

Art Society's water colour demo workshop

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Artist Terry Harrison demonstrated his water colour techniques to the Art Society at their most recent workshop on Saturday, organised by Ilene Watson. The art society hold a workshop demo every month from September to April. From May to September they enjoy painting days out. (Photo order AL/7)

Art Society well on course for 75th birthday

THE Alton Art Society was formed on November 16, 1925 at an inaugural meeting called by curator of the Curtis Museum, Mr W Hugh Curtis.

Chief scout, Sir Robert Baden Powell, was the first president and remained in that position until his death in 1941.

General Sir Alfred Martin was the first chairman and was succeeded in 1927 by Mr Stephen Warner who remained in office for 20 years. Mr Hugh Curtis and Mr Morgan Owen were joint secretaries until 1947.

In the early days many crafts were accepted for exhibition and demonstrations held at Alton Assembly Rooms where the society had the use of all rooms for the sum of £10 for the whole week!

Miss Everett was there with her spinning wheel, spinning wool that she had gathered from the countryside, and Mr Norris with his loom.

At a later date, there were also pottery demonstrations by Miss Whitehouse and Mr

Plomer, and Miss Cleff demonstrated weaving.

During Festival of Britain year, 1951, the Assembly Rooms were donated by the town council free of charge for the week.

Activities ceased during the war, to be resumed in 1946 when Mr Warner was re-elected to the chair. Mr Hugh Curtis remained secretary and Lady Bonham-Carter became the society's president.

The Sketch Club was started in 1948 by Lieut. Comdr. Brooks at the Butts Tearooms, the home of Miss Clegg and Miss Whitehouse.

Members met weekly, moving in time to the British Legion Hall in Albert Road and continuing until 1960. Since those days the society has run a winter and a summer programme of demonstrations and tutorials combined with informal painting days.

Sir Hugh Smiley became chairman in 1955 and continued until 1966 when he became vice-chairman and Mr H Percy Cox, a member since 1926, was appointed to the chair.

He remained in the post until 1979 and died in 1990.

Between 1961 and 1962 were three presidents: Tippitt, Mrs (now) Mallinson.

In March 1963 Lady Coggin was elected president in succession to the resignation of Lady Sheila Fitzmaurice. Lady Shadley is the current president.

The first Alton Art Exhibition took place for the first time in 1963. It was held in the Alton Assembly Rooms. It was a success and the late Jack Brown Street was the first to be exhibited in 1963. The 1983 exhibition was held in two weeks.

Lady Charlotte Bonham Carter died on December 21, 1988. She was president of the society for many years. Lady Lane took over the presidency in 1989.

In May 1988 exhibitions were started at Oakhanger, near Lawrence Church, and held at Alton Assembly Rooms. For many years the society also enjoyed using the Gallery for exhibitions.



Alton Art Society president, Lady Charlotte Bonham Carter (centre) viewing an exhibition during the late 1960's with the then chairman, Percy Cox (second right) and secretary, Norah Coggin (left).

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