

REPORTS 2022 - 2023

CHAIR'S REPORT

In June 2022, as I took over the Chair from Claire Sarkies' very capable hands, the country had just celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. By the time we all met again in September for our first lecture of the 2022-2023 season, we were preparing for the Queen's funeral. And we have just seen the coronation of King Charles III.

We have enjoyed a full and varied programme of lectures during this past year, organised for us by Sassy Skinner. Thank you to Sassy for all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes with the planning needed to bring the programme to fruition.

I think that one of the best things about being a member of The Arts Society is the variety of lecture topics throughout the year. You cannot always tell from the title of the talk what exactly it will be about, even though you're given a clue, but it's always entertaining and informative and leads you to want to discover more for yourself. It has also led the committee to plan some trips and study days as a follow-up, e.g., the visit to St Paul's Cathedral, following the lecture on Wren's churches.

Last June, we had an outing to Wightwick Manor and gardens, near Wolverhampton, and in November 2022, a visit to Murray Edwards College, to see their Womens' Art Collection. In February 2023, our first London visit since the pandemic - a guided tour of St Paul's Cathedral, or Tate Modern, and the Cezanne exhibition. Many thanks to Margaret Gledhill and Mary Knowles for organizing these visits.

As well as visits, we had a textile study day in February, organised by Carole Pook, on spinning and weaving - to whet your appetites for the Isobel Lattimore Textile Prize. This is a new venture for our Society. Alongside the entries this year there is an exhibition of textiles for you to enjoy. We hope the Textile Prize venture will grow year on year; it is open to members of the Arts Society Huntingdonshire and to school-age children, too. A very important part of our remit is to support young artists in the county.

In February 2022, there was the CAYAC (Cambridgeshire Young Artists Competition) exhibition in Hinchingsbrooke House School; the exhibition displayed works by artists aged from four to eighteen years. Many thanks to Rosemary Huckle for its planning and organisation.

We continue to meet here at the Corn Exchange, St Ives. Our grateful thanks to Joe Masters and his colleagues for their support with all the organisational aspects involved in hosting and running our lecture programme.

During the year, some of my committee colleagues and I have been fortunate to attend some Arts Society regional days in Bury St Edmunds. As well as being informative and interesting, it has been so supportive and enlightening to learn what other branches of the Arts Society are doing around the region and throughout the country. Branches vary in size. We're medium-sized! Many are struggling to maintain numbers and to recruit to their committees. Some branches have amalgamated, some have folded. We're still here because of our enthusiasm for the arts. But branches don't run themselves. Your committee members are all volunteers who work quietly behind the scenes, whilst juggling other aspects of their lives. We always welcome offers of help,

no matter how small. We would love to welcome new people onto the committee, so do please consider. Of course, during any year, circumstances change for some people, and so too for us there have been some changes to the committee, and there will be more to come. But I sincerely thank all my colleagues on the committee for their support and encouragement, hard work, flexibility and commitment. Thank you to all those who have helped in so many ways during the year, whether with art exhibitions, or with trips, or on lecture/study days, or behind the scenes with other preparations. And thanks to you, the members, for your continuing attendance at our talks, whatever the weather. Please continue to tell your friends about us - we need new faces to join us.

I'd like to name the committee members not mentioned so far, because they have all been working hard in their various roles: Jane Woods, Secretary and Vice-Chair; Alison Clough, Memberships Secretary; Claire Sarkies, Acting Programme Secretary, who has already organised next year's programme of talks; Bob Woodham, Webmaster, and Elaine Clarkson and Mary Anderson, Committee Members. A special mention to Margaret Gledhill, a long-standing committee member, who has had many roles within the Arts Society, in particular with Young Arts and then Visits, who has now retired.

I too am stepping down from the committee. I wish the new Chair and committee all good wishes for the coming year. Many thanks and may we all continue to enjoy the arts in their many forms.

Clare Fox

TREASURER'S REPORT

Last year, I reported that the past year had been challenging for our Society. This year has also been equally financially challenging.

When we took the decision to extend the membership period because of Covid, we did so in the knowledge that we would at some time have to subsidise it out of our large deposit account. This year we have in consequence transferred £1,000 from our deposit account into our current account.

Our hope that the increase in our membership fees to £45 would cover our expenses was upset by the national Arts Society raising its fees by £5, including insurance, to just over £16 per member for the 149 members we had had at the end of financial year 2021/2022. With a current membership this year of 135, it has presented a considerable challenge.

The move to the Corn Exchange has been a great success financially; we could not possibly have continued to meet at Burgess Hall. Speakers' fees have seen a slight rise, but their travel expenses have increased only slightly.

We also decided, as we had lost so many in-person meetings, to add an extra Arts Society lecture to our June AGM meeting, making ten lectures this year instead of the usual nine.

At the end of April, we have £3,669.54 in our current account; this includes £1,448.71 held for CAYAC, and £5,301.48 in a deposit account. We have set up a totally separate account for the Isobel Lattimer Textile Prize, which at this time holds £204.

The full details of the accounts up to the end of the financial year in May 2023 will be available at the AGM in June.

The final result of our financial discussions is that we are obliged to ask for an increase in membership fees to £50 for each member.

Carole Pook

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Our membership numbers over the year have sadly declined from 149 to 135 fully paid-up members. I also have to report that several more of our long-standing members have died since the last Annual General Meeting in 2022. They will be very sadly missed.

The Corn Exchange in St Ives attracts more drop-in guests at our monthly meetings, and it is hoped that some of them will go on to become full members of the Society - enquiries re. membership have increased in the past few weeks.

And please - a gentle reminder. 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 address, telephone number/s etc, please do let me know as soon as possible. I can then ensure that you continue to receive missives from our committee Chair, general information from our own Society, all the national Arts Society e-mails - plus their magazine three times each year. My contact details are on our local Society website, and/or membership card and you can also complete a 'Change' form at any of our monthly meetings.

Alison Clough

PROGRAMME SECRETARY'S REPORT

The 2022-2023 programme began with two outstanding lectures on artists four hundred years apart. Gavin Plumley focused on Breugel's paintings of 'The Seasons', whilst Jacky Klein spoke on Grayson Perry's life and work. Both lecturers shared their knowledge with passion, flair and humour.

In April we enjoyed another outstanding lecture. 'The Culture of the Ukraine' drew a large audience eager to hear more of this tragic country's history, art and music. Rosamund Bartlett, the lecturer, provided sound bites of Ukrainian singers, and instrumentalists playing the Kobza, the Ukrainian version of a lute. We were joined by several visitors from the Ukraine, making the occasion even more memorable.

Ian Swankie gave an excellent lecture on the polymath, Christopher Wren, whilst Rosalind Whyte gave us such a good introduction to Scottish Art that we have invited her back next year to give a talk on Charles Rennie Mackintosh. We enjoyed entertaining lectures from David Phillips on museum curating and Russell Nash on menswear. Bertie Pearce enlivened a cold, wet afternoon in March with his talk on theatre design, punctuated by skillful conjuring tricks (he is a member of the Magic Circle) and witty ad libs to the audience.

A programme secretary in their first year inherits a season of lecturers booked the year before. It is thanks to Sassy Skinner that we had such an interesting and varied programme. Special honours go to her for her prescience in organising the talk on the Ukraine.

I am finalising the programme for 2023-2024. If anyone has any special requests for topics or lecturers, please contact me. The Arts Society has a long list of options. Choosing sometimes reminds me of the difficulty I felt as a child in a sweet shop!

Claire Sarkies

VISITS SECRETARY'S REPORT

On Monday 3rd February 2020 the Society organised a coach trip to the Saatchi Gallery in London to visit the highly recommended Tutankhamun exhibition. The following month the Prime Minister announced the first Covid lockdown and we had to wait until 20th June 2022 for our next coach trip. For many of the 39 members on that trip to Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton, this was their first outing with a large group since February 2020. Some of us felt rather daring for doing it. The house was delightful, with a welcoming atmosphere and a large collection of pre-Raphaelite paintings.

Encouraged by the positive response to this visit, we decided to plan a full programme of visits for 2022-2023. We began on Monday 21st November with a local visit to Murray Edwards College by 29 members to view their impressive collection of Women's Art dating from the early 20th century. This is the largest collection of art by women in Europe. To tie in with a lecture on Wren's churches, we took a coach to London on Monday 20th February; the 34 members chose either to join a guided tour of St. Paul's, to visit the Cezanne exhibition at Tate Modern or to do their own sightseeing. This could well be a useful model for future visits to London. Finally, we will be travelling to North Norfolk to visit Felbrigg House and gardens on Wednesday 7th June.

Fuller reports and photographs of these visits are available on the Society's website.

For the future, we hope to arrange a holiday based in the New Forest, visiting properties in Hampshire and Dorset in May 2024.

Margaret Gledhill and Mary Knowles

YOUNG ARTS

From early 2020 Covid restrictions prevented the YA volunteers from changing display boards at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. At the end of the Summer Term 2022, we received excellent artwork from several schools, and the hospital's restrictions had been lifted, so we were able to change ten boards, moving others to new positions. Both corridors are now looking bright and cheerful.

In July 2022 YA volunteers selected 11 pieces of A Level artwork from three local secondary schools to be submitted to the RBA Star Student competition. Twenty pieces of work are selected annually from schools around the country, to be exhibited in the Mall Galleries in London. Sadly, this time we were not successful, but will try again in 2023.

The Arts Society Huntingdonshire supports CAYAC - an exhibition and competition to celebrate the outstanding work of children in local schools and their inspiring teachers. This year it was

generously hosted by Hinchingsbrooke School, with the exhibition in Hinchingsbrooke House on 17th & 18th February 2023.

The Arts Society helped by inviting 70 Primary Schools and 16 Secondary Schools to register for the competition; 47 schools registered with 41 finally submitting entries.

Thanks are due to the three judges - Charlie Horry, Barbara Levene and Paul Todd - who gave their time and expertise; a challenging task to choose the winners from an outstanding selection of work. We were greatly supported by the staff and students of Hinchingsbrooke School, who helped to photograph and hang the entries.

On the day of the exhibition, an amazing Arts Society team helped with the organisation to ensure the smooth running of the day. We welcomed 638 visitors, and it was wonderful to see so many families enjoying 256 excellent pieces of artwork by youngsters aged 4 -18 years. Some of the work was jaw-droppingly accomplished- so exciting to see such a high standard displayed, and planning is already underway for CAYAC 2024.

Notelets (on sale at every lecture) were as usual printed using photographs of the entries. Their income helps to fund the competition.

Rosemary Huckle

WEBMASTER'S REPORT

The website has been consistently updated, with advance notice of future talks, study days, visits and exhibitions. The layout has also been modified, to make it easier for members to navigate.

All annual costs relating to the website have been paid.

A shadow is urgently needed for the role of Webmaster. Up-dated instructions as to the management of the site are frequently given to the current committee - but it would be far preferable to have someone interested in ultimately taking over to work alongside the current Webmaster.

Robert Woodham

VOLUNTEERS' REPORTS

CHURCH RECORDING

Huntingdonshire Church Recorders is a small group of nine volunteers currently meeting on Thursday mornings a couple of times a month, when we can.

At the time of writing (April 2023), with all written content completed, the compilation of the final record book for St Andrew's Church, Swavesey, is underway. The project started pre-COVID in 2019 but paused for 18 months due to restrictions. We are hoping to have the book printed, bound and presented to the Church by the end of 2023.

Church Recording is very much a team effort. The dedication of the group has led to the end of the successful project at St Andrew's Church, Swavesey and the start of a new one at St John the

Baptist, Holywell - a beautiful small church just outside St Ives. Recording began in March 2023, and the project is likely to take one to two years.

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. My heartfelt thanks to them and our local TAS who supported us.

We always welcome new volunteers. Please feel free to get in touch if you would like to know more.

Pat Hamilton

GARDEN HERITAGE

Last year I reported the launch of our Small Grants Scheme, promoted with your help and through Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust (CGT), intended to support the work of those creating, maintaining and adapting gardens for the benefit and enjoyment of the community. CGT invested nearly £1,250 in the last 12 months to help fund local projects. The Manor Fund at Hemingford Grey was our first of this year's recipients, winning funds for the replacement of pergola and trellis timbers, to improve the visual impact and maintain safety. Swavesey Community Orchard also won funding for permanent labels embossed with each fruit tree's variety and name, and Hilton Community Garden was able to install galvanised edging to separate paths from garden borders and fruit cages, easing maintenance and preventing soil from being scattered across walkways. You can enjoy seeing the latter if you join the CGT summer picnic at Hilton Village Hall on Friday 23rd June, where you will also be able to meet fellow AS and CGT members and hear one of our favourite lecturers, Professor Beverley Glover, Director of Cambridge Botanic Gardens, sharing with us her research on why flowers differ in their colours. We would be delighted if AS GH volunteers (and, indeed, all AS members) could recommend to us other gardens which could benefit from the scheme.

Do you know of any vintage greenhouses in your neighbourhood? If so, we'd dearly love to hear from you with any information for our project to locate heritage greenhouses built before 1945. A countrywide survey has been proposed by Historic England, to which we are looking forward to contributing with as many as we can track down.

We continue our brilliantly attended programme of visits, lectures and other activities, which we hope you will continue to support. (See the Arts Society Huntingdonshire website, under Volunteers, for illustrations of a few of the most recent).

Do follow our website <https://cambridgeshiregardenstrust.org.uk> details of future activities.

Judith Christie