

BSBA Newsletter December 2024



Holly and Mistletoe by Dennis Neate

A few words from our chair Jan:

I'm pleased to say we end the year on a positive note with our exhibition 'An American Legacy' very successfully completed. Angie has also just started a new beginners' course with seven ladies taking part, all, of course, potential new members. It was great to see all her last year's course participants with lovely paintings framed and hanging in the exhibition – a tribute to her teaching and to their enthusiasm.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to those on the exhibition sub-committee for their hard work over many months and, in particular, to Lyn who not only had to deal with all the money side of things but had to suddenly go and buy a new card reader when the one being used stopped working. Stewarding ran very smoothly and thank you to the friends and relatives who stepped in at the last minute to help out.

Our thoughts are with those members who have had a difficult year through loss or illness and we send them our love and best wishes. Wishing you and your families a happy Christmas and very best wishes for the coming year.

Jan

Some exhibition statistics:

Visitors recorded: 792

Sales: Framed paintings : 4

Mounted originals: 1

Small paintings: 4

Prints: 7

Calendars: 39

Cards: 478

Total sales: £3618.61

An appreciation from Jan and Lyn:

Thank you so much to all of you who have not only put your heart and soul into your paintings but have pulled together and mounted a first-rate exhibition in a prestigious institution in the middle of Bath. Of course, the successful show would not have been achieved without the hard work of all the artists but by the same token the exhibition would not have been achieved without the work of the Committee. So thanks to them too and let's have a little look at what they do:

The Picture Committee is chaired by Jan and work started more than a year ago with the planning. (with an honourable mention to Brenda who was instrumental in the early plans). Dates and venue are chosen and our speaker booked. Paperwork is produced such as the guidelines and entry forms and the selection and purchase of the card reader etc.

The small committee consists of Annabel, Celia Lyn, and Penny, who worked together composing the text and finding the illustrations for the large information boards which were then designed by Janet. The stewarding schedule is a big undertaking over the three weeks and the admin must be organised with invoices, cash and card reader at the ready. The catalogue has to be produced along with the plaques which go alongside each painting plus various handouts and info.

Then it's all hands on deck for the hanging day with extra helpers and Jen and Caroline to the fore with their skills at selecting where paintings are hung, deciding which complement each other and arranging them with such a pleasing result.

Finally, the exhibition is open and the Private View can kick it off in style.

Thank you one and all.



Gareth Thomas (CEO American Museum) who spoke at the Private View.
Thanks go to Celia and Theresa who organised and manned the refreshments for the evening.

From Penny Ladd:

The Poison Garden at Alnwick Castle

On a recent holiday I had the chance to visit Alnwick Castle and its well-known gardens and, in particular, the Poison Garden. Two tales from the guide stuck in my mind. The first regards rhubarb.

During the First World War, leaflets were circulated encouraging people to grow and eat their own vegetables and one of those vegetables was rhubarb. Unfortunately, rhubarb leaves contain oxalic acid which can lead to kidney stones and kidney failure and, as a result, several people died and the advice leaflets were withdrawn. However, during the Second World War, the same leaflets were again distributed with the same predictable results!

The second tale is a bit more gruesome. One plant in the garden is enclosed in a glass box to prevent visitors touching it – and with good reason. It is a plant in the nettle family found in the rainforests of Australia and is called the stinging tree, stinging bush or gympie-gympie. Its leaves have fine hairs of silica which can get under the skin if touched. They are extremely difficult to extract and the pain is absolutely excruciating. One unfortunate, having crash-landed his plane in the forest, inadvertently touched the plant and, although surviving the crash and being rescued two days later, couldn't live with the pain and took his own life.



The poison garden at Alnwick

From Barbara:

“ Wedges are driven into the wood, then fertile slips inserted. Presently up shoots a lofty tree with flourishing boughs, marvelling at its unfamiliar leaves and fruits unlike its own”

Virgil. The Georgics Book II.

The Babylonians, and who knows who before them, experimented with attaching twigs to other trees, so by the time Virgil wrote these lines grafting was well established. He died in 19 BC.

Another 'blast from the past' from Annabel:



One day around 32,000 years ago, an arctic ground squirrel consumed parts of the plant, *silene stenophylla* (narrow-leaved campion) including its seeds. The squirrel was in the process of digesting them when it died. Its body was retrieved from permafrost and studied. Scientists successfully germinated a seed from this plant.

This *silene stenophylla* (above) has just bloomed it is 32,000 years old.

From Janet:



The Ghost Orchid *Epipogium aphyllum* is often called the rarest plant in Britain. It is thought to have flowered only twice in the past 30 years and at one point was declared extinct. We now know that it is still in existence due to a small, dedicated group of 'ghost hunters' who go out each year, scouring the sites where it has previously been seen, searching for the tiny flowers. The ghost orchid is entirely lacking in chlorophyll and the flowers and stem look as though they are made from yellow wax. It lives mostly underground where the rhizomes may, or may not, produce a flower bud which if the weather is favourable emerges above ground as a flower spike the following summer. It is known to exist in only two sites in Britain: the Chiltern beech-woods and a small area on the Herefordshire-Shropshire border.

Julia Trickey has a star packed list of speakers for her 2025 Botanical Art Talks including: Billy Showell, Ann Swan, Laura Silburn, Sharon Field and Simon Williams. See: www.juliatrickey.com for further details and also to view short extracts from previous talks.

Julia also alerts us to **Botanical Art Worldwide 2025**: 'Looking back to our future': further details: www.assocbotanicalartists.com

Courses:

Theresa has been working very hard all year to organise some interesting day workshops to be held at St. Andrews over the coming year, details below:

Day Workshops for 2025.

Thinking ahead to next year!

So far, two workshops have been arranged for 2025

1) Sarah Morrish - Friday March 14th.

'Illustrating Moths in Pen and Watercolour' – For reference see Sarah's excellent book 'Natural History Illustration in Pen and Ink'. Look out for the signing up form that will be circulating on Thursdays, to secure your place, or contact Theresa at theresasmith2351@gmail.com.

2) Megan Stallworthy, Celandine Books - Friday May 16th.

'Sketchbook workshop'

Megan will teach us book binding skills to create our own sketchbooks. The aim is for each participant to make two simple sketchbooks; one with a hard cover and one with a soft cover. There is the possibility to use your own favourite watercolour paper. More information to follow closer to the time.

Additional workshops will be coming up later in the year.....so watch this space!

The Royal Academy of Arts has an on-line course in Botanical art in March and April 2025 with Helen Allen as tutor. For further details see: www.royalacademy.org.uk

Clos Mirabel in the French Pyrenees is running various residential Botanical Art courses in 2025 with many well known names as tutors: Ann Swan, Billy Showell, Lara Call Gasteringer to name but a few.

Further details: www.atelier.closmirabel.com

Exhibitions:

Royal West of England Academy in Bristol: **FLORA**

Flowers, plants and botanical-inspired art works from the RWA collection along with works by Cynthia Wear and Charlotte Price. See: www.rwa.org

For further details.

Lost Gardens of London on now and running until 2 March 2025 at the Garden Museum, for details see www.gardenmuseum.org

The Garden Museum also has some interesting short films to watch on their website.

Bees: A story of survival. The story of 120 million years of adaptation and survival. Bees have lived in the world since the time of dinosaurs and are vital to our survival. However environmental and climate changes mean that their existence is under threat. This exhibition is on at the World Museum, Liverpool until 5 May, 2025.

For more information and links see: www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

Bath Society of Artists are holding their annual open exhibition which is running now until 11 January 2025 at the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath.

The Shirley Sherwood Gallery, Kew is showing “Botanical Blues” exploring nature’s most elusive colour. Running now until 23 March 2025, visit www.kew.org for further information.

Diary dates:

9th January – painting restarts at St. Andrew’s, no lunch time workshop in January.

14th March: Day workshop with Sarah Morrish, Moths in Pen and Wash.

And don’t forget **The BSBA Christmas Lunch** at St. Andrew’s on 12th December!
Coffee at 11.00 with a Bring and Buy to browse followed by a sharing lunch buffet.
Please bring a plate of food to share and priced items (books or art materials) for the sales table.

Season’s greetings,
Janet