

**THE ARTS SOCIETY
HUNTINGDONSHIRE**



ANNUAL REPORTS 2018 - 2019

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER 2018-2019

Dear members,

Having recently attended an Arts Society Directory Day in the vast auditorium of Westminster Central Hall, I can affirm The Society's excellent organisation. There were hundreds of lecturers and even more delegates. Each lecturer had only a brief time to present themselves and their subject. But what an array of subjects and how well it was run, with the strictest of timing to ensure all were heard. It was a fabulous array, a chocolate box of tempting delights, to guarantee more of the lectures we so enjoy.

Lectures are the bedrock of our organisation, and the standard of lecturers is widely acknowledged. Besides our Wednesday sessions, other activities take place such as holidays and outings organised by our Visits Secretary. In addition we have enjoyed two Study Days. Our Treasurer, Carole Pook, has been extremely generous with her time and talents, running two stimulating Study Days: one in July, on Frida Kahlo, the Mexican artist and more recently, a Photography Day, with a lecture on women photographers, followed by a talk on how to take better images, given by a local vet and keen photographer, Simon Shaw.

It is admirable that the Arts Society reaches out to the community to encourage art and conservation work. In our branch we know of the great success that our Young Arts team achieves with their dedication and enthusiasm. Meanwhile the meticulous Church Recorders have finished one project and are starting the next. We are proud to be affiliated to the Historic Gardens Trust and commend their good work in recording the historic walled gardens in our area.

This year we have had several new officers who have been settling in to their new roles and working on improvements to our communication with members. Our pre-talk slide-show has been given a new look by our Programme Secretary, Sassy Skinner, and we are most grateful to Bob Woodham for his work on the website. The overhaul is not yet complete, but should be by the next season and we hope members will make good use of the facility.

The Burgess Hall is capacious, the parking easy and the members' subscription seems to me to give excellent value. We want to retain the Hall without raising the fee and affording it requires us to keep up our numbers. The committee agreed to reduce the visitors' fee from £7 to £5 to encourage attendance. We hope this was the reason for a record number of visitors in February. Our other initiative was an offer to members to bring a guest free to Douglas Skeggs' lecture in January, hoping for new recruits. We did gain two new members, with the possibility of two more. However, costs increase each year, so please encourage friends, neighbours and especially newcomers to the area to join us and swell the throng on Wednesday afternoons.

Wednesday 12th June is the date for our AGM, which will be in Hemingford Abbots Village Hall at 2.30pm. After the short business meeting, we will have a presentation on the A14 archaeological finds. We also hope to display members' responses to the roadworks in the form of art, photography, textiles, letters and poetry. If anyone has written a ballad, such as "Lament for Lost Hedgerows", I am sure we could make that heard as well.

Claire Sarkies

PROGRAMME SECRETARY'S REPORT

This is my first year as Programme Secretary. Our 2018-19 programme was, of course, prepared and booked by Barbara Levene before she stepped down at the last AGM, and I would like to thank her for making my introduction into the role so easy.

In this Society we aim for variety in subjects and speakers and we greatly appreciate feedback from members. As a very polite audience, you give us lots of good feedback on lectures you liked but hold back on the negative! However, this is useful too as the feedback not only goes towards the lecturer rating which we send back to Head Office, but also informs our planning for future years. Ratings are graded on a seven-point scale from No Rating, through Passable, Poor and Good to

Very Good, Excellent and Outstanding. This year our speakers were all above Good with three lecturers being rated Outstanding.

The 2019-2020 Programme is now complete, beginning in September with A History of Wallpapers, acknowledging the 100 year anniversary of the Bauhaus and including the fascinating topic of how the country prepared for war by packing up all our art treasures. Not to forget Cezanne, Frost Fairs, Sculpture and the reign of an Empress in China amongst others. Don't forget to invite your friends! The Chairman and I recently attended Directory Day in London to hear from a plethora of newly-accredited lecturers and from established speakers with new topics. We already have a draft programme for our 2020-21 season and will be working on that in the next few months.

Programme for 2019-20

Date	Topic	Lecturer
11 September 2019	A History of Wallpapers	Jo Banham
9 October 2019	Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes	Rosamund Bartlett
13 November 2019	Cezanne	Michael Howard
11 December 2019	The Bauhaus	Anthea Streeter
8 January 2020	Frost Fairs	Nicholas Reed
12 February 2020	The Dowager Empress Cixi	David Rosier
11 March 2020	How New York stole the idea of Modern Art	Barry Venning
8 April 2020	Packing up the Nation	Caroline Shenton
13 May 2020	Antony Gormley	Rosalind Whyte

Sassy Skinner

VISITS SECRETARY'S REPORT

Members have enjoyed a varied range of visits throughout the past year.

In March 2018, a guided tour of the European ceramics collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge - one of the most important collections in the UK.

April saw a visit to London, combining two exhibitions - 'Charles I: King and Collector', at the Royal Academy, and 'Charles II: Art and Power' at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace. The annual holiday, also in April, toured the Castles and Gardens of Kent and Sussex.

In November, a group visited the University of Cambridge's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, to view the exquisite Anglo-Saxon jewel, the Trumpington Cross.

The calendar year ended with a December visit to Blickling Hall, in Norfolk, the family home of Anne Boleyn, for their Georgian Christmas experience and Garden of Lights.

In February 2019, a small group visited Ely Cathedral, to see the exhibition of work by the Embroiderers' Guild, 'The Beautiful Stitch'.

Two Study Days have been much appreciated. A lecture by Carole Pook on the Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo, followed by a delicious Mexican lunch, and a further lecture by Carole on 'Women Photographers'; again followed by lunch, and a hands-on practical session with local photographer, Simon Shore.

Sue Denney

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Total membership as we come to the end of the 2018/2019 academic year currently stands at 186, with an average of 120 members attending each lecture over the past year. The end of year total is an even more substantial drop in the membership numbers from the 2017/2018 figures. There were paying visitors each month and visitor numbers varied dependent on the lecture subject. Current membership fees are £42 (single membership) and £79 (for couples) and it is proposed to hold the

fees at the same rate for the coming year. The membership list needs to be kept as up-to-date with all your details as can be achieved. If at any time anyone does change part of their 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 the Chair of the Committee. My contact details are on your membership card.

Alison Clough

HERITAGE VOLUNTEERS CO-ORDINATORS' REPORTS (GARDENS - CHURCH RECORDERS - YOUNG ARTS)

GARDENS GROUP

Members of Arts Society Huntingdon continue to assist the aims and research work of the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust. This year, much interesting data on walled gardens in the counties of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire has been recorded and stored. When complete, it may be left as an online consultative document, or published as a gazetteer. Research has been interrupted by the temporary closure of the Huntingdon archive library and will resume when the facility re-opens fully.

We have also focused on the garden designer, Humphry Repton, whose anniversary year is currently being celebrated. We enjoyed a visit in January to The London Museum of Garden History to see an exhibition on Repton, which featured several of his famous "red books", cleverly designed so that clients could see their estates 'before' and 'after' Repton's proposed improvements. To extend our knowledge of this famous successor to Capability Brown, to whose tercentenary Huntingdon so brilliantly contributed in 2016, we read and discussed a short, well-illustrated book by Laura Meyer. A practical session on painting landscapes is planned, as well as a visit to Waresley Park, which was one of Repton's projects.

The group meets once a month on Monday afternoons at Fen Drayton Village Hall and if you would like to join us, please do contact Judith (judith.christie@ntlworld.com) or me/the writer, for further information. You may be interested to know that the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust holds an annual Christmas lecture with an impressive list of past speakers; there are two excellent Study Days, a summer event which this year is in the grounds of Kirtling Hall and many outings to historic or little known private gardens.

Additionally, there are opportunities to volunteer at the wonderful restored walled garden at Ramsey Abbey: well worth a visit!

Claire Sarkies

CHURCH RECORDERS GROUP

The Arts Society promotes the recording of historic churches because it believes that recording places of worship of all religions will raise awareness and promote the heritage within such buildings, helping to protect and preserve them.

The Huntingdon group is currently recording two churches. Work on **St. Peter & St. Paul, Fenstanton**, the burial place of landscape designer Lancelot Brown, and site of the recently restored memorial to his family, is in its final phase. Checking of almost all observational work in the church is now complete and compilation of the final record is well underway. This final record will then be printed, bound and a copy presented to the church and the local record office. Digital copies go to various national institutions: Historic England, Churchcare and the V & A Museum - the latter in a high quality archival format which should last for hundreds of years. Recording of **St. Andrews Church, Swavesey** started at the end of February 2019, and we are therefore very much at the beginning. It is an imposing but welcoming church and we look forward to the task ahead.

There are currently 12 members in the group, but new members are always welcome. We endeavour to meet at St Andrew's on the last Thursday morning of each month (10am – c. 12 noon) to share progress. Observational work takes place at the church on all other Thursday mornings for those who can make it.

Over the past year, some group members have attended specialist study days on topics such as iconography and the recording of memorials. These excellent courses are run by the CR Eastern region and provide a valuable training tool.

Lastly, I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to all members of the CR team, past and present, for the considerable time, effort and commitment they give to our CR projects.

Pat Hamilton

YOUNG ARTS

2018 was Jubilee Year for the Arts Society. In East Anglia we celebrated by building on the programme of events to showcase support for art projects across the area and to demonstrate joint working with teams of volunteers in other organisations. Events continued until September, concluding with a splendid retrospective exhibition of sixth form art in Ipswich attended by many past winners of the competition.

Royal Society of British Artists

The annual competition for sixth form and A level art students is co-sponsored by the RBA and the Arts Society. Committee members from local societies choose art work for submission with art teachers at sixth form exhibitions. 247 items were entered this year, from which 21 were selected by the RBA for the national exhibition in the Mall Gallery in July. Three of the winners are from our schools: one from Kimbolton and two from Sawtry. Congratulations! We wish them well for the future.

CAYAC 2019 (Arts Society Huntingdonshire)

Our Society has supported the Cambridgeshire Area Young Artists Competition as lead sponsor for the last six years, both financially and with volunteers. 2019 was the largest event so far, involving 167 entries from 47 schools. The exhibition was hosted by Sawston Village College and benefited from excellent organisation and IT support from the Art Development Manager, Lesley Morgan. Next year Kimbolton will host the competition. Watch the website for news of date and venue. www.cambsyoungartists.org We need more volunteers to work with schools. Please do contact Jill Donnelly or Margaret Gledhill if you are interested. Contact details available on Hunts Arts website: www.huntsarts.org

Joint working with other organisations

Our Society continues to work with other local groups and Societies to promote art in schools. Particular links are with *Cantab and Granta Arts Societies*, where Hunts volunteers helped to support two very successful weeks' exhibition of sixth form art from 10 Cambridge schools at the Michaelhouse Gallery in central Cambridge. *S. Cambs Arts Society* has a well established link with Sawston VC. Significant annual contributions are made to the school art programme. Mutual benefit is being realised by joint working with Hunts Arts Society volunteers who already have established links with schools in their catchment area. This was particularly helpful in 2019 with Sawston VC hosting CAYAC. Secondary and feeder primary schools in Peterborough are beginning to provide art for display on corridor walls of Peterborough Hospital. The hospital has provided display cases, schools providing art and committed to regular change of exhibition. Children's art is now displayed in all three hospitals of NWE Anglia NHSFT:

- Hinchingsbrooke (5 year established programme),
- Stamford (3 year programme by invitation to local schools),
- Peterborough - first term of project.

Thanks to all who give time, energy and enthusiasm to make these projects successful and sustainable over time.

Jill Donnelly, Arts Society Coordinator for Cambridgeshire jill@stivesdocs.demon.co.uk.

Margaret Gledhill, Young Arts Lead, Huntingdonshire Arts Society mjgledhill@ntlworld.com

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Committee took two important financial decisions last year. The first was to decide that as there was dwindling interest in the New Year lunch at the Dolphin, to have instead, for 2018 only, a tenth lecture in January. Lectures at Burgess Hall cost around £600-£650, for the lecture fee and hire of the hall.

The second decision was that, as we have healthy reserves, we also thought it fairer to you, our members, to cover the cost out of reserves rather than to increase the subscription. However, you will see from the Membership Secretary's report that there was a sharp drop in our membership last year, and so we lost income.

Despite all this we have again decided that this year we would still like to keep the subscription at £42 for the coming year. In 2018-2019, we are planning nine lectures and a different less expensive format for the AGM.

It is important in going forward to increase our membership, and we need you all to support the Committee in its various efforts to bring new members into the Society.

Carole Pook

See also the Financial Statement.