

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD



Children of St. Lawrence School pictured with their "Little Red Riding Hood" collage which was a prizewinner at Alton Art Society's annual exhibition



Jean Greaves and her painting of Bosham which won her the "Exhibit of the Year" award

JEAN WINS "EXHIBIT OF YEAR" AWARD

A view of Bosham, Sussex, painted by Jean Greaves, won the "Exhibit of the Year" award in this year's Alton Art Society Show.

In the annual competition decided by the votes of visitors, Jean Wingate's "Urban Wildlife" was runner-up, with Gordon Fleming's "Morning Sunlight, Wield" third.

In the children's section, the winners were: Under 5's — 1, St. Lawrence Primary; 2, Four Marks. 6-8 years — 1, Four Marks; 2, Gideon Frater (St. Lawrence's). 9-11 years — 1, Joanna Wolfe and Sarah Storey (Four Marks); 2, Stephen Fitzmaurice (Four Marks). 12-14 years — 1, Tamsin Dunne (Amery Hill); 2, Alan Woodruffe (Amery Hill). 15-17 years — 1, Kate

Exhibition evinces the pleasure of art

THE 55th Annual Exhibition of the Alton Art Society has been taking place in the Assembly Rooms this week — it continues until (tomorrow) Saturday. Last year saw a more improved one, and it works well; the numbering system is strictly logical, though so is Rubik's cube!

The bulk of the exhibition consists of members' work, 196 pictures and just two examples of "pottery" (which most would call sculpture). At one end is a table with work for direct sale, pottery by Patricia Dodson and Original Animal Paintings on wood by Joan Wingate, and at the other, on the stage, children's art emanating from local schools, divided into classes and awarded prizes. Alton and District Flower Arrangement Society have provided floral displays throughout the hall.

VILLAGE SCENES

The mix doesn't change much year to year. A preponderance of landscapes and village scenes; a good number of flower studies; rather fewer still-life paintings and portraits; a very few prints, collages, and what you will. The stuff indeed of art society exhibitions anywhere, for this is painting and drawing carried out for pleasure rather than profit; nor does it pretend to great significance or profundity, though the exhibitors do aim to create images that people will look at, enjoy, share.

As ever, some works stand out, differently for some people than for others: visitors are asked to nominate for an Exhibit of the Year Award. I go unhesitatingly to four large, very strong pastels by Philippa Dorling, two of jugs of flowers (nos. 30, 34), one a seated profile portrait (no. 32), and one a view of a small village in the French Alps (no. 35). All fine

works, and not just because of their size. In the end I nominated Dédé's Jug, but it could have been any of them.

But going round the show I noted a good number of works. Two small images of figures against open mud-flats and sky by Sheila Halliwell (nos. 3 and 4) are nicely atmospheric; Tana Riviere is strongly expressionist in browns and yellows in her Fiery Sunset (no. 17); all the pictures by Arthur Wren (a new name?) have character and quality that stand out; Molly Dinwiddie has a good study of The Lot Valley (no. 18) and a fine grouping of figures in Down on the Beach (no. 50), both paintings with obvious historical references (Cézanne, Van Gogh), but none the worse for that.

Jean Heathcote conveys the feel of winter well in Tilford in Winter (no. 55), while I particularly liked Mary Towsey's capturing of Morning Light in the Cotswolds (no. 58), an out of the ordinary view, and the more welcome for that. Jean Stourge has two accomplished still-life paintings (nos. 74 and 76) separated by a second of Tana Riviere's more dramatic statements, The Invaders (no. 75). Patricia Lesley Smith also likes to experiment moving into abstraction in Sunset (no. 83), and cut-out paper collage in The Purple Balloon (no. 84). Joan Wingate has birds and animals (what else?). Her Garden Guests are blue tits around half a coconut (no. 85); her German Shepherd Puppy (no. 155) I can best describe as winsome.

Marjorie Kirby has, as ever, strong portraits (nos. 105 and 131). I enjoyed Paul Bannings' very competent watercolour of Green Gates, Bentley Hall (no. 108) and Dorothy Dean's Late Harvest in Alton (no. 109) as well as others of her paintings. Kathleen Page continues to show individuality — I particularly admire her unusual view of Fiddleford Mill (no. 152). And Arthur Farrow is not afraid to stylise his Fields and Buildings

(no. 160). Last, but certainly not least, Zweena Ta'Bois has a good small study of a Village Shop (no. 196), full of character.

CHILDREN'S ART

As ever, the children's art has much of interest, though I have the impression that the senior classes were not as well supported this year as previously. In the under-fives groups of children from St. Lawrence Primary School (with Little Red Riding Hood) and Four Marks Primary School (The Scarecrow) had both done excellently, while also from Four Marks six to eights have given us a splendid fabric assembly of Monsters. Up another age group, nine to elevens, and we have Joanne Wolfe and Sarah Storey, Four Marks again, with a strong image of a Fox, and Stephanie Fitzmaurice with a somewhat unusual Intercity 125 train. Tamsin Dunne from Amery Hill School provides us with a monochrome collage portrait head in the twelve to fourteen group, while in the fifteen to seventeen Kate Hewitt has three linocut prints of a tiger. As ever some of the most interesting images are to be found in the children's work — what we later gain in sophistication is often more than offset by our loss of curiosity and inhibition.

Comparisons one year to another are difficult, but this seems to me to be as good an Alton Art Society exhibition as any. Perhaps it is not quite so strong at the top end (two or three significant names are missing from this show), but on the whole I sense a general increase in the use of light and colour, and the new display pattern certainly helps greatly, numbering system notwithstanding! This show ends on Saturday and seems bound to have many visitors before it closes. And so it should.

Peter Sanger