



THE ORIGINS OF PERSHORE ARTS

“...were the result of an over-ambitious project which failed!” With our annual exhibition at Number 8 fast approaching, this is a good time to explore how and why Pershore Arts came about and how the link with Number 8 was forged. Founding member, **Jane Hordern** explains....

“In 2008 it was suggested that as other areas had very successful “Open Studio” events, our area could do the same. Jenny Davis, the Arts Development Officer for Wychavon, organised a meeting for artists who might be interested, but finally made it clear she was unable to offer any practical or financial support. That same night we formed a small committee to progress the project. One problem was that while many people were enthusiastic not all were able to open their work spaces to the public, and so we searched for alternative display venues which included Number 8.

It soon became clear that we had bitten off more than we could chew - we had insufficient of everything - especially money and time. We had to convene a meeting of all those artists who had already committed to explain the reasons for cancelling our plans. We could return their participation fees, but offered an alternative. This was to use the fees to

create an arts club and we outlined our vision of a minimum of two exhibitions a year, four newsletters, meetings, and occasional outings. All but one person chose this option. And so a club was born. I can't remember the initial numbers but within a year we had 40 members and by 2010 it had grown to a membership of 70.

We needed a name, but settling on one proved very taxing! In order to make the search for seedbed funding more viable we decided to confine our efforts to the local area and we wanted a name to reflect this. “Art WR10” was proposed but this soon changed to “Wychavon Area Network for Artists” with the acronym WANA. At the start of 2013 this was changed to the more recognisable “Pershore Arts”.

We didn't have any stated aims but I guess that they were understood to be mutual support and companionship between people with a common interest. This is still the basis for Pershore Arts.

From the start we have always had huge support and encouragement from Number 8. An exhibition there was an obvious start and the first one was so successful that they were quick to offer us the venue for the following year.

The exhibition has become a wonderful showcase and an opportunity to present a thriving face to the community. When displayed together the huge variety of talent, styles and experience makes for a really lively and varied show. It provides a unique opportunity for publicity and recruitment, and recognition with local agencies: schools, businesses, churches etc.

The stimulus to create new artwork to exhibition standard, to receive comments and feedback and to raise personal profiles provides endorsement and encouragement for members. The common goal of the exhibition and a shared sense of pride give cohesiveness and validation to the group.

It is an absolute joy to see someone who might be new to art, or lacking in confidence, screw up the courage to submit a picture and for them then to see it holding its own among the others. And if this should result in the accolade of a sale, I guarantee that they will be hooked for life

At times the whole venture felt like a cliff-hanger, spurred on by challenges we were not sure we could accomplish and a sense of relief - and triumph - if we did.”

