

BLUECOAT
SOCIETY
OF ARTS

1946

BLUECOAT SOCIETY OF ARTS
LIVERPOOL

NINETEENTH
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 26 JULY 1946 AT
2-30 P.M. IN THE OFFICE OF THE SOCIETY
BLUECOAT CHAMBERS

SECRETARY'S REPORT, BALANCE SHEET
AND REVENUE ACCOUNT, 31 MARCH 1946

BLUECOAT SOCIETY OF ARTS

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR

ENDED 31 MARCH 1946

TRUSTEES

Professor L. B. BUDDEN, F.R.I.B.A.	J. H. LAYTON
Mrs. JAMES CALDER	The Right Hon.
Sir DAVID MAXWELL FYFE, K.C.,	THE VISCOUNT LEVERHULME
M.P.	JOHN MACLEAY
Sir HECTOR HETHERINGTON	Col. Sir JOHN SHUTE, C.M.G.,
ALLAN JEANS	D.S.O.
Mrs. JAMES CALDER	Major R. H. THORNTON, M.C.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President : The Right Hon. THE VISCOUNT LEVERHULME

Hon. Treasurer : JAMES MCKENDRICK

Secretary : W. S. MACCUNN

N. MARTIN BELL	P. R. ENGLAND, O.B.E.
Professor L. B. BUDDEN, F.R.I.B.A.	J. H. LAYTON
Colonel V. E. COTTON, C.B.E.,	THE VISCOUNTESS LEVERHULME
T.D.	Mrs. S. PERMEWAN
Sir SYDNEY JONES	Major R. H. THORNTON, M.C.

Bankers :

MARTINS BANK, LTD.,
Water Street,
Liverpool.

Auditors :

Messrs. CHALMERS, WADE & Co.
5 Fenwick Street,
Liverpool.

THE vacancy on the Executive Committee caused by the death of Mr. William Rushworth has been filled by Mr. N. Martin Bell, who holds a distinguished place amongst Merseyside painters and is well qualified to express their point of view and to keep an eye on their interests.

For a large part of the year the Executive Committee was mainly concerned with routine matters. I am glad to say that all the habitable parts of the building have been let throughout the year and that the accounts, with which I shall deal later, show a not altogether unsatisfactory position.

Since the autumn, however, the Trustees and Committee have been giving particular consideration to the future of the building and to the continuance of the Trust as embodied in the Deed of Constitution of the 28th January, 1927.

To understand the position it is necessary to go back to the autumn of 1943. On the 29th September, 1943, the Executive Committee appointed a Reconstruction Sub-committee, consisting of Professor L. B. Budden, chairman, Colonel V. E. Cotton, Mr. R. H. Thornton and the Secretary, to consider the question of repairs and rebuilding and to submit a report thereon to the Trustees and Executive Committee. On 5th May, 1944, the Sub-committee submitted their report to the Executive Committee. This report briefly described the damage that the building had suffered; summarised the financial position, with emphasis on the existing mortgages of £18,100; and put forward a scheme proposed by Colonel Cotton and approved by the Sub-committee.

This scheme recommended that the building and site, together with any money receivable from the War Damage Commission and any invested funds, be handed over to the Corporation of Liverpool, who would then discharge the debts of the Society, to form the nucleus of a new Art Gallery and Shipping Gallery

supplementary to or in place of the Walker Art Gallery, where the war-time policy of a succession of temporary loan exhibitions could be continued and expanded. The proposed new gallery would ultimately cover the area bounded by School Lane, Peter's Lane, Hanover Street and College Lane and would contain not only exhibition rooms but accommodation for such societies as the Sandon Studios Society and for individual painters. In addition to discharging the debts of the Bluecoat Society of Arts, the Corporation would undertake to restore the building, preserving its essential characteristics, and taking care that all new building should conform to it architecturally. The Sub-committee's report further suggested that the simplest way of carrying out this proposal would be for the Corporation of Liverpool to become Trustee in place of the existing Trustees (who would retire) and carry on the administration of the Trust as laid down in the Deed of Constitution.

Colonel Cotton also informed the Committee at this meeting, on 5th May, 1944, that the Libraries, Museums and Arts Committee of the Corporation had approved of this plan and had recommended it to the Post-War Planning Committee of the Corporation.

At this date, May 1844, the mortgages on the building totalled £18,100 and the loss for the year ending 31st March, 1944, had been £999. Cash in hand and investments were £2,300.

It was against this financial background that Colonel Cotton's plan was considered by the Executive Committee. It was clear that unless this very large debt (which would increase year by year for some time to come) could be paid off the future of the building would be very uncertain, and though Colonel Cotton's plan involved the surrender of the Society's independence, it appeared to insure the restoration and preservation of the building. The Committee therefore decided that, if the interests of the Sandon Studios Society and other tenants were properly safeguarded, the plan should be recommended to the Trustees.

Accordingly the position was laid before the Trustees in writing, together with the Executive Committee's approval of the plan, and the plan was accepted by them. On 30th May, 1944, a letter was sent to the Town Clerk offering to convey to the Corporation of Liverpool "the property known as Bluecoat Chambers" should they be willing to use it as the nucleus of a new art gallery for the fine arts (as outlined by Colonel Cotton), provided

that they would take over liability for the existing mortgages, restore the damaged parts of the building, undertake that any additions to the building should accord in material, height and general feeling with the original building, incorporate in the design for rebuilding reasonable accommodation for societies connected with the arts and for individual artists (having special regard to existing tenants), and that agreement was reached on other points that might arise. It was further suggested that, if the Corporation should accept the offer, the Corporation should become Trustee of the Bluecoat Society of Arts, the existing Trustees retiring.

This letter was acknowledged by the Town Clerk on 9th June, 1944. Since that date no communication on this matter has been received from the Corporation.

As it would be necessary for the Corporation to acquire other properties as well as Bluecoat Chambers, if the proposal were to be carried out, the Executive Committee agreed that at that time no public statement regarding the negotiations should be made.

The whole matter then remained in abeyance until, with the ending of the war against Japan, the question of the repair and reconstruction of the building became a matter for immediate attention. The possibility of making a start on the plans for rebuilding and repair of the building was, therefore, discussed at a meeting of the Executive Committee on 22nd November, 1945. By this time it was known that the War Damage Commission would eventually make a "cost of works" payment* in respect of the damage that the building had suffered, but, as the Committee had received no answer from the Corporation to their letter of 30th May, 1944, it was considered that the future function of the building was so uncertain that it would be impossible to instruct an architect to prepare plans.

Shortly after this meeting a letter was received by all the Trustees from the United Society of Arts (of Liverpool), expressing the liveliest concern at the prospect of the building being handed over to the Corporation for use as an art gallery, and urging the Trustees to maintain their independence and to continue to provide a centre for those practising the arts, which

*NOTE.—This notification was contained in a letter from the War Damage Commission, dated 5th November, 1945.

is one of the principal objects of the Trust as laid down in the Deed of Constitution of the Bluecoat Society of Arts. Though it was clear that this letter was written with an imperfect apprehension of the facts, there appeared to be sufficient substance in it to justify its consideration by a special meeting of the Trustees, which was held accordingly, on 11th January, 1946. The whole question of the future of the building was again considered at this meeting. The anxiety of the United Society of Arts that the building should continue to fulfil its purpose as an Art Centre, as laid down in the Deed of Constitution, and that it should continue to be owned and to be administered by independent Trustees and an independent Committee was fully appreciated. It was abundantly clear that architects, painters, musicians and lovers of the arts are seriously alarmed at the prospect of the building being municipalised. Rightly or wrongly they feel very strongly that the vigorous artistic life that has characterised the building for the last nineteen years would wilt in the atmosphere of municipal control; and that in place of being a home of "live" art, the old Bluecoat building would become merely a museum. On the other hand the Trustees were faced with the stubborn fact that there is a debt of £18,100 on the building and that, even if this debt were discharged, there would be a deficit each year of about £300 until the building is restored and able to earn an adequate income from rents. Their paramount duty is to insure the preservation of the building. If the mortgages can be paid off and an additional income of £300 a year obtained for the next five years, clearly it is desirable that the Trustees should maintain their independence. Probably there would be little difficulty in raising an income of £300 a year for a few years by means of subscriptions. The payment of the debt of £18,100 is a very much more difficult task and, indeed, may not be possible. If it cannot be done there is no alternative to negotiating for the handing over of the building to the Corporation, trusting that the widely held misgivings of those who oppose this course will prove groundless.

After weighing these various considerations, the Trustees felt, on the one hand, that they could scarcely carry on unless they could clear their feet of debt and that, though the policy of handing over the building and site to the Corporation had many drawbacks, it would at least insure the preservation of the building, while, if the Corporation became Trustee, it would also be bound by the Deed of Constitution. On the other hand

the Trustees considered that they were not bound to persist with Colonel Cotton's plan if any alternative were possible, especially as the Corporation after a period of twenty-one months had not responded to the offer contained in the letter of 30th May, 1944. The Secretary was, therefore, instructed to approach the Arts Council of Great Britain with a request for help in placing the affairs of the Society on a sound basis.

Accordingly a letter covering the history and present position of the Trust was submitted to the Arts Council, with an appeal for financial help. On 27th February, 1946, Professor L. B. Budden, Mr. J. H. Layton and the Secretary had an informal meeting with the Secretary-General of the Arts Council and their Regional Director. Some correspondence has since taken place and it is clear that the Arts Council appreciate the position and are very sympathetic and anxious to help, but are very unlikely to make a grant or even a large interest-free loan to clear off our debt. Negotiations are still going on with them. Up to the present time we have received no communication from the Corporation of Liverpool regarding our conditional offer of May, 1944.

A matter that at the present time gravely perturbs the Trustees and Committee is the proposal of the Corporation of Liverpool, published on 28th March, 1946, to drive the projected Inner Ring Road across the south-east part of our site. If this is done, it will be impossible to restore the south and east fronts in a manner worthy of the other parts of the building, and the present rectangular shape of the site will be so completely destroyed that no properly balanced building can possibly be placed on it. Furthermore the prospect of heavy traffic, such as will use the new road, passing very close to that part of the building which both architecturally and historically is of pre-eminent value, is most alarming. A protest has been made to the Town Clerk and all possible steps will be taken by us to have the line of the Inner Ring Road so changed that it will not encroach on our property.

I will now ask you to turn to the accounts which have been circulated. Looking first at the Revenue Account, Expenditure was £1,664 : 3 : 8, Income was £862 : 19 : 3 and the Deficit for the year was £801 : 4 : 5. This expenditure of £1,664 : 3 : 8 (and the consequent deficit of £801 : 4 : 5) appears heavy, but you will notice that it includes an item "Net A.R.P. Expenditure

written off, £170 : 15 : 7." From September, 1939, onwards we spent a considerable sum on air raid precautions (shelters, sandbags, "black out," and a variety of other items). Much of this was recoverable from the Treasury and from our tenants and has been recovered. For convenience in book-keeping this has been shown year by year in our Balance Sheet, as if it had been capital expenditure. With the approval of the auditors I have this year written off the non-recoverable balance of £170 : 15 : 7. When this is taken into consideration it is clear that our actual expenditure during the year was £1,493 : 8 : 1 and that the deficit was £630 : 8 : 10, a much less serious figure. During the coming year there will be a further saving as no War Damage Contribution (£96 : 13 : 0) is payable, and so I hope that next March the deficit will not be more than £550. When it is remembered that for the year ending 31st March, 1942, the deficit was £1,100, for the year ending 31st March, 1943, it was upwards of £1,400 and for the year ending 31st March, 1944, it was £999, this is a really satisfactory improvement in our position.

The Balance Sheet shows little change except that it includes the value of the property in Gleave Street bequeathed to us by the late Mr. P. F. Griffiths. This was valued for probate at £500 and is, accordingly, shown at that figure in our Balance Sheet.

We still have cash resources of approximately £1,200 and this should enable us to pay our way until the autumn of 1948. Much may happen in these two years, but it is not possible, as yet, to make definite plans for the future or even to start the repair of the building. If we could find the £18,100 needed to free us from debt, we could give instructions to our architect tomorrow and we could start work as soon as the necessary permits were obtained. Alternatively, if the building should be transferred to the Corporation on the terms laid down in our letter of 30th May, 1944, the Trustees would at least feel that sooner or later the fabric of the building would be restored and preserved and could hope that, in spite of widely held misgivings, it might continue to function as the live centre of the Arts that was visualised when our Deed of Constitution was drawn up in 1927. At the moment we are in suspense and I greatly regret that I must end my report on this note of uncertainty.

W. S. MACCUNN,
General Secretary.

EXHIBITIONS HELD IN BLUECOAT CHAMBERS DURING THE YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH, 1946

With the return of many of their members from war service, the Sandon Studios Society (who have been tenants of rooms in the building for nearly forty years) have begun to revive their normal activities, and during the period covered by the foregoing report the following exhibitions have been held in their Music Room.

1945

April - Exhibition by Mr. Will C. Penn for 3 weeks.

May - - Exhibition by Liverpool Academy of Arts for 3 weeks.

September Exhibition by Mr. Eugen Hoffmann for 2 weeks.

October - Exhibition by Sandon Artists Group for 2 weeks.

December Exhibition by Miss W. O. Humphreys and two others
for 1 week.

During the same period the Arts Committee of the Corporation at Liverpool, continuing their interesting and successful war-time policy of a series of loan exhibitions, have held the following exhibitions in the Lecture Hall :—

March 26th—April 7th, 1945 : Royal Society of Painter-Etchers. †

April 9th—28th : Contemporary British painting.*

April 30th—May 22nd : Liverpool Architectural Society.

May 24th—June 16th : Modern Chinese paintings. ‡

June 18th—July 7th : The Golden Age of English Architecture**

July 9th—21st : Liverpool School of Architecture.

July 23rd—August 4th : Polish School of Architecture.

August 6th—September 8th : Liverpool Amateur Photographic
Association.

* From the Arts Council of Great Britain.

† From the Art Exhibitions Bureau.

‡ From the British Council.

** From the Georgian Group.

1945

September 10th—October 6th : Pictures of old Liverpool. ††

October 8th—November 10th : Recording Merseyside.***

November 12th—December 8th : New English Art Club. †

1946—

December 10th—January 5th : The Geoffrey Blackwell collection †

January 7th—February 2nd : The Ashcroft and Hartje collections.

February 4th—23rd : English conversation pieces.*

February 25th—March 16th : Works by George Sheringham. †

March 18th—April 6th : Cosmopolitan contemporary drawings. ††

†† From the British Institute of Adult Education.

††† Largely from the collection of Mr. E. B. Royden.

*** Organised by the following members of the Sandon Studios Society:—
Messrs H. Thearle, H. Tyson Smith and C. W. Sharpe.

BLUECOAT SOCIETY OF ARTS

The following bequest, loans and gifts were received between September, 1939 and March, 1946, and are acknowledged with sincere gratitude.

BEQUEST—

The late P. F. Griffiths, Esq. : House property valued at £500.

LOANS—

<i>Free of interest.</i>	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Messrs. Alfred Holt and Co.	1,000	0	0			
Mrs. James Calder	500	0	0			
Lord Leverhulme	300	0	0			
William Rushworth, Esq.	300	0	0			
R. H. Thornton, Esq.	150	0	0			
Miss E. G. Holt	100	0	0			
Mr. & Mrs. W. S. MacCunn	100	0	0			
						2,450 0 0
<i>At 3%</i>						
Mrs. Permewan	1,000	0	0			
H. A. Thew, Esq.	200	0	0			
Mrs. Kipling	100	0	0			
Earl of Sefton	100	0	0			
Commander N. L. Cappel	100	0	0			
Major Mark Rathbone	100	0	0			
Countess of Sefton	50	0	0			1,650 0 0
						£4,100 0 0

GIFTS—

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
The Pilgrim Trust	500	0	0	J. M. Furniss, Esq., C.B.E. ...	10	0	0
Sandon Studios Society	263	10	6	G. Hastwell Grayson, Esq. ...	10	0	0
Anonymous per Sir Sydney Jones	207	0	0	Miss H. Harrison	10	0	0
Sir Robert Rankin, Bart., M.P. ...	200	0	0	E. Peter Jones, Esq.	10	0	0
Miss E. G. Holt	100	0	0	Merseyside Civic Society ...	10	0	0
Messrs. J. Bibby & Sons, Ltd. ...	50	0	0	T. Stone, Esq.	10	0	0
The Viscountess Leverhulme ...	50	0	0	H. J. Perrett, Esq.	10	0	0
R. G. Morton, Esq.	26	5	0	Vernon E. Sangster, Esq. ...	10	0	0
Sir John Shute, C.M.G., D.S.O., M.P. ...	25	0	0	Professor L. B. Budden	5	5	0
Miss Margaret Gladstone	20	0	0	Miss L. I. Earle	5	5	0
Miss Mary E. Gladstone	20	0	0	T. F. Shephard, Esq.	5	5	0
Lady Holt	20	0	0	D. Winston, Esq.	5	5	0
Sir William Rootes	10	10	0	Mrs. Frank Bateson	5	0	0
William Gibbons, Esq.	10	10	0	Lt.-Col. D. Bickersteth ...	5	0	0
Mrs. G. W. Armitage	10	0	0	Mrs. Charles Booth	5	0	0
Mr. & Mrs. H. P. Bibby	10	0	0	British Council	5	0	0
				P. Buchan Hepburn, Esq., M.P. ...	5	0	0
				Miss Calder	5	0	0

BLUECOAT SOCIETY OF ARTS

REVENUE ACCOUNT

Dr.

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH, 1946

Cr.

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
To Mortgage Interest	466	11	2	By Rents	797	18	11
„ War Damage Contribution	96	13	0	„ Interest on Deposit	65	0	4
„ Secretary's Salary and Bonus	325	0	0	„ Loss for year carried to Balance Sheet	801	4	5
„ Wages of Caretaker and Cleaners	359	13	8				
„ Rates	6	18	3				
„ Insurance	32	10	3				
„ Fuel and Lighting	20	14	6				
„ Printing, Stationery, Postages, Telephone and Sundries	35	12	0				
„ Martins Bank Ltd., Trustee Fee	25	0	0				
„ Audit and Accountancy Charges	15	15	0				
„ Repairs	100	10	6				
„ Depreciation of Furniture and Equipment	8	9	9				
„ Net A.R.P. Expenditure written off	170	15	7				
	£1,664	3	8		£1,664	3	8