



Newsletter

December 2025

The place for all things art...where Arts are for All

A Message from your Chair

Last message for 2025 and such a lot to say, but I will try to be brief:

In recognition of her fantastic contribution to the Newbiggin Arts Centre, Wendy has been appointed as Studio Manager (but that doesn't mean that she won't be doing all the admin stuff as well !!!) – thanks Wendy for all the hard work.

A sad farewell to Keith! As I said at the Christmas Party presentation, without his initiatives back in 2018/9, we would not have embarked on this journey and taken NAC to where it is now. Whereas Keith will be stepping down from his tutorial roles, I am sure that we will still see him about the Studio. I really hope so!

Thanks also to Leigh for her 14 months as a Trustee. Your contribution was really significant. We hope to see lots more of you as a participant and tutor in future.

Don't forget to submit your artwork on 15th to 17th January to the Woodhorn exhibition. Which reminds me; I should be getting on with my submission(s).

Well, the hackers brought down our website this week and consequentially we lost our emails for a few days. But everything is now sorted out and we apologise for any inconvenience. Rest assured there should not be any detrimental effect to any of your emails and because the site was suspended, you shouldn't have caught any malware yourselves either.

Looking back on 2025 it is disappointing that, due to shortage of funding, we have had to be very frugal with our courses and workshops from external tutors. However, we have already received our first grant for 2026 (from Bernicia) and, together with our 3-year National Lottery Community Fund grant, we will now be able to provide a more extensive range and scope of tutorials for 2026 – and, importantly, keep the cost of sessions down to an easily-affordable level. Some details below, but watch the Newsletters for further information.

Please note that if the small fees are still an obstacle to you attending our sessions, please talk to Wendy and we will make the appropriate arrangements to allow you to continue attending. Our objective is to make sure that we are providing "Arts for All" to everyone, irrespective of the financial status.

See you all in January; until then:

From myself, the other Trustees, Studio Manager and all volunteers, I wish you all a very **Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year.**

And, for those of you not celebrating Christmas;
Seasons Greetings to you too, whoever, whatever and however you are celebrating!



Committee Meeting Update

A Day in the Life of a Charity Chair... Spoiler: It's Not All Paintbrushes and Parties!

Ever wondered what a typical Friday looks like for a charity chair? Our Chair's Friday included scaling ladders like a mountain goat, mixing mortar like a seasoned brickie, wrestling breeze blocks, running the books, and still turning up looking presentable for the Christmas Party by 17:30. Honestly, we're exhausted just reading the list and it's no wonder!

Here's the hour-by-hour rundown:

- 07:30** – Roof rack fixed to the car
- 08:00** – Off to Dudley to collect the extra-long ladders
- 08:30** – Ladder-lifting team (Frank & Wendy!) on duty at Gibson Street
- 09:00** – Fourteen ladder climbs later... drainpipe hopper secured and cemented
- 10:00** – Yard cleared and rubbish run completed (thanks to Wendy, too)
- 11:00** – Ladders liberated from the yard and onto the roof rack (Wendy's help again)
- 11:30** – Ladders returned to Dudley (thankfully!)
- 12:00** – Breeze blocks moved into the shed, ready for the glass kiln
- 12:30** – Mortar mixed and new steps built for safe shed access
- 13:30** – Back to Front Street to count cash and wrap up end-of-month books
- 14:00** – Grant-writing session with Val
- 15:00** – Invoices, etc. sorted for the 2025 bookkeeping and annual report
(Job for over the Holidays!)
- 16:00** – Electronic records reconciled for November and December
- 17:00** – Quick dash "home" to freshen up and get festive
- 17:30** – Back to Front Street for the NAC Studio Christmas Party
- 19:00** – Presented Keith with his tankard and delivered the obligatory speeches
- 19:30** – Finally... food, wine, and a well-earned relax!



With the ladders returned, the mortar drying, and the Chair finally out of his work boots, it was time to swap DIY for celebrating!

A Season of Celebrations at NAC

It's been a season absolutely packed with celebration here at Newbiggin Arts Centre. We've cheered, we've toasted, and more than once we may have wiped away the odd happy tear. From Wendy stepping proudly into her new title of **Studio Manager**, to the bittersweet joy of marking **Keith's retirement** (a wonderful moment for him, but a huge loss for all of us), it's been a time of big transitions and even bigger gratitude.

We also had the delight of celebrating **Josie's 90th birthday** - a milestone that filled the studio with smiles, memories, and cake - and we wrapped it all up with a brand-new tradition: our **first ever NAC Studio Christmas Party**, full of laughter, sparkle, and that unmistakable NAC spirit.

Here's a peek at some of the joy, laughter, and celebrations that make our NAC community so special!

Keith's Retirement

We took the opportunity during our first NAC Studio Christmas Party to celebrate Keith's retirement—a moment filled with happy stories, plenty of smiles, and just a touch of "we really are going to miss him." Keith has contributed so much to NAC over the years, both in practical ways and in the friendly, dependable way he supported everyone around him. While we're delighted to see him enjoy a well-earned retirement, his absence will be deeply felt.



Celebrating Josie's 90th Birthday!

We were delighted to celebrate **Josie's 90th birthday** this November!



As she wasn't able to attend her regular Thursday group, we brought the celebration to her with a **beautiful bouquet and a box of chocolates** personally delivered to her home.

Many congratulations to Josie from **everyone at NAC**—we hope your special day was as wonderful as you are!

NAC Studio Christmas Party

Our first-ever NAC Studio Christmas Party was a huge success! The studio was full of people, laughter, and festive cheer, with everyone enjoying the wonderful buffet provided by Hayley's Catering.

Wendy kept spirits high with her amazing Christmas-themed quiz, which had everyone laughing and joining in. The decorations looked fantastic and really added to the festive atmosphere.

It was a joy to see so many people having a great time together; and judging by the hints we heard throughout the evening, there's definitely interest in more fun social opportunities like this throughout the year.



A huge thank you to everyone who came, to the trustees for organising such a lovely event, to the craft club for making the wonderful table lanterns and finally to Steve, who drove all the way from Lancashire to join us—it wouldn't have been the same without you!

Christmas Holiday Closing Times

Just a reminder of our festive season opening hours: **our last class before the holidays will be on Tuesday 23rd December**, and we'll be **back open on Monday 5th January**.

We can't wait to welcome you back in the New Year with even more classes, clubs, workshops, and community events!



Did you know...

...that looking at art for just 10 minutes can lower stress levels? Studies show that simply being around creative work—paintings, photography, sculpture—helps slow your heart rate and boost your mood. (Great excuse to pop into the studio more often!)

...you don't need lots of fancy materials to be creative? Some of the world's most famous artists created masterpieces using recycled paper, cardboard, and leftover paint. Your "rubbish pile" might be your next brilliant idea.

...learning a new skill at any age boosts memory and brain health? Trying a new workshop—whether it's watercolour, lino printing, or crafts—gives your brain the same kind of workout as puzzles and games.

...drinking tea while doing something creative actually improves focus? It's the combo of a warm drink plus a relaxed activity. So, your mid-session cuppa is basically a productivity tool.

...the average pencil can draw a line 35 miles long? That's more than the distance from Newbiggin to Alnwick. Think of that next time you sharpen yours!

...sharing your artwork—even when it feels scary—can make you more confident? Positive feedback actually rewires the brain to be braver next time.



Classes, Clubs, & Workshops

New Course With Lara – Starting January!

Great news to brighten up those winter Mondays: **Lara**, our brilliant intern who's just completed her 8-week course with flying colours (and a whole fan club), is coming back in the New Year with a brand-new 8-week course of her own!

She'll be running it on Monday afternoons, with the option to extend if there's lots of interest - which we're expecting, given how popular her last sessions were.

If you fancy giving your week a creative kick-start, or you just want to make Mondays feel a bit less... well, Monday-ish... this is the perfect excuse. Come along, learn something new, and start your week in good company.

Keep an eye out for the poster and ad - it's one you won't want to miss!

A Note About Our Tuesday Oil Club & Wednesday Watercolour Club

With Keith stepping into his well-earned retirement, things will look a little different in our **Tuesday Morning Oil Club** and **Wednesday Morning Watercolour Club**. Keith has been the heart of both sessions for many years - offering one-to-one guidance, gentle support, and the kind of steady presence that made everyone feel at ease. It's fair to say the clubs won't be *quite* the same without him.

However! We're committed to keeping both groups going and keeping the creative energy alive. The clubs will continue in the spirit Keith helped shape: friendly, relaxed, and supportive of all abilities.

As we won't have that same one-to-one guidance Keith provided, we'd **love to hear from anyone who might like to volunteer** as a peer helper - either in oils or watercolour. It's an informal role, nothing heavy or official, just someone happy to share skills and help keep the sessions welcoming and encouraging.

If you've ever thought about getting more involved, this is a lovely opportunity to join a great team, support fellow artists, and help carry forward the atmosphere Keith created.

TGIF (Thank Goodness its Friday) Update for the New Year

As we step into the New Year, we'll be giving our TGIF session a little refresh. From January, TGIF will run **10am–1pm**, with Wendy and Eric (our newest key holder - welcome aboard!) looking after the club between them.

Although the session is now a bit shorter, we're focusing on making those three hours lively, welcoming, and well-used. Over recent months numbers have dipped a bit, so this is a chance to reshape the session, bring back some creative energy, and hopefully welcome new people through the door.

If you haven't been in a while - or if you've never tried TGIF at all - this is the perfect time to pop in, say hello, and enjoy a friendly, relaxed Friday morning of making, chatting, and coffee.

Lots of New Things Coming Up in 2026!

We've got a whole range of new workshops, events, and courses lined up for the New Year—everything from creative tasters to longer skill-building sessions. Keep your eyes peeled for announcements, posters, and updates... these sessions tend to **fill up fast**, so make sure you grab your spot early!

We'd Love to See You – Online or at the Studio

Don't forget to check out our website and Facebook page to see our full schedule, or please pop by the studio to see what's on offer and where we'll be happy to show you around and answer any questions.

For more information or to register for these or our other ongoing clubs, please contact Wendy at: info@newbigginartscentre.org
or **07766 856365 or 01670 708269**



Exhibitions

Portraits Exhibition – On Now!

Our latest exhibition is a joyful celebration of portrait work created by our incredibly talented NAC members. From expressive human faces to charming animal portraits, the show is full of personality, variety, and the kind of creativity that makes our community so special.

You'll find a huge mix of styles, techniques, and subjects - there's something to surprise you, something to make you smile, and definitely something you'll want to linger over.

If you haven't popped in yet, make sure you do. It's a wonderful reminder of the talent we have right here in our own studio - and it's absolutely not one to miss!



Coming Next

Visiting Artist Exhibition – Adele Agar (From 9 January)



We're excited to start the New Year with a brand-new visiting artist. **Adele Agar** will be showcasing her work at NAC from **9 January**, bringing a fresh creative voice into the studio.

We'll share more about Adele and her artistic practice as we get closer to the launch, but for now, mark the date - this is a wonderful chance to discover a new artist, enjoy some inspiring work, and kick off 2025 with something uplifting and creative.

A quick reminder...if you have any paintings stored at the studio, please don't forget to drop by and pick them up (storage space is always at a premium).... Thank you!



How to Contact Us

If you want to sign up for a course, provide us feedback, or send us your ideas on what we can do better, we always appreciate hearing from you.

Contact us at:

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