



## NEWSLETTER JULY 2009

### LETTER from the CHAIRMAN

Hi, Folks

I hope you've all been taking advantage of the extremes of weather we have recently experienced to gather inspiration for some spectacular pictures. I look forward to seeing some stunning new images gracing our screens in September.

### Exhibition September 2009

The exhibition paperwork is included with this newsletter. The format is well established, with one notable exception: due to the paucity of entries over the last couple of years the Exhibition Subcommittee has decided that pictures previously shown at the FCSA annual exhibition may be re-entered PROVIDING that they are not entered in consecutive exhibitions. In other words, you may show your work again, providing you didn't show it last year. The committee continues to endeavour to provide a quality exhibition, with fresh pictures, however bare walls will not attract visitors. The visiting public views the exhibition as a reflection of the efforts of the FCSA as an entity; so let's show them what we can all do. Money may be tight right now but that can act in our favour, if we can persuade visitors to invest in our work.

### Meeting venue

Over the past few months we have been switching between rooms at the Adult Education Centre, after the Centre management decided to convert our regular demonstration room (#24) into offices. Having considered members' feedback the committee feels that rooms 9 and 10 are the best compromise, despite the drawback of the division in the space. So, we will revert to holding all future meetings, including demonstrations, in the "Art Rooms".

### Friends of Surrey Heath Museum

The FCSA is an associate of the Surrey Heath Museum and as such has been approached by the museum to become involved with their latest venture, the Surrey Heath Museum Action Group (SHMAG) shop. The details are still developing, although SHMAG has offered exhibition space in return for volunteers to help in the shop. Tom Moss, FCSA Vice Chairman has been liaising with SHMAG and can provide further information.

### Surrey Heath Arts Council

As you may be aware, the FCSA has a seat on the Surrey Heath Arts Council (SHAC). Last year SHAC ran the first Surrey Heath Young Musician of the Year competition for young classical musicians in the borough who have achieved grade 6 or above. It attracted an extremely high standard of entrants, each of whom put on a professional-quality performance in the heats and finals held at the Camberley Theatre. The overall winner, Elizabeth Edwards, has since gone on to win more competitions (see article in Camberley News and Mail, 12<sup>th</sup> June).

The quality of the performances given by the finalists was astounding, easily establishing each of them as potential professional musicians. An even more incredible achievement when you consider that the entrants were all under 19 years old and the youngest was just 10.

The competition proved to be such an outstanding showcase for Surrey Heath's young talent that SHAC plans to stage the event again this year, with the finals being held in Camberley Theatre on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October at 7:30pm. Very well worth attending.

If you would like to know more about the event (or SHAC), or have a young relative who would be interested in competing, visit [www.surreyheatharts.org.uk](http://www.surreyheatharts.org.uk) or contact the organiser, Barry Buckingham (01276 21295). [Sue Thomson, Chairman]

### REVIEWS

#### Mixed Media Demonstration by Liz Seward-Relfe, 3 April 2009

Starting with a photo of a scene she knew well, Liz had prepared a sketch re-shaping it to her preferred square format and locating the centre of interest (a prominent central tree). Tonight she had selected a view in the Test Valley. It is so important to know and absorb the feel of the scene. We live in a lovely area for painters - and this spot is convenient for the pub near Chilbolton, too.

From her sketch, Liz had done a fairly detailed drawing on a new 300lb Saunders Waterford hot-pressed paper sold as being good for acrylics. Using it unstretched but taped down on all four sides she used only FW liquid acrylic ink and Caran d'Ache Neocolor II crayons (these were what made her choose HP paper, so that the Neocolor did not pick up texture from the paper).

The only brushes Liz used this evening were Da Vinci "Cosmotop" flat ones, using widths between about 10 and 50 mm. Unlike DIY brushes these form a very sharp chisel end.

First she brushed water all over the paper, to keep the initial washes soft, and then went straight in with Yellow Ochre in the area of the prominent tree. This she surrounded by Red Earth (to separate the yellow from the blue, so that greens were not mixed by accident) and then Prussian Blue. Some touches of Paynes Grey darkened the edges and began to define the water's edge. FW white ("miracle-worker, she called it) is miscible with watercolour. Although it covers very well it can be diluted to give lovely reflections in the water (draw the brush down) and to create patches of sky in the trees.

Since Prussian Blue and Yellow Ochre make a rather Caribbean green she dulled it with a little brown and applied the resulting green thinly enough for the red still to show through. For darker features Sepia serves well.

Liz then moved almost entirely into Neocolor, using white and other colours, such as chinese green, sky blue and beige, to cut out the trees, add highlights, twigs (sepia) and other bits of interest.

Dead white is stark so instead she often uses very pale shades of other colours. However, Neocolor will pick up previously-applied layers and so you can often get away with white (especially if you plan to apply a wet brush to it).

The time after the break was devoted almost entirely to putting more light into the picture (turquoise and orange are colours she loves for this) and to various more-general snippets of advice and comment.

If you want a really non-absorbent surface, a couple of coats of gesso should do the trick. On the other hand, if the surface is not absorbent enough (for example you may have a pre-primed board) you can buy "Absorbent Ground", a coat or two of which creates a very good surface for watercolour or pastel.

Neocolor II can be used dry, spread/softened with water or applied onto wet paper - and the shavings in the pencil-sharpener can be used to make a quite serviceable paint. Beware! Many other pencils, even reputable ones, especially the reds, are not as light fast as you might like.

"Women are colourists; men draw."

Only at the end did Liz add the blue-white horizontal reflections of sky into the water and strip off the masking tape. "It's not finished - I'd usually take a couple of days, not a couple of hours, for something like this. It will come home with me and be 'considered' for as long as it takes"  
[Sam Dauncey]

### **Still Life with Acrylics; Demonstration by Keith Morton, 24 April 2009**

Keith's early career was in commercial design but when a company he was working for went into liquidation he decided to a full time painter.

He gave great care to the lighting and composition of his simple still life group comprising a small silver trophy, a glass tumbler and an apple. The silver trophy and glass give interesting reflections and distortions. The apple gives colour. The black and white background and the apple were arranged so that edges were visible through the glass, making the refraction satisfy the eye that that is what it really was. Also, a big 'arrow' of black paper on the right pulls the eye into the picture. It was balanced by placing the trophy quite close to the left edge. A small light, close to the arrangement, adds sparkle.

Contrary to his usual choice of heavy cartridge paper, Keith was working on tightly stretched acrylic paper (a present from Daler Rowney). He had prepared this by roughly covering it with a warm brown mid-tone background.

His palette of Cryla acrylic was one he uses for all his work and comprised three warm primaries (cadmium yellow, cadmium red and ultramarine blue) and three cool primaries (lemon yellow, crimson and prussian blue). The warm group is mostly for well-lit areas and the cool set for shadows.

Then came the drawing: watery crimson acrylic applied with a small (No.8?) round brush. The colour is not that important for still life but it is what he uses most of the time. Everything was carefully measured by eye, marking the result of each measurement with a small dab on the paper with the side of the brush.

Having touched in the top and bottom of the trophy, Keith established that the radius of the top rim was 1/5 of the height. All other measurements were then based on this. He measured verticals and horizontals and, most importantly, carried angles across by lining up the brush and moving it across to the painting. He finds curves so difficult that he builds them up from numerous short dabs at the appropriate angle.

Once the basic drawing was done, Keith started to establish the darker-toned areas, using the same watery crimson, but with a bigger (1/2 inch?) flat brush.

Then began the application of more realistic colours. He wanted to keep everything fairly dark and grey at first (limited hue) so that when he put in the highlights at the end they would really "zing". In fact all the colours at this stage were modified greys.

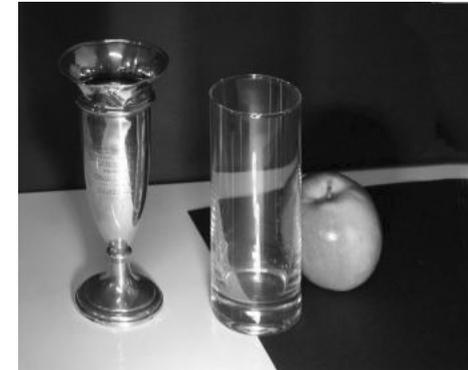
Keith's use of acrylic is fundamentally different from any watercolour technique. His college tutor advised him that one should 'mix the colour you want, with a creamy texture, and dab it on'. This means that the paint is going on thick enough to cover the colour underneath (although gaps will still allow it to show through).

He could offer no 'technique' for painting silver. The way is just to paint what you see and this he did, with myriad little dabs of colour.

Careful examination of small areas out of their context gives surprising results. For example the 'black' behind the trophy is actually a dark khaki (because of the close-up lighting) and this same colour appears reflected in the glass and the trophy. Even the white is pretty dark (reassuring, to give scope for contrasting lighter lights).

Nearly everything was dabbed in with the 1/2" flat, deliberately aiming to make the marks visible (not trying to indicate linear perspective). It was then noted that the shadowed ceiling was reflected in the foot and inside of the trophy and in the glass: so we need the cool set of primaries.

Then back to a smaller round brush for lighter touches and some snippets of advice:  
."If you make a nice mark, don't go back and reinforce it."  
."If you don't like something, it is more often a question of tone than drawing or colour."  
."To lighten, add a touch of yellow to the white"  
."Remember, acrylic dries darker (not like watercolour)"



Running out of time (there was more to be done, especially perhaps in the background), the glints were finally touched in with pure white. The effect of these final glints is remarkable, as you can see from the photo taken at the end of the demonstration.



### **Painting Day at Red Barn Hill; 25 April**

On 25 April Annalisa's garden was a picture of Spring just waiting to be painted, and four members and two other painters arrived to take up the challenge. The weather had not promised well but improved to sunshine and cloud which gave a lively changeable light. Annalisa's hospitality and

sociability are such that the main challenge is to force one's self away from the comfort of the conservatory, the refreshments therein, and discussions of the issues of the day to actually get down to painting. The next challenge is to decide from the plethora of potential subjects, what to paint. When that has been done, there follows the usual struggle to get down a reasonable representation of it and this results in complete oblivion to the cares of the world and a total unconsciousness of the passage of time. Unfortunately the planned painting day on 4th July had to be cancelled but there is a possibility of another later in the year. If so the committee will endeavour to let everyone know.

[Brian Richardson]

**Email addresses**

If your email address has changed, please let Don know so that the membership records may be updated. In a recent “round robin” email concerning the painting day cancellation, three emails were returned as undeliverable

**Theme for Annual Exhibition:**

The theme for this year's exhibition is “Portals” which has a wide variety of meanings which should get the grey cells buzzing with creative thoughts and result in some interesting interpretations.

**Demonstration “Caricature” by Danny Byrne; 8 May 2009**

Danny had last visited us on 26th September 2003 and so we were very happy to welcome him for another demonstration of his humour and skill. He has been drawing cartoons since he was at school and it did not take long for him to realise that he could make a living at it. Calendars, books, greetings cards and jigsaws probably fill enough of his time but he could almost moonlight as a stand-up comic.

The first phase of any of his cartoons is to start with " Pencil Roughs" - he may do perhaps ten before he is satisfied. For cartoons, you can forget all your worries about proportion and perspective. He would normally start with the "stage" (the background scenery) and then add the figures. These, for people or animals, he starts with the head: drawing a circle (which may be drastically distorted), then an oval (ditto) for the nose and two smaller circles with dots in, just touching the nose, for the eyes. Make these features tiny for babies. Ears are then tacked on. The mouth can be almost any mark. Eyebrows, almost more than the mouth, define emotions.

Ear shapes, a healthy black nose and appropriate fur and whiskers are all that you need to make an animal head instead of a human one. The basic starting point of head/eyes/nose circles stays the same.

You would normally attach very under-sized bodies and limbs to the head with a thin neck. Arms and legs are first 'pin men', then rough cylinders with hands and feet sticking out. Clothing is then added.

Don't forget, though, that you should still collect reference material - not just so you have records of what characterises things but also because you can sometimes be criticised for technical mistakes that most people would never notice (like the wrong shape for an engine). However, it is important, for humour's sake, to exaggerate important characteristics (like the contents of shopping bags) and not to forget the little dashes and speed marks to indicate motion.

Each artist will have a style, and practice is the only way to find what's best for you. Use large sheets of paper and try all sorts of shapes until you find some that appeal to you. Then into the real thing with ink (black felt pen, here), using pencil lines only as a very rough guide. Finally Danny did caricatures of Jason Crandley and Fiona Hunt . He made it all look so, so easy - as if anyone could do it - but his technical skill came through in the last few minutes when he did the caricatures.

A super evening.

[Sam Dauncey]



**Talk “Painting and Lettering on Church Banners”; Anne Thalmessinger, 29 May 2009**

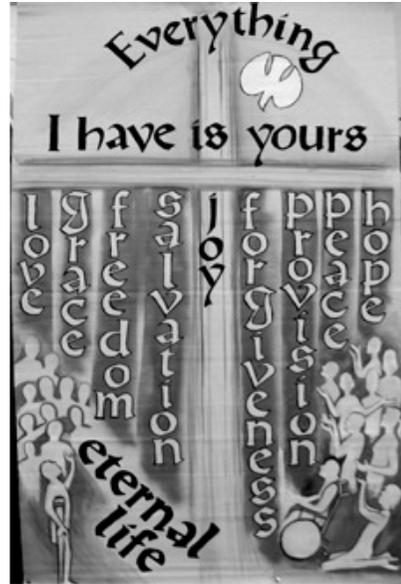
Who would have thought that the subject of church banners could be so interesting? Memories of the rude rhyme about Sister Anna unwillingly carrying the banner were evoked by the title of Anne's talk but she quickly dispelled any such unruly thoughts when she showed the results of over twenty years of making banners both for her church and an organisation involved in the welfare of people with learning difficulties.

Anne's approach starts with a theme suggested by the use to which the banner is going to be put. She then sketches ideas on paper before transferring them to cloth using acrylic paint. Her skill at rendering the human and animal forms was very evident at this stage.

Words are very important features and Anne described the painstaking process of cutting out the individual letters from self adhesive material and ironing them on to the cloth.

She had brought along a large selection of banners, some so big that they had to be displayed on the ground outside the studio. The logistics of handling such large “canvasses” would have daunted someone less devoted to the causes than Anne, and her diligence in overcoming the problems is a measure of the strength of her faith.

The accompanying pictures show a couple of examples of Anne's banners.



[Brian Richardson]



**Mixed Media Demonstration by Sera Knight, 26 June 2009**

Sara is now strongly into collage - perhaps you could see the beginnings of this in her prizewinning entry to the 2006 Exhibition. She has come a long way from there.

She brought a fine array of samples of her recent collage work.

Inspired by, and working from a black-and-white photo, Sara created more than the general composition with scraps of paper cut from a magazine and brushed down with PVA glue.

This helps her thinking to develop: she was occasionally peeling pieces off; frequently covering bits that she did not like, sliding them to get alignments that pleased her and applying others of contrasting tone to re-define an edge.

She distinguished clearly between the rectangular background blocks and the triangular ones that created the feeling of perspective. There was no wish to keep precisely to the perspective of the photo.

I was surprised at the amount of detail that went into the man and his reflection. Bits of paper no bigger than a few inches, in different shades of grey, were roughly snipped out and applied. Initially he was badly distorted but more bits refined the outline. Larger pieces of roughly-torn tissue paper and lots of PVA mellowed everything and got rid of any hard edges.

Then the first paint was applied : acrylic ink, squirted directly onto the still-wet glue, thicker and darker at the edges, worked over, wet-into-wet (water spray to stop it from drying too quickly). The lovely purple/green greys had come from magenta and viridian, darkened with burnt sienna and finally dried with the hair-dryer.

The choices of colours and tones of paper are not random: blue-greys give distance, reds imply foreground, stripes railings.

Then she turned to ordinary acrylic paints, whatever make comes to hand is OK. She knows she ought to use a limited palette, too, but finds she uses a dozen colours or so.

The last 45 minutes of the demo were devoted to brightening, touching up, painting negative spaces, particularly around the man, glazing to improve tonal composition, adding highlights and countless tiny flecks of colour - virtually all, I think, with an inch-and-a-half flat brush.

Nothing was mixed on the palette. Whites were modified with naples yellow - pick up a touch of yellow, dip the brush into the white, apply and repeat. Subtle greens were made using Paynes Grey as the blue.

She printed in some fencing with a 2-inch piece of mountboard dipped into paint.

Almost at the last minute she chopped another small bit of paper from her magazine to make a notice board on the right. It needed only a light glaze to tone it in with the rest of the painting.

Sera said she might do more but had reached the stage where care was needed to avoid

**Illustrated talk on Animation by David Richards, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

David, a long time member of FCSA, gave a fascinating talk on his recent work involving a wide variety of techniques, including animation, to realise a concept which he called The Natural History Project. This purported to show a number of different species of animal, dragonflies, reptiles and birds in their natural habitats, together with their fossil forbears in museum settings. They all had authentic sounding Latin names and were convincingly classified according to Linnaeus. Some of them were shown in action in a mockumentary narrated in the style of Sir David Attenborough

David retired early from his profession as a radar engineer with the Civil Aviation Authority and subsequently obtained an honours degree in Fine Art at Farnham art college. His creatures were made of paper, modelling clay or metal and some bore more than a passing organic resemblance to aircraft seen at the Aerospace Museum at Duxford.

David had created a virtual museum for the display of his (virtual) specimens and, by means of the magic of 3D software, was able to take us on a tour of the galleries. The illustration is of one of David's "humming bird dragonflies", stellatarum.

The talk was such a skilful blend of fact and fantasy that the real and imaginary became inextricably blurred.

If you have access to the Internet, you can see David's work at:

[www.thenaturalhistoryproject.org.uk](http://www.thenaturalhistoryproject.org.uk). You should also visit David's personal website at:

[www.davidrichards.org.uk](http://www.davidrichards.org.uk)

[Brian Richardson]

"mud".

A great evening. What inspiration one can get from an old black-and-white photo!



**Keith Morton demonstration: Portraits in Acrylics, 3 July 2009**

It was good to see Keith again so soon. Much of the evening reinforced what he had said in earlier demo's so I won't repeat unless it strikes me as particularly worth repetition. You'll just have to read all three write-ups.

June was persuaded to sit for us. I was surprised by the long time Keith took to get her head, and the light, precisely positioned. He obviously knew exactly what shadows he needed.

He had previously stretched some acrylic paper and slapped on some watered-down Burnt

Umber. He seemed to have changed from his original preference for a greenish background for portraits. However he said that if he were turning it from a demo sketch into a more formal portrait he would paint in a greener background at the end to complement the tones of the face.

Out came his old round "Rosemary" brush and the little pot of crimson.

A couple of tiny horizontal touches with the side of the brush, about a hand span apart, defined the top and bottom of the head ("I find that's about the height of head I'm most comfortable with"). Then a third one where the face ended and the top of the head started (visible because he was looking from above).

The last mark before really serious measuring started was half way up the face, for the eyes.

As always, Keith's measuring was meticulous and the new marks tentative, particularly angles: the angle of the line of eyes; the centre of the face (one touch) and then, going across from left to right, the relative spaces between cheek (check resulting angles), eye, centre of nose, tear duct and end of eye. All with the side of the brush. Then the nose length (shorter than you think), the angle of the nostrils and finally the line of the mouth. One eye shut, one eye almost shut, feet in exactly the same place. Check positions, check angles, check a different way, correct the odd 1 mm error. "The less you see the better you paint."

He quoted John Singer Sargent, who is reputed to have said that a portrait is like a photograph with the mouth not quite right.

The far side of the head (hair) needed repeated measurement and comparison with the height of the head and face - the head is always wider than you think. By the time the little touches of crimson had closed the gaps and introduced the shirt, he found that the chin was a good 3 mm out.

His stream of consciousness reminded us, too, that the neck has a front and sides - "it's not a drainpipe". It's important to paint what you see, not "features" like eyes, nose, mouth.

With his thinned crimson and a wider brush (3/8" flat?) he started to mark areas of tone/shadow. Still often just tiny marks, like the underside of the nose.

Only then did colour, flesh first, start to come in - broad dabs now, instead of touches with the side of the brush. Flesh needs all three primaries and white

Actually he uses two sets of primaries: warm ones (Ultramarine Blue; Cadmium Red, Cadmium Yellow) in the light and cool ones (Prussian Blue; Alizarin Crimson; Lemon Yellow) in the shadow. Sometimes the colour of the surface requires the 'wrong' set to be used: for example the shaded lipstick was bright enough to need the warmer red.

Acrylic dried very quickly this warm evening and so Keith was able to mix exactly the colour he wanted and apply it over a previous coat without risk of picking up the previous shade. To get the colour right he makes frequent mental reference to the colour wheel to correct colours that were not quite as he wanted them.

To make sure that the painting is not too photographic he likes to move his brush across lines in the original (hair, say) as well as in the expected direction. He gave the result to June, who agreed with all of us that the likeness was very good.

A formal portrait would take a week or two but when you looked at his sample portfolio you could see how much more work went into such paintings. His enthusiasm keeps bubbling through: "Why didn't I think of that before?", "I've not tried it like this, but it really seems to work", "I'm putting features in first now, instead of the outline of the head". As always it was a great evening.





[SamDauncey]

#### 2009 Annual Exhibition

As you will have seen from your programme, this year's exhibition will be held at High Cross Church from 10 to 12 September. This is the opportunity for members to show their work and hopefully sell some of it. And nothing is quite so good for the painting confidence as making a sale and even if you do not, it is still a great feeling to see your work hung (after all you put in a great deal of thought and effort to produce it).

The venue is an excellent showcase and has a high footfall of potential buyers and the committee has put in much work to create an excellent exhibition again, but ultimately its success depends entirely on us, the members.

So let's look forward to a vintage year and get painting. Don't forget the Competition, the title of which is "Portals", which gives plenty of scope for the imagination.

[Tom Moss]

#### Change to programme

Please note that the pastel still life demonstration by Ann Wilkinson will now be on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September and not 25<sup>th</sup> as in the programme.

#### Exhibition Space in Camberley Centre

Surrey Heath Museum has been offered free exhibition space in the Mall Camberley and has offered FCSA the opportunity of sharing the facility, which will be available from about the beginning of August 2009 to January 2010.

This will provide valuable exhibition and selling opportunities to members as well as helping to publicise the Society generally. Will members who would like to take advantage of this opportunity please contact any member of the exhibition or executive committee as soon as possible.

[Tom Moss]

**Any contributions to the newsletter should be sent to Brian Richardson at 6, Spring Woods, Sandhurst, Berks, GU47 8PX, or by email to [BRicha3691@aol.com](mailto:BRicha3691@aol.com) The deadline for the next issue is 20 November 2009.**

The advertisement below is published in exchange for a contribution towards the costs of producing this newsletter from Andalucian Holidays.

In the absence of any personal experience, FCSA makes no claim for the quality of service provided by Andalucian Holidays.



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#### **NEWS EXTRA**

Annalisa Brett has very kindly offered to host members for another painting day at Red Barn Hill. The date for your diaries is Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> September. The garden will present an Autumnal aspect in contrast to the Spring and Summer days we have enjoyed in the past, so we will probably need to work with a different palette of colours.

#### **NOTE**

Except where otherwise attributed, all the reviews are based on Sam Dauncey's write-ups for the website.