



NEWSLETTER November 2011

Editor's Note

The AGM documents are included with this newsletter. Please consider standing for committee. Some of the present committee have exceeded the period in office allowed by the Constitution and are seeking relief. The notice shows those willing to stand again along with those who are retiring.

Also with this newsletter is the form for renewing your subscription. If you fail to do this by the end of January your membership lapses, so don't be tardy if you wish to continue to enjoy the benefits of membership which include friendly interaction at the Friday evening meetings and a stimulating programme of demonstrations and talks, together with the scope for everyone at whatever level of ability to exhibit at the annual exhibition. You are reminded that the AGM agreed an increase to £16 for the annual subscription.

With the Olympic Games taking place in 2012 it is felt that a sporting subject would be appropriate for the themed competition for the Annual Exhibition for which the preliminary dates are 12, 13, 14 th of July 2012.

Annual Exhibition

The Annual Exhibition in July was one of the most successful of recent years in respect of sales, and featured alongside the usual paintings, pottery and sculpture for the first time for a number of years. Bob Roope won the Winsland award for watercolour landscape with his painting entitled "Haverigg, Cumbria", the themed competition was won by Babs Grove with her painting of flowers entitled "Touch of Summer", and the Peoples' choice was "Journeys end" by Daniele Mandelli. Our congratulations go to all of them. The screens designed by Terry Ralph and his meticulously prepared layout schemes for their positioning in the galleries meant that the rooms were ready for the start of hanging earlier than ever before. The blustery, showery weather on the set-up and take-down days kindly gave us dry gaps for the transporting of the screens to and from the store in Jenny Trowsdale's garage.

News of Members

Elaine Winsland: One of the first members of the Art Society, Elaine Winsland, donor of the Winsland prize for the best watercolour landscape in the annual exhibition, sadly died earlier this year. Elaine was a regular exhibitor at our exhibitions. We are fortunate that her granddaughter, Leonie McQuigan, is keen to continue supporting the prize in memory of her grandmother.

Rosemary de Goede: Sadly we have to announce the death of Rosemary de Goede in hospital on 10th November after a short illness. Rosemary was a mainstay of the Society for many years. She was a very successful artist in terms of sales, a skilled potter and clay modeller, and lent her skills to the Society as an occasional workshop tutor. She was always prominent at exhibition time organising the handing-in and hanging of paintings and will be very sadly missed. Earlier this year she had won the Hillier prize for Creativity at the Society of Women Artists' exhibition in the Mall Galleries in London.

Reviews

As usual the reviews are based on Sam Dauncey's brilliant reports for the website unless otherwise attributed. Any errors are the editor's.

Horse Portrait in Acrylic and Oils by Mike Skidmore, 19 June 2011

Mike normally demonstrates his techniques through portraits of people. But he has had many portraits of horses commissioned, so that's what we had asked of him tonight. These portraits would normally take much longer than a two-hour demo and this was the first time he had done one as a demonstration. So, unusually, he worked from a photo.

He had prepared a canvas by drawing enough 2B pencil lines to guide his painting and then covering the whole lot with several transparent glazes of Burnt Umber acrylic. But mild panic was showing - despite multiple coats the acrylic was going on patchily and not drying properly. He suspected that a student had poured left-over oil paint into his acrylic pot! "We can pretend that the background was supposed to be textured but my main worry is that I may not be able to work over it properly if it's not hard". As an aside,

Mike said that when he did want to slow down the drying of acrylics, he'd found that silk screen glaze was just as effective as ordinary retarder, but cheaper. Mike underpaints his oils in acrylic.

The pencil drawing was now visible only at close quarters. He made a well-thinned darker mix (Burnt Umber, dark Cadmium Red and some blue) on his palette - a two-foot diameter folding garden table, oils on one half and acrylics on the other - and re-drew the outlines using a small (No.8?) round brush as if it were a pencil. This was done quite carefully at first but he began to enjoy himself when he was able to use faster, longer lines for the shapes of the mane and the shoulder. Mike referred frequently to the photo, looking for significant shapes and lines, deciding which to emphasise and which to leave out. "Leaving detail out of a painting can do a lot to stimulate the viewer's imagination and interest".

Perhaps because the glaze was not drying properly he went on adding darks and shadows, first with the No.8 brush and later with a larger flat one (1/2 inch?).

Then came white. This went on freely but still allowed the lines to show through, the brush-strokes following the direction of the hair. Because the brown under-painting was not dry the white picked it up, taking away its harshness. For finer detail, like the highlights on a buckle and reshaping the eye, he used a smaller brush. His brushes were mostly synthetic ones by Rosemary (and some mongoose ones).

When Mike introduces a new colour he gives it life by starting with a too-dark version and then lightening it gradually by glazing over it. He managed to keep talking as he painted:

"It's important to enjoy painting - otherwise it will look contrived"

"Painting is all about thinking ahead"

"Use a limited palette" - I don't think he used more than about 5 colours

"Don't paint individual hairs - just paint lightly (quickly) in the right direction"

"In the early stages of a painting, tone is more important than colour"

Only now, just before the break, do more orange tints start to appear. By the end of the break Mike had nervously decided that the acrylic had dried enough for him to continue in oils. So he turned his palette/table round 180 degrees to the oils side and mixed a new dark with Payne's Grey and Burnt Umber. This mix can be made cooler or warmer by using more or less Payne's Grey.

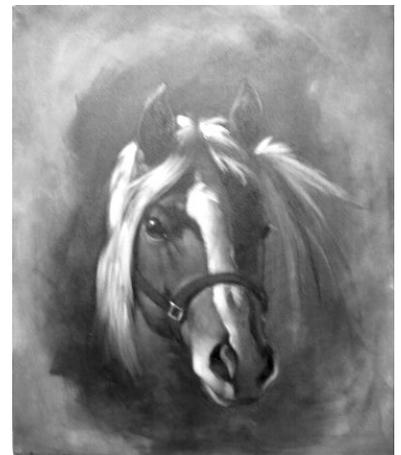
It was well-thinned with his "secret" thinning medium: 2/3 parts Damar varnish (gives gloss); 4 parts turpentine; 2 parts linseed oil; 1 part Venetian turpentine.

Panic ensued amongst those who had not met Mike before when he took a big flat brush and put this dark mix over the entire head, almost completely obliterating it. But he immediately picked up a piece of cloth (and occasionally a Johnson's cotton bud) and started to rub much of the new oil paint away wherever there were lights. The soft-edged rubbing out of dark oil paint meant that the more sharply defined acrylic under-painting showed through and had started, subtly, to have more life and form.

Mike then poured some thinner onto the palette. When he mixed white into this, the white was darkened slightly by residual brown. He put this on in the direction of the mane, and for highlights in the buckle and the eye.

The final touches make all the difference. Shadows as well as highlights were added and the chestnut colour heightened with a little orange. Most of the time he held the brush at right-angles to the canvas and moved it only in the direction of the horse's hair, even if this was across an important line. So, during these last minutes he was making countless very short, fine strokes and frequently going back in with cloth and cotton-bud to soften both edges and over-bright spots. The final half hour of oils certainly did convert a competent but somewhat flat acrylic under-painting into a portrait with real subtlety and feeling.

Thank you, Mike, for an inspiring evening. Frankly, not being a horsey man, I had come to this demo expecting to be less interested than I had been when Mike demonstrated portrait painting. How wrong I was: not least because he gave us valuable insight into how one can adjust one's technique if circumstances are not ideal (as here with the uncertain-drying acrylic) and of how there is refreshing spontaneity if one has not previously given this particular demo. In the event, Mike admitted that more work was needed but said he would try to remember to let us have a photo of the finished painting.



Portrait in Oils by Keith Morton, 8 July 2011

Keith has demonstrated for us on three previous occasions and as he is very consistent in his

technique this report will only mention the highlights. More detail can be found on the website.

- * Set up the pose and the local lighting very carefully
- * Look for features, shapes, transitions and corners.
- * Make only tiny marks, by touching the side of the brush to the paper
- * Mark top and chin so that the head is about one stretched-out hand-span high
- * Eyes about half way up as a starting point
- * Line up angles, estimate short distances, measure larger ones
- * Draw a centre-line at the correct angle
- * Short, carefully aligned, straight marks gradually form shapes and curves
- * When you get to the chin it may not be exactly where you originally marked it (see the two marks)
- * Measure the width of the head, see how far up the face it comes and then reverse this process and mark it on the paper. It will look too wide!
- * Check angles and alignments repeatedly. "A millimetre is so important". Keith had to re-draw the whole back of the head because he'd got it a few mm too narrow!
- * Finish the drawing by lightly indicating shadows. 3/8" flat brush
- * Primary colours: 3 warm, 3 cool (see April 2009)
- * Pre-mix the colours on the palette, not on the picture. Creamy consistency. Dab it on.
- * Colour lets you correct drawing errors
- * Mix from warm primary colours for skin highlights first
- * Cool primaries (quite brown) for shadows
- * Start dark, and when you lighten with white always add a touch of yellow
- * Keep checking and correcting angles and making only short marks (even for the flowers) - it almost seems like fiddling
- * He thinks continually of the colour circle. Knowing that his mixed colours are hues of grey he's always thinking which primary he needs to add to move it towards the part of the circle he wants.

The final result (surprise, surprise) was an excellent likeness of the model, Jill Guppy. It amazes me how he gets this, relying, as he does, almost entirely on measurement of angles and on intuitive estimation of short distances. I suppose the secret, apart from years of experience, is that the tiny short marks can be subtly moved a millimetre or so, almost without noticing, so that the likeness slowly emerges, as it certainly does.

Wonderful. Thanks again Keith.



Portrait in Pastel, by Paul Lewis, 22 July 2011

Paul had set out a number of examples of his earlier work but nothing as big as the 3' x 4' sheet of blue/grey mount board attached to a wooden board on one of our easels which was to be his "canvas" for the demonstration.

Paul had asked for a volunteer to model for him with a musical instrument. Maureen Broomfield persuaded her husband, David, to give up his evening for us but he must have felt a bit nonplussed when Paul seemed disappointed that the guitar was silent - I think he was expecting musical inspiration as he worked. He came back to this later on, commenting that multiple drawings of David's hand as if in motion would have given more dynamism to the picture. He had a couple of boxes of Inscribe pastels and a few other bits of pastel and charcoal. Before starting he separated out the 10 or 12 he was going to use.

He said that the first thing was to decide where the extremities of the picture were to be: end of guitar, feet, head etc. and to locate central features relative to these. Sadly he made no marks to show these points and went straight into the head with charcoal.

Paul located other features relative to the head by visualising vertical and horizontal lines through significant points, always using the height of the head as his reference length. He did, of course, take into account some of the conventional rules of thumb: like the distance between the eyes being equal to the width of the eyes (regardless of race!) and noting the height of the ears relative to eyebrows, nose and mouth.

During the demo he seemed to do very little measuring. He explained that very careful measurement is the rule when you start portrait painting but experience enables a quicker approach. A jazz

trumpeter portrait on display took only about five minutes and he often does 10-minute or 20-minute portraits at village fêtes. Quite early on he began careful drawing of the face, using a sharp piece of charcoal, and adding shadow. Paul's not one for blending pastel but at this stage he frequently used his fingers to spread shadows and to rub out poorly-placed charcoal marks: "They are going to be covered with pastel, so it doesn't matter".

Colour came in after about 30 minutes, starting with placement of lights all over the picture. The initial charcoal drawing is never perfect, so you have to keep looking and correcting. Working on such a big ground makes it worse because it's pretty certain that you'll have moved your head and misplaced at least something. The secret is to keep working around the picture, continually re-checking relative positions. When the flesh and shirt colours came in, Paul started to work almost entirely with the sides of broken sticks of pastel, using what a water colourist would think of as dry brush technique - very light strokes so that the paper or any earlier colour showed through.

The process from then on was one of continuously working over the whole picture: hinting, correcting, adding bits of complementary background, touching skin colour into the hair, background colour into the figure, getting more of a likeness into the face, drawing straight lines very quickly, deliberately neglecting areas away from the centre. "Enjoy yourself. Forget about developing a specific style - you'll lose your spontaneity". The end of the demo was arbitrary.

Soon after coffee break, although much of the original charcoal drawing and the paper were still visible, we had a quite presentable "finished" painting. So most of the second half was spent gradually improving it. Towards the end Paul decided to devote time on the hands, shading and moving fingers by millimetres and reminding us, perhaps, why he would have liked David to have actually been playing.

It is most interesting to have the opportunity to enjoy watching someone work on such a big scale using, and enjoying using, techniques that most of us associate with much smaller paintings.

Thank you, Paul.



Watercolour demonstration by Wendy Jelbert, 9 September 2011

She started the talk with a series of general hints about painting moving things successfully. For example:

- . Watch them carefully, draw them in lots of different positions, put several together and draw "action lines"
- . Sketch on tracing paper, rearrange, trace, turn the paper over, break lines up and establish a flow in the drawing.
- . Exploit the shimmery effect if you are looking through water. Wet into wet watercolour works wonders here.
- . Avoid hard edges and precise outlines.
- . Pay attention to negative spaces. These can often be even more important than the objects themselves.
- . Legs and arms can be drawn several times around the central position to show movement.
- . Stretched cling film, left on until watercolour dries, can leave interestingly fluid marks.

As references, Wendy had a photo of a big wave and lots of sketches and photos of seagulls. She had already prepared pencil guidelines for the wave and a few gulls.

She wet the paper, pretty thoroughly, and then started with a large patch of central yellow light, followed by green and then some violet for darker areas, all put on with flowing up-strokes.

Early on, to emphasise the light in the wave she started an even darker sky background, with blue, violet and grey.

This background went, not very carefully, around the drawn outlines of the birds. Even here she kept the brush moving with the same upward sweeps. She kept going back over the same areas so that there was variation of tone and hue everywhere.

For some of the lighter areas, where it was not possible to lift out enough paint, she introduced paint mixtures including white acrylic. "Never use pure white - mix it with other colours: yellow ochre,

pink, blue etc."

As she put more and more detail she was repeatedly studying the photos and sketches to locate their important features.

Watercolour dries lighter and so Wendy had to keep going back in with more and more darks: burnt sienna, violet, blue and even (hush) some black. Quite a lot of purple (and touches of lovely aquamarine) went into the wave. The green, too, needed to be strengthened.

Colour went on very dark at the edges of the birds etc. but was feathered out into the general background.

Everything was kept pretty wet, so marks that at first looked very harsh soon spread out and blended in with their surroundings. The buckling of wetted 140 lb paper can be removed by pressing it onto a flat surface for some hours.

As the wave developed, Wendy also visited the birds more and more frequently (it should be clear by now that she was working all over the painting all the time) .

Repeated glazing gives a painting life because it makes surfaces more varied. It was never quite clear to me how Wendy got round the problem that glazes tend to result in mud if any earlier ones are not bone dry - perhaps she moved round the picture in such a way that each area had time to dry before she re-visited it.

Splatters of off-white paint give the impression of spray (brush flicked across the end of a finger).

From now on we shifted into a process of repeated darkening and highlighting. The brush nearly always moved only in the direction of the curve of the inside of the wave. Edges were strengthened and pulled out.

Areas of light along the crest of the wave and dark in the trough established a lovely curve across the top, down the right hand side and back under to the left.

Then, surprise, we found that the original pencil drawing included masking fluid: in the birds and for some very fine lines in the darker part of the wave"



As the end of the demo approached, we noticed how wave colours are reflected in the low-flying gulls, how wing shapes are hinted at even away from the (fuzzy) wings themselves, how the sky colours appear in the smoother water, how the wave crest continues far over into the distance.

Wendy made the usual comment that it was not really quite finished but I'd have been more than pleased with myself if I'd got that far. Everyone seemed to find it a most instructive as well as entertaining evening.

Painting Day in Jackie Corrall's garden; 17 September 2011

The day dawned bright with sunshine, but the forecast was showers. Ten or so painters assembled at "Deron" in Yateley to seek inspiration in Jackie's lushly intimate garden where every turn revealed a new aspect. Jackie's brother, Brian Sayers an established full time artist, was on hand to demonstrate his way with watercolour and to spur us on. A morning's concentrated painting was ended by a heavy shower which literally turned some paintings into very wet-into-wet impressions. This was a good time for a lunch break and the sandwiches of the painters were supplemented with delicious cold savoury dishes and cakes provided by Jackie and friends. Lunch was followed by an afternoon of wide ranging discussion of artistic matters led by Brian Sayers who proved to be an energetic and inspirational speaker. Those who attended went away truly inspired.

(Brian Richardson)

Watercolour Demonstration by Sue Smith, 30 September 2011

Sue, a self-taught prize-winning artist, teaches at Bracknell College, runs workshops and is currently Chairman of Wokingham Art Society. She is kept busy with commissions for animal and people portraits.

For this evening she was working from a photo of geese in which one of the birds had been

reversed to improve the composition, at the same time ensuring its shadow remained consistent with the direction of the light by reference to one of the other birds.

Then she'd done exploratory tonal and colour sketches to establish a satisfying composition and colouring.

A full-sized drawing was then made on translucent layout paper, complete with main shadow outlines and the chief lines transferred onto a stretched full Imperial sheet of 140lb Two Rivers paper. Sized right through, this more expensive paper is very forgiving.

Normally she works with the paper horizontal, but on the vertical surface being used for demonstration purposes, she started working from the bottom with a 3" hake, wetting the paper with clean water, taking care not to wet within the shapes of the birds. Next she added cerulean blue at the top and cadmium orange at the bottom. The blue needed several applications and the orange was too yellow until a little vermillion was added. Using a smaller brush she was able to carry wet colour carefully right up to the drawn lines. This was all kept as wet as Sue could get away with. Any runs too big to be removed with the tip of a brush are dealt with by damp cotton wool rather than kitchen paper - "too brutal".

When this first wash had dried (tested with the side of the hand) Winsor & Newton Transparent Yellow was applied as the first glaze for beaks and legs. For the background Sue used various mixes of purple and orange to suggest trees, taking great care where she wanted dark against light around the birds. Cerulean was added to the mix for the shadows on the birds. Where light is reflected up from the ground she used much more orange, moving the brush in a curve to hint at the full shape of the breast. Flicking shadow up from the wing area into the white paper gave a feathery impression.

All the time she was painting the shadows Sue referred repeatedly to her tonal drawings as well as to the photo. Towards the end, a shadowy texture was applied randomly into the foreground surface although more blue and red would eventually be needed to achieve a satisfactory result.

Features in the head (nostrils, eyes etc.) needed a black which was made with the basic purple and orange, too! (Complementary colours make blacks.)

She had not expected to complete the painting during the demo because of the limited time. At home she works very slowly, letting paint dry naturally, sometimes continuing all night (with a daylight lamp) and often leaving a nearly-finished work on view in her studio for some weeks before "signing it off".

Sue slipped in many little comments and bits of advice some collected here:

- . The Child Beale Trust is a good place for artists.
- . Faces etc. are badly distorted if you take close-up photos. Use the zoom from a distance
- . A very economical way to let the kids "paint" is to give them just black paper and water!
- . If watercolour has dried too much for further wet-into-wet painting or to lift it out, re-wet it with a spray rather than a brush (kinder to the paper)
- . If you want red to look really bright, underpaint with yellow first
- . A better finish is achieved if you let watercolour dry naturally, rather than use a hair dryer
- . Sue uses a lot of Winsor & Newton watercolour but Shin Han is becoming popular.

Graham's Drawing Workshop, 7th and 14th October 2011

In the first week we had to draw a small still life group against a plain background **without** using line. This entailed using the side of the pencil lead (around 4B) with the pencil held between thumb and forefinger and pointing away from one's body **not** as one holds a writing instrument. The aim was to realise the still life image by careful rendering of the tones to differentiate between the different parts of the scene. There was some intense concentration and a silence disturbed only by the rustle of pencils as the artists struggled with the unfamiliar way of holding the pencil followed by some satisfaction at the pleasing results achieved.

In the second week we had to contend with a still life group against a non-patterned drape as the background, adding the need to render fold shadows. Again some satisfying images resulted.

All those who took part enjoyed the challenges Graham had posed and felt that they had learned a



lot from them.

(Brian Richardson)

Landscape with Acrylics by Mitch Waite, 4th November 2011

Mitch worked from a large print of one of his photos, chosen by members out of 20 or so he had brought. The view was of the Quai des Etats-Unis in Nice.

Mitch favours Interactive Acrylics because of their slower drying time and revivability which suit his wet-into-wet technique.

He used two separate pots of water, one for brush-cleaning and one for painting - although he dilutes the paint hardly at all. The palette and painting are regularly sprayed with a fine spray to keep them from drying. His brushes are best quality hogs' hair, mostly filberts - from size #12 down to about #4.

His palette had been pre-loaded with enough fairly warm colour (two blues, two reds and two yellows) to last the evening, and titanium white which would need topping up more than once.

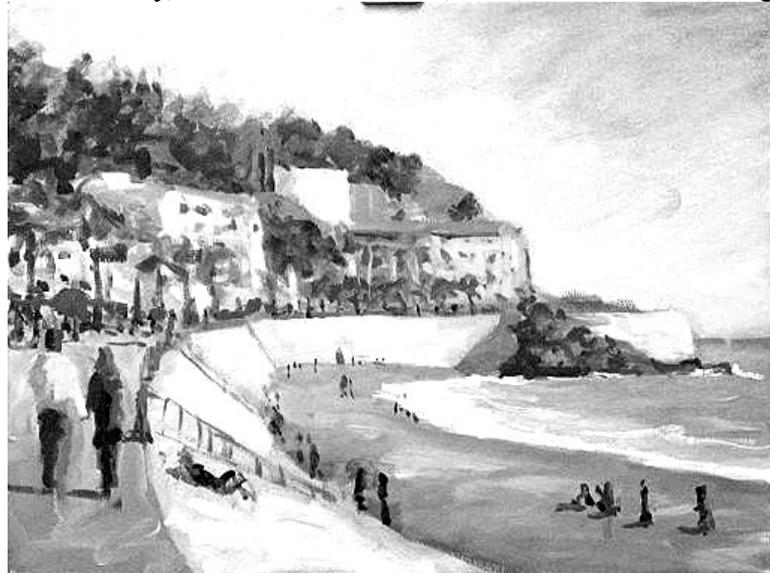
It's essential to decide what it is about the scene that is important to you before starting. If working from a photograph this has been done for you by the photographer but, especially if the canvas is not the same shape as the photo, you still have to decide about cropping or adding extra space.

Because there was no central point of interest in the chosen picture he wanted to keep the eye circling clockwise round the picture, landing on the headland, on the people on the beach, on the walkers and back along the promenade to the starting point.

The essential outlines were quickly dashed in with a big brush and thin yellow paint before he started scrubbing in an ultramarine blue sky (lots of white, of course), introducing more and more red and yellow as he got to the horizon.

To render green trees he added some ochre to the sky blue, plus burnt sienna for the darker foliage. The palette shows the colours he has used and he is usually able to pick up a mix that is just right if something needs adjusting. Relative colour matters much more than absolute. Mitch gets the colour he wants by looking at what is on the palette and deciding, using his knowledge of the colour wheel, what needs to be added. The various greys, beach, sea-wall and pavement were distinguished by adding different amounts of red or yellow to a basic grey mix.

Once the white of the canvas was completely covered Mitch started to work on smaller areas. This included putting some richer blue/white into the sky, pushing it down to define the tree-tops better and then immediately, with a smaller brush, blue, ochre and red, brightening and pushing the trees up again.



It was then time to start thinking seriously about relations between different objects, the perspective, how vertical and horizontals relate, pulling (still wet) background in as negative space to define objects, dots for heads and quick slashes for bodies and legs and using cloth or brush to lift out lighter areas. It was time to make adjustments such as moving a tree trunk so the it did not grow from a figure's head and to strengthen shadows. "Errors should be dealt with in order of severity". Unimportant ones won't be noticed.

People need only be suggested unless doing a portrait. Think back to what the picture was for and decide what is actually still really needed to capture the essence of the scene. Mitch provided a non-stop flow of information and advice but as he made some of his apparently random dabs with the brush there must have been much more going on in his subconscious.

For his second visit to us he had again given us a most inspiring and enjoyable evening and the audience gave him an enthusiastic round of applause. [SD, edited for space reasons by BAR]

Christmas Party, 16 December

Do sign up for the Christmas Party on 16 December. Each year this proves to be a fun-filled event including a fiendish quiz devised by Jenny Colquhoun where teams at tables vie for a prize, a raffle with

valuable prizes and all sorts of delicious food and drink provided by members. It's just the occasion for getting into the Christmas spirit.



Painting Holidays in Sunny Andalusia

Departures 2011 : 12 November

Departures 2012 : 14-21 January, 17 Apr, 08 May, 02 June, 07 July

Tuition from professional artist in all media with breathtaking mountain landscapes, white villages & Mediterranean Sea.

Only £699 and No single Supplement

(£50 off for members of Frimley and Camberley Society of Artists)

"Painting experience was excellent. Anna is a great tutor..." Lucie Mackenzie, January 2011

"What a fantastic holiday. Brilliant weather, brilliant food, fantastic people and Anna's style of painting was very different and interesting. I had a great time and would certainly do it again." Laureen Aherne, June 2011

For more information visit our website at www.paint-andalusia.com, email enquiries@paint-andalusia.com or call Elaine on 020 8385 2024

Contributions Contributions to the newsletter are welcome, preferably on art-related themes, and should be submitted to:

Brian Richardson, 6 Spring Woods, Sandhurst, Berks GU47 8PX, or by email to: bricha3691@aol.com