

Memories of John Bowen
President of Poole and East Dorset Art Society
1984-2020

There are some newer members who won't have had the experience that is John Bowen.

There are many of you that have great memories. This is for you all.

From Norma

I met John Bowen around 1984 at the Pedas Agm I was a very green member and even more green artist so didn't really know who John was back then. I know I am in awe of this knowledgeable articulate gentleman.

I got to know John Bowen better around 1989 at Poole College where he was head lecturer in the arts. I didn't study under him until 1991. Anyone who knew John will agree he was selfless to the extreme. This became apparent quite soon during my A level art course. John was teaching still, even though his son was in a coma in hospital. John would keep vigil by his bedside for days, while doing so would sketch his son. He would then bring these into show us and of course they were inspirational. How he managed to do this was beyond any of us students. My admiration for John began that day.

Going forward that year with John was a revelation. John set us an essay on Janus, which was the first time the A level included any research and use of the very early basic computers, which John was eager for us to try and get our heads around.

At that time John was also giving lectures art history Saturday mornings to a packed Art Centre (now the Lighthouse). He was also teaching a flexi study course at the college.

Along with Jem Main, John would utilise the amazing art collection the college had acquired over the years. I remember drawing the Henry Moore 'Mother and Child' also Jacob Epstein's 'Head Of Kathleen'.

Mean while in 1984 I had joined Pedas. John became President in 1980. Between us we garnered a few new members. Myself and the rest of the small committee including Liz Magee had decided we needed a regular evening session. I asked John if we could use the college rooms. He said come with me and proceeded to take me through to the other side of the college where a large building was being converted to purpose built art studios, He said 'will this do?' of course we grabbed the chance, that's how our evening sessions began.

I could and probably will fill several pages on the history I share with John but for now these are a few brief instances. 12 Years of trips abroad and home, several day trips, a fair few workshop days, lots of projects, lots of demos, lots of art history lectures, lots of wonderful paintings entered into our exhibitions, lots of inspirational ideas, including Picture Dorset, Pro-loco, several Panto moments, Xmas parties quizzes, and who could forget Johns filling in for a band who didn't arrive at our Friday evening bash at the Seldown Gallery exhibition by quoting a story from Guy De Maupassant. This led others to step up and before long one of the Fridays were to become a Pedas talent evening each year. I think that may have given us the idea for the Pantomimes.

To sum up John was more than a fine artist, he was a visionary, an inspiration, a true and loyal friend to Pedas and a wonderful human being. He will leave a gaping hole in our club and our lives.