

# Local Artist

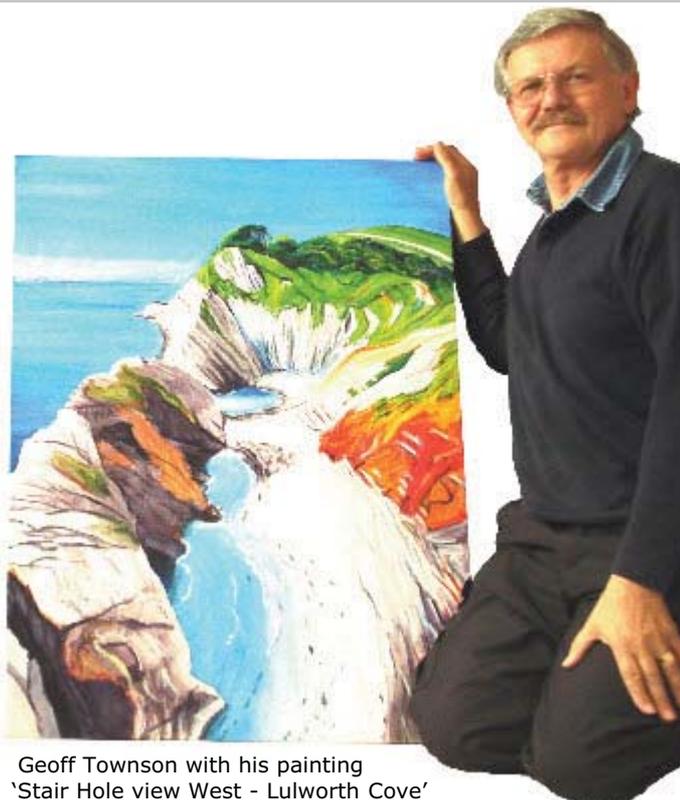
**Artist and geologist Geoff Townson's eye-catching seascapes encapsulate the relentless interaction between land, sea and air.** His dramatically flowing brush strokes, variations in texture, bold colours and 3D representation also reflect his background. "I try to convey contrasts between really hard rock and softer flowing sediment, honouring the geology and emphasising what's going on. I like to create a feeling of being high up - of being able to look down and up at the same time, like a seagull flying through."

"The Jurassic coast is exciting; you can reflect upon the passage of time in these ever-evolving landscapes. The neighbouring countryside is on a scale that's tangible - stand on a hill and you can nearly touch the next one; it's almost as if you've moulded it yourself", enthuses Geoff.

Born in Goring-by-Sea, West Sussex, Geoff first came to Charmouth as a student in 1965. He distinctly remembers the major mudslide that prevented him walking to Lyme Regis. After reading Geology and Zoology at King's College London, he undertook three years research at Oxford University resulting in a doctorate on the Upper Jurassic of the Anglo-Paris Basin.

During his career in the oil industry with Shell International, Geoff visited 44 countries, including Brunei where he was posted for three-and-a-half years with wife Jane and their two small sons. But it wasn't until the early 1980s in Perth, Western Australia, that he enrolled in drawing classes and, at his Hungarian tutor's suggestion, a sculpture course. A posting to The Hague followed and it was several years before he took up drawing again.

Back in the UK in the early 1990s, he attended evening art classes. "My Indian teacher took me from drawing in black-and-white to using paint - a scary step," recalls Geoff, who went on to complete the Open College of the Arts Painting Course Years 1-5. His first exhibition, during year 4 of the course, was entitled 'Landslip - The West Dorset Coast seen through the eyes of a Geologist'. Held



Geoff Townson with his painting 'Stair Hole view West - Lulworth Cove'

at Salisbury City Library Portico Gallery, it comprised twelve paintings of the Jurassic coastline - three of which sold during the exhibition (and others since). In order to broaden his resource base, Geoff took the OCA one-year Understanding Western Art history course. By now retired, his art constituted an "excellent bridging mechanism - more of a career change than a retirement."

Next Geoff undertook a project on Wessex Prehistory Sites, from Avebury to Pilsdon Pen and east to Danebury. He visited 20 - taking photographs, video and making detailed charcoal studies. The resulting 12 paintings, including Maiden Castle and Flowers Barrow, formed the basis for his second solo exhibition in 2005 at Salisbury City Library Edwin Young Gallery.

Around this time he attended John Skinner's classes at Abbotsbury. "I can still hear John talking over my shoulder when I am painting," says Geoff. "He got me into larger canvasses, encouraged greater expression and an increased use of oils. He would say, as have others before him, 'Art is not about imitating nature. It's about conveying your response', which is true. If someone looks at one of my landscapes and feels the way I felt when I was there, then I have communicated with them - that's what it's all about."

Geoff has also had two solo exhibitions in Dorchester and has exhibited in group exhibitions in London, Frome, Bridport, Andover, Romsey, Quarley, Southampton and Swanage. He has taken part in Dorset Art Weeks Open Studios (2004-08) and Bridport Open Studios. Signed cards of his paintings are available in Charmouth at Breeze and at Ida's.

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**Lesley Dunlop**

## Young Artist

### Millie Pearce (aged 9)

Millie recently entered a picture competition after visiting **Astra and the Waste Monster** - a play promoting recycling organised by DCC.

Her picture was awarded with a Highly Commended certificate.

Well done Millie!

