie Redland Collegiate School (late in life, Rex Hopes had married Susie Adams, headmistress of the school). There was a continuous programme of plays, a cabaret & revue, dancing by school children, and a demonstration of dancing by Margaret Hughes. There were an amazing number of stalls and side-shows -

"character reading", an ice cream bar, guess-the-weight-of-a-meal competition, white elephant and craft stalls, games, a putting green, a cookery stall, a smelling competition, fudge for sale, portrait sketches by Donald Hughes, guess-the-number-of-people competition, food and produce stalls, gas balloons, a music van. This caused the overdraft to be reduced to £130, so perhaps raised about £70.

In 1926 and again in 1933 there were serious suggestions of winding up the Club because of the financial situation. In 1933, when the overdraft was nearly £200, the minutes say "Mr Frank Cowlin had been reminded by the bank that he was the guarantor of the overdraft. As he had accepted this responsibility in 1923 on the understanding that the Club would soon clear its debt, he was rather shocked... of those Club members who had also guaranteed the overdraft, some had died and some left the district". A new list of Club members' guarantees was made. There was a crisis meeting, and subscriptions were put up to 25/- for full members and 12/6 for exhibiting members. Non-payers of subscriptions were to be barred from the Club or charged a fine. In 1935 the bank temporarily refused to honour cheques, and in 1938, when the overdraft reached £225, the bank manager was upset because this had exceeded Sir Frank Cowlin's guarantee of £150.

1938-1945

In the autumn of 1938 the financial situation actually caused the partial closure of the Club. All the rooms were sublet most of the time, the number of meetings was reduced, there were fewer plays, the Dramatic Contest was suspended, and the life classes were held in Miss Brownlee's studio.

There was no craft or sketch exhibition, although there was the exhibition of framed pictures in the spring of 1939. Donald Hughes stopped keeping his log books.

After the outbreak of war, a subletting of the whole lease was arranged and all CAC activities took place in Miss Brownlee's studio. There was no printed programme. It was fixed up from week to week. The 1940 exhibition was held in the City Art Gallery.

On the outbreak of war in 1939, the BBC Symphony Orchestra was evacuated to Bristol. The CAC rooms were let to the composer Alan Rawsthorne and his wife, Jessie Hinchliffe, a violinist with the orchestra. They were joined by Sidonie Goosens, the harpist and her husband, the conductor, violinist and composer Hyam Greenbaum. The Rawsthornes lived in the large front room and the Greenbaums in the main studio with their bed on the stage. The studio became a centre of the orchestra's social life.

The minutes of September 12th 1939 after the outbreak of war said "letters had been received expressing the hope that the Club would be kept together in some way during the war... As it was impossible to arrange meetings during the winter period, the subscription has been reduced to 12/6."

Then the financial situation was solved by Hitler. 17/18 Charlotte Street was destroyed in a blitz on November 24th 1940 (fig 8). Miss Paterson said they had been having a coffee party (perhaps in Miss Brownlee's studio), when there was a very severe air raid. They all went down to the shelter. When they reappeared, the Club was replaced by a hole in the ground. The whole building had been burned down. Many of Alan Rawsthorne's manuscripts were destroyed. This was the night when most of Park Street was burnt.

Number 17/18 Charlotte Street was never rebuilt properly unlike the rest of Park Street. Presumably because the Club had virtually closed down on the outbreak of war, the Club's archives and the two pictures by Beatrice Kerry



Fig 1.
"Six friends of the artist" by Degas. Pastel. 45"x28". 1885.
Top left: Walter Sickert. Top right: Jacques-Emile Blanche.
Painted in Jacques Blanche's studio in Dieppe.
(Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design)

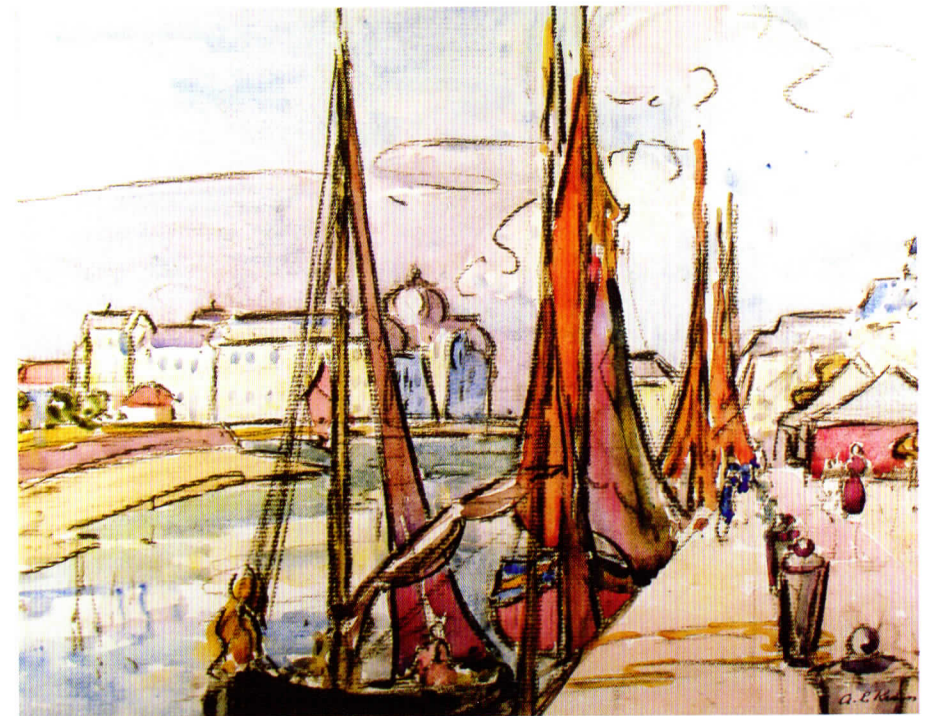


Fig 2. *Trouville-sur-Mer* by Amy Krauss. Charcoal and watercolour. (Collection of RWA)



Fig 3. Paule Véselay in her London studio. 1934. (England & Co)



Fig 4. Jug and Shell by Doris Hatt. Oil, 1937. (Collection of RWA)



Fig 5. Smallholding, Costa Brava by Kit Gunton. Oil. (Collection of RWA)



Fig 6. On the Zuider Zee by Marjorie Paterson. Oil. (Private Collection)



Fig 7. "The Russian Ballet" from CAC Pantomime February 1933 at Charlotte Street. L to R: Donald Hughes, unknown, Alec Abbott, Brian Cumming, H W Seccombe Wills, Frank Gardner. (Bristol Evening Post)



Fig 9. CAC life class in 110 Pembroke Road. 1958. L to R: unknown, unknown, unknown, Kit Gunton, Phyllis Denton, Donald Hughes, Barbara Gay. (Bristol Evening World)



Fig 8. November 1940. Blitz on Park Street. Clifton Arts Club entrance is on right (in Charlotte Street)



Fig 10. CAC exhibition at RWA 1964. L to R: Marjorie Paterson, Monica Vincent, Donald Hughes. (Bristol Evening Post)

Fig 11.
Flowers by Mary
Fedden. Oil.
1940.
(Collection of RWA)



Fig 12.
Tortworth Woods
by Donald
Milner.
Watercolour.
(Collection of RWA)



Fig 13.
*Cornwallis
Gardens* by
George Sweet.
Oil.
(Collection of RWA)



Fig 14.
*At Easton Grey
near Malmesbury*
by Donald
Hughes.
Watercolour.
(Collection Bristol
Savages)

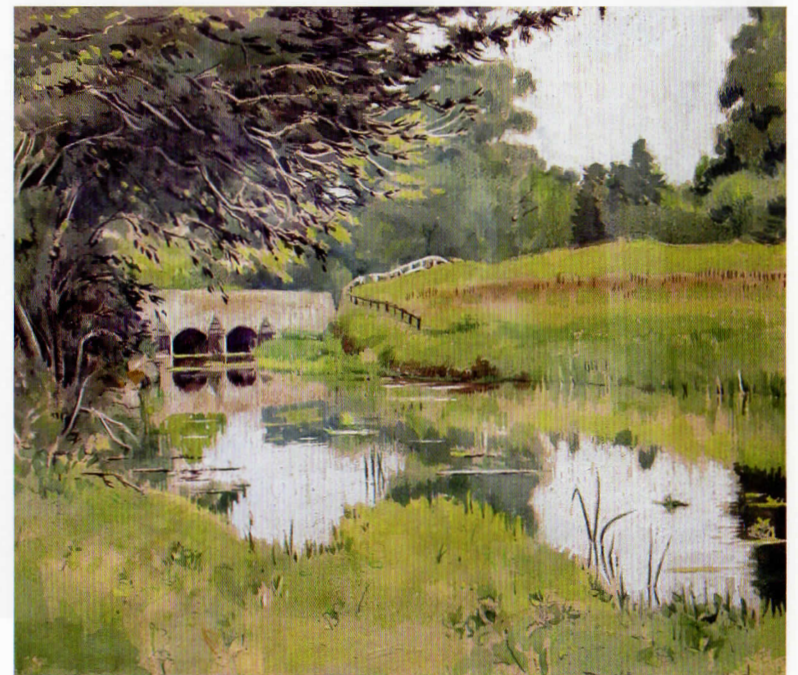




Fig 15. CAC Jubilee Exhibition in RWA 1981. L to R: Bernard Dunstan, Margaret Howman, Diana Armfield, Bill Weaver.



Fig 16. *March Day, Portishead* by Dawn Sidoli. Oil, 1998. (Artist's collection)

were saved. Perhaps they had been taken to Donald Hughes' home. However, the Club did lose some of its possessions, for it was awarded War Damages assessed at £114 in 1942 payable after the war plus 1% interest. In fact the money, £134, was not received till 1954. After the Charlotte Street premises were destroyed, no Committee meeting was held until April 1941 (Mrs Knight-Adkin's house). The Committee agreed to carry on the Club if possible. An indication of the emotion caused by the destruction of Charlotte Street is that Donald Hughes proposed that seeds of annual flowers be scattered in the ruins.

The Secretary and Treasurer from 1940 to 1943 was **Grace Knight-Adkin**, whose life was bound up with the CAC. As Miss Garner she had been Secretary from 1915-23 before she married. At a CAC dance, she met Captain Jim Knight-Adkin, who taught at Monkton Coombe School. Their wedding reception in 1923 was the first event to have been held at the Clifton Arts Club rooms in Charlotte Street. She was on the Committee on and off till she left Bristol in 1965. She died in 1966.

From 1941 to 1947 the **Oakfield Road Unitarian Church Rooms** were rented for each meeting. Like life generally at that time, it seems to have been rather uncomfortable. Although the hall itself was unscathed, a bomb had struck the chapel and it was only after the lapse of some weeks that the caretaker found an unexploded bomb at the foot of the organ pipes. There was no fuel for central heating, only a very dangerous gas stove without a flue. The chapel was so cold that services were held in the hall, therefore before CAC meetings Kit Gunton (secretary 1943-52) had to remove hymn books, hassocks, and the harmonium etc and catering was difficult. A permit was obtained to get rations of tea, milk and sugar for Saturday afternoon meetings. In the Vestry were stacks of disintegrating mouldy hymn books and two pianos, one of which had a number of permanently dumb notes and the other was incapable of staying in tune for more than a few days, even after the removal by Philip Lace of a broken tea cup from the works. The walls were hung with Victorian oleographs of religious paintings, so it was not possible to hold exhibitions there. The meetings were fortnightly on Saturday afternoons between February and September. Presumably the winter and evenings were avoided because of the blackout and the blitz. Impromptu Committee meetings were held after such events because of the difficulties of travel. Only 5-14 people attended each meeting. "The Club invites HM and USA forces to the meetings free of charge."

The **number of members** was enormously reduced, partly because people were called up or moved away, and partly because the Club was able to put on only a skeleton programme.

A suggestion that the name of the Club should be changed to Bristol Arts Club was defeated at the 1945 AGM.

From 1940, **exhibitions** were reduced to one a year, the unframed sketch

exhibition and craft exhibitions having ceased for ever. Crafts never played any part in the Club's life again. In spring 1940, originally because the Charlotte Street rooms were sublet to save money, the exhibition of paintings was held in one of the main galleries of the City Art Gallery and it continued there, sometimes in spring and sometimes in autumn every year till 1960. This was arranged by Mr H W Maxwell, the Director, who gave many talks to the Club. In 1947 Kit Gunton "thanked the Director of the Art Gallery, who did not forget that we kept the flag flying for art in Bristol during the bombing and gave wall space to distinguished visitors to our city."

While the membership and programmes of the Club declined, the **finances** of the Club improved. Because they no longer had the drain of the Charlotte Street lease to pay, the Club started making a profit and the overdraft, which had been worrying them for 17 years was paid off very quickly in four years, being fully paid coincidentally just at the time when Sir Frank Cowlin, the guarantor, died.

1945-1955

Even after the war, the Club continued to struggle with a rather unexciting programme and few members. The only activity of the Club which really flourished was the annual exhibition. Donald Hughes was still Chairman and was given a presentation by the Club for all he had done in keeping the Club going through the war.

The Secretary

during most of this period was **Kit Gunton RWA** (1890-1980), painter and pianist (fig 5). She taught painting and illustrated books eg Donald Hughes' "*Birdsworth*". She joined the CAC before 1929, and was Secretary and Exhibition Secretary on and off between 1943 and 1960, when she was made Vice-President. She often gave talks to the Club. In an appreciation, Philip Lacey said that members who shared with her the dark and difficult war years and the still difficult post-war period, will never forget her enthusiasm and courage, cheerfulness, adaptability, and knack of getting the best out of her fellow members. She evolved her own system of administration by trial and error, invariably treating the welfare of the Club as her prime consideration. There was always a mild strain of eccentricity, and she displayed a remarkable knack for surmounting difficulties, turning what threatened to be a fiasco into a triumphant success. During the war she lent the Club money to pay the interest on the overdraft and in the fifties she lent the Club her piano.

Venues

Ever since 1940, the Club had been looking for premises which could be leased completely, as in the old Charlotte Street days. In 1947 they found a room in **91 Hampton Road** which they leased from a Mrs Martin. Unfortunately Mrs Martin sold the house in 1950, so the Club were homeless again. At that time they asked Mr Milner about renting a room at the RWA, but it was an "unsatisfactory interview" according to the minutes. The Club then started renting for one evening a week a room at the Psychology Club at **13 Tyndalls Park**. The lighting was not very good and the piano was in extremely poor condition.

Programme

After the war the timings of meetings went back to the old arrangement with evening meetings again and a long summer vacation, with nothing between June and the beginning of October. Play-reading had gone on all through the war, but no plays had been produced. There was an effort to revive the drama side in 1947 when the CAC entered the Drama League again, but in 1948 not enough CAC members could be found to cast a play. Thus the CAC's drama side disappeared for ever.

Through the fifties the Club programme consisted of fortnightly artists' evenings (mostly life drawing and criticisms) alternating with ordinary meetings, the subjects of the ordinary meetings being equally divided between painting, literature (writer's evenings, poetry, and play-readings) and music (such as gramophone recitals). Until 1950 the talks were given by members, since the Club could not afford outside speakers. There were fewer social events than in the Charlotte Street days. American suppers were held because of rationing. In 1949 this was accompanied by a paired celebrities game, a drawing competition, bird verses by Donald Hughes, songs, a play-reading, music, games, and a grand finale. In 1949, coach trips started again, presumably because of improved petrol supplies. In 1952 there was a Garden party at Pinecroft, on the hillside high above Long Ashton, where Donald Hughes had a "country cottage". Bus routes were included in the invitation. In 1953 two days of outdoor sketching in June were introduced for the first time since 1914.

Exhibitions

One exhibition a year was held in the **City Art Gallery**, but the standard was not very high. This low standard did not matter during the war when any sort of exhibition was welcome, but in 1950 the minutes speak of "castigation of the show from the press". The "hanging committee had been lenient, but for the sake of the prestige of the Club, this was unlikely to be repeated". Selection seems to have been done entirely by members of the Club until 1958.

In 1951 for the first time since the loan exhibitions of the twenties, the Club asked outsiders to exhibit (presumably to try to raise the standard). They asked Mary Fedden and John Codner (old members who were now RWAs) and Winston Churchill to exhibit with the Club. Mr Churchill refused. The Committee inspected the work of new members, to save them the expense of framing pictures which might be rejected at the exhibition. In 1953 the exhibition became truly open in that "in future the privilege of country members exhibiting for a hanging fee of 7/6, returnable in the case of rejection,

be extended to all artists who wish to exhibit only and not attend Club activities". Such artists were thereafter called Associate Members.

Members

It was a struggle to get the Club on its feet again. At the 1949 AGM it was "hoped that with more enthusiasm and co-operation from members, the Club would regain its old prestige and position." By the 1952 AGM, members were said to be keener and the membership was being built up, there being 47 members, and by 1954 there were 109. During this whole period the proportion of members who painted gradually increased, encouraged by the exhibitions in the City Art Gallery.

1955-1973

This is the period covered by the Club's residence in 110 Pembroke Road and Miss Paterson's secretaryship. During this time the number of members gradually declined from 103 in 1955 to 75 in 1969. In 1959 the Evening Post said "for more than half a century the Clifton Arts Club has occupied a unique place in the affections of Bristol art lovers."

Presidents

In 1960 Mr Barton was succeeded by **Ralph Edwards MBE, FSA, RWA, FRIBA**, a former member of the Club, an architect who did much to help the preservation of old Bristol. He was President of Bristol Society of Architects and a trustee and vice-chairman of the RWA.

In 1965 **Vivian Ogilvie** of the BBC took over as President of the CAC. He was a writer and broadcaster, who had given propaganda broadcasts to Germany during the war. He died in 1972 soon after retiring to London.

In 1971 he was succeeded as President by **Prof W McCausland Stewart MA, DLitt**, Emeritus Professor of French at Bristol University. He was a dedicated francophile and belonged to the Alliance Française and Le Cercle Française of Bristol. Early in the 1950s he was invited to serve as a lay member of the Council of the RWA. Club members recall a delightful evening when Prof Stewart read his own poetry to them. He was a frequent purchaser of the Club's pictures - every space on his walls being occupied by pictures with only a few inches between them.

The Chairman

until his death in 1968 was still Donald Hughes, but he was now in his eighties and attended fewer meetings. In 1968 he was succeeded by **Vivian Ogilvie**, who was both Chairman and President until he went to London in 1971. In 1971 **Alan Whiteside** became Chairman.

The Secretary

from 1957 to 1973 was **Marjorie Paterson**, who had joined the Club in 1930 and had been on the Committee since 1932. She had studied art at the Slade, and was a very good painter (fig 6) (usually mentioned in press reports of exhibitions). She did a huge amount of work for the Club, of which she ran every aspect. On painting evenings she liked absolute silence, enforced by a large handbell, which was not always very welcoming for new members. In 1973 she had to retire through illness, and was made Vice-President. She died in 1983 and left £100 to the Club. A typewriter was bought with the legacy.

Venue

In 1955 once again the Club had managed to find a permanent home. It was a room built into the garden at the back of **110 Pembroke Road** as a billiards room. The Club soon made themselves at home. There were tables and chairs, a cupboard in which members could keep their paints and art periodicals, a notice board, a "mirror in the lobby for the use of lady members", an arrangement of members' pictures on the walls, and Kit Gunton provided her piano. "CAC" was written on the door.

The rent was £150 a year for continuous use and to help defray this expense the room was sublet to the Soroptimists and to a dancing class on several days. Also the subscription was raised to one guinea from 10/6.

In 1955 the Committee decided "no alcoholic drinks to be brought into the Club room." We do not know what incident prompted this. In the minutes in 1957 there is mention of an "infringement of Bristol Watch Committee by-laws in relation to the drawing class... irregularities committed inadvertently". According to David Cox, nude models had been used on an occasion when there was no tutor. There is a later entry - "The Committee decided that there should be no nude models in the life classes". In 1960 the Committee were asked to look out for "models of rugged or colourful type" (perhaps to make up for the absence of nudes).

This happy situation of the Club's having its own room lasted only seven years, because in 1962 the owner wanted to double the rent. For the next 11 years the Club hired the room for one day a week only. The Club had to remove all its furniture and other possessions and its name from the door.

Programme

There continued to be artists' evenings, sometimes with a model (fig 9), sometimes for discussions, or criticisms by Kit Gunton, on alternate weeks with

lectures. The lecture evenings were still equally divided between art, music, poetry, and play-readings.

There was still no activity between the end of June and the beginning of October except for the one coach outing in July. After the opening of the Severn Bridge and the motorways, it was possible for coach outings to go further afield, including visits to the Royal Academy. All-day sketching was introduced in 1967 when the Club visited Marjorie Quinn at Clapton-in-Gordano. This became a yearly event, and other venues were included after 1972.

In 1961 the Carnegie Trust gave a grant of £75 to pay for two weekend painting courses with three combined clubs - CAC, the Bath Society of Artists and Clevedon Art Club. The numbers for the first weekend were 26, nine, and five respectively. The two tutors were Jack Marriot and Bernard Dunstan. The weekends were held on the Promenade, Clifton Down, and at the Arnolfini Gallery (then in the Triangle). Painting weekends were a new idea then. Further Carnegie weekends were held in 1962 and 1963.

Social events continued, and at the 1960 party the committee decided that "entertainment should be more adult in tone with no community singing". (What can have happened at the previous party?) In 1966 there was a Diamond Jubilee Dinner at the University Senate House.

In 1969 there was a long article about the Club in the "Leisure Painter".

Exhibitions

There continued to be one open exhibition each year. Between 1956 and 1960 this was still at the City Art Gallery. The 1956 exhibition included works by early members of the Club because it was the Club's jubilee year. In 1957 certain pictures were rejected as being done under supervision at Bristol College of Art.

The Committee continued to try to raise the standard of the exhibition. In 1958 the Committee decided for the first time to co-opt a distinguished outsider onto the Hanging Committee. "The Exhibition Secretary will issue exhibition forms only to those whose work reaches a certain standard". It is a "great pleasure to encourage beginners, but public exhibition is for artists of some maturity". Eighty-two exhibits were chosen from 172 submitted. In spite of these efforts, the standard of the exhibition cannot have been very high for in 1959 Mr Schubart (Mr Maxwell's successor) wrote and said the CAC could no longer exhibit at the Art Gallery unless he was on the Selection Committee. At a meeting with Mr Schubart, it was decided that "a more satisfactory exhibition would result if the Club's Selection Committee was reconstituted and was smaller in number". But it still consisted of seven people - Mr Schubart, John Codner, Donald Hughes (chairman), Miss Paterson, Mr Lace, Miss Gunton, and Miss Hatt. Pictures were received at Pembroke Road and a preliminary

weeding-out was followed two days later by judging, 58 out of 163 pictures being hung. Mr Cook, a member of the Committee, was upset by this and resigned from the Club.

In 1961 the Club could no longer use the City Art Gallery since all the galleries were now in use. The Club therefore asked the RWA if they could hold the exhibition there. They were told that the RWA was already booked for 1961, so no exhibition at all was held that year. In 1962 the Club held its exhibition at the **Forum Gallery** in 24 Park Row.

On being asked by Donald Hughes and Kit Gunton, the **RWA** agreed to let the CAC have one gallery for its exhibition in 1963, and the Club continued to hold its exhibitions there (fig 10) at a very low rent until 1986, except for two years when there were building works in the RWA - 1966 when the Club exhibition was again held in the Forum Galleries and 1969 when the exhibition was held in the rear hall in Bristol Museum & Art Gallery at no charge, Arnold Wilson having succeeded Mr Schubart. The size of the exhibition gradually increased, to fill two galleries at the RWA in 1967 and three in 1971. The number of pictures hung increased from 128 in 1963 to 188 in 1973, and the number of pictures sold also increased from seven in 1957 to 18 in 1967.

During this period the Selection Committee usually consisted of the Club Chairman, Secretary, and Exhibition Secretary and one or two non-members.

Of the 1966 exhibition at the Forum Gallery the press said "in too many paintings, the life never seems to have breathed in the canvas". According to the minutes, the "opening was marred by an unfortunate accident"... "compensation for Miss W Medway injured during the private view... expenses £11 for new spectacles, doctors bill £12.12.0... offered £50 as goodwill". Miss Medway was a member who had won a poetry prize. Marjorie Quinn remembers that there was a dangerous step in the gallery and Miss Paterson had been worried that there was no handrail. Miss Medway fell on this step.

Some Members:

Philip Lace FCA, Miss Willway's nephew, joined the club in 1922. He was a chartered accountant and Treasurer of the RWA. He was on the CAC Committee on and off from 1938 and acted as Vice-Chairman, Exhibition Secretary or Treasurer whenever there was a manpower crisis between 1947 and 1968, and was later a Vice-President. He audited the club accounts from the 1970s till his death in 1985.

Olive Griffiths PhD (1905-65), (niece of Dr John Griffiths, the Club's early Chairman, with whom she lived as a child) joined the Club in 1929 and was on the Committee from 1961 to 1965. She was educated at St Hugh's, Oxford, wrote several books and lectured on local history.

Reg Gammon RWA, ROI, whose hundredth birthday in 1994 was celebrated with exhibitions of recent paintings in the RWA and in London, was a member from 1963-71 and often helped with exhibitions. He died in 1997 aged 103.

Barbara Gay ARWA, possibly the only ceramicist to become an ARWA, was on the CAC Committee between 1949 and 1956. She had attended the West of England College of Art, and all her life had had very poor sight. She had her own kiln at home, and modelled 30 Chaucer characters, using much research into the right historical detail, and made 30 copies of each figure. She also made figures of the five senses taken from the Cluny tapestry. The CAC American supper was held in her flat in Miles Road from 1974 to 1984. She died in 1991.

Audrey Lewis-Hopkins was on the CAC Committee between 1957 and 1962. She was Secretary while Marjorie Paterson was in New Zealand in 1961. She had attended the West of England College of Art and exhibited in the Paris salon in the 1950s, and often had pictures in the RA and RWA.

Monica Vincent joined the Club in 1958, and was on the Committee 1959-68, and Exhibition Secretary between 1962 and 1968. The Club leased her basement as its Club rooms between 1974 and 1979.

Biddy Howe was Assistant Secretary of the Club 1962-68, and died in 1970. One of her pictures and an African rug were given to the Club by her husband in her memory.

Marjorie Quinn, to whom the Club owes a great deal, joined in 1960 and was on the Committee from 1964 to 1976. She ran the artists' evenings between 1964 and 1979, and was Exhibition Secretary in 1973 and 1974, as well as being one of the best painters in the Club. The Club painted in her house and garden many times between 1967 and 2000. Her beautiful oil paintings are much sought after.

Deborah Jones had frequent one-man shows from 1960 onwards (one went on to Liberty in London). She started as a stage set designer in the West End, at one time under Oliver Messel, and had a studio in Shirehampton.

Michael Barnfather was on the Committee from 1966-71 and now exhibits with the Alexander Gallery. The Club has painted at his beautiful mill in South Wales many times.

Vera Apter Smith joined in 1962. She was on the Committee from 1972 to 1978, and ran the social subcommittee, holding coffee mornings and American suppers for the Club at her house. She has an extensive knowledge of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, and has given the Club talks on these art styles. She is particularly well-known for her large pots and for her paintings.

1973-2006

1973 was the beginning of a period of enormous growth of the Club, both in the number of members and in the size and variety of the programme. The Club moved into a permanent home yet again - the basement of Monica Vincent's house in Richmond Park Road, and again this did not last, the Club then renting rooms in the Redland United Reformed Church Hall.

The standard of the exhibition enormously improved year by year. Several members are hung at the Royal Academy each year, as well as many at the RWA.

President

from 1979 to was **George Sweet RWA**. He was one of the distinguished artists who, after the war, was elected to the RWA by Council, rather than by ballot. He was appointed the Academy's representative to the International Association of the Plastic Arts and became one of its principal officers. As head of the painting school, West of England College of Art, he was a notable teacher. Lovers of painting in Bristol remember with pleasure the exhibition he arranged at the RWA of the work of the late William Townsend. His own beautiful paintings of the nude and of landscape and still life are masterly (fig 13). He died in 1997.

Francis Greenacre became president in 1997. He had been Curator of Fine Art at Bristol City Art Gallery since 1969, where he mounted many high-quality exhibitions, especially those of the artists of the Bristol School, such as Danby and Jackson. He was High Sheriff of Avon in 1993-4. He is a most active and helpful President.

Chairmen

1971-8: **Alan Whiteside** saw the Club through a period of rather slow growth and perilous finances. He was very good at persuading people to co-operate in increasing the Club's goodwill and he worked extremely hard in helping to make Monica Vincent's basement into a viable clubroom.

1978-1988: **William Weaver** joined the CAC in 1971 and was on the

Committee from 1974 to 1978. He had retired from being managing Director of Cadburys in Jamaica. He gave an enormous amount of time and effort to the Club. Like his predecessor, Donald Hughes, he drew cartoons. The Club painted in his beautiful garden at East Dundry for many years and enjoyed Bill and Joy's generous hospitality. In 1988 he retired from the chairmanship because of increasing deafness and became an Honorary Vice-President of the Club. He died in 1995.

1988-93: **Lionel Pimm** joined the Club in 1983 on retiring as an orthopaedic surgeon in Ipswich and joined the Committee in 1986. Though still working in retirement he found time for painting and for taking a great interest in the working of the Club. He is quiet and unassuming and had a delightful way of bringing a touch of humour into the introduction of speakers.

1993-1998: **Suzanne Clarke** joined the Club in 1968 and, in 1982 became Membership Secretary and computerised the membership records. She arranged CAC holidays at Glynhir in South Wales from 1996-2001. After standing down as chairman, she continued as Minutes Secretary and in 2000 started editing a CAC Newsletter. In 2001 she was made an Honorary Vice-president.

1998-2004: **Sue Bracher (Bartlett)** has been a member of the Club for many years and has always been a great supporter. She was a very diplomatic, charming and helpful chairman. Under her chairmanship, the Club continued to go from strength to strength.

2004-present: **Donald Jones, MA, MLitt, BSc** taught history in schools and the University of the West of England till his retirement in 1983. He has written six books, many on the history of Bristol. He has done an enormous amount of invaluable work in the arrangements for the CAC Centenary.

Secretaries

1973-82: **Margaret Howman** joined the Club in 1959. She was a prize-winning student in dress design at Southampton Art School, and in 1962 set up as a dress designer in a workroom in her own home doing bridal trousseaux. She was Exhibition Secretary from 1967 till 1973. On becoming Secretary she improved the programme enormously, so that the number of members increased. In 1982 she became Honorary Vice-President and continued until her death in 2005 to be a great help to the Club. Her father, Sir Arthur Rostron, was the captain of the *Carpathia*, the ship which rescued the survivors of the *Titanic*.

In 1982 the secretary's job was divided into two, Joan Weir becoming Programme Secretary and Suzanne Clarke Membership Secretary.

Joan Weir joined the Club in 1975 and for 17 years has brought her charm and her experience working with the BBC and the British Council together to make

a valuable and rewarding contribution to the life of the Club. She managed to persuade some very important artists to speak to the Club. Three times a year the programmes devised by Joan and the Committee arrived, always promising interesting meetings and trips. She retired as Programme Secretary in 1999 and was made an Honorary Vice-president in 2003.

Cynthia Skinner took over as Programme Secretary from Joan Weir in 1999 and has continued to arrange an excellent and varied programme, which is well supported by members.

Patricia Corrigan took over as Membership Secretary from Suzanne Clarke in 1993. Her husband, Michael put the membership list on computer and both have helped the Club in many ways, collecting subscriptions, organising the Spring Lunches (and the bar on social occasions) and in the very arduous task of filling envelopes.

Venues

In 1973 the Club rented a room for Thursday evenings for one season at **Bristol Music Club**, 76 St Pauls Road.

Then in 1973 the Club leased their own Club room again. It was a large room with a small kitchen in the basement of **4 Richmond Park Road** - Monica Vincent's house. This involved much hard work by the Committee, in applying for planning permission, getting fire regulation approval, and arranging insurance. It was necessary to plaster, seal and decorate the ceiling and walls, to put in a kitchen, to put hardboard on the floor above, to put up a curtain rail and make curtains, to put up a rack for paintings, to obtain fan heaters, chairs, tables, fire extinguishers, etc. The cost was £621, which included £98 for fire precautions, but the result was a lovely, cosy room, where the Club could keep all its possessions.

In 1978 Monica's husband died suddenly and Monica wanted to move, so once again the Club was without its own rooms. The next year the Club started renting rooms at **Redland Park United Reformed Church Rooms**, a happy arrangement which still continues.

Programme

Gradually the number of events for the other arts - music, poetry, writing, etc. became fewer and fewer as the number of members attending these diminished, and in 1979 these died out altogether. Perhaps it is sad that subjects have become so specialised that there is no longer an interest in "The Arts" generally. At the same time the number of outdoor sketching days increased enormously until they continued all through the summer; the number of coach

outings increased from one a year to four; and the Club started arranging holidays abroad.

1981 was the 75th anniversary of the club. There was a most enjoyable dinner in the RWA at the time of the exhibition (fig 15), with speeches by Bernard Dunstan, Bill Weaver and Philip Lace. A painting by Kit Gunton was lent by Philip Lace for the exhibition. There was also a competition for the cover of the anniversary catalogue, which was won by Barbara Hirst.

In 1994 the Club starting holding annual lunch parties and in 1996 had started a video library. In 1996 the Club started arranging yearly untutored holidays at Glynhir in Carmarthenshire

In 2000 there was an article about the Club in the *Leisure Painter*.

The Club celebrated the Millennium with a party with music in the Victoria Rooms after the Open Exhibition Private View.

Recent programmes have included talks by Bernard Dunstan, Diana Armfield, Robert Organ, Edward Piper, Richard Long and Leonard Manasseh. From 1979 tutorials were arranged for Club members two or three times a year.

Exhibitions

were held in the **RWA** until 1986. Ever since the Club was founded, exhibitions had been opened at the private view by a celebrity making a speech, with people sitting in rows on chairs. With increasing attendances this became difficult, particularly for the hearing of those at the back, so this was abandoned in 1977.

The number of pictures hung gradually increased from 239 in 1974 to 474 in 1986. The number of pictures submitted also increased from 372 in 1974 to 780 in 1986. Although the proportion of pictures hung remained about the same, the standard of pictures in the exhibitions gradually improved. The number of pictures sold also increased. In 1987 after 25 years, the Club was no longer able to hold its exhibition in the RWA. Some RWA staff did not want exhibitions over which they did not have complete control. Since then the Annual Exhibition has been held in the **School of Art and Design**, next to the RWA building. In the past few years, about 600 works have been submitted and 370-400 placed. Club members have rallied round to help with all the receiving, portering, hanging and cataloguing of works and these rooms, familiar to the Club in 1913, have proved a welcoming and most satisfactory venue. The exhibitions have been very well received and profitable.

The 1988 exhibition was almost a disaster. The Exhibition Secretary, Paddy Fear had to go into hospital a few weeks before the exhibition. Molly Perry took over and she was taken ill a few days before handing-in day. Then Sally Aplin took over, but developed influenza on handing-in day. So Suzanne Clarke took

over, helped by Sally Aplin later. The exhibition survived and all the Exhibition Secretaries recovered.

In 1995 the Club started asking the Selection Committee to choose one or more pictures as the "selector's choice".

In 1976 **members-only exhibitions** without selection were started for the first time in the history of the Club, upsetting those who thought that the Club should maintain a high standard. At first these were held on the steps of the Victoria Rooms, and later in Clifton Down Shopping Centre and at Clifton Village Fair. They were held all day on a Saturday, and usually up to 30 pictures were sold. This boosted the confidence of those Club members who usually had their pictures refused for the open exhibition. Pictures could be displayed on screens made in 1978 by John Dale and Bill Weaver with money raised at coffee mornings. These screens were also used for evening criticisms. These exhibitions finished in 1985 when Clifton Down Shopping Centre came under new management. Occasional members-only exhibitions have been held since at various venues.

Finance

To keep abreast of inflation the subscription rose over this period from £1.50 in 1973 to £15 in 2006.

By 1973 inflation and the cost of moving into Monica Vincent's basement had eaten into the funds. The Club therefore held money-raising coffee mornings, raised the subscription, and increased the hanging fee for the exhibition. The Club also applied for a grant from the Arts and Leisure Committee of Bristol City Council, and in 1974 received £50, and in 1976 another £50.

After losing the club room at Monica Vincent's in 1979, there was much less drain on funds and the savings in the building society have gradually increased, so that at present the finances are in a very healthy state.

Number of members

increased enormously from 80 in 1973, to 145 in 1979, when the Committee decided (to prevent overcrowding at meetings) to limit the numbers and have a waiting list with those on the waiting list being sent exhibition submission forms. The limit was put at 160 in 1979, and has gradually increased to 250 members with a waiting list.

Some members

Pat Hemmens was Treasurer of the Club for 22 years from 1968-90. The Club was most appreciative of the immense amount of work he did. When the Club's bank started charging without warning, he stood firm, refused to pay and quickly found a more sympathetic bank which did not charge. He died in 1993.

He was succeeded at Treasurer from 1990 by **Douglas Woods IPFA** and in 1994 by **David Bright**. He was succeeded in 2005 by **Susan Davis**.

John and Joan Dale joined in 1972. Both were on the committee in 1973, and Exhibition Secretaries from 1977 to 1980. Both did and still do an enormous amount for the Club. Joan twice won prizes for her pictures at the Bath and West show. She was made an Honorary Vice-President of the Club in 1989.

Dawn Sidoli joined the Club in 1973 on coming to Bristol. She soon became an ARWA and then RWA (fig 16). In 1991 she became a member of the NEAC. She won the Laing Prize and Bath and West show prizes, and often has pictures in the RA. She was on the Committee 1974-7 and 1984-8. Although so distinguished, she has continued to be a great help to the Club, especially in the hanging of exhibitions and the design of posters. In 1997 she was made an Honorary Vice-President.

Pat Rogers joined the Club in 1973 and was on the Committee 1977-81. The Club is indebted to her for arranging the Club's coach outings for 22 years. She died in 1999.

Barbara Chubb became Exhibition Secretary in 1991 and continued to do this very time-consuming and demanding task for ten years until 2001.

Maureen Barry became Exhibition Secretary in 2001 and continues this very arduous job with great good humour and efficiency.

Bill England for eight years oversaw the projector and room arrangements for CAC meetings as well as helping the Club in many ways. He died in 2004.

Heather Robson joined the Club in 1981, was Minutes Secretary 1982-91, and then became Vice-Chairman till 1993. She did the onerous job of Exhibition Secretary 1983-5. She was a great help with the production of the exhibition catalogue.

Dobrivoje Beljkašić (Dobri) arrived with his wife Gordana in Bristol (where his daughter lives) from Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993, when he became an Honorary member of the Clifton Arts Club. After studying art both in Paris and Belgrade, Dobri lived and worked as an artist, painter, illustrator, and designer, and as curator at the Art Gallery of Bosnia and Herzegovina, senior lecturer for drawing and painting at the Higher Teacher's Training School, adviser for visual culture and art education at the Institute for Education Development of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as an author of several school books for art education.

He took part in many group exhibitions in Yugoslavia and abroad, and had many one-man shows. Dobrivoje's works are in many public and private collections around the world, including the UK, Germany, Russia, and other European countries, the USA and Argentina.

However, the tragic events in his home country in the nineties tore his world apart. Life in Sarajevo for Dobri and Gordana was very difficult with no electricity, windows, heating, water, food or medicines, and shooting and bombs all round them. Then Dobri's studio, which was situated in the old Town Hall, was completely destroyed by fire in August 1992, together with the majority of his work. They eventually escaped in a Red Cross convoy in November 1992.

A television documentary about Dobri and Gordana was made by HTV in 1997.

During the 1980s the **Exhibition Secretaries** (each serving one or two years) were Joy Gluxon, Bill Weaver, Heather Robson, Sally Aplin, Molly Perry and Paddy Fear.

Cynthia Skinner succeeded Joan Weir as Programme Secretary in 1999, and continues to produce a marvellously varied programme of events and talks.

Among the painterly painters of the last 25 years in the Club, who had pictures hung in the RWA Annual Open Exhibitions, (apart from those already mentioned) were Margery Alexander, Phyl Blandford Harris, Sylvia Levine, Dorrie Moller (also well-known for her enamels and jewellery), Marjorie Pitt, Daive Phillips, Irma Pierson, Therese Ralli, Cecily Sanderson, Phoebe Tulloh, Minnie Wills, Fiona Payne, Norah Buston, Brian Jones, David Rees Jones, Brenda Coles, Mersa Gibbons, Jack Seymour, Ann Harley, Ken James, Janet Rose, Don Walker, John Trentham, Anne Huddleston, Bobbie Heaven, May Cockburn, Gordon Ellis, Joanna Eckert, Barry Paine, Keith Elvin, Sheila Sherley Price, Gwyneth Browne, Jenny Davidson, Jennifer Caplan, Robert Maxwell Wood, Gordon Cox, Don Rush, Sheila Noble, Wendy Lovegrove, Christina Mephram, Margaret Taylor, Jean Cannan, Linda Ogle, Lindsay Hemmens, Richard Humphreys, Pat Sutherby, Joy Moorhead, Pam Kaye, Kate Jepson, Effie Romain, Betty Marten, Deborah Cox, Beryl Ball, Cliff Hanley, David Nutt, and Ann Fawcett.

Between 1977 and 2005 between one and four Clifton Arts Club members have had pictures hung in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition each year.

Postscript

The alternation between the Club having its own rooms and then losing them for various reasons and having to rent rooms by the day is a recurring theme through the history. When the Club had its own rooms, it was usually in some

degree of financial trouble. There was always the worry associated with the sub-lettings. Also there was always the worry for the Committee of upkeep of the building. In Charlotte Street the minutes mention damage to a ceiling due to the overflow from Mr Cleverdon's bath. Later "all stage fires should be under the personal supervision of the stage manager... sand bucket and fire extinguisher should be in readiness." Whatever had happened? The piano was hired, and there was continual trouble about who should move it on and off the stage. In Richmond Park Road, a few years after the original conversion, there was trouble with damp.

On the other hand, when the Club rented rooms by the day, there were none of these worries and the financial situation was always good.

It is noticeable how history repeats itself - that the same topics keep cropping up in the minutes over the years.

1. Twice there have been suggestions that the name of the club should be changed to the Bristol Society of Artists. This was defeated on both occasions.

2. There are frequent references to members not paying their subscriptions; to the apathy of members resulting in low attendance at meetings; and to the difficulty of getting members to help with coffee. Human nature doesn't change.

3. As regards exhibitions, there are repeated references as to whether non-members should submit fewer pictures; whether pictures painted during classes should be accepted; how to keep up the standard of work hung; the disappointment of members whose pictures have been turned down; the inconvenience when people do not collect their pictures at end of exhibitions; annoyance when newspaper or television journalists do not keep appointments.

4. Twice the Club has been asked to leave the RWA - in 1923 and 1987.

The Club has changed over the years, from being, before World War I, mostly associated with painting; to having, between the wars, a greater emphasis on other arts, especially drama, and many social events; to a depressed period during and after the second war, with few members and little enthusiasm; to its present extremely healthy state with many members, a high standard in the visual arts, but no activities associated with the other arts.

The age of the membership has also changed. Before 1938 many of the members were young, so that in the course of time some were members of the Club for over 60 years. The present membership is aged mostly over 50.

The founders of the Club were interested in modern French art. Although throughout the Club's history, the majority of members has painted in an unadventurous way, there has always been a sizeable proportion of the members who painted in a more "modern" way. The Club's founders would be pleased with the way the Club has continued to flourish.

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