

The Bluecoat

Today & Yesterday



A description of
Bluecoat Chambers, Liverpool
By Celia Van Mullem & Bryan Biggs

The Bluecoat Society of Arts

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The sketches in this book have been drawn by Bryan Biggs and the text is by Celia Van Mullem, except where otherwise specified.

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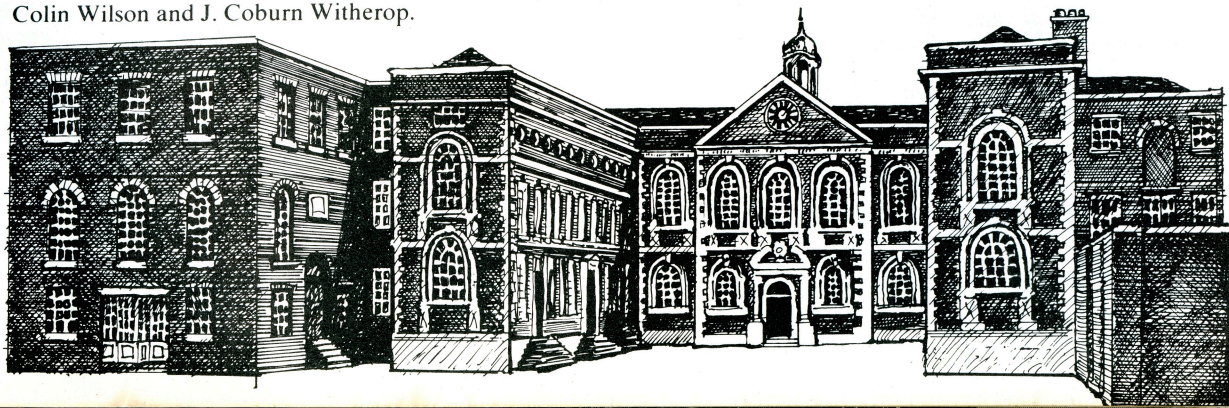
The building known as the Bluecoat Chambers started life as the Blue Coat Hospital in 1717. In 1906 the Hospital (or school as it became to be known) moved to more spacious premises in Wavertree and the building (after being used for various purposes mainly cultural but partly commercial) was saved from demolition in 1927 by the fund-raising efforts of members of the Sandon Studios Society (particularly Mrs Fanny Calder) and others interested in the arts. The most generous benefactor was Mr W. E. Corlett to whom a plaque has now been erected in the back courtyard. Robin Hewitt-Jones wrote a most interesting history of Bluecoat Chambers for the 250th Anniversary celebrations in 1967 and this, with one or two amendments, can be found at the end of this book.

The day to day work of the Bluecoat Society of Arts is carried out by an Honorary Secretary, J. Van Mullem and Administrator, Celia Van Mullën under an Executive Committee consisting of myself as Chairman, John Cook as Hon. Treasurer and Robert Gardner-Medwin, Nicholas Horsfield, Adrian Julian, Julia Pugh Thomas, Gillian Rushworth, James Rushworth, Peter Tyson, Colin Wilson and J. Coburn Witherop.

Bluecoat Chambers is maintained by money from rents for studios let out to artists, cultural societies, architects and others concerned with the arts, as well as from the hiring out of the Concert Hall, Music Studios etc. The Society charges considerably higher rates for all commercial activities in an effort to get commerce to pay something towards subsidising the arts. However, in order to pay reasonable rates of pay to the present dedicated overworked, underpaid staff and to maintain the interior and exterior of the building, contributions are urgently needed. The stonework and paintwork is in need of attention and it is many years since the interior was decorated. All gifts and covenants will be gratefully received and acknowledged in the Annual Report. A list of benefactors up to present date appears inside the back cover.

The pages which follow give some idea of activities in the Concert Hall, Galleries and studios and will I hope, encourage people to come and visit this unique and beautiful building and make use of its many facilities.

F. J. Camenisch *Chairman, January 1976*



Concert Hall

The maximum seating for the Concert Hall is 399 but smaller numbers of seats can be arranged in various ways to suit the different type of event which is taking place. It is used regularly for concerts, recitals, music festivals, rehearsals, lectures, political and religious meetings, seminars and conferences of various kinds. In addition examinations for the Civil Service, Open University and various other bodies are held here. The North West Antiques Fair comes in February, the Book Fair twice a year, and various other trade exhibitions are a regular feature. It is also suitable for fund-raising events such as cheese and wine parties, fashion shows, etc. etc. Catering facilities are available from the Liverpool Architectural Society's Bluecoat Club or people may arrange their own catering if desired.

A few steps down from the Hall is an Annexe with a small kitchen attached. This is sometimes let out separately but is also used in conjunction with the Hall.

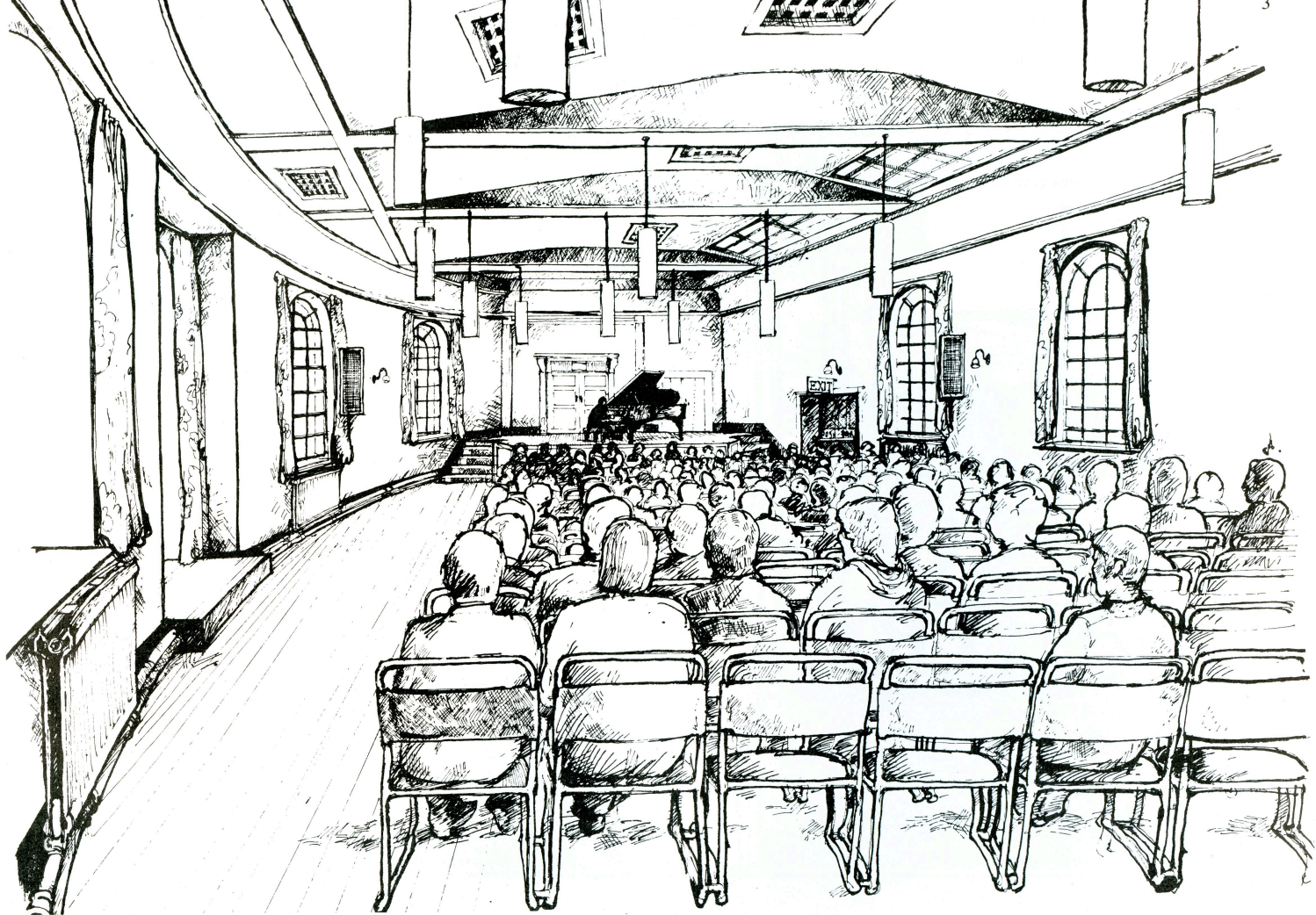
Over the years the Bluecoat Society has been responsible for festivals of the arts, recitals and exhibitions, at which such famous personalities as Julian Bream, Max Adrian, Janet Suzman, Stephen Wearing and Arthur Dooley have appeared. It now promotes concerts for children and parents every holiday; it has inaugurated the Liverpool Lieder Circle (the only one in the country) which has not only welcomed such internationally famous singers as Isobel Baillie, Peter Pears, John Shirley Quirk, Gerald English, Thomas Hemsley, but has also arranged students' recitals and concerts dedicated to helping young professional artists to get started in their careers. In addition it promotes a series

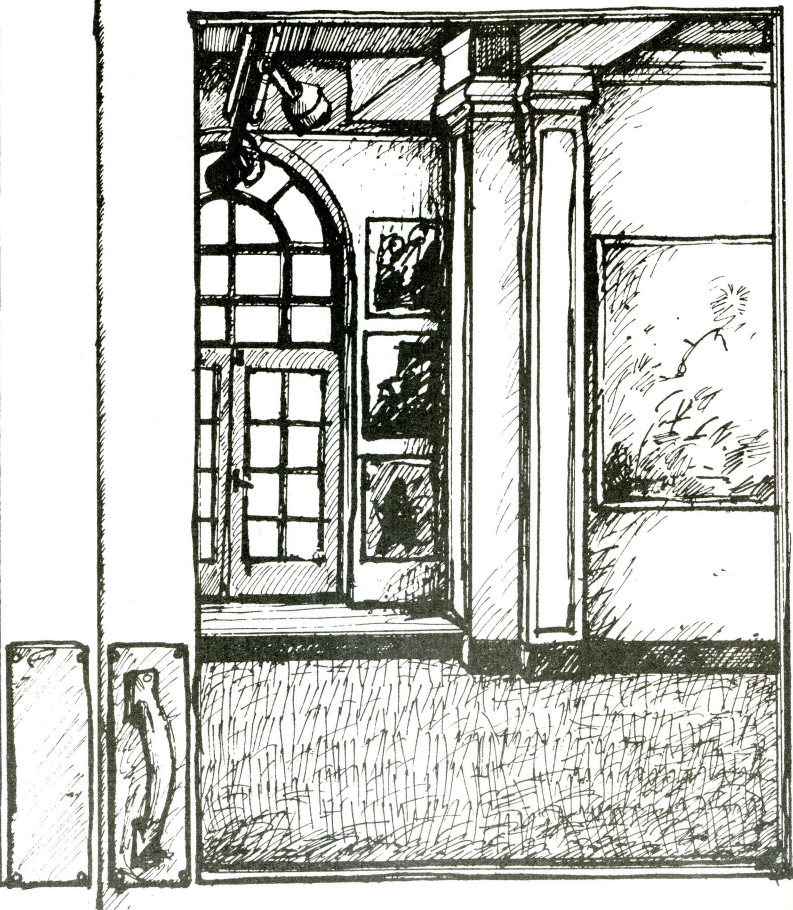
of concerts 'Musicians of Merseyside' at which both famous and well-established musicians born in or living on Merseyside as well as those embarking on their careers give their services for the benefit of Bluecoat Chambers. John McCabe inaugurated the series in November 1974 closely followed by Suzanne Cheetham, and other musicians who have kindly performed for us in 1975 were John Fuest, Colin Carr, The Spinners, Jacqui and Bridie, the Liverpool Baroque Ensemble, Roger Allen, Kate Wilson, Christine Hughes and Stephanie Bamford.

The Merseyside Arts Association, who of course arrange recitals all over Merseyside (see special entry Page 13) regularly use the Bluecoat Hall and have brought many illustrious musicians to this building. Choirs, chamber orchestras, instrumentalists and pianists find it an excellent hall acoustically and appreciate the particularly warm and friendly atmosphere which Bluecoat Chambers provides. Most of the events which take place in the Concert Hall are mentioned in *Arts Alive Merseyside* and are also publicised in 'What's on at the Bluecoat' - a leaflet produced by the Society itself for the two winter terms.

Enquiries for hire of the Concert Hall (also for artists' studios, music studios, Sandon Music Room and Foyer Gallery) should be addressed to the Administrator of Bluecoat Chambers as follows:—

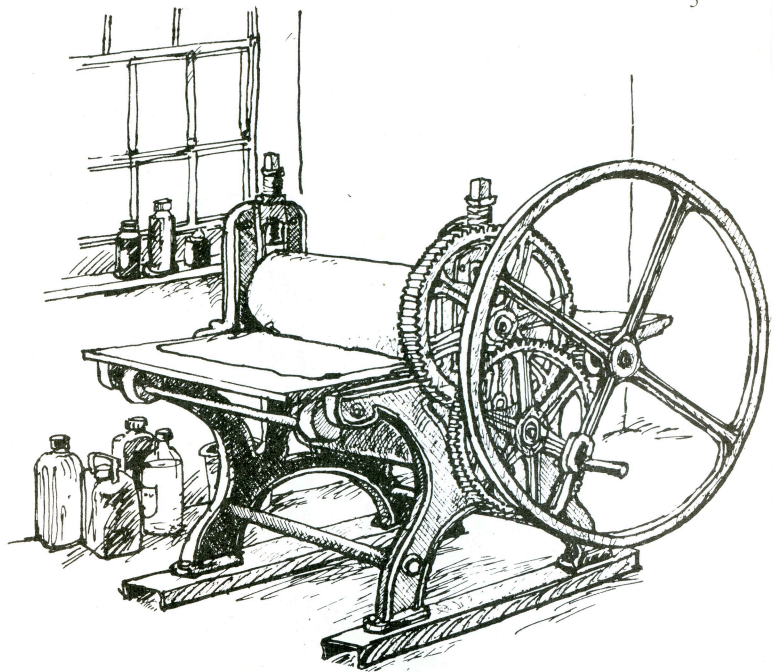
Mrs Celia Van Mullem
Administrator, Bluecoat Society of Arts
Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane
Liverpool L1 3BX
051-709 5297



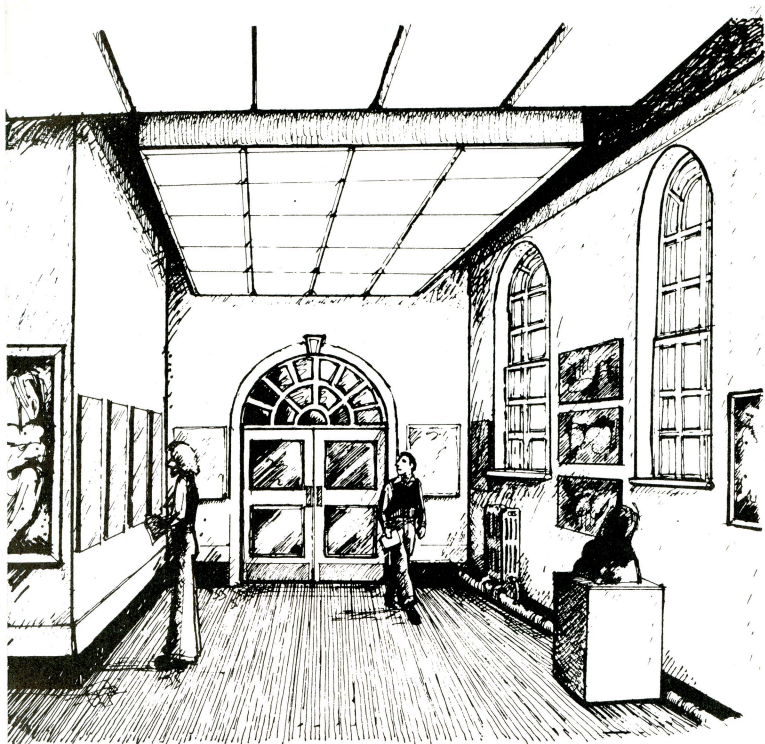


The Bluecoat Gallery

has its own Director, Barbara Putt, who organises exhibitions by artists not only from Merseyside but all over Britain. Painters whose work has been shown include Derek Boshier, Tom Phillips, Barry Flanagan, Dave Pearson, Mark Boyle, Don McKinlay and Maurice Cockrill. A highly successful exhibition 'Images of War' was a joint promotion with the Liverpool *Daily Post and Echo* and several other shows have been staged in collaboration with the Merseyside Arts Association including one featuring the work of the leading Kinetic artist Michael McKinnon. Work by local artists (among whom are numbered Sam Walsh, George Jardine, George Drought, Dorothy Bradford, E. Scott-Jones, Frank Green and John Baum) is regularly on view or easily obtained. The Gallery would welcome the opportunity to promote joint exhibitions with arts organisations or commercial firms. A permanent stock of reproductions and prints is always available for sale. There is access through French windows to the back courtyard where sculpture exhibitions may be held. An exhibition panel with special responsibilities for the Gallery consists of Chairman, Colin Wilson and Peter Bevan, Nicholas Horsfield, Margo Ingham, Kenneth Lawrence, Celia Van Mullem, Alan Swerdlow and J. Coburn Witherop. Artists wishing to exhibit should see the Director or send slides. Gallery Tel. No. **051-709 5689**.



The etching press shown here is in the *Print Workshop, Studio 9* and was acquired from the Sandon Studios Society with the help of a donation from the Liverpool Academy. Regular etching classes are held and it is available for use by professional artists (further information from the Gallery Director: **051-709 5689)**



The Foyer Gallery

is used either in conjunction with the Bluecoat Gallery or as a separate entity and is let out by the Bluecoat Society of Arts to various organisations such as the Liver Sketching Club and Art Departments of colleges for regular exhibitions. In addition commercial organisations make use of this area, sometimes as an extension of the Concert Hall as in the case of the Antique Fair. As the Foyer Gallery leads directly to the Concert Hall, exhibitions can be seen, not only in the daytime, but also at night when the Concert Hall is often in use.

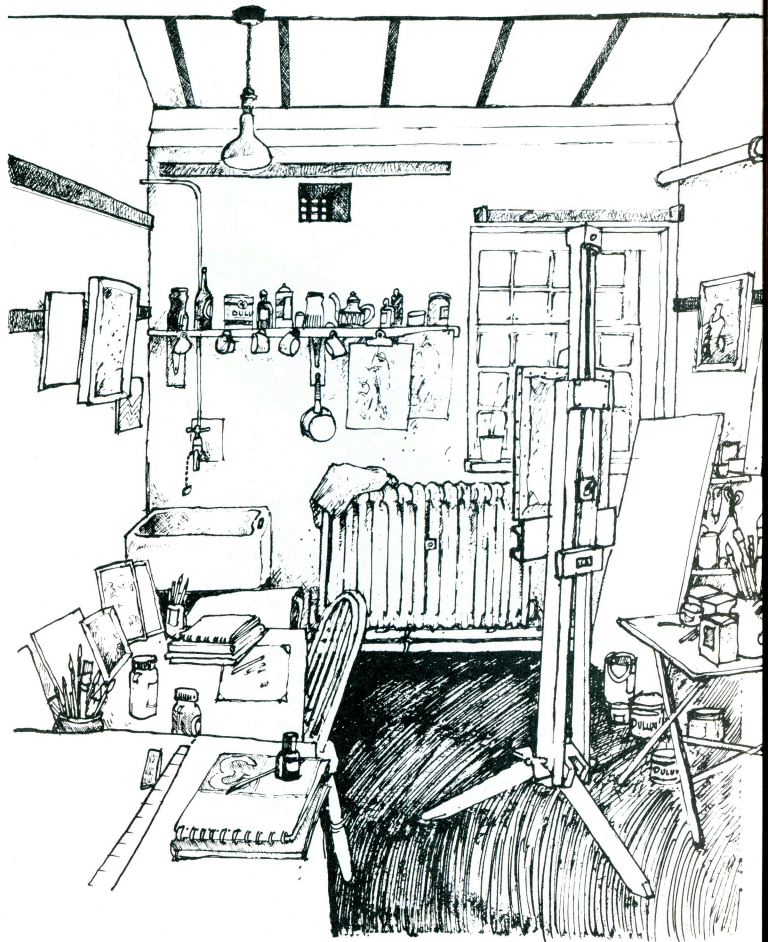
Enquiries: **051-709 5297**

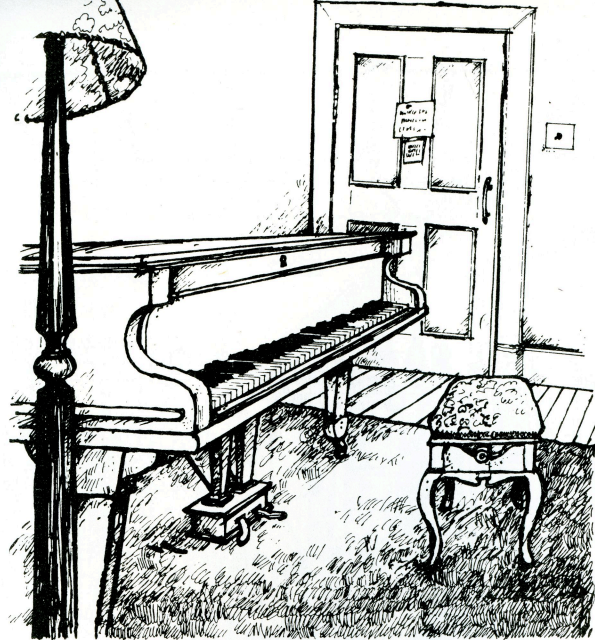
Painters Studios

This drawing illustrates one of the many *painter's studios*.

These studios are rented on a quarterly basis and there is usually a waiting list but artists wishing to rent studios should get in touch with Celia Van Mullem, Bluecoat Society of Arts.

051-709 5297





One of the *Music Studios* let out by the hour for either practice or teaching. Since the building is open from 8.00 in the morning until 10.00 at night these studios are much in demand. Commercial firms have long since ceased to operate such a service and very few music studios are available in the whole of the North West of England. These studios (as well as the Sandon Music Room) are used at the end of every term for examinations arranged by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, Guildhall School of Music and Trinity College of Music.

051-709 5297

The Garden Courtyard

The recently re-habilitated garden courtyard now has a raised area from which concerts have been given during the summer months by the Merseyside Police Band, Mabel Fletcher College Band etc., etc., and various poets have given readings to a mixed audience of shoppers, business men, shop assistants and office workers who come into the courtyard to eat their lunch or just sit in the sun. Wellwishers have provided the seats and we acknowledge with gratitude the financial assistance given to the Society by the Liverpool Heritage Bureau, Booth Training Ltd., the English Tourist Board and many lovers of the Bluecoat Chambers.

Some years ago the Society allowed amateur artists, not connected with the Bluecoat, to show and sell their paintings from the railings in front of the building every Saturday. This little exhibition has become quite a showpiece.

The Bluecoat Society of Arts is greatly indebted to Booth Training Limited for the help given by their task force of trainees in refurbishing the garden courtyard.

Booth Training Limited
Speke Boulevard
Liverpool L24 9LU

051-486 5989



The Sandon Music Room

seats between 50 and 80 people and is in constant use for lectures, small recitals, rehearsals and social functions.

Regular users include the Sandon Studios Society, Liverpool Historical Society, Music Teachers' Association, Royal Court Theatre Club, Friends of Westminster Theatre and Townswomen's Guilds Choir. The Liverpool Mozart Orchestra who annually promote four Sunday concerts in the Bluecoat Hall, rehearse there regularly on Thursdays.

The Theosophical Society, groups practising transcendental meditation and various religious and political meetings are held here. In the daytime it is quite often used by firms for market research purposes and some local companies make use of it for discussions and conferences.

Candidates for Associated Board, Trinity and Guildhall Schools of Music and the Poetry Society are examined here or in another room near the Concert Hall.

Enquiries: **051-709 5297**



Tenants

CULTURAL SOCIETIES

50*	BLUECOAT DISPLAY CENTRE	709 4014
7/8*	BRITISH COUNCIL	709 4133
5	ENGLISH FOLK DANCE & SONG SOCIETY North West Area Headquarters	709 7423
55	LIVER SKETCHING CLUB	228 2669
30*	LIVERPOOL ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETY Headquarters	708 8499
	BLUECOAT CLUB (Members only)	709 2179
42*	LIVERPOOL YOUTH MUSIC COMMITTEE	709 9409
2/6*	MERSEYSIDE ARTS ASSOCIATION	709 0671
3*	MERSEYSIDE ARTSHOP General Enquiries	708 7592
	What's On - 24 hours	708 7576
40B	MERSEYSIDE CONFERENCE FOR OVERSEAS STUDENTS	709 9839
45*	MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY	709 4260
36	SANDON STUDIOS SOCIETY	
39*	WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION	709 8023

ARTISTS

49*	AMALGAMATED INSTITUTE OF ANTIQUARIAN CRAFTS	709 6115
	Stephen Baty: <i>clockmaker and repairer</i>	
	James McLaughlin: <i>carver and sculptor</i>	
	Susan Dawson: <i>Botanical watercolourist</i>	
	Roger Williams: <i>potter</i>	
41	WILLIAM BATEMAN: <i>sculptor and model maker</i>	709 3287
16	ALAN BIRD: <i>painter and writer</i>	
31/32	R. F. BISSON: <i>painter and writer</i>	
19	DOROTHY BRADFORD: <i>painter</i>	36 77350
20	JAMES CLIFFE: <i>painter</i>	
29	R. S. COVENTRY: <i>painter and designer</i>	709 2606
52*	JULIA CARTER PRESTON: <i>potter</i>	
48	NIGEL HELYER: <i>sculptor and woodcraftsman</i>	
37	LESLEY HUMPHREYS: <i>painter (portraits etc.)</i>	
10	GEORGE W. JARDINE: <i>painter</i>	6385811
35	INEZ M. LIND: <i>painter</i>	
34*	WILLIAM SCOBIE: <i>adviser on fine arts and antiques</i>	709 2950
43	RONALD SETTLE: <i>pianist and music teacher</i>	709 7877
1	A. SOLOCH: <i>leather craftsman</i>	709 3334
44	THOMAS D. WESS: <i>harpsichord maker and player</i>	336 5727
11	GEOFFREY G. WHEELER: <i>painter and mosaicist</i>	0270 661510
40A*	ALAN G. WILSON: <i>antiquarian bookseller</i>	708 0204

ARCHITECTS

12	HALL & WILSON George A. Hall, FRIBA, MRTPI Colin R. Wilson, FRIBA	709 6182/3/4
33	AUDREY WALKER, BArch	709 5150

*Further information on subsequent pages.



Bryan Biggs.

The Merseyside Arts Association

The *Merseyside Arts Association* has been a tenant of the Bluecoat Society of Arts since 1969 and occupied two offices at Nos. 2 and 6 Bluecoat Chambers. The Association, funded by the Arts Council of Great Britain and the seven Merseyside Local Authorities, is the principal development agency for the arts on Merseyside, providing financial assistance to artists and cultural societies, promoting events, and providing a wide range of advisory and marketing services. The Association publishes the monthly arts magazine, *Arts Alive Merseyside*.

On the 26th January 1976 the Association opened its new Artshop on the site of the Bluecoat Society's former Enquiry Office at No. 3. The Shop is open Monday - Friday, 10.00 - 4.00, for the sale of tickets for concerts, theatres, and the Merseyside Film Theatre and stocks a comprehensive range of literature on regional arts events, as well as a selective list of records and local poetry books. The Shop can also help with enquiries about local cultural societies, adult education courses and other arts events nationwide. Day to day information about what's on is also provided on a 24 hour telephone service. (D.P.)

Merseyside Arts Association, 6 Bluecoat Chambers
Tel. **051-709 0671**

Merseyside Artshop, 3 Bluecoat Chambers
Box Office: Tel. **051-708 7592**
What's On: Tel. **051-708 7576**





Liverpool Youth Music Committee

Chairman: **Stanley J. Kennett, BSc, PhD**

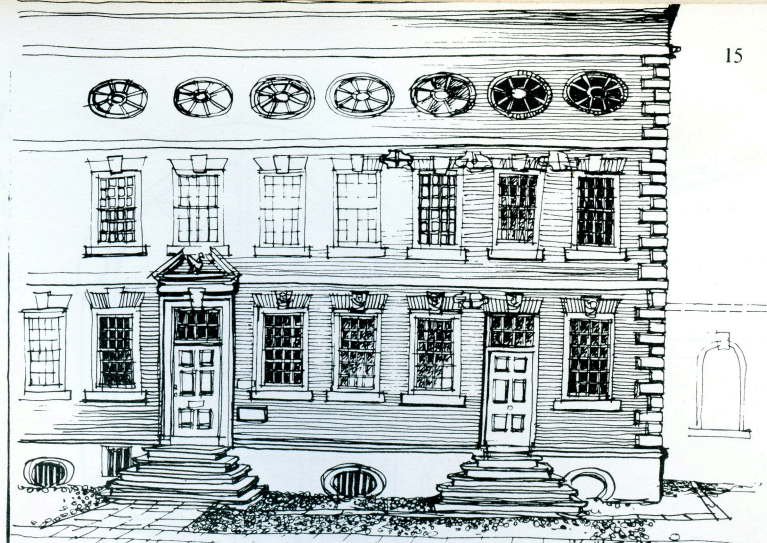
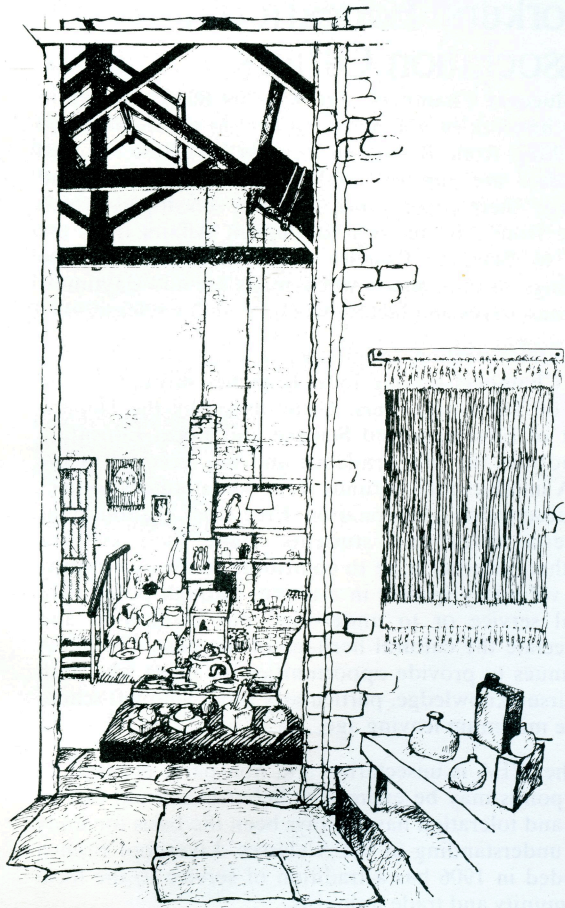
Organiser: **Raymond Mulholland**

The Liverpool Youth Music Committee has its headquarters at 42 Bluecoat Chambers (Tel. **051-709 9409**). Instituted to foster, by voluntary means, the desire for young people to make music in their leisure hours. Promotes an annual Festival in the Bluecoat Hall, also two major concerts specially produced for young performers in the Philharmonic Hall. All the year round a Youth Music Centre functions in the basement of the Central Hall, Renshaw Street where a full range of musical activity takes place under professional guidance. (S.J.K.)

The illustration shows young musicians rehearsing at Renshaw Street.

The *Bluecoat Display Centre* is reached through a small door in College Lane or through the main building (Door E) and across the back courtyard. It is a non-profit making organisation where the best work of British artist/craftsmen is on permanent display and for sale. There is a great variety of pottery, weaving, jewellery etc. at remarkably low prices, making individual gifts. The range changes all the time, and the area covered is the whole of the British Isles from Land's End to John O'Groats.

Tel. **051-709 4014**



Liverpool Architectural Society - Bluecoat Club

The Club is located within the Courtyard of Bluecoat Chambers, and offers excellent bar and dining facilities in the centre of the City. *Illustration by Ken Martin*

The Club was formed by the Liverpool Architectural Society for those interested in the Arts and membership includes architects, artists, musicians, doctors, teachers, accountants and others. Anyone interested in membership should apply to:—

The Secretary
Room 30, Bluecoat Chambers
School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BX Tel. **051-708 8499**

Rooms can be hired for parties and meetings by arrangement with the Club Secretary, address as above.



Workers' Educational Association Offices

39 Bluecoat Chambers, Tel. **051-709 8023**: the centre for a network of voluntary workers in adult education stretching from Barrow-in-Furness to Chester. Local Branches are run by adult students who plan and arrange their programme of study on topics which range from Archaeology to Current Affairs from the Arts to Science. Courses are mainly held in the evenings, usually once a week, many are now daytime – for housewives and factory workers on day release.

The administration and finance is arranged from Bluecoat Chambers serving local Branches through a field staff of Tutor-organisers. Grant-aided by the Department of Education and Science and Local Education Authorities the independence and the freedom of the WEA involves raising funds from non-statutory sources by subscription and donation. Free from examinations or tests, tutor and students shape their syllabus together, whether it be to contribute to the community as a voluntary worker in a union, through political or social service or to understand our civilisation and appreciate the cultural heritage of the past. The WEA continues to provide opportunities for those who wish to pursue knowledge, particularly those who left school at the minimum leaving age.

As the WEA is unsectarian and non-party political all viewpoints may be expressed. Belief in reason, discussion and toleration have always been the basis for study and understanding in WEA classes. Liverpool Branch founded in 1906 has a tradition of service to the local community and trade unionists.

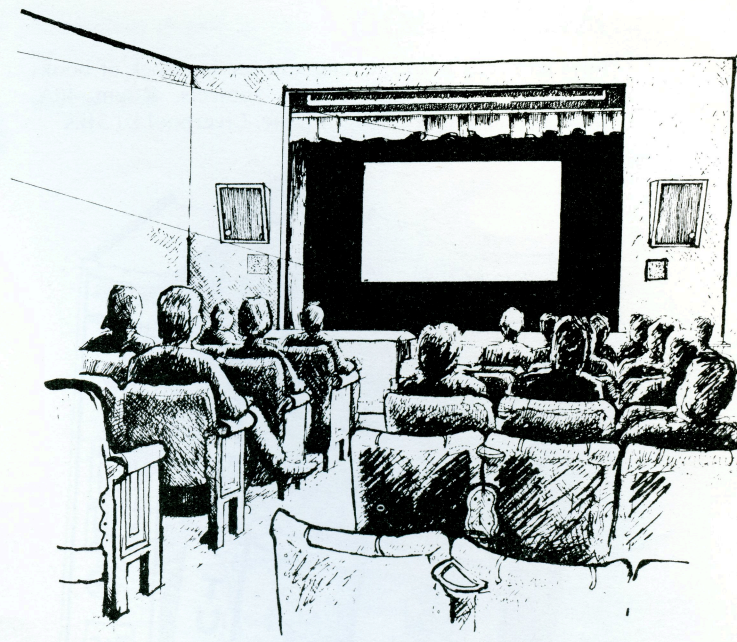
Merseyside Film Institute Society

The Society, founded in 1933, has for over forty years been the most active in the country. Over seventy feature films are presented each season, about half of which are English language films. The programmes presented provide a balanced mixture of revivals of famous films of the past with recent productions from all the leading film-producing nations. This season's programmes have included:

Grapes of Wrath, Roy Bean, Fellini Roma, Siegfried, The Music Lovers, Chinatown and Solaris.

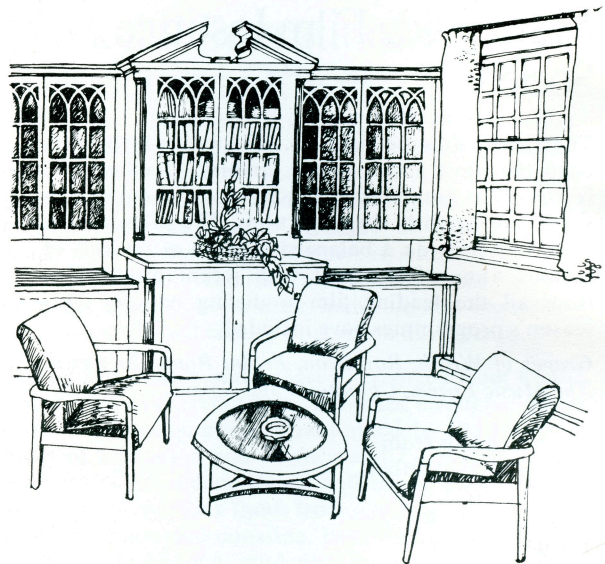
Further details from:
45 Bluecoat Chambers,
School Lane,
Liverpool L1 3BX
Tel. **051-709 5297**

(S. O.C.)



Alan Wilson

buys and sells books. Come and see his stock of books on local history and general subjects. Room 40A, Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BX



The British Council reception room

The aims of the British Council are to promote a wider knowledge of the United Kingdom and the English Language abroad and to develop closer cultural relations with other countries.

Amalgamated Institute of Antiquarian Crafts

49 Bluecoat Chambers. Tel. **051-709 6115**

Stephen Baty: *Clockmaker and repairer*

Susan Dawson: *Botanical watercolourist*

James McLaughlin: *Carver and sculptor*

Roger Williams: *Potter*



The Institute was formed with the following aims:

To foster interest in the traditional crafts and help revive crafts that are either lost or nearly lost.

To provide a service of restoring or reproducing objects by traditional methods.

To supply a focal point where craftsmen can meet, work and display their craft.

The membership consists of full-time craftsmen, part-time craftsmen and interested parties. Craftsmen members have workshops throughout the North West and North Wales. A central showroom of work and some workshops are in the back courtyard of Bluecoat Chambers. (S.B.)

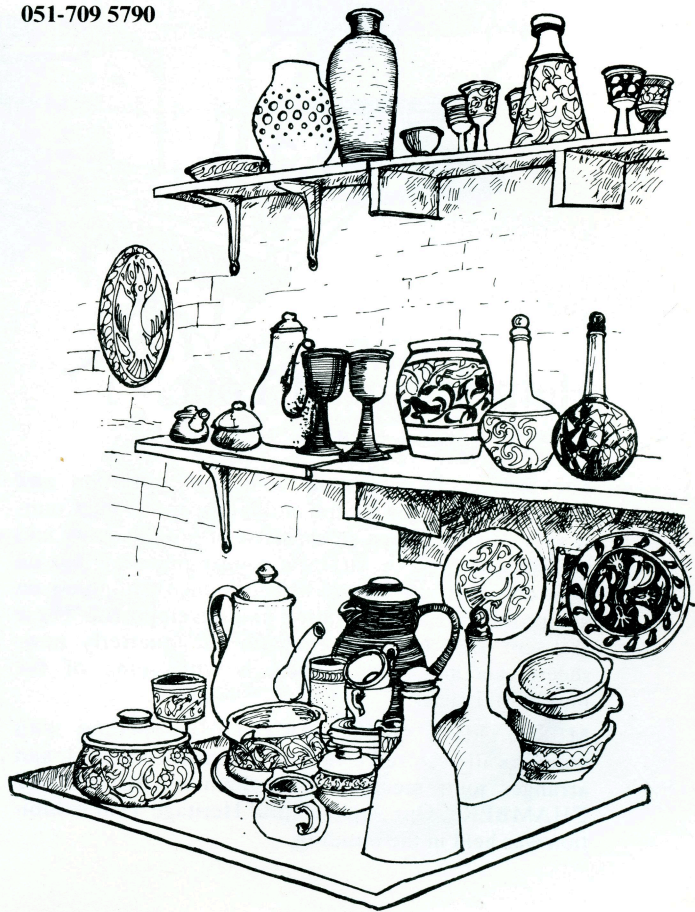
Northern Arts Antiques Consultants Studio 34

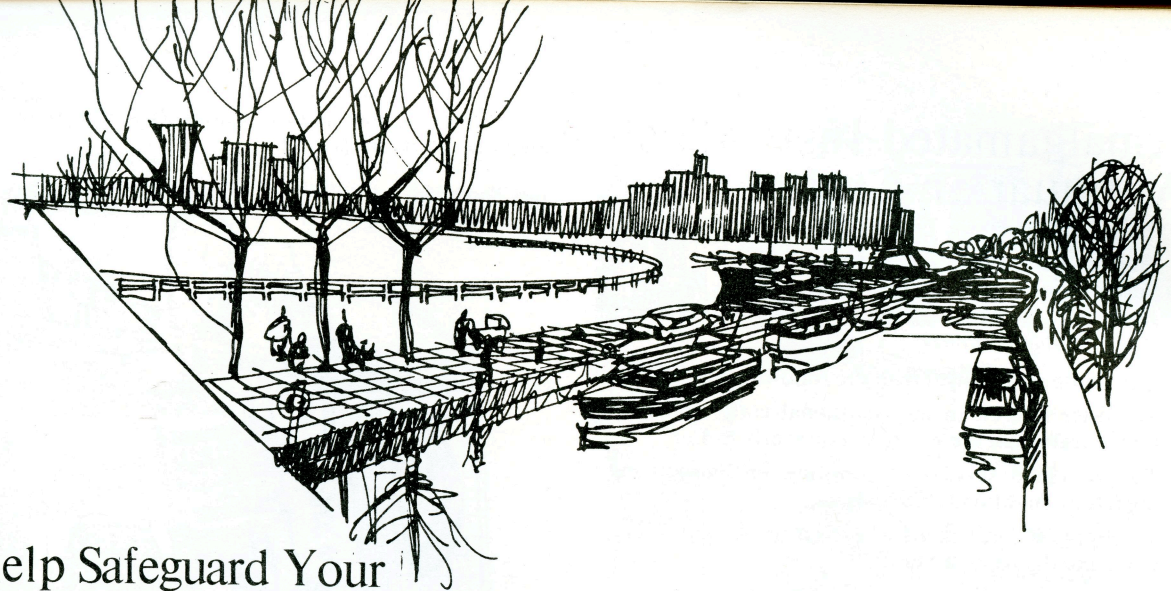
A new venture set up by a local partnership. The firm will undertake the cataloguing and valuation of fine art and antiques and give advice on all matters relating to these. The wide knowledge of the partners is amplified by their panel of independent authorities prepared to act within their own fields.

051-709 2950

A selection of pots in Julia Carter Preston's studio, in the back courtyard No. 52.

051-709 5790





Help Safeguard Your Heritage

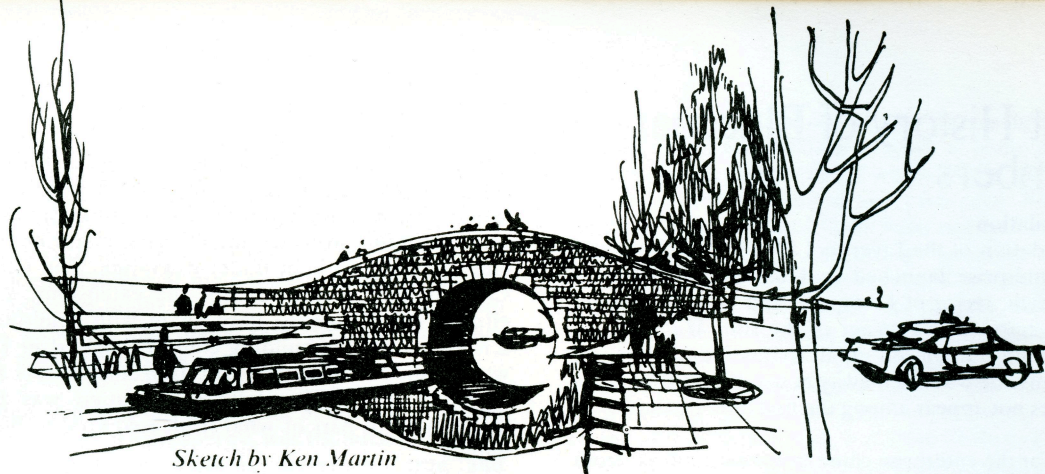
The Society is concerned with the protection and enhancement of townscape and landscape in the County area. It draws upon an expertise of professionals, and its Study Groups on strategic county planning and on civic design in the central area, produce pamphlets on key problems of conservation and development. These are sent free to members with the quarterly news sheets, keeping them in touch with some of the important issues.

MERSEYSIDE CIVIC SOCIETY co-operates with many locally centred civic and amenities societies, and arranges joint meetings with them in BLUECOAT CHAMBERS. Our Architectural Heritage Year exhibition was held in the building.

Merseyside Civic Society

The Society has a critical but co-operative association with the Chief Officers of County and District planning authorities. If you believe in having a say about your local area, join your local civic society. If you are also concerned about the quality of townscape in the central city areas, or about basic development policies in the County, and if you believe in public participation in development decisions, join the MERSEYSIDE CIVIC SOCIETY.

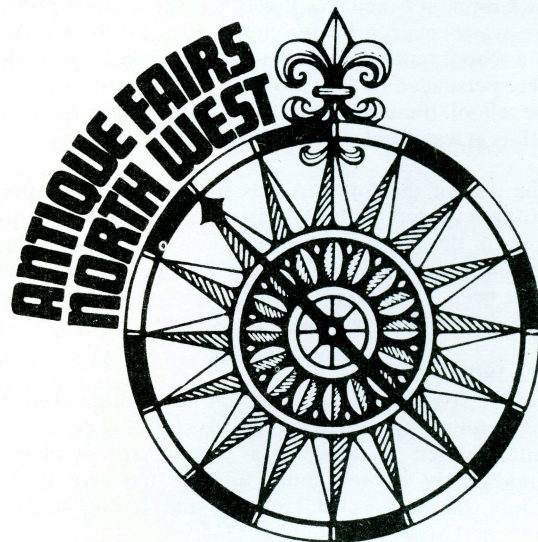
For details, apply to the Treasurer, Mr David Stewart, Wilson's Bookshop, Renshaw Stret, who will send you a free copy of the latest news sheet.



Sketch by Ken Martin

The regular visit of Antique Fairs North West in February to Bluecoat Chambers is welcomed by people all over Merseyside district and is a very popular event in the Bluecoat year. All exhibits are for sale including furniture, porcelain, pictures, rugs, books, jewellery, silver, prints, glass and ivories and many specialists items.

ANTIQUE FAIRS NORTH WEST
 Brownslow House,
 Great Budworth, Cheshire.
 Tel: 0606 891267/061-962 5629



Short History of Bluecoat Chambers

The Foundation

The foundation of the Liverpool Blue Coat School was a joint enterprise launched in 1708 by the Reverend Robert Styth, rector of Liverpool, and Bryan Blundell, a master mariner and owner of the ship *Mulberry*. At first the main burden fell upon Mr Styth and, presumably because he was often away at sea, Bryan Blundell's name does not appear among the first nine trustees.

Support for the enterprise came from two sources: from the Common Council of Liverpool who granted part of the 'waste' near St Peter's church yard for the erection of a school building; and from private benefactors who were persuaded by Bryan Blundell to subscribe towards the school. Blundell himself gave over £200 in the years before it was decided to erect the present building.

The aim of the founders was simple: 'To teach poor children to read, write and cast accounts, and to instruct them in the principles and doctrines of the established church.' At this stage, the school building, too, must have been simple since it cost a mere £35, and housed fifty children for teaching purposes only.

The 18th Century

Robert Styth died in 1713. Bryan Blundell determined in the following year to give up his seafaring career and settle himself in the town as a merchant so that he could apply himself more fully to the care of the school. He was elected Treasurer and Trustee in place of Robert Styth in September 1714.

Blundell was aware that his school was unlikely to fulfil its real purpose so long as the children who attended it were exposed out of school hours to the distractions of the town and, perhaps, to the evil influence of a bad home. He therefore determined to raise funds for a larger building in which the children might be housed, clothed, fed and kept under discipline. The Common Council gave permission for the extensions, and the citizens came forward once again with generous subscriptions, so that building could be started in 1717. It was finished in 1725 and cost altogether nearly £2,300, of which Bryan Blundell's contribution was £750 – 'being a tenth part of what it pleased God to bless me with.'

The design of the school has caused much speculation among architectural historians. It has even been attributed to Christopher Wren, but the most convincing case so far has been made out by Mr S. A. Harris in favour of Thomas Ripley, the architect of the Old Customs House which stood at the end of the Old Dock, and the executive architect, for Colin Campbell, of Sir Robert Walpole's Houghton Hall in Norfolk.

In keeping with Blundell's declared aim 'to instruct the children in the principles and doctrines of the established church', a faculty was granted by the Consistory Court of Chester in 1717 for the erection of a gallery at the West end of St Peter's Church, which stood just outside the front of the school on the site now partially occupied by Woolworth's. This gallery, where the boys and girls might 'stand, sit, kneel and hear divine service and sermons,' was used by the school until the church was demolished in 1922.

Bryan Blundell died in 1756. He had been Treasurer of the school since 1714 and during his long service had seen it expand to provide places for 70 boys and 30 girls. But the work of the school did not end when its children left, for the pages of the first account book bear witness to the payments made year after year for apprenticing children at the age of fourteen to various local trades. As might be expected, a connection with the sea grew up and many 18th century Old Blues became mates or masters of their ships.

It is often said that the Blue Coat School, and indeed much of Liverpool's prosperity, was founded on profits of the slave trade. This is regrettably true and can be shown that more than half the trustees in the mid-eighteenth century, including Bryan Blundell and his sons, were deeply involved in the business. It is also true that many of the boys were apprenticed to captains of slave ships or served in the counting-houses of slave traders, while the girls were frequently 'apprenticed' into service in their households. The generous contributions to Liverpool's flourishing charity school may in many cases have taken the form of conscience money, but before too harsh a judgment is arrived at, one ought to remember that it was an age of extraordinary contrasts when callousness and philanthropy were often found incongruously side by side.

Progress continued during the treasurerships of two more Blundells, Richard (1756-60) and Jonathan (1760-96). Both were sons of Bryan. Subscriptions continued to flow in, numbers rose to over 200 and the building was enlarged to include further sleeping accommodation, work room, sick room and dining room.

It was usual, in a school of this nature in the 18th century, to set the children to work at some period of the day on profitable labour which would help defray the costs of their education. Liverpool Blue Coat Children had at various times been engaged in picking oakum, drawing yarn for cordage, spinning and knitting, and later in the manufacture of stockings, cotton thread and pins; but in 1802 the trustees decreed that this was not in keeping with the intentions of the founders, and from then on the children's time was wholly devoted to learning. Although this decision has been claimed by some as a sign of increasing liberality on the part of the trustees, it is more likely to have been taken as a result of the unprofitability and inconvenience of the children's labour. There is certainly nothing in the narrow and rigid curriculum of the years which followed to suggest a more liberal attitude.

The 19th Century

The Blue Coat School continued its distinguished career during this century. Its numbers exceeded 300 by the time French prisoners from the Napoleonic wars were being housed in the Old Tower of Liverpool on the waterfront, and there is evidence throughout the century of continued support from the citizens of Liverpool. It is notable that among these supporters, were now appearing prosperous men who had once been educated at the school themselves. Such a one was George Brown, who entered the school as an eight-year-old orphan in 1765, went to sea on leaving school and became master of his ship at the age of twenty, owner of a small fleet by the age of thirty, and in 1808 was elected Treasurer of the Blue Coat School. (The office of Treasurer at the Blue Coat School has always been equivalent of Chairman of the Trustees).

The building received several repairs and alterations during this period. In 1807 the brickwork of the front of the building was pointed and the stone refaced, but care was taken not to 'injure or affect its present appearance and general character.' The back of the building, however, was considerably altered. It had originally balanced the front, with a similar arrangement of windows and pediment, but sometime during the 1820's it was given its present, plainer, segmental appearance. Other additions and alterations were made from time to time, as is shown, for instance, by an architect's plan of 1881.

One aspect of the school which distinguished it in the early 19th century was its adoption in 1812 of Dr Bell's Madras system of education, better known as the monitorial system. The Visitors' Book shows that Bell paid more than one visit and was delighted with what he found. So famous did the school become in the area round about, as an exponent of the system, that teachers came from far and wide to study the new methods. One of these was the Rev. W. Carus Wilson, the harsh and autocratic evangelical who established the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge to which the unhappy Brontë sisters were sent in 1824.

This was also a century in which traditions were acquired, or consolidated. The St George's Day Parade is well-known from the familiar painting entitled 'Recollections of the Blue Coat Hospital, St George's Day, 1843' in which children are shown leaving the courtyard with banner, band and, one assumes, patriotic noises. Another event which became well-known in the town was the Blue Coat Children's Service, conducted every Sunday afternoon in the School Chapel by the children themselves. This is recalled in a picture



by J. Kirkpatrick which shows the last such service to be held in the old school chapel.

In 1906 the school moved to larger premises in Wavertree. It had outgrown its original home after nearly two centuries of occupation, and the extensive new building rising up 'on the edge of the country' away from the unhealthy atmosphere of the city centre bore witness to the substantial resources which had accumulated since Bryan Blundell made his first appeal for subscriptions in 1708.

(Note.—When referring to the School it is customary to use two separate words in the title; but when the Society of Arts or the building which houses it is described, the two words become one. From now on we shall be speaking of 'the Bluecoat' rather than 'the Blue Coat').

The 20th Century

It seems strange that the future of a building such as this should ever have been questioned, particularly in a city which possesses no other example of its period; but never, since the school moved out, has the Bluecoat building been entirely free from threat of demolition or financial insecurity. The story of the Bluecoat building in the 20th century is the story of a struggle for survival and, while it is emphasized that the struggle is a continuous one, only the three major crises will be mentioned here.

Struggles for Survival

THE FIRST STRUGGLE TO SAVE THE BLUECOAT 1906 – 1914

For a time after the removal of the school to Wavertree the building was neglected, but in 1907 a body of painters and sculptors who occupied No. 9 Sandon Terrace, opposite the site of the Anglican Cathedral, were rendered homeless by the demolition of their Regency premises. Mrs James Calder, one of the Sandon Terrace painters and a member of an influential Liverpool family, acquired a new home for her fellow artists in the old Blue Coat School. This was not the last time Mrs Calder and her friends were to save the building by their enthusiasm and perseverance.

In 1908, Mrs Calder and other members of the Sandon Studios Society interested the first Lord Leverhulme in the preservation of the building and in the following year he agreed to rent it from the Trustees. In 1910, as a result of an award for damages amounting to £99,000 in a vast libel action against several newspapers, Lord Leverhulme gave £102,000 to Liverpool University.

Part of his gift was the lease to the school of Architecture of premises in the Bluecoat and the old school was renamed 'Liberty Building' in celebration of his triumph.

It was Lord Leverhulme's intention to make the Bluecoat into a great centre for the arts. He was prepared to add to it and repair it, providing concert rooms, exhibition galleries and a number of private studios. With this intention, he bought the property from the Trustees. Plans were drawn up and approved, but then came the outbreak of war in 1914 and the scheme was suspended. After the war it was revived but Lord Leverhulme seems to have changed his mind and was not prepared to put the original plan into effect. He died in 1925 with a modified scheme still only on paper, and made no provision for it in his will. By this time, too, the School of Architecture had moved out.

THE SECOND STRUGGLE TO SAVE THE BLUECOAT 1925 – 1927*

Soon after the death of the first Lord Leverhulme his executors advertised the Bluecoat for sale as a building site. Death duties on the Leverhulme Estate were enormous and although the new Lord Leverhulme was sympathetic, he could not forego the assets which the building represented. It went through an uncomfortable period of misuse, during which the central area on the ground floor was leased to a car sales firm.

Meanwhile, members of the original Sandon group and notably Mrs Calder, who returned to Liverpool from her new home in Bath for the purpose, raised an appeal to save the building. There was now considerably more

public sympathy than in 1906. The Liverpool *Daily Post* gave tremendous support throughout the campaign and the Lord Mayor launched the appeal at a public meeting in the Town Hall. The sum needed was £40,000 and there was over a month to raise it.

Despite a warm response from the public, both rich and poor, only £12,000 had been raised two days before the date fixed for the auction. A desperate last-minute appeal was signed by the Lord Mayor and published in the press but there seemed little hope of finding £20,000 in 48 hours. Then a miracle happened. 'A lover of his native city', while travelling to work on the Mersey Railway, happened to glance at his neighbour's copy of the Liverpool *Daily Post* and noticed the final appeal. Just after 10.00 am next day, with 24 hours to spare, the Lord Mayor received an anonymous donation of £18,000. It is now known that this 'lover of his native city' was Mr W. E. Corlett.

'In the afternoon the committee met in a mood that can only be described as hilarious . . .' says the minute book. The balance of the purchase price was borrowed on mortgage and the building passed into the ownership of the newly-formed Bluecoat Society of Arts. But as one struggle ended another began, for the new Society had to face the cost of repairs after twenty years' neglect, and the burden of a heavy mortgage. Moreover they had to raise funds for adapting the building to new purposes.

THE THIRD STRUGGLE TO SAVE THE BLUECOAT 1941 - 1958

During the Merseyside blitz of 1941, the building was seriously damaged. On the night of 3rd/4th May the premises on the east side were set on fire by incendiary

bombs and a strong east wind spread the fire rapidly through the Bluecoat. The north east wing was completely burned out, the south east wing was destroyed and the concert hall was gutted. At that point the fire was arrested. But the west side which had escaped the fire was damaged two nights later when a high explosive bomb fell on the building next door to it.

The end of the war did not bring the end of anxiety for the future of Bluecoat Chambers. Grants were obtained, it is true, from the War Damage Commission and the Arts Council but other threats appeared. There was a scheme in 1944 for the building to be taken over by the Corporation as part of the City Art Gallery. This might have given freedom from financial worry but it would have destroyed the independence of the Bluecoat Society of Arts. Frustrated in this attempt, or so it might appear, the Corporation then produced a scheme in 1946 to drive an inner ring road across the south quadrangle. This disaster, too, was fortunately averted and with the aid of gifts, grants and loans, work was started on restoration in March 1949.

By April 1951 it was possible to mark the re-opening of the Bluecoat Hall by three concerts, followed later in the year by an exhibition of 50 years of Merseyside painting. The post-war reparations were not finally completed until 1952 but by this time new financial problems had arisen and a new appeal had to be launched. There was still much to be done to the stone-work on the front of the building, which was decaying through old age rather than the results of enemy action, so once again the scaffolding went up in 1957. It was not until 1958, therefore, that the building could truly be regarded as fully restored.

Blue Coat and Bluecoat to-day

Since 1949, when the girls left to join other boarding schools, the Liverpool Blue Coat School has been a Voluntary Aided School for boys from 11 to 18 years of age, and retained its boarding establishment. It draws day-boys from the whole of Liverpool and boarders from all parts of the world, and offers them education on a comprehensive basis. Although the girls have left, the boys no longer wear their characteristic uniform and the status of the school has changed, there is much in the traditions of the Wavertree school to-day to link it with its former life in the School Lane building.

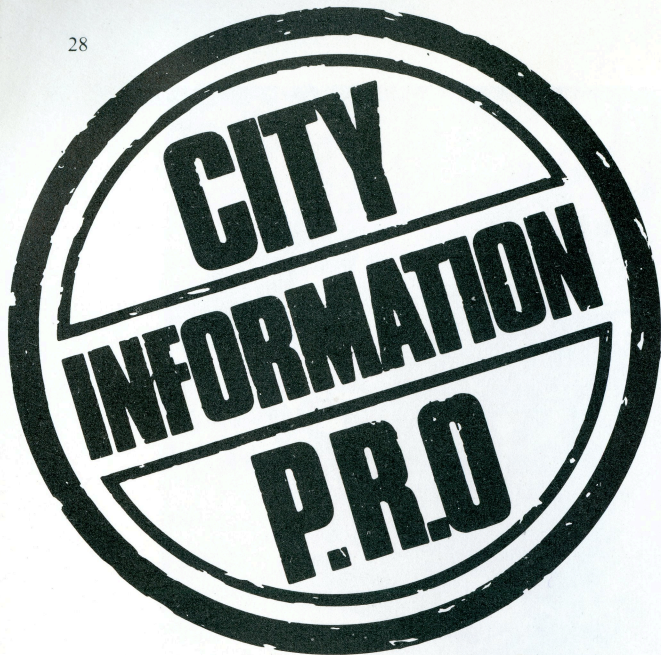
As for the Bluecoat Society of Arts, it is probably nearer than ever before to fulfilling the intentions of the 1st Lord Leverhulme and the original trustees. It is possible in a single visit to gain only a hint of the richness and variety of the artistic life it fosters. The building may often appear quiet from the forecourt but between 20 and 30 artists (painters, sculptors, potters and musicians) and 11 cultural societies are hard at work inside, not to mention the architects whose drawing offices could reveal a hive of activity.

(written by Robin Hewitt-Jones for the 250th Anniversary Celebration in 1967 and revised November 1975)

*See also 'BLUECOAT CHAMBERS' (published 1956) by W. S. MacCunn, former General Secretary of the Bluecoat Society of Arts from 1927 to 1959. On sale at the Society's office at the reduced price of 50p. Also 'SANDON STUDIOS SOCIETY' by R. F. Bisson.



Herbert Tyson Smith, the well-known Liverpool Sculptor and Stonemason (1883–1972), working in his studio in the back courtyard with his son Geoffrey.



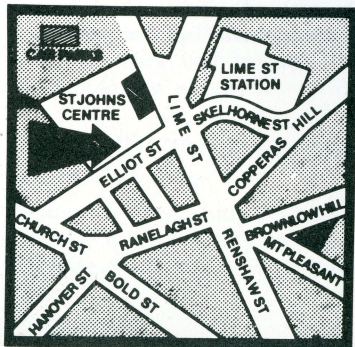
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Liverpool


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