

ANNUAL REPORTS 2020-2021

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER 2020-2021

Dear Members,

There were speculations in the summer of 2020 that the pandemic would 'all be over by Christmas'. Wasn't it similarly predicted in 1914 of WW1? Despite this naive optimism, The Great War lasted four long, hard, loss-filled years. Similarly, our time of trial outlasted Christmas 2020 and gave rise to tragic loss of life. However, after sixteen months of 'lockdowns' of varying severity, restrictions have been lifted, and cases of Covid 19 are falling: an apparent contradiction that is puzzling scientists. The good news is that double vaccinations are demonstrably helping us to stave off the worst effects of the infection. So, we can dare to be cautiously optimistic about the future and hope that we can be reunited for the 2021-22 season of lectures.

How did we navigate our way through the crisis?

You may remember that our Programme Secretary was swift to react, cancelling speakers and re-booking them for the following year. Thus, the programme for autumn 2021 was the programme for 2020. When Covid first struck we had only two lectures left of our season, and both were delivered electronically, later.

Initially we were unsure that we could manage the new Zoom app. Instead, we supplied stimulus material and linked this where possible to visual material. The quality of these contributions from members of the committee has been remarked on and commended. You can still find the documents on the website: Jane Woods on archaeology; Margaret Gledhill on the Renaissance; Rosemary Huckle on Raphael's drawings; Carole Pook on an art heist from Drumlanrig Castle; Bob Woodham on The House of Commons; Claire Sarkies on Edward Wilson and Hilton; Carole Pook on Inuit art. We were commended by our Area Chair who later spoke to HQ of our initiative.

As the months went by it was clear that a re-start in January was impossible and we had to adjust both as members and committee members to the Zoom relay. We are enormously grateful for the courage of Sassy Skinner, who undertook the Zoom training and impressed us with her competence in running the sessions from January by Zoom. Actually, many of us rather enjoyed this armchair experience. We had the lecturer and his/her material in our laps if we had ipads or on our desks if we joined in via a PC. It was excellent to be able to see an image close-up and not struggle with a head in the way or the writing being at the bottom of the screen. I enjoyed all of the Zoom lectures, BUT I did miss the 'togetherness' of a Wednesday afternoon in the Burgess Hall.

What about those loyal members of our Society who could not attend Zoom lectures because they did not have the necessary technology? We could not abandon them/you. By asking our lecturers or finding material ourselves we managed to send out a package each month to members without computers so they could feel in touch. Each month Carole Pook has sent out printed copies of the researched material to a dozen members and we are all proud of her determined efforts to maintain the quality and regularity of the posts.

Sadly, all our usual creative outlets and outreaches were affected by Covid 19. We could not enjoy any visits or holidays. Our liaison with schools providing artwork for Hinchingsbrooke Hospital was prohibited and of course our annual art exhibition, CAYAC, was cancelled. However, we can look forward to an exhibition in 2022 and we have just heard the good news that St. Andrew's Swavesey is to permit access again and church recorders will resume work in the first week of August.

Refusing to be utterly quashed during 'lockdown,' we undertook some creative clearance of the Society's archives. One very pleasing result of this is that we now have reports on the excellent work undertaken by volunteer groups. Margaret Williams has written about the projects undertaken by the distinguished needlework group and also the archivists who gave considerable aid to the Norris Museum, documenting a collection of local photographs. The Church Recorders' work is evident in the records handed to local parishes after painstaking stock-taking and research by volunteers. Pat Hamilton has explained and summarised the group's achievements. Judith Christie has written about the popular Garden Group and its activities and outings. Finally, we have a summary of the extensive work of our successful Young Arts team. Once again HQ took an interest in our compilation of the Society's history and record of achievement. I have agreed to send in a copy once all has been finalised and checked.

I think the committee has done sterling work in these crisis months. I am sure you will join me in acknowledging their help and contributions. Our committee meetings as well as our lectures have continued, thanks to Zoom, and so we have been able to fulfil our roles and our duties in so far as circumstances have permitted. Now we shall have some re-building to do. Understandably we have lost a few members. However, we hope that with the resumption of normal service they will come back. Meanwhile, we thank you for your continued support and commitment to The Arts Society, Huntingdonshire.

Claire Sarkies

PROGRAMME SECRETARY'S REPORT

On reviewing this report for June 2020, I note that we said that the 2020/21 season was likely to be presented somewhat differently. Well, I think we could say that prediction certainly came true!

We did not go willingly into the Zoom internet world. As it became apparent that the Covid restrictions would not be all over by September we chose initially to defer the lectures for the first four months of the season to the subsequent year. In their place members of the committee took responsibility for preparing some "self-study" material on or around the topic which had been programmed. Thus, we had articles on: 'Women and Real Life in Roman Britain'; 'Renaissance Art', 'Raphael's drawings', 'A Notorious Art Theft'; 'Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament'; 'Edward Wilson, the polar explorer', 'From Hilton to the Antarctic' and 'Art from Snow and Ice'. I would like to thank all those who used their time and expertise in the preparation of this material. It is still on the website and worth viewing again.

When Covid wasn't over by Christmas we determined that we would Zoom into the new year with online presentations in line with the programme. We only had to substitute one lecturer and added another for June to make up for lost time. Although the online audience was somewhat reduced from our usual attendance, the 50-60 people who attended from their armchairs were certainly appreciative and we had some outstanding presentations. For those members without internet access, we provided a small package of material around the topic, which was posted out to them.

We are now hopefully, if not yet confidently, looking forward to returning to Burgess Hall lectures in September. The first will be Guy de la Bédoyère on 'Villas in Roman Britain' (as seen on TV!)

Sassy Skinner

VISITS SECRETARY'S REPORT

Unfortunately, Covid 19 prevented any visits last year - whether day trips or holidays.

However, we have in the diary a trip to North Devon from 8th - 12th May 2022 (inclusive), which we hope will provide a much-needed break for those taking part.

Sue Denney

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Our membership numbers over the year sadly dropped from 187 to 135 fully paid-up members - who have continued to receive missives from the local Branch, joined the monthly Zoom Lectures and continued to receive the National Arts Society Quarterly Magazine.

Enquiries regarding new membership/s are now being received on a regular basis.

The membership list needs to be kept up-to-date with all your details and if at any time you change part of your personal/address/e-mail details, please do let me know as soon as possible and I can then ensure that you continue to receive the Arts Society Quarterly Magazine and the missives from our Committee Chair. My contact details are on your membership card. Thank you.

Alison Clough

YOUNG ARTS

It has not been possible to enter Hinchbrooke Hospital to refresh the walls with artwork from local schools as we normally do. However, we have been able to collect work from schools so that we can supply new material when permitted.

The CAYAC exhibition will take place in 2022 on the 18th and 19th of February and we are pleased to announce that our host is Hinchbrooke School. Lillian Pickin and I are organising the event and have already begun to liaise with schools.

Margaret Gledhill

WEBMASTER'S REPORT

Given the disruption to our lecture schedule, as a result of Covid 19, our website became ever more important as our main means of keeping in touch with our membership, and for the first four months of 2020, we mounted self-study material linked to the subjects of the missing lectures. These articles are now archived, and still available on the website.

The programme for the coming year is already mounted on the website.

Please note that we have removed the Guest Book; it was never used, and the Contact Form serves the same purpose, for any comments or suggestions you might care to make.

Robert Woodham

TREASURER'S REPORT

Please see Financial Statement 2020/2021 and Financial Report 2020/2021.

Carole Pook