



A new exhibition . . . artist David Ballantyne
—Echophoto

Pilgrimage into the past by painter

A PILGRIMAGE back into the past has awakened a passion for painting that David Ballantyne abandoned almost a lifetime ago.

Although trained as a painter in the 1930s it was to craft rather than art that he turned for his livelihood, to become head of ceramics at Bournemouth College of Art.

But since his college retirement David, of Chewton Farm Road, Highcliffe, has resumed his early brush with art—with a positive flourish.

Some of the flowering of his long-lost talent can be seen in the first exhibition of his work at the Regent Centre, Christchurch.

The scenes are all of France, mostly of the unspoilt little village of St Didier in Provence where, in recent years, he has found growing fulfilment.

So what went wrong on his first sojourn across the Channel in 1934, the result of a travelling scholarship at the end of his student days?

"I found myself subject to the awe-inspiring experience of going to places universally known through the eyes of the Post Impressionist painters.

"And yet treading in their footsteps and finding things

did not look like the paintings I did not know how to respond. I went through agonies of disillusionment," he recalled.

It was not until the end of his teaching career he decided to take his wife, Katherine, back to the vineyard country in the south of France and show her the countryside he had failed to capture on canvas all those years ago.

"This obviously had to involve more than clicking a camera," he remarked. "Having originally gone there to paint I had to do something about it this time. The early pressures of having to prove myself in the great world of art had gone."

David remains a working designer-craftsman, having tackled many special projects over the past few years. The tile mural at the entrance to Saxon Square in the centre of Christchurch is one of them.

But having found his way with canvas and brushes at last it's a path he's pursuing with ever more purpose and enthusiasm.

His exhibition continues until January 11.