DIAMOND JUBILEE

1952 - 2012

Officers of the Society of Fulham Artists
1952 - 2012

PRESIDENT

1952 - 1990	Michael Stewart
1990 - 1992	Baroness Phillips
1993 - 1996	Carel Weight

CHAIRMAN

1953 - 1954	G A Stevens
1954 - 1963	Leslie Wilcox
1963 - 1969	Jack Fairhurst
1969 - 1976	Richard Joicey
1976 - 1990	Joyce Doo
1990 - 2002	Liz Macdonnell
2008 - 2011	Hazel Leach & Martin Chaffer
2011 -	Clare Weatherill

SECRETARY

1952 - 1957	Ailsa Gilpin
1957 - 1981	Peter Gardner
1982 - 2001	Ray Garvey
2002 - 2005	Hazel Leach
2005 - 2011	Martin Chaffer
2011 -	Rowena Vaughan

TREASURER

1952	J W Jermaine
1953 - 1955	Kenneth Hempel
1955 - 1956	George Branigan
1957 - 1976	Edward Tudor
1976 - 1980	George Petty
1980 - 1982	Mary Cane-Honeysett
1982 - 1989	Elizabeth Macdonnell
1990 - 2004	Felicity Guille
2005 - 2009	Michael Burchell
2009 -	Annette Van Maurik

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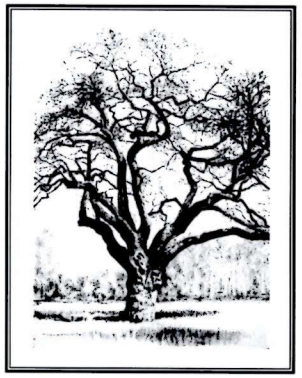
Dedication

Although this short history of our Society bears witness to the outstanding service of some of our members past and present, I would like to dedicate this book to one who, though not a member, gave unstinting support both practical and financial, which saved SOFAP from extinction.

His name is **Michael Burchell,** and we wish him a speedy and full recovery from the stroke that he suffered earlier this year. He will not be forgotten.

And I would also like to record my thanks to my wife, Greta, not just for hours spent patiently typing various drafts of this book, but for all her help and support behind the scenes on behalf of the Society. Also thanks to Charlotte Darwin for her laser-eyed proof reading and corrections, and to Tony Hannaford for making it all look so good!



Foreword

by Martin Chaffer, Hon President, SOFAP

This brief account of the Society's history marks our Diamond Jubilee in the year in which we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Accession of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. The two events were not entirely unconnected, as we will discover.

Sixty years ago, I was in my final year at school, where I enjoyed art classes as well as the usual heartier pursuits. From the time I left however, I never gave a thought to painting until, at the age of about sixty, it occurred to me that my career as an advertising photographer might not last forever! I started going to drawing classes with an artist friend, Sarah Beckett, whose studio was halfway between my workplace in Battersea and my home - a Victorian artist's studio at 8 Avonmore Road, near Olympia. This grounding gave me hope that I might have found an agreeable and challenging pastime to occupy my retirement. When Sarah returned to Trinidad I took various part-time courses at Heatherley's and Putney School of Art and enjoyed the luxury of having a large studio in which to practise.

In 2002, as our two boys had married and left home, we decided to downsize. Two years of roller-coaster ups and downs ensued as we tried to find a suitable

home in Fulham, so that Greta, my wife, could get to the V & A Museum where she does voluntary work for the Friends. At the eleventh hour we bought 48 Epple Road, almost opposite the Library, and in August 2004 moved in, knowing not a soul in the area.

Three months later, a rather tatty banner strung across the Library's face announced an Art Exhibition. Out of curiosity we went in, to discover what appeared to be a thriving Society of local artists. We asked if we could join and were delighted to be accepted. Then, as soon as the exhibition was over, came a general meeting at which it was proposed that the Society close down! There appeared to be no alternative until the man sitting next to me stood up and said, *"What's the matter - do you need money? I'll give you some money. How much do you want? What do you want it for?"*

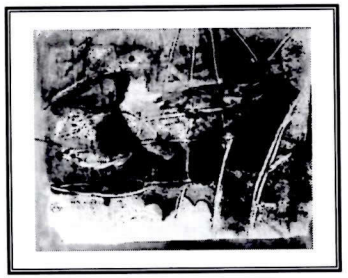
It was of course, Michael Burchell. And I thought, if he is a member there must be something about this Society that is worthwhile, and as I had time on my hands, I offered what help I could, so long as someone could show me what needed to be done! So SOFAP was saved from extinction thanks to Michael, who was not in fact a member of the Society but a local businessman with a big heart, and to the members who came forward to keep the flag flying, notably Hazel Leach, Alan Day, George Farkas and Russell Mack, supported by Chris Payne who, like me, had just joined. With Michael and Lynda Williams we formed an ad hoc committee to see what needed to be done.

Over the next seven years I gradually took on the role of Secretary, with the guidance and support of the committee. My background as a self-employed photographer meant that I was happier working on my own rather than directing others, and, one step at a time, we set about reviving the functions and fortunes of the Society.

A first meeting of members was held in February 2005, and it was decided to revive some of the events that would encourage members to take an active part in the Society between Exhibitions. Classes, demonstrations, visits to exhibitions and galleries were all proposed and a date was fixed for a Summer Exhibition. A quarterly Newsletter, with pictures, was launched in June, designed by David Lauder and printed by the ever-generous Michael Burchell.

This helped enormously in conveying information - especially the promise of a workshop with Hazel Soan, a celebrity artist who fronted episodes of The Watercolour Challenge on television. Hazel Leach hosted a "taster day" for would-be potters at Sands End, and the Newsletter also offered a variety of tips likely to be of interest to members. I really feel that this initiative was probably the vital ingredient in the revival of the Society's identity. From that time on a sense of community developed, and members began to feel that the ship was on an even keel.

Today I am happy to have handed over to Clare Weatherill, our new Chairman, the reins of a Society that has risen phoenix-like from the brink of annihilation and will, I hope, celebrate its Centenary in 2052. Along the way Greta and I have had the pleasure and privilege of working alongside a team of volunteers whose cheerful dedication to the cause leaves me with no doubts about the Society's future. When Clare asked me to write up our history to celebrate our Diamond Jubilee, I agreed, with little idea of what it would involve. But as I started delving into the archives, although there were some surprises regarding our origins, I found that our history could be conveyed by reference to just three people whose dedication had seen the Society through thick and thin for over half a century. And they are all alive to tell the tale - take a bow Peter Gardner, Liz MacDonnell and Hazel Leach! Their contributions to this archive cover the first fifty years of the Society.



Chapter 1

A Society is born

Something struck me about the composition of the first Committee when I started reading through the Minutes of the Society of Fulham Artists: worthies and dignitaries from the Fulham Council seemed to outnumber actual artists! The Bishop of London, Dr JWC Wand, was named Vice-President along with the Mayor of Fulham (ex-officio). Two MPs were involved – Dr Edith Summerskill (Fulham West) as another Vice-President, and Michael Stewart (Fulham East) as President. Two Councillors represented the Libraries Committee - Alderman Mrs Lusher and Cllr Brian Galpin, a distinguished barrister, while his wife, Ailsa Galpin, became Hon. Secretary. The meetings took place at the Fulham Library, with Cllr Wallis in the Chair.

At the first meeting of the Society on December 2nd 1952, Cllr Wallis vacated the Chair in favour of Mr G. A. Stevens, who was an artist and Principal of the Fulham and South Kensington Mens' Institute. Seven other members of the newly formed Society were then elected to the Executive Committee to formulate policies for the coming year. Of these only one, Haydn Reynolds Mackey, was a professional artist of some renown. The others were all amateurs. It was this curious preponderance of Council officials in the make-up of the Society's

original Committee that led me to spend a few hours in the Fulham Archives to discover the facts about the origins of our Society. And here is what I found.

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We go back now to the Festival of Britain in 1951. Six years after VJ Day, which had marked the end of the Second World War, Britain was still recovering from years of austerity. Food rationing was to continue until 1954. The Festival was organised both to show the world that we were emerging from depression and to inject a new spirit of optimism for the country's future. Fulham Council enthusiastically joined in, organising street parties and other events, which included putting on an exhibition of work by local artists at the Fulham Library in July 1951. The Fulham Chronicle greeted this innovation thus: "FULHAM MAY CHALLENGE CHELSEA DOMINANCE". And they were not talking football!

Dr Wand, the Bishop of London, who opened this show, said "The 72 pieces by 49 different artists show there is a live artistic settlement in Fulham today." He also reported that: "Ever since an official of Fulham Palace set up a pottery under the wing of his Bishop, there have been repeated outbursts of real artistic talent in Fulham." [This, I think, refers to the old Fulham Pottery, whose kiln is still visible at 210 New Kings Road]. He also invoked the names of William Holman Hunt and Edward Burne-Jones who had lived and worked in the Borough.

Cllr Wallace, then Deputy Mayor as well as Head of Libraries in the Borough, replied that the Libraries Committee was delighted to provide facilities for art exhibitions. "We would like the Library to be the centre of culture in Fulham", he said. The Council's minutes stated, "We have welcomed a suggestion from the Borough Librarian that a local Amateur Art Group should be formed to foster the study and appreciation of art. We should be prepared to offer facilities for meetings of such a group and ask all amateur artists to send their names and addresses to the Borough Librarian."

Encouraged by the success of the Festival of Britain show, the Council repeated the idea to celebrate the Accession of Queen Elizabeth in June 1952. They

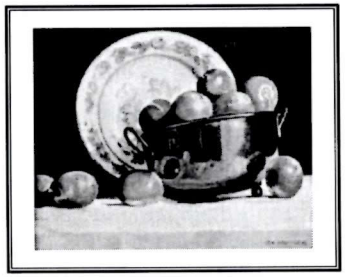
then followed that with another show in October, to feature work by local amateur artists, urging them "to band themselves into an Association along the lines of the Society which had flourished in Fulham in the 1930s". Cllr Wallis said, "We have felt that a Society of this description is necessary and we are willing to provide accommodation. If they take this up we hope they will give us a show once or twice a year". One of the exhibitors was our Chairman, Michael Stewart MP, who had only recently taken up painting as a hobby. A painting by Councillor Galpin's wife, Ailsa, also attracted favourable comment in the Fulham Chronicle.

At the close of this exhibition, which was put on by the Council, a number of the exhibitors were invited to prepare a draft constitution for a Society of Fulham Artists. This was adopted at a further meeting on December 2nd 1952, and so it was that the Society of Fulham Artists was officially born, under the aegis of the Council and with a total of twenty-seven members. From the outset, therefore, we enjoyed not only the free use of the exhibition space and the hands-on support of the Fulham Council, but the assistance of the Library staff in hanging the exhibitions. This lasted until 2009, when the Council (now of the joint Boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham) decided that they could no longer sponsor our Exhibitions, creating the most serious crisis that we have had to face and overcome in our 60-year history.

The Minutes of our first official Committee Meeting are signed by Michael Stewart, who remained a loyal and hugely popular President of the Society until his death, aged 83, in 1990. He was MP for Fulham from 1945 until 1979, when he took his seat in the Upper House as Baron Stewart of Fulham. He served twice as Foreign Minister in Harold Wilson's government, and was made a Companion of Honour and a Privy Councillor. In spite of his impressive political career, he enjoyed his role in the SFA, exhibiting whenever he could (mostly marked NFS), always encouraging amateur artists like himself. Hazel Leach, a potter who joined the Society in 1975 and helped to rescue it from closure in 2004, remembers him opening one exhibition by saying, "If a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing badly!" in relation to his own artistic efforts.

Another early member of the Society was Peter Gardner, a very good artist

and Head of Art at the Fulham Men's Institute, who visited the Society's first exhibition in 1953 and subsequently joined. It seems he was the equivalent of today's techno geeks, as he owned not only a telephone but also a typewriter! He was immediately recruited to be Assistant Secretary, and later Secretary, and it is he that we have to thank for the impeccable records he kept in a massive ledger of over two hundred pages, from 1958 until he retired in 1981! To my great delight I found that, at 91, he is still enjoying his retirement in the lovely Dorset town of Shaftesbury, where I went to meet him to get a first-hand account of those early days.



Chapter 2

A quarter-century of service

Peter Gardner joined the Society in 1954. He had recently married and moved into 36 Gowan Avenue, where he lived until he retired in 1991. When I went to meet him at his home in Shaftesbury I was hugely impressed by his total recall of the characters of some of our founding Members. Let him take up the story in his own words.

"In 1952 the Fulham Borough Council decided to celebrate the Accession of Her Majesty by organising an art exhibition. The exhibition was considered such a success that the organisers decided to make the group permanent and so formed themselves into the Society of Fulham Artists. The President was Michael Stewart, a local MP, the Chairman G.A.Stevens, and the Secretary Ailsa Galpin. I first attended one of the early meetings and as I was the only person to admit to owning both a telephone and a typewriter, I was elected Assistant Secretary.

At first there were monthly meetings which were crits, demonstrations, or lectures, plus an annual exhibition in the Central Library. The exhibitions

attracted many of the professional artists living in and around Fulham, amongst them one Carel Weight RA, who helped a lot and showed regularly, sculptors Herman Cawthra and James Wedgwood, and Christopher Catlin RBA, who was a taxi driver. He often took fares to our handing-in and then he would tell the fare that he was on the hanging committee and explain which paintings stood a chance and which did not. Leslie Wilcox, a distinguished marine artist, had just painted the Royal Yacht. Formerly hanging in Britannia's dining room, the picture is now in Frogmore House, Windsor.

We had some unusual troubles though. The first Treasurer disappeared with the Post Office book with our total funds (£10) and was never seen again. An early Publicity Officer was arrested for soliciting at Walham Green Station, as it was then, and a later Publicity Officer, who was the wife of a member, gave her husband a two-page spread in the West London Observer which described in great detail each of his paintings and relegated the other exhibitors to "And also exhibiting are...."! After her resignation, a quiet period, but then a later Publicity Officer was murdered with a cricket bat and we felt it was time to give that office a rest!

After a few years I was promoted to Secretary, when Mr & Mrs Galpin moved to the West Country. Edward Tudor became Treasurer, serving for many years. He was a bank clerk by profession, and did a thoroughly professional job. And our President, Michael Stewart, became Foreign Secretary, so that we were often swamped with security officers when he came to a Private View. Though he was obviously very busy, Michael always showed a painting - usually a watercolour of the Scilly Isles where he holidayed with Harold Wilson.

When he became Lord Stewart of Fulham in 1979, Martin Stevens became our MP. He was very interested in the Society's efforts and arranged an exhibition for us in the Houses of Parliament. It took place in a large room in the depths of the building. I was fascinated to see all those famous faces in the flesh, but most were plainly baffled by our presence, as the usual displays shown were about pig-iron and such things! They seemed pleased with our show but we never sold anything.

A member of the Libraries Committee wanted to start a picture lending scheme. He persisted and one was organised. The Library bought some reproductions, but also regularly bought paintings from our exhibitions. This meant that we always sold a few pictures before the Private View, which was a great encouragement to the members. I used to ask a local artist to select the works. These included Ruskin Spear, Carel Weight and Mary Fedden, who were very happy to do this. The Council gave a generous fee as well!

In the mid-Sixties, during the Chairmanship of Richard Joicey, a group of artists joined who were connected in various ways to show business. They were a lively bunch and brought much vitality and colour to the Society. *(Joicey was the youngest sibling of Lord Joicey, who had married a music-hall artiste called Violet Loraine. She sang with George Robey who made a big hit with the popular song "If you were the only girl in the world." Ed.)*

I loved painting Fulham, as did many other artists, in spite of the lethal smogs. I loved the brown and green paintwork, the empty streets, the grime and the milkman's horse waiting patiently in the rain. I painted them all. We did not have much in those early days but I think we had optimism, and authorities like Fulham Borough Council that not only supported the Arts but tried hard to find ways to encourage them."

Peter Gardner ROI, FRSA.

This short account does not of course do justice to Peter's immaculate record-keeping of all the Society's meetings and events during his 25 years of service. It is thanks to his efforts that we have a massive ledger of over 200 pages recording the ups and downs of the Society. Sadly, this gradually peters out a few years after his retirement.

In addition to his work for the Society, Peter enjoyed teaching as Head of Art at the Fulham and South Kensington Institute. Hazel Leach recalls him fondly, as it was Peter who encouraged her to take up teaching pottery. His office he described as "a shed" at the back of Beaufort House School on Lillie Road. The Institute was run by the London County Council, inspired by the principle that "no eligible candidate should be debarred from higher education

through lack of means to pay for it." The LCC was abolished in 1965, and the school itself was closed for redevelopment in 1991. There is now a block of flats on the site behind the old school walls, with the entrances for Boys and Girls still showing.

We would know very little of the early pioneers of the Society without Peter's "Who was Who". For instance, of our first Chairman, G.A.Stevens, who was replaced after only one year in office. *"He was Principal of the Fulham Men's Institute and had returned from organising education in Africa. He was elected Chairman and it was he who organised the first exhibition of the Society, which I saw. There were about ninety exhibits, of which it seemed forty-five were by Mr. Stevens! They were all of Africa or Africans and looked as though they had been painted with coloured soaps. This caused a row with the professional members. A Committee meeting was hurriedly called and Leslie Wilcox was elected Chairman. Mr. Stevens soon left the Society and retired from Fulham and South Kensington".*

This incident is very discreetly minuted in the report of the first AGM of the Society in October 1953 as follows: *"As a result of a ballot, Mr. Leslie Wilcox RI was elected Chairman in place of Mr. Stevens by 21 votes to 7." The Fulham Chronicle curiously described Stevens' Portrait of Akua Nyame Kye" as "another sensitive study of the sepia skin!*

Peter Gardner continued in office until he retired in 1981, three years after the Society's 25th Anniversary. I feel it is worth quoting his Chairman, Michael Stewart's, report on that occasion, as it encapsulates the way things were then.

"This year we celebrated our 25th anniversary as an Art Society. During those years we have served, first the Borough of Fulham and then the Borough of Hammersmith, as the main exhibiting resource in the area. Our relationship with the borough is very good, they have supported us, both by letting us use the hall we are now in free of charge, by allowing the janitors to hang and arrange the work, by exhibiting our posters around the borough and by buying pictures from the exhibition. Without the support of the borough we would not be able to exist. The reason why we are able to charge so little for our services is entirely due to this support and we must put on record our thanks.

"At last the residents of Fulham are realising what a number of bargains there are at our exhibitions and the increase in the exhibition of pottery has helped sales and given an attractive three-dimensional quality to the show....

Stewarding is a great problem. We all like to sell, but this can only be done if there is someone there at the time to take the money and clinch the order. If more members would give an hour of their time it would be less of a burden to those who so kindly give up theirs. This is one way in which members can be actively of help to their colleagues.

"We can congratulate ourselves on reaching this anniversary and we must look forward to the next 25 years and try to make them as successful as these have been."

As it happened, the year 2002 saw a very low point in the Society's history, so low that our Golden Jubilee anniversary passed unnoticed. But before that there was a kind of Golden Age which we will come to in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

MEANWHILE...

There is no doubting the commitment and enthusiasm of the founding members. A variety of events was organised at the library on the first Wednesday of each month. The first was a 'portfolio' meeting where members could bring their work for helpful criticism by professional artists. A subsequent Minute records that *"Generally the first meeting was a great success but although Mr. Wheatley was a very pleasant and interesting speaker, he took too long, and what he said was probably above the heads of half the members present!"* Other activities were films or slide shows, demonstrations of work in various media, as well as outdoor sketching trips as far afield as Boxhill. The only activity not allowed in the library was life drawing, but classes were soon arranged at member Peter Jackson's studio in W 14. It was even agreed to advertise the classes on the library notice boards.

At the AGM at the end of the Society's first year, membership had reached 64 and the proposal was made that work shown at exhibitions should be marked

A or P in the catalogue, to distinguish between amateurs and professionals. This was rejected by the meeting and remains to this day one of the core values of the Society. We are not an elitist society. We do not discriminate.

Two of the original members of the SFA were distinguished sculptors who both resided in Fulham Park Gardens. They were Hermon Cawthra FRBS, ARCA, at No. 4 and James Wedgwood FRBS at No.10. Their work can be seen in Bishop's Park near the Putney Bridge entrance. They exhibited regularly with the Society, although long before the lift was installed. This meant manhandling those weighty objects up the forty-four steps to the Exhibition Hall - men were men in them thar days!

The pattern established in those early days meant that the Society quickly became a going concern. Fees and costs could be kept to a minimum thanks to the wholehearted support of the Council, and membership slowly increased. In the third year, potters were exhibiting alongside the sculptors and in 1955 Mr. Wedgwood, defending the arrangement of the sculpture at the previous exhibition, declared that he knew "of no other Society where the standard was so good" and that "the Pottery makes the show!" A pottery demo was arranged the following year.

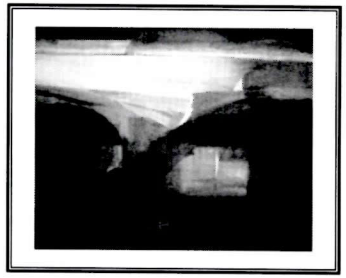
By the Spring of 1957 membership totalled 96, and it was decided that saturation point had been reached, and that membership should not automatically grant the right to exhibit, but that this should be at the sole discretion of the Hanging Committee. This was agreed, and in 1958 a second annual exhibition, to be held in May, was proposed in order to increase the Society's funds in the face of rising costs. The November exhibition that year attracted a thousand visitors, and a Newsletter was started to keep the growing membership up to date. In the Spring of 1962, two thousand visitors saw the show and sales were good.

In all this time however, there were two constant and recurring themes - unpaid subscriptions and the failure of some exhibitors to take their turn at stewarding. And it has to be said that this was still the case in 2004 when the Society came to within a hair's breadth of self-destruction. Subscriptions then used to be paid for 12 months from the date that you joined, so everyone had a

different renewal date! Stewarding seems to have been almost voluntary, with the result that the exhibitions would frequently be closed for lack of anyone to invigilate, and visitors might arrive to find the doors locked. Now that all subs are due on January 1st and specific stewarding times allocated at Handing-in, the mechanics of running the Society are much simplified and consequently more efficient. I suppose that this is one benefit of our use of computer technology which now, in our 60th year, covers 75% of our membership.

But we were talking about 1962 when the Society was just ten years old. I don't think, however, that recording all the ups and downs of our long history would be very illuminating. For much of the time it is a case of *"plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose"*. There are a few facts, however, that caught my attention as I delved into the archives. One thing that struck me was the length of service of the various officers of our Society. Our first President, Michael Stewart, served from 1952-1990 - more than half our total history to 2004 - but the office seems to have died out a few years later. There have been only six Chairmen covering the first 50 years; only three holders of the position of Secretary, but eight Treasurers, including the one who absconded with the money! Quite an exceptional record, which no doubt helps to account for the stability of the Society over the years.

In fact I began to suspect that perhaps it was the later breakdown in the formal structures that may have contributed to our near-collapse in 2004.



Chapter 4

A new style

In 1981 Peter Gardner, who had served as Secretary for 27 years, turned 60 and decided to retire and move to the West Country. He was succeeded by Ray Garvey, a colourful character who was to guide and inspire the Society for the next 20 years, with the support of a charming and charismatic partner, Liz MacDonnell, as Treasurer and later, Chairman.

But in 1984 he was faced with a crisis. The Borough Council of Hammersmith and Fulham (the boroughs having merged in 1975) decided that only one exhibition a year would be allowed, as economy measures were called for. This threatened to halve the Society's income at a stroke, but interventions by Michael (now Lord) Stewart and our MP, Martin Stevens, plus a petition organised by Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Liz MacDonnell, carrying over 300 signatures, managed to save the day, and the status quo was restored with only minor changes. From that time on it was the partnership of Liz MacDonnell (who became Chairman in 1990) and Ray Garvey, who had succeeded Peter Gardner as Head of Art at the Fulham Institute, and Felicity Guille taking over as Treasurer, that kept the Society going until the turn of the century. So it was to Liz that I turned next for her recollections of twenty

years' service to the Society.

Liz MacDonnell (in her own write)...

Martin has asked me to contribute my memories of the Society of Fulham Artists, as it was then known, so here goes...

Well, yes, of course, I have always been passionate about art, all the arts actually, and painting is such an exciting thing to do, no matter what. David Hockney once said that he got as much enjoyment from painting his front door as making a painting on canvas! I also do so enjoy painters and potters and anyone creative actually. Rather different, a little bit eccentric, colourful, observant, funny, passionate and often deeply thoughtful and original.

When Ray Garvey asked me to "help him run the Society" (he was teaching and very busy and so did not have the time to put in to it) I thought it would be an interesting challenge. Ray had inherited it from Peter Gardner, when he succeeded him at the Institute in Lillie Road. We felt that the Society was a little bit old-fashioned and resolved to bring it more up to date. It certainly was a challenge but a very enjoyable one. There was already a Committee, so I had to tread carefully to begin with, but the Committee Members came and went until we built up a wonderful lot of helpers willing to do almost anything!

We decided to keep everything as cheap as possible to enable people of lesser means to join. I realised what an important community project it was, and we wanted to encourage dormant talent and to help those suffering from things like depression, those having lost a husband or indeed a wife, recovering from often serious illnesses, and even a few on the mental side. (I was once reliably informed that I was being observed by beings in outer space!) All in all, the people I met from that time were the salt of the earth - the proper Fulham residents, who had lived in Fulham for all their lives, one or two in the same house, and had witnessed the horrors of the Blitz. Fulham was badly hit in the war. Houses disappeared overnight. Children were orphaned or lost. I heard some heartbreaking tales first hand. I began to advise people about the adult education classes run by the Council, which were marvellous in those days.

The new Committee consisted of friends. We met round the kitchen tables of our various houses to write invitations and envelopes, sort out the catalogue, etc. And to begin with, I was doing the finances as well. I found that very difficult, especially trying to work out fifteen per cent of the price of a painting, then deduct that from the original price to send the balance to the artist who had sold it! I made endless mistakes, but at last Felicity Guille appeared, a proper accountant to boot, and someone who could spot a mathematical error from a hundred yards. What bliss, and what a kind person.

Handing-in day for the exhibition usually took place on a Saturday. That left us two days to sort out, arrange, number and lay out the paintings on the floor ready for hanging. We then had to copy out the information on the labels and list them in preparation for the catalogue. This was a lot of hard work and we could not afford to make any mistakes, especially with the prices. It was quite a marathon. But the exhibitors had quite a marathon to contend with as well.

The Library stairs, as most people know, are very steep and in those days there was no lift. Several of our Members were well into their eighties, but they were expected to carry their paintings up those stairs. And first they had to do battle with the weather. The worst is trying to carry canvases in a howling gale. Struggling along or being blown along like a ship in full sail is torture enough, but with rain as well and possibly thunder and once in a snowstorm..! I remember coming out of the Library and finding our cars covered in snow - in fact we had difficulty in finding our cars at all.

The potters, of course, had to bring in large boxes with carefully packed and fragile pieces. One trip on the stairs and disaster was imminent. The queue to deliver the art and pay the dues stretched right down the Fulham Road, but there was always so much to talk about, catching up on news and gossip, families and health issues of the previous six months. It was like a great reunion.

The Private Views were legendary. We changed the "one invitation to admit 2 people for a glass of sherry and a piece of cake" to "bring as many people as you like, lots of wine red or white, and nibbles". We subsidised the wine consumption by putting a large bowl on the bar with a notice saying "Contributions by anyone feeling guilty will be appreciated". By the end of the evening the bowl

would be overflowing!

The potters set out a marvellous display in the centre of the hall and there would be 225 paintings hanging ceiling to floor, as well as on panels. These were all hung by the Library porter, wonderman Roberto, who took on this huge job without batting an eyelid. It took him a week, and used hundreds of miles of string! He was never seen to be grumpy or to utter an unkind word, and we always gave him a fat envelope after the exhibition to show our appreciation. We felt very proud to be hanging amateur and professional painters side by side. It made for very diverse and interesting exhibitions.

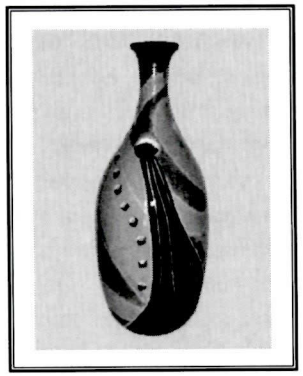
I had one responsibility I did not enjoy, which was to find someone, possibly a painter, to open the exhibition. I dreaded writing inevitably a rather cringe-making letter, but they nearly all worked, except for Bernard Dunstan who wrote back "Certainly not, I hate opening exhibitions!" We had a good list but I think my favourite was Mary Fedden. When I plucked up courage to ask Carel Weight to be our Chairman I did not hear anything for a year, then suddenly he wrote to say he had just found my letter and was delighted to fill the post!

This continued for twenty years, forty Exhibitions, forty Newsletters, always supported by a loyal band of stalwarts. Then sadly, tragedy struck three times in the space of just over a year. Ray Bone, who was the leading light of the potters, lost his partner and fellow potter Eric to cancer. Then Ray Bone himself died of a stroke, followed shortly by Ray Garvey of a heart attack. As if that were not enough, the Library was going to close for a year for the installation of the lift, and I decided the time had finally come for me to retire. I needed to spend more time with my family and my own painting. I certainly felt a great sadness, as over the years I had met so many fascinating people and made many wonderful friends. I feel really privileged to have been involved with such a lovely Society, which has enriched my life and given me so much pleasure, and left me with so many happy memories."

When Liz finally called it a day, in spite of many vain appeals in her newsletters for someone to take over, there were no takers. Hazel Leach, however, who bcame Vice-Chairman of London Potters about this time, acted as care-

taker for the time being, although it seemed that the life had drained out of the Society. Our fiftieth anniversary in 2002 passed unnoticed. There were no celebrations. The exhibitions in 2004 showed that the spark had gone out altogether, and Hazel called a meeting to declare officially that it was beyond recovery.

Let Hazel, the last of my three stalwarts, tell her side of the story.



CHAPTER 5

SOFAP MEMORIES FROM 1975 - 2005

by Hazel Leach

I first joined the Society of Fulham Artists in 1975 with encouragement from my pottery tutor, Diana Carruthers, and the Head of Art at the Institute for Adult Learning, Peter Gardner. Peter was the Secretary of the Society until 1981. It was only the second year that pottery had been displayed in the exhibitions, although sculpture in wood and stone had featured before. Michael Stewart was President at the time. Michael (later Lord Stewart, the Foreign Secretary) was a modest painter himself, obviously an amateur but one who loved to get his paints out and have a go. My fondest memory of him is a speech he made at the opening of one of our exhibitions. He said, "If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly" - giving encouragement to all of us who love painting but whose talent doesn't match our enthusiasm. He strongly emphasised the principle that our exhibitions were for all our members, so that amateurs could show their work at the side of professional artists and would learn something from the experience.

In the 1970s our three-dimensional work was shown in two rectangular glass and

wooden cabinets on legs, which had no shelves, so the display had to be built up with covered boxes to give it height. The work had to be passed through a narrow door at one end. One had constantly to move back to assess the balance of the display and there was much discussion and changing work around which took a great deal of time. There was only a handful of potters showing at that time, but numbers quickly grew so a bigger, more convenient area had to be introduced. In the 1980s we began using the platform plinths which we use to this day.

Meetings like the AGMs were held in the Exhibition Hall free of charge. We also had some demonstrations, mostly by Ray Garvey, who showed us how he built up his abstract landscapes. These were not workshops as such as the members only watched and did no work themselves.

Ray Garvey took over the Secretaryship when Peter Gardner retired. We all missed Peter's lovely work which featured fine landscapes and snowscapes. I remember one particular painting of a hunting scene on a frosty morning, with the red coats of the riders bringing a blaze of colour to the cool tones of the English countryside in winter.

Ray's style was very different in size and method. He painted large, highly coloured outdoor scenes in acrylics. They were almost abstract but kept just enough information to suggest landscapes. His death in 2001, at the age of 58, sent shock waves through the Fulham art community. His memorial service at Saint Etheldreda's Church was filled with grieving students of his, and staff from various Adult Education establishments as well as his many friends. He was my Head of Department after Peter and was a very supportive and dear friend.

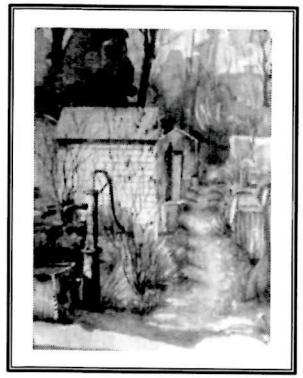
The Society's exhibitions continued, and Liz MacDonnell did sterling work, with few to help her except Felicity Guille, her Treasurer. Ray Bone and Eric Grant (both potters) were extremely helpful at exhibition times. They were always there during all the "handing-ins", and arranged the displays of pots and sculptures. By the mid-nineties we had a lot of pottery members, both Ray Bone's students and mine, and they were all extremely helpful. On an analysis of people stewarding at one exhibition it was noted that 70% of members were painters and did 35% of the stewarding whilst members who were potters did 65%! It was because the potters were so supportive of the Society in this waning period

that I suggested that the "Society of Fulham Artists" should add "& Potters" to our title, and this was agreed in 2003.

About this time, with Ray Bone and Eric Grant having died as well as Ray Garvey, and Liz becoming increasingly involved in other spheres, the Society began to decline. I took over writing the Newsletter - and it was just that, a letter. Marilyn Hardwick typed out my script and the two of us hand-wrote envelopes to all members (169 at the time) and posted the letter and exhibition forms twice a year. But nothing else was going on.

In 2003-4 many artists drifted out of the Society, some saying that standards were falling. Interest from viewers was waning too and the exhibitions were poorly attended, with very poor sales. In the Spring of 2004 only 2 pictures and 3 pots were sold and clearly the Society was going downhill. I called a meeting at the Library, intending to put it to the members that perhaps we should call it a day. However, a few days before the meeting, I had a letter from Michael Burchell. He admired the Society and was distressed to hear that we might be closing. He offered to buy us a new banner (the old one dated from 1952 and was falling to pieces) and also offered to donate £250 to our coffers, to do some printing for us, and to fulfil any function that would be useful to us. In due course he became our Membership Secretary. I read his letter to the meeting and it turned the tide of opinion. With such support we decided to carry on and pull out all the stops in staging the next exhibition.

Enter Martin Chaffer, Tony Hannaford, David Lauder and Alan Day (now sadly deceased). We had a follow-up meeting at my house to discuss how we could put SOFAP back on the artistic map. Tony and Alan were graphic designers and Tony came to the meeting armed with a really attractive poster. Martin had some good ideas about how things should be run, and later he got his wife Greta involved with advertising and getting us sponsorship. Alan and David helped with the printing. The next exhibition was a modest success and a number of members who had lapsed decided to come back to us. Since 2006 there has been a steady rise in SOFAP's fortunes.



Chapter 6

2005 - Rebirth

by Martin Chaffer

Following the meeting in December 2004, a small Committee was formed with Hazel Leach as Co-ordinator and Michael Burchell taking over as Treasurer from Felicity Guille. George Farkas and Russell Mack represented the Potters' interests, while Tony Hannaford and Alan Day were artists and graphic designers. My wife and I had a large kitchen table so we hosted Committee meetings and tried to pick up the threads of the organisation.

A Summer exhibition was scheduled for early June and the first workshops were planned. David Lauder's experience as a graphic designer made it possible to produce an illustrated Newsletter to be published four times a year. The Summer exhibition was an improvement on the disastrous Autumn 2004, but the new banner designed by Tony Hannaford was stolen off the front of the Library after the first night, so attendance fell short of expectations! A few weeks later, it seemed that the recovery was doomed, as the Library scheduled a three-month closure for redecorating in the autumn. A desperate search for an alternative venue in the borough ensued without success, but fortunately, the work was postponed and our November exhibition went ahead as planned. A much sturdier and more prominent banner, which we still have, was again

sponsored by Michael Burchell.

The Exhibition was opened by our MP, Greg Hands, and the Fulham Gazette gave us a half-page write-up. There was a gratifyingly large entry, and in the event, 28 pictures had to be rejected for lack of space to hang them. But sales indicated that we were on the way back to success. One member wrote, *"I'm delighted with all the new blood and enthusiasm. I had almost given up hope!"*

Our first workshop that autumn, with Hazel Soan at her studio in Crookham Road, was a huge success and set a very high standard for the future.

Bit by bit the Society was finding its feet again, and in retrospect, I feel that the one factor which helped build the recovery and maintain momentum was the quarterly Newsletter posted to all members. Apart from diary dates for future workshops and exhibitions, it contained reviews of events and provided members with a forum in which to air their views. Although it appeared only in black and white until March 2009, I think it helped to establish a sense of community even among members who did not exhibit.

In the Spring of 2006, a very important event occurred which has benefitted us ever since. Tom Robb, who had been Professor of Fine Art at Middlesex University and also Commodore of the Ranelagh Sailing Club, kindly arranged for us to hire the Club room for our workshops. At last we had an ideal base, and could plan a series of events with confidence. Tom proved a delightful teacher as well, always encouraging and stimulating, and has opened our series of workshops every year since. *"Lang may his lum reek!"*

The 2006 Autumn Exhibition exceeded all expectations. It was opened by David Herbert, Head of Libraries in the Borough, who recalled an earlier occasion when Ray Garvey had taken him out for dinner after a similar opening night. They enjoyed a few drinks, and then a few more, and David found himself unfit to drive home! Luckily he had the keys to the Fulham Library and spent the night in sweet oblivion on the floor of his office! Sales on the first night alone topped £2,500 in spite of the crowds and the heat, and the final total set a record of £4,336. New rules about stewarding ensured the Hall was open all hours, and members could see that their efforts bore fruit.

At this point the Society took a hesitant step into the future by launching its own website, with Jesus Soler as webmaster and help from David Lauder and Peter Evans who were already 'computer savvy'. This marked another important stage in the Society's evolution. As more and more members were able to receive information by email, the sense of community was fostered and developed. Instead of the bi-annual letter from the Secretary a month before the exhibition, two-way communication on a daily basis was now possible - and it was free! Nevertheless I feel we should never abandon the quarterly printed Newsletters, which not only serve as a permanent record of the Society's affairs, but keep the 20% of members who do not have internet access feeling that they are still part of the whole.

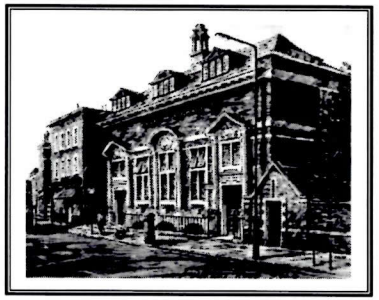
Since the time that I became involved with SOFAP in 2004, the annual subscription has risen from £5 a year to £25 in 2012, and membership has grown to a capacity of 200. The sub rose gradually to cover costs as we became more ambitious in our activities with regular workshops, newsletters and a website in addition to our exhibitions. But the main hike in the subscription occurred when the Council decided to charge a commercial rent for the exhibition hall in 2008. Although it was postponed for a year, the realisation that it would cost us £3,000 a year for our exhibitions forced us to take stock of the way we were organised.

We now adopted more formal titles. Hazel Leach and I became Joint Chairmen, and I was also Hon. Secretary, with Michael Burchell as Treasurer and Lynda Williams as Membership Secretary. Annette van Maurik became our Accountant and third signatory, as cheques now needed two signatures. All this formality really did not change the way we worked, but it meant that to the outside world we were a properly set up Society and so could be eligible to apply for grants if needed to cover the huge rise in our expenses. With advice from the Council, I spent a month filling in application forms, but in the event, with the help of a donation from the Daisy Trust for which we must thank Cllr. Frances Stainton, Arts Minister on the Council and then Mayor, we were able to survive by increasing both our subscriptions and commission on sales. In spite of this, I am told that our charges are still reasonable compared with those of similar societies.

Now that I have bowed out of the Committee I am very pleased to note that our new Chairman, Clare Weatherill, has again strengthened the formal structures and is delegating more responsibilities to her Committee. With luck this will bring back the element of continuity that kept the Society running smoothly for the first half of its history. At the same time, I feel that it is important to maintain personal links with the membership which can only happen over time, and which should be a two-way traffic. Members must be prepared to give something back to the Society if it is to survive and prosper, especially at exhibition times when a lot of hard work devolves on a few. Let us hope that we can keep SOFAP strong and healthy for another sixty years!

Chapter heading images are by past and present Society members.

P.3 *Tony Hannaford*
P.4 *Martin Chaffer*
P.7 *Annie Grace*
P.11 *Peter Gardner*
P.16 *Hermon Cawther*
P.19 *Liz MacDonnell*
P. 24 *Hazel Leach*
P. 27 *Clare Weatherill*
P. 31 *Clive Graham*
P. 32 *Frank Wright*



CODA

Andrew Carnegie.

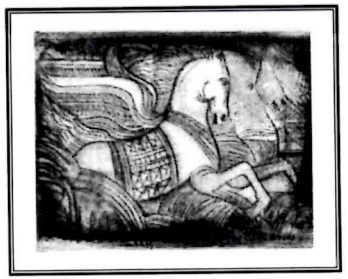
Since we owe our origins as a Society in part to the existence of the Fulham Central Library and the free use of its Exhibition Hall for so many years, I thought it would be apt to dwell for a moment on the history of the building itself. It was built in 1909 by architect Henry T. Hare, President of the Architectural Society and later of the RIBA, but it was financed by Andrew Carnegie, a poor Scottish weaver's son who emigrated to America and became the second richest man in the world!

He donated over three hundred and sixty million dollars to various causes before he died. His philosophy was very simple.

1. Spend the first third of your life getting all the education you can.
2. Spend the next third making all the money you can.
3. Spend the last third giving it all away to various worthwhile causes.

"A man who dies rich, dies disgraced," he said.

As well as the Fulham library and the Hammersmith library, Carnegie financed an astonishing 380 libraries in the United Kingdom alone, as well as countless others in the US and elsewhere. His epitaph might well have been:-
"Look upon my works ye Mighty and despair!"



Earliest recorded memberships of current members

1975 Hazel Leach

1982 Nancy Lees

1983 Diana Williams

1984 Patricia Collins

1985 Annette van Maurik

1986 Frank Wright

1988 Julia Adlard

1989 Russell Mack
John Paul

1990 Lynda Williams

1991 Shireen Faircloth
Elizabeth Oldham

1993 Noelle Barham
Ros Crook
Lucina della Rocca

1994 Felicity Guille
Joyce Johnston
Beryl Touchard
Margaretta Waymouth

1995 Arthur Craig
Diane Sawbridge

1996 Liz Elmhirst
Karen Fall
Margaret Lawrence
Stephen Salmon

1997 Marilyn Hardwick
David Morris-Marsham
Bridget Royle
Colin Smith

1998 Maud Logan
Ruth Quigley
Angela Wilkes

1999 Sim Hock Neoh
Miranda Phillimore

2000 Lorraine Doubrere
Ronnie Sonneborn