

Volunteers have discovered and researched the work and achievements of almost 30 artists since 2009. **Ian Thompson** asks whether it was worth the wait?

Volunteers put hidden art in the frame

A LOT seems to have been written about a group of Barnsley artists and designers whose talents have come to light through the work of a group of volunteers over the last five years.

Many of them left the town before they found fame and fortune and have been forgotten. Now, at long last, we can see what all the fuss has been about.

'The Hidden Art of Barnsley' at The Cooper has something for everyone. Few exhibitions this year will show religious pulpit panels and saucy seaside postcards.

Yet this show, put on by the group Barnsley Art on Your Doorstep, pulls it off.

We see beautiful panels depicting the Annunciation of the Sacred Virgin Mary produced for All Saints' Church, Cawthorne by John Roddam Spencer Stanhope.

In another part of the gallery is the work of Brian Fitzpatrick, of Barugh Green, who worked for the Holmfirth post card company Bamforth's.

A nice card shows a woman relaxing on a deckchair and a caption 'Letting all my worries float away from me this week'. A naughty card shows a man and woman going into some toilets. The sign above one door says 'Shake Dry', the sign above the other says 'Drip Dry'. Ooh er, missus.

The exhibition reminds us of work as well as play. One of the best paintings, 'Stairfoot' by Sir Henry Rushbury, shows women working at the Beatson Clark glassworks in 1944.

Another picture, 'Choke Damp' by Platts



Friends of Cooper Gallery's Ann Frost with the new 'Hidden Art of Barnsley' exhibition.

Picture: Scott Baintow P055552

Common-born Gilbert Daykin, shows a miner in the throes of an agonising death.

There are portraits of the famous including Laurence Olivier, Alex Guinness and the ballerina Margot Fonteyn by the costume designer Sheila Graham. Ernest Moore depicts Yorkshire Cricket Club's greatest all-rounder Wilfred Rhodes.

A down-to-earth watercolour by Alan Wade is of Barnsley Main pit. A series of exotic portraits

by John Wood Shortridge show Turkish and Swiss guards.

The organisers say they have been surprised by some of their discoveries and have found out far more about the 'hidden' artists than they expected.

Now it is the public's turn to look at local art with shock and a little bit of awe.

■ 'The Hidden Art of Barnsley' runs until August 30.