



Tela



The Magazine of The Friends of
Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery

February 2025

This newsletter is completely FREE

Thomas Cantrell Dugdale (1880–1952) *Mr Kersley, Suffolk*



Blackburn born, Dugdale studied at Manchester School of Art, the Royal College of Art, the City and Guilds School in Kennington, and at the Académie Julian and Atelier Colarossi, Paris.

He was a well-regarded and successful portrait painter, exhibiting with the New English Art Club and Royal Academy, being elected RA in 1943.

In the inter-war period he was art adviser to the Manchester textile manufacturer Tootal Broadhurst Lee.

He is well represented in national and provincial collections, including the Tate Gallery, Imperial War Museum, Manchester and Liverpool Art Galleries amongst many others.

This splendid, characterful portrait was given to Blackburn Art Gallery in 1954 by his widow, the painter Amy Katherine Browning. It probably dates from about 1940.

Programme 2024/25

Unless otherwise indicated, meetings are held on TUESDAY afternoons at 2 pm.

11th February: *George and the Dragon in myth and reality*, a talk by Gayle Knight, a freelance education worker at Blackburn Museum
NB: This is a change to the published programme

11th March: *The Restoration of Blakey Moor*. Julia Simpson talks about the recent town centre upgrade.

8th April: *Developments at the Cotton Exchange*. Howard Foy, co-author of a recent book on the subject, describes progress at this important Blackburn landmark.

13th May: *The Portraits of Gerard de Rosé*. Richard Cross talks about this 20th century artist, who was born in Accrington and has works in the Haworth and Rochdale Art Galleries.

10th June: Members of the Museum & Art Gallery staff talk about developments.

22nd June: Garden Party
at Mike & Dot Millward's, 36 Parsonage Road

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BM&AG ART OPEN 2025

Members of the Friends volunteered to help with the administration of entries for the current Art Open Exhibition. Dot Millward, was unable to participate this year through illness, but David Howarth, Mike Waters, Paul and Gillian Mason and Nigel Jackson

were there on the 9th, 10th and 11th January. The three days were very busy, with about 270 entries - an increase of 50% on last year. Many thanks to them all - Nigel is not even a member of the Friends!

The opening was on Saturday 18th January, by which time the Art Gallery staff had displayed an amazing 245 works. About 600 people attended. The prize winners were Zara Saghir: "I am Mrs Kahn" (1st), Fatima Bux: "Mother's Treasures" (2nd) and Damian James Murray: "Try" (3rd)..

The walls of the Gallery are extremely full, but the Museum should be congratulated on managing to show so many works in the limited space available. The job of hanging the exhibition in such a short time must have been quite challenging.

The exhibition continues until 15th March, after which the volunteers will be helping to administer the collection of works.



Photographs (all courtesy of Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery)

Top: Zara Saghir by her winning entry,
Middle: The exhibition in the Small Art Gallery, and the opening crowds in the Victorian Gallery
Bottom: The winning picture; 2nd prize winner Fatima Bux and 3rd prize winner Damian James Murray

British Association of Friends of Museums

Annual Conference

My thanks to the Friends for supporting my attendance at the 2024 BAFM Conference in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire during October. I was curator at the Wisbech & Fenland Museum for 5 years a very long time ago, and it was good to see the place again.

The conference theme was "Friends supporting museums in these financially challenging times." Sessions included fundraising from small events, publishing for profit, and an excellent review of the new Heritage Lottery Fund grants regime..

In discussions about the current state of Friends' groups and relationships with the museums, responses ranged from groups with enormous membership and fund-raising potential, but sometimes a poor relationship with their museum to some with a good relationship but falling membership, and a few on the point of collapse from lack of support or as a result of their museum's closure. I think we are probably doing a little better than average on these criteria.

There was a general feeling that the future of friends' groups is not secure, and that younger generations show little enthusiasm for joining social groups of this type. Some complained of difficulty filling officers' roles. The cost of coach hire seems to be adversely affecting friends' activities everywhere.

All in all, the conference was well worth attending. I learnt a bit and met some interesting people. It would be good for us to take a closer interest in the wider museum friends movement.

Regional Representative

BAFM is currently seeking a representative for the North West. In the past, Joy Heffernan and David Shipway served in this capacity and members are invited to consider emulating them. Anyone interested, please contact me for details.

Mike Millward



Wisbech & Fenland Museum

Coffee Morning

The Christmas Coffee Morning took place on Saturday, 21st December at Ken and Jill Ford's house. Although there were slightly fewer people there, the amount raised was up 20% on last year, a total of £266. Thanks to all those who came, those who bought tickets and didn't come, and those who supported the raffle. And special thanks to Ken and Jill for hosting this enjoyable social event.

The Friends' Website

Our website contains details of forthcoming events, news items, occasional articles about museumy subjects, membership details and past copies of Tela. Have a look at it if you haven't already done so (or even if you have):

<https://friendsofblackburnmuseum.org.uk/>

Taken from a Boy's Pockets - from the Blackburn Weekly Telegraph, 7th November 1908

A father whose name we would rather not give states that he recently found the following articles in one of his boy's suits: **64 Articles in total.**

6 Cigarette cards, 5 Blackleads, 4 Old keys, 4 Pieces of tin, 3 Billiard chinks, 3 , Matches, 3 India rubbers, 3 Papers, 2 Notebooks, 2 Pen nibs, 2 Bath tickets, 2 Buttons, 2 Nails, 2 Candles, 2 Handkerchiefs, 2 Pieces of wire, 2 Magnifying glasses, 1 Packet of chemicals, 1 Block of wood, 1 Top, 1 Piece of rubber tubing, 1 Sea shell, 1 Empty tobacco box, 1 Window key, 1 Piece of cobbler's wax, 1 Cork, 1 French penny, 1 Halfpenny

With thanks to Philip Crompton

Sharpe, Paley and Austin By Ken Ford

It was on a visit to Lancaster Museum in 2023 that I first became aware of the architectural practice of Sharpe, Paley and Austin. I then realised that my knowledge of architects was somewhat limited to national figures who designed prestige projects in cities or large country mansions. So I decided to find out more about this Lancaster based firm and was astonished at the quality and quantity of their work that was almost exclusively in the North-West. They designed everything from civic buildings and institutions to shops and grand houses but they are particularly recognised for many fine churches throughout Lancashire including five in Blackburn. Under various combinations of their names the practice built or renewed well over 200 churches before the firm was wound up in 1944.

Edmund Sharpe was born in Knutsford in 1809 but after his father died in 1823 his mother moved the family to Lancaster to be near relatives. He attended private schools at Greenwich and Sedbergh before taking a degree at St. John's, Cambridge. It was there that he developed an interest in architecture and was awarded a three year travelling scholarship that allowed him to study medieval buildings in Germany and France. He returned to Lancaster in 1835 and set up his architectural practice there.



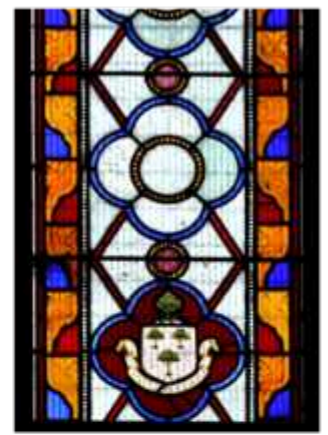
The first church he designed was St. Mark's, Witton which probably came about through family links. His first cousin was Revd. J. W. Whittaker, vicar of Blackburn, who was married to a Fielden and it was the Fieldens of Witton Park who commissioned the church to be built on their estate. Sharpe was clearly influenced by his visits to 11th century Romanesque churches in Germany and the lack of expensive carvings kept down the cost. The style is unusual in this country especially with its extensive use of Lombard bands (small blind arches) around the outside at three different levels and the narrow round headed windows. It closed in 2013, was put up for sale in 2018 and sold in 2024.



Within two years Sharpe designed five more churches before embarking on plans for his largest church, Holy Trinity, Blackburn. His cousin, Revd. Whittaker, was keen to have another church in central Blackburn at a time when the town's population was expanding rapidly. He wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury (he had previously been one of his chaplains) expressing his fear that local disagreements in the Established Church could result in a damaging schism. He wrote that his plan would 'prevent this... with the further view of attracting the malcontents to the church'. The foundation stone was laid in 1837 but the town's economy was struggling so financial problems delayed its completion until 1845. A decade later the tower was added but the intended spire was never built. Even without the spire its position on the summit of Mount Pleasant made it a prominent landmark in the town. Designed in a Decorated style of Gothic it is very tall and spacious with transepts as high as the nave.



It had galleries in the transepts and on the south, west and north sides of the nave providing seating for over 1600 people. In 1944 all the galleries except the west one were removed at the request of the vicar, Chad Varah (who went on to found The Samaritans). A unique feature of Holy Trinity is the ceiling which is covered with 88 coloured wooden panels, 80 of which are decorated with the armorial bearings of sovereigns (from Edward the Confessor to Queen Victoria) together with those of clergymen and Lancashire worthies who contributed funds for the privilege - the Archbishop of Canterbury gave £100. Some of these panels such as the one in the centre of the crossing have been cleaned; I have enhanced the ones around it in my photograph. The divided arrangement of the windows at the ends of the transepts and the chancel are another unique feature. Sharpe's arrangement of 2-3-2 lights is not a feature of English Gothic but is common in Germany where he probably met it. The attractive geometric designs in the stained glass are similar yet different in each set. The east window is recorded as being designed by Thomas Willement, a leading stained-glass artist of the Victorian age who went on to design many great windows including one in St. George's Chapel, Windsor.



A third unusual feature that I have not seen in a church elsewhere is a Princess Staircase leading up to the gallery – two curving branches, meeting at the top and doubling back across the void.



The organ came from Hanover Square Rooms, which from the 1770s was a principal concert venue in London. Mendelssohn performed a prelude and fugue on the organ in 1840. After refurbishment it was installed in Holy Trinity in 1851.

The church was closed in 1978 when dry rot had made the ceiling unsafe and repair costs were



estimated to be £63,000. It was declared redundant in 1981 and it was planned to demolish it. The Victorian Society wanted it saved and it was taken over by the Redundant Churches Fund, later renamed the Churches Conservation Trust. (SEE FOOTNOTE)

In 1838 Sharpe took on a 15 year old pupil, Edward Paley, who became a full partner in the firm in 1845 – in 1851 he married Sharpe's sister, Frances.

It was Paley who designed the Blackburn church of St. Thomas in Lambeth Street. The plan was drawn up in 1859 but it was not built until 1864/5. It had a fairly plain exterior in comparison to the previous two churches with no tower or transepts. The number of worshippers fell to the point where it had to close in 1977 and has since been demolished.



Also designed by Paley was St. Andrews Church in Livesey Branch Road. The foundation stone was laid in 1866 but it was 1877 before it was consecrated. The nave is lit by pairs of lancet windows and the transepts by seven circular windows in circular frames – a sort of basic rose window.. The chancel has a polygonal apse and in the angle between the south transept and the chancel is the bulky base of a tower that was never built. Instead it is topped by a stumpy pyramid which I think is incongruous. The church was declared redundant in 2008 and has been converted into a care home.



The practice was joined by Hubert Austin in 1867. Austin was born near Darlington, was educated at Richmond School and articulated to his half-brother who was an architect in Newcastle. His success in examinations led him to be taken on in the London office of the great Victorian architect, Sir Gilbert Scott. Among other projects he worked on was the Midland Grand Hotel at St. Pancras Station. His move from London to Lancaster would be quite surprising were it not for a number of friendships and relationships between the Paley, Sharpe and Austin families.

Edmund Sharp died in 1877 so it was Paley and Austin who were responsible for the fifth Blackburn church by the practice: St. Silas' on Preston New Road. It was designed in Gothic Revival style in 1878 but building did not start until 1894. The first phase was complete by 1898 and had a turret and spirelet in the south east corner of the chancel. The 32m tower was not added until just before WWI and because of economic circumstances the planned spire was never built. And neither were any bells installed. When Holy Trinity closed its bells were removed, restored and hung in St Silas', first ringing in their new home in 1983.





The tower is flanked by both aisles and at its summit has a quatrefoil-pierced embattled parapet, pinnacles and a polygonal stair turret in one corner. The south transept is also embattled and has a pair of square-headed two-light windows. The spacious interior is well lit with five wide four-light windows in Perpendicular Gothic style along the length of the south wall. Two windows were made by Morris &

Co using designs by Edward Burne-Jones. The west window was made by Whitefriars and installed in 1950 and has the trade mark white friar in it.

On the wall outside the south chancel is a date stone that was a characteristic of the practice's later churches.



FOOTNOTE

In order to write this article I wanted to see inside Holy Trinity Church which is in the hands of the Church Conservation Trust (CCT). I contacted them and was told there had not been a local key-holder for a few years. I tried to make arrangements to view over a period of many months with no success so I volunteered to become the key-holder myself. CCT took up my offer and a year after my initial contact I received the keys and went inside the church for the first time. I was amazed by the massive interior and its unique features as described above.

If anyone wishes to take a look inside I will be very happy to arrange a visit. Please contact me via the email address given on the back page.

Ken Ford

Dating Antique Photographs

Ken Ford has a new article on our website. The link is

<https://friendsofblackburnmuseum.org.uk/2025/01/31/dating-antique-photographs-2/>

The website also carries news about the Museum, our activities and other stuff of local interest.

Have a look!

Blackburn Art Gallery in 1937



In February 1937, John Yates (*left*), a local solicitor, artist, art collector and member of the Borough Library, Museum and Art Gallery Committee, presented a report on future policy for the Art Gallery which was covered in detail in the Blackburn Times. The following is a transcription of the newspaper coverage, which makes interesting reading in the light of current display policy and the development of the art collection since Yates wrote his report.

Many thanks to Philip Crompton for bringing this to my attention.

A short article about John Yates appeared in the previous issue of *Tela* (September 2024).

THE BLACKBURN TIMES, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1937

BLACKBURN ART GALLERY

MR. JOHN YATES' CRITICAL SURVEY



Photograph of the Art Gallery from the Blackburn Times in 1937, compared with one taken from a similar viewpoint a few days ago.

BLACKBURN ART GALLERY MR. JOHN YATES – CRITICAL SURVEY

A report on the future general policy for the conduct of the Art Gallery was submitted to the Blackburn Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery Committee at their meeting on Wednesday by Mr. John Yates a member of the committee.

Mr. Yates said previous to the last century public galleries were practically unknown. Monarchs and men of high position, wealth and learning formed their own collections of works of art, but towns and cities possessed no galleries of their own. The National Gallery was formed less than a century ago, and all provincial galleries were of more recent origin. The reason for their foundation was probably due in part to the desire to possess something which previously has been confined to their cultural or influential lenders, and in part to the wave of education which swept the country during the Victorian era.

It was generally realized that a public gallery with a well kept and carefully chosen collection of works of art was one of the effective signs of an enlightened and progressive town or city. Quite apart from this, the art gallery's place was recognized as an educative influence on the cultural life of the community.

HOUSED IN TWO GALLERIES

The collection of the Blackburn Corporation, which was formed in 1894, was housed in two galleries, on the walls of the stairway, and on various walls of the museum. Many of the less important paintings were loaned for the decoration of the Town Hall and the offices of the town's officials. The two galleries were well-lighted and maintained in a manner which would bear comparison with any existing art gallery.

Fifty-nine oil paintings covered the walls of the large gallery, and 120 water colours were crowded in the small gallery. On the stairway walls were 23 paintings. A large proportion of the collection was composed of pictures and drawings received as gifts, bequests and loans and a fair proportion had been purchased from revenue. The gifts, bequests and loans included paintings and drawings of various schools and tendencies.