

## ANNUAL REPORTS 2021 - 2022

### CHAIR'S LETTER 2021-2022

At 2.25 pm on 8th September 2021, Handel's Hallelujah chorus could just be heard on my ipad by the valiant group of members who attended our first 'live' meeting since March 2020. It also marked the first lecture delivered at our new venue of the Corn Exchange in the centre of St. Ives. The move, as you may remember, was prompted firstly by the administrative chaos at the Burgess Hall, following its closure due to Covid and secondly by a considerable hike in the fees. As several lecturers have commented, the 'new' hall is a pleasant space and the position of the screen far above our heads makes it so much easier for everyone to see the images which are crucial in any lecture on the fine arts. The sound was not so satisfactory at the outset: every time a lecturer turned to face the screen audibility was lost. However, we were assured by the management that the matter was being tackled and indeed we witnessed teams of men bent over wires, until they, and we, were satisfied.

Members seem to have found parking places nearby without too much difficulty and at minimum expense. It is good to see that the parking spaces reserved at the back of the hall for people with mobility problems or large loads are now being used with ease and confidence. There are six of these places and we advise our technician, Joe, of expected numbers before the lecture each month. The ease with which technical matters have been arranged has been one of the most gratifying aspects of the move. Joe, the technician, is as competent as he is helpful and always around. The relief to our Programme Secretary, who frequently struggled with the faulty connections in the Burgess Hall in fraught pre-lecture moments, is worth several blasts of the Hallelujah Chorus. Naturally we were unable to run any trips during the Covid restrictions. However, when numbers of Covid infections had dropped and before the Omicron variant had struck, we managed a local visit in October to Kimbolton Castle to admire the 18<sup>th</sup> C architecture and see where Queen Katharine of Aragon passed her last days. Happily, a Devon holiday originally planned for 2020 will at last be going ahead in May! Now we can look forward and plan excursions without fear as the pandemic subsides. Thus we are planning a trip to Wightwick Manor on 20<sup>th</sup> June, organised by our new Visits Secretary, Margaret Gledhill.

Following the death of Isobel Lattimore, the committee felt her leadership and skills as a needlewoman deserved lasting recognition. It was decided to establish a prize in her memory to be awarded to a creative work using textiles. Colin, her husband, has donated the generous sum of a £1,000 to start the fund and The Arts Society has contributed a further £250. We hope members will be willing to contribute financially to the award. Some may also feel inspired to enter a piece of artwork of their own to compete for the award.

A further initiative of 2022 was the design and printing of a leaflet to advertise the society. This has been very well received. It has been agreed that next year this illustrated and colourful leaflet will replace membership cards by the simple device of leaving a space on the front page for a member's number. As always, we hope to spread the word about our society: it is still unknown to many people who would potentially be interested. Please keep on distributing the leaflets in your communities.

As I am ending my term of office, I must pay my respects to the wonderful team whose company and support I have enjoyed for the last four years. We are fortunate to have a group of people who work very hard to keep the society going. They are most generous with their time and use their talents for our benefit, displaying competence and efficiency across a range of skills from computer literacy to proof-reading, networking with schools, organising events... and many more. Their worth is incalculable: without their efforts, there would be no Arts Society in this area.

Finally, I must pay a tribute to Jill Donnelly, who has been a committee member for many years giving valued and unstinting service. Those fortunate to have been on a visit or holiday organised by Jill when she was Visits Secretary will have valued her excellent research and efficient leadership. Later Jill became the Young Arts Secretary. Loving children as she does and delighting

in their creative work, she has given hours of her time to CAYAC, the annual art exhibition, an event she believes in whole-heartedly. Her dynamic contribution to the Capability Brown tercentennial led to the extraordinary achievement of a stained-glass window created by children from Fenstanton Primary School to honour Mr. Brown and the changes he brought to the landscapes of grand houses and their estates.

Her outstanding contribution is to the hospital she worked in, bringing joy to the staff and patients of Hinchbrook hospital by liaising with local schools to provide a continuing supply of artwork to fill the hospital corridors. For this work she was recommended by the Arts Society for a Marsh Award for volunteering, which she received in 2016. Sadly, Jill has stepped down due to ill health but continues to support us with coffee and advice. We thank her and will continue to be grateful for all she has done.

**Claire Sarkies**

## **PROGRAMME SECRETARY'S REPORT**

The new season started in September 2021 at a new venue - the Corn Exchange in St Ives. As Programme Secretary, I was not displeased, as the technology at the Burgess Hall was not infallible and caused quite a few sleepless nights. The staff at the Corn Exchange are a breath of fresh air, in particular Joe, the technician, who is always on hand with his box of wires and gizmos, and more particularly with quiet confidence.

Our first few lectures had been rebooked following the Covid restrictions in Autumn 2020. Guy de la Bedoyere, as seen on TV's Time Team, proved an Excellent lecturer on 'Roman Villas' and was not above going round the back of the hall to shush some overzealous builders. James Lindow presented a Very Good lecture on 'Raphael' in the 501<sup>st</sup> anniversary year of his death, followed in November with an Excellent 'Tour of Big Ben' by Tim Redmond, complete with the sound of the bell itself. Our planned December lecturer had to withdraw after suffering a broken wrist, but the substitute, Richard Burnip, entertained us with 'The London of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L Sayers' and was rated Excellent.

Covid once again reared its ugly head with the threat of the Omicron variant so, at the lecturer's request and on our assessment of possible risk, the January lecture was delivered by Zoom. However, Jacqui Hyman presented an Outstanding lecture on fabric conservation entitled 'Sticky Tape, Moths and Men'. Who could forget the Durham Miner's Banner stuck up with Duct Tape before its amazing renovation - though women didn't get off lightly with a machine-washed antique sampler!

Another Outstanding Lecture was presented in February by Timothy Walker on 'Botanical Art', but the March offering on 'Trooping the Colour' by Graham Jones divided the committee. Whilst acknowledging the fluency, knowledge and experience of the speaker, some felt that the subject matter was not to the expected Arts Society standard so No Rating was given.

In April, we returned to Fine Art with Sarah Burles' Excellent introduction to 'The Three "Grandes Dames" of Impressionism: Bracquemond, Morisot and Cassatt', with the final lecture of the year rescheduled from May to June to avoid a clash with the holiday in Devon.

And finally, the accompanying lecture to the June AGM will be Colin Pink: 'Paul Nash and the Landscape of Mystery'.

**Sassy Skinner**

## **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Our membership numbers over the year have increased from 135 to 149 fully paid-up members but I sadly have to report that several of our long-standing members have died since our last Annual General Meeting. They will be very sadly missed.

Moving to the Corn Exchange in St Ives, has, however, ensured that we now have more drop-in guests at our monthly meetings.

A reminder, please. The membership list needs to be kept up-to-date with all your details and if at any time you change any of your personal details/address/e-mail, please do let me know as soon as

possible and I can then ensure that you continue to receive missives from our Committee Chair plus all the National Arts Society e-mails and their magazine (three times a year). My contact details are on your membership card. Thank you.

**Alison Clough**

## **VOLUNTEERS' REPORTS**

### **GARDEN HERITAGE**

Many Huntingdon AS members have become Garden Heritage Volunteers since we started in 2001 and we would like more! We support the aims of Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust (CGT); specifically, this year, by launching a biannual Small Grants Scheme to fund projects consistent with the Trust's objectives. From the first round, CGT made awards to therapeutic garden schemes at Woodlands MacMillan Treatment Centre, Hinchingsbrooke Hospital (£337) and Springbank Ward, Cambs. and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (£250), and to Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden Trust (£230 for plant labelling equipment). Through our research we support authors, planners and local historians: most recently by challenging previously accepted 'facts' about 'Capability' Brown's life and plans for his Fenstanton Manor, correcting the account published in Fenstanton Church, where Brown was buried, and restoring his marital reputation in the process (see [Newsletter 51](#), p13)! All through lockdown we organised and joined in many Zoom lectures and, when rules relaxed, a fantastic six-week course on garden history attended by at least 17 of our AS group. Especially for AS members and their friends we arranged private visits to gardens and exhibitions, memorable examples being to Magdalene College and the Old Rectory, Quinton. More information on how to join us appears under the volunteering section of our AS website and full details of past and forthcoming trips and lectures can be found on the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust website at <https://cambridgeshiregardentrust.org.uk/events-calendar-2/>

**Judith Christie**

### **CHURCH RECORDERS**

The Huntingdon group is still persevering with the recording of St Andrew's Church, Swavesey and at last, there is light at the end of what has been a very long tunnel.

COVID-19 meant we were unable to visit the church from March 2020 until July 2021 and after 16 months of virtual inactivity on our part, most of us felt as if we were going back to square one! Now we are very much back into the swing of things with observational work in the church coming to an end for most recorders. Before the production of the final church record, however, there is much checking and editing of content to ensure both accuracy and consistency within and across all sections. This process is now very much underway.

The final bound Church Record for St Peter & St Paul Fenstanton was delivered to a representative of Fenstanton Church in May 2020 but we were unable to formally dedicate and present it at that time. At last, on 29th May 2022 this will be done at a special service. We hope the Record will be shared and of interest to all.

Huntingdon Church Recorders is still a small group of ten people and will always welcome those who might like to come and give church recording a try. Thursday mornings is our usual meeting time – but not every week – and we can be flexible.

As always, I extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all members of my CR group, past and present, for the considerable time, effort and commitment they give to our CR projects.

Church recording is very much a team effort. The dedication of the group post-Covid means the end of another successful project is now in sight. My heartfelt thanks to them and our local TAS who support us.

**Pat Hamilton**

## **YOUNG ARTS**

It has not been possible to enter Hinchingsbrooke 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 2023 on the 17th and 18th February and we are pleased to announce that our host will be Hinchingsbrooke School. Lillian Pickin and I are organising the event and have already begun to liaise with schools.

**Rosemary Huckle**

## **WEBMASTER'S REPORT**

Do please consult the website! Besides discovering interesting background information on our monthly lecturers, you will find reports on visits, memorials of past members, archived lectures and linked study material, and useful information such as contact details of the committee and the venue. It is our aim to keep the website up to date, accessible and well presented.

**Robert Woodham**

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Please see Financial Report 2021/2022.

**Carole Pook**