

A Brief History

of

The Sleaford Art Schools

Carre Gallery was founded in 2009 to encourage and support artists from Sleaford and from the whole of Lincolnshire by providing them with a gallery in which to exhibit their work and to liaise with their local peers.

Sleaford is a storied town with a centuries-old tradition of promoting and teaching the arts. Perhaps our most famous artist, although near-forgotten locally, was Charles Haslewood Shannon (1863-1937) whose work is now collected and exhibited in galleries throughout England, Europe, and North America.

It was at Carre's Grammar school (est. 1604) that Charles Shannon first showed an interest in drawing which he developed in his later years to include lithography, portraits and figurative work of a very high standard. He also became proficient in the wood engraving that featured strongly in publications which he produced with Charles Ricketts.

Painting and drawing had been popular subjects studied at Sleafordian schools from at least the 17th century and in 1875 the town obtained a dedicated art school.

The Sleaford School of Art, Duke Street 1875–c1918

The Sleaford School of Art began informally in 1875 and for the first two years occupied the Temperance Hall in Westgate and held classes during the winter. It then moved to a pair of houses on the north side of Duke Street, which had previously been the premises of a junior school.

Upon moving to Duke Street, the art school was recognised officially in 1879 by the government's Science and Art Department, based at the South Kensington Museums. Its role was to promote education in art, science, technology and design in Britain and Ireland. In 1899 it divided up to become the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Science Museum.

The Department regularly visited the Sleaford Art School for inspection and gave positive reports. Pupils were encouraged to visit the museums in South Kensington to raise their standards of excellence.

From 1881, the pupils' work was sent to South Kensington and entered for examinations held by the Department of Science and Art.

1875 – 1918 contd.

The school, whose full title was the Sleaford Science and Art School, was run by a committee whose successive chairmen included the vicar, Rev. Richard Yerburgh, and Col. Fane of Fulbeck.

The day-to-day management was overseen by the Hon. Sec., Herbert Kirk of the building firm Kirk and Parry.

The first mistress of the Art School was Miss Mary Wedd (c1844-1934). Originally from Boston, she moved to Sleaford with her sister and lived at 6 Lafford Terrace (now the offices of North Kesteven District Council) opposite Duke Street. In 1881 she was praised by the Chairman for her thoroughness of instruction and the way in which she conducted the classes. One of her watercolour paintings has survived. It depicts the interior of the baptistery of St Denys' Church.



Mary Wedd retired in 1900 and was succeeded by Miss Mary Oliver.

Adults and young people were enrolled in the school's classes, which were described as including 'time-sketching, outlines from nature, figure drawing, advanced perspective and copying casts of statues of antiquity'.

The school was privately funded with school fees and payment for particular classes. It therefore attracted the children of those middle-class families in the town, who could afford to educate their daughters.

They included Catherine and Helen Shannon, sisters of Charles Haslewood Shannon, the well-known artist from Quarrington; they were both prize-winning pupils in 1908. Alice Peake, daughter of the solicitor Herbert Peake, and

Mary, daughter of the local bank manager, Henry Ingoldby, also attended.

At the end of each school year, an exhibition was held of the pupils' work. The exhibition of July 1882 was reported in the local newspaper. It was held for three weeks and boasted a prestigious and lengthy list of patrons, including the Duke of Rutland, the Marquesses of Bristol and Exeter, the Earl of Lindsey, the Bishops of Lincoln and Nottingham, and the Finch-Hattons, Whichcotes and Chaplins.

Some patrons lent works of art, such as pieces of china, needlework and furniture, and paintings and drawings by Lincolnshire and local artists, both amateur and professional.

Sydney House School, 83 Southgate, Sleaford, c1891–c1918

The Sydney House School in Sleaford was one of a group of independent, privately-run schools. It operated in the town from around 1891 to at least March 1916. Not much is known about this establishment other than that it was run by Mrs Sarah Maria Bell, a widow and native of

Sleaford, and it was initially based at no. 93 Southgate then moved to no. 83. It is known to have taught drawing because in 1912 one of the pupils, Maud J. Boocock, aged 10, was awarded a certificate for passing a drawing examination by the Preparatory Division of the Royal Drawing Society.



Demand for private education declined towards the end of the nineteenth century as state schools were established under the Education Acts which later culminating in the Fisher Act of 1918. This made secondary education for under 14s compulsory.

Appreciation of Art amongst the wealthier families in the County was evident in the content of their homes with original work prominently displayed in the larger houses and mass reproduced images in the form of engravings, woodcuts and lithographs widely available and affordable in the Victorian

and Edwardian eras.

Several of the larger Country Houses in the area have subsequently revealed their collections as death duties and high building maintenance costs led to their sale. Between 1900 and 1982 the catalogues of Sleaford Auctioneers Earl and Lawrence recoded local sales of paintings by Constable, Turner, Orchardson, Ansdell, Redmire, Wheeler, Rhys and many other artists of international renown.

Sleaford today

Art and photography now form part of the modern curriculum of our local schools whose pupils continue to produce work of a high artistic standard which can lead to career opportunities in design, marketing, illustration, education and other fields. The work of several of our contemporary artists already has a following from enthusiastic collectors in Lincolnshire and elsewhere.

The movement in Sleaford is led by Sleaford Joint Sixth Form, a collaborative project involving Carre's Grammar School, Kesteven and Sleaford High School and St George's Academy.

Paintings and photographs from the Joint Sixth Form and the individual participating schools have been a regular and most welcome feature of exhibitions at Carre Gallery.



For more examples of past school exhibitions visit: www.carregallery.wordpress.com

Carre Gallery is operated by The Sleaford Gallery Arts Trust, a registered Charity. The operation of the Gallery is entirely dependent on the goodwill and generosity of our Friends, volunteers, exhibitors and sponsors.

If you would like to exhibit at the Gallery, assist with invigilation, sponsor an exhibition or help in any other way, please contact us by using one of our online forms or by emailing: info@carregallery.co.uk.



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