

GAS HISTORY – in BRIEF

Guildford Art Society must be one of the oldest creative societies in the country with its early beginnings in 1923. The first exhibition was held in November 1925. The annual subscription was 5/- . The exhibition was opened by Mrs Watts from Compton and two paintings by her late husband, Mr G.F.Watts, were exhibited for the first time. The most expensive painting at £30 was by Mr S.H.Sime. It is interesting to note that there is an exhibition of works by Mr S.H.Sime permanently on display at the Sime Memorial Gallery in Worplesdon, a Guildford parish.

Other exhibitors in 1925 included Mr E.H. Shepard and his wife. Mr Shepard is famous of course for his illustrations in Winnie the Pooh and Punch Magazine. And Margaret Tarrant, a talented illustrator, well recognised for her fairy like images in children's books and postcard designs for Medici Cards

In 1928, it was agreed that as the annual exhibition was now so popular that nothing smaller than the Borough Hall would do. It is worth noting that six entries were by Sir Edwin Lutyens but were not for sale!

In 1930 the exhibition was opened by General Lord Baden Powell. From then until 1937 the Society was very active and apart from the war years continued with annual exhibitions.

For 1960 the annual exhibition arrived at its present home at Guildford House Gallery, 155, High Street, a fascinating 17th century Grade 1 Listed town house, where it has remained until today. The new Chairman was Edward Wesson, one of the greatest watercolourists of the twentieth century.

Ted Wesson remained as Chairman for many years. Several of his paintings are now in the Guildford Borough Collection. Other members of the Society also have work in the Borough Collection, including Pauline Dean, botanical artist and holder of 7 gold medals from the RHS, Margaret Howarth and her superb drawings of old Guildford, Margaret Palmer, portraitist, Juliet Renny, local artist, book designer and illustrator, and our President Jane Allison a National portraitist having recently completed works of Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall and Archbishop Sentinou.

That is a quick summary of our illustrious past! Today the Society has approximately 300 members, painters, sculptors, ceramicists and craftsmen both professional and amateur. Our youngest member is 15 years old and our eldest is 100 years old and still painting. Talent abounds and many of our members exhibit at national exhibitions including Roger Dellar ROI RIPS, John Bryce SWE RE, Christine Charlesworth RBS SWA, Jo Quigley MA, Sera Knight SWA and Rosemary Miller SWA to name but a few.

We have a busy programme of talks, demonstrations, workshops and outdoor painting days during the summer and many members are active on our Facebook page. We hang two exhibitions annually for artworks in all media, at Guildford House Gallery. The Spring Exhibition is open to all our members. A panel of external professional artists selects our exhibiting members' works for the Autumn Exhibition but even so we fill the walls, a testimony to the general level of members' skills.

Both exhibitions are acknowledged by visitors and press to be of a very high standard and are both eagerly anticipated, well attended and free to visit.

We are easy to join. Just go to the Membership page for information.