

## ANNUAL REPORTS 2019-2020

### CHAIRMAN'S LETTER 2019-2020

Dear Members,

It was all going so well.....

- Two successful and trouble-free trips to major London exhibitions
- A well planned Cotswolds holiday in excellent accommodation
- An inspired Study Day on Coco Chanel
- An interesting and entertaining visit to Willingham Auction House and another planned
- A highly successful CAYAC exhibition at Kimbolton School
- A planned mid-summer visit to Wightwick Manor
- Not forgetting a very good lecture programme

Covid 19 has interrupted our schedule and upset our plans. For the last three months most of us will have been under virtual house arrest, missing the joy of meeting family and friends and deprived of our usual sources of stimulus. As I write this, the portcullis is lifting a little more and we will take tentative steps back to social life as we used to know it. We will have to adjust and in time lose the fear and distrust that has kept us in our own bounds.

Until 23<sup>rd</sup> March we were winning. Visitor numbers were increasing thanks to good publicity and attractive lecture topics. We had finally, after a good deal of angst, exasperation and several meetings, managed to overcome the technical difficulties we were having in the Burgess Hall. The purchase of our own connector cable made a significant difference. Sassy Skinner, our valued Programme Secretary and invaluable technical 'fixer' was finally able to sit back and enjoy the March lecture, having previously, like the boy putting his finger in the dyke, held the cable in place.

All our Committee members have made major contributions to our society this year. Carole Pook as Treasurer and Alison Clough as Membership Secretary have worked tirelessly throughout to keep track of subscriptions and payments. Young Arts continues to thrive, led by the energy, enthusiasm and skill of Jill Donnelly and Margaret Gledhill. Sue Denney led the successful Cotswolds holiday and has negotiated further ones to North Devon for Autumn 2020 and Cornwall in Spring 2021. Pennie Harrison has master-minded the teas with great good humour and competence. Jane Woods has provided us with lucid and intelligent minutes and Bob Woodham has looked after our web-site. Their commitment has greatly increased our enjoyment of the Arts Society and I am grateful for all their efforts and admiring of their skills.

Regrettably, we had to cancel two planned lectures, as well as the Annual General Meeting. Luckily we have re-booked those lectures for 2021. After careful consideration and discussion with the central office of The Arts Society, we are deferring the start of our programme of lectures in the Burgess Hall until January. From September, we hope to make available to members a monthly package of material related to the topic of the month from our programme schedule. We have been in touch with some of the lecturers who are willing to supply presentations to be viewed at home. Members will be kept fully informed of all

developments, since there is still a great deal of uncertainty and Public Health instructions can change, as we have seen. These changes to our programme will have an impact on costs. The Treasurer's Report explains that adjustments (down) to Membership Fees will follow when we can make the final reckoning.

The AGM will be conducted 'on line'. Happily all present committee members are willing to stand for another year. Claire Fox has been proposed as an addition to the team and we are delighted that she is willing to stand. Barbara Levene, who will be very well known to society members, has been proposed to take the place of Young Arts Secretary, taking over from Margaret Gledhill, whose services have been greatly appreciated and whom we thank profusely. As we cannot vote in person for these additions, we would ask you simply to let them pass on the nod, as it were. But if you have "cause or just impediment" why these two members should not join the committee you are asked, please, to declare it by email! Thank you to all our members for your support throughout the year. I hope we will be able to meet in the Burgess Hall in January and enjoy the stimulus and fellowship that keep us faithful to The Arts Society.

**Claire Sarkies**

### **PROGRAMME SECRETARY'S REPORT**

The 2019-2020 lecture schedule promised a wide-ranging programme covering an array of art, design and architecture from across the world. We learned of English wallpaper, Russian ballet, French painting, German architecture, icy Dutch landscapes, Chinese costume, and American modern art. None of these was rated less than Very Good, and most were Excellent. The somewhat irritating IT connections in the Burgess Hall did not seem to mar enjoyment, except possibly for your beleaguered Programme Secretary. In fact, one of the lectures drew the comment that it had been one of the best, if not the best, that he had ever attended. The Committee certainly appreciates the feedback.

And then Covid 19. Quickly realising that the April and May lectures would be unable to take place, we managed to rearrange these bookings for the remaining slots in our 2020/21 calendar. We felt it important to recognise that many of the Arts Society lecturers rely on their fees as their predominant source of income and therefore made goodwill payments for the cancellations, for which they were very grateful.

The 2020/21 season, although fully programmed, is likely to be presented somewhat differently, at least initially. But many of us have found the internet to hold a wealth of information on all aspects of the arts, and the national office of the Arts Society has worked hard to support the membership through this difficult time. We look forward to a new, and perhaps improved, "Normal".

**Sassy Skinner**

### **VISITS SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Unfortunately, our planned visit to Waddesden Manor for their Christmas Experience had to be cancelled, as it was felt to be too close to the Christmas holiday. We would hope to try again in November 2020 - Covid 19 permitting.

In February, a group visited the Saatchi Gallery, to see the 'Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh' exhibition, in celebration of the centenary of Carter's discovery. More than 150 objects from the tomb of Tutankhamun were on display, of which 60 pieces had never before left Egypt (and will not do so again). The exhibition showcased the astonishing craftsmanship of the artefacts which accompanied the boy-king into the afterlife more than 3,300 years ago.

In July, we made a visit to the Tate Gallery, for the Van Gogh exhibition, based on the artist's time spent working in a London art gallery. There were many examples of Van Gogh's own work depicting the outcast and impoverished, set against paintings by his predecessors and successors. An excellent exhibition - not overcrowded, well-organised and coherent.

In September, our annual holiday took us to the Cotswolds. Our first visit was to the gardens of Hidcote Manor, followed by the house and parkland of Compton Verney, and the extraordinary Snowhill Manor. For many, the highpoint of the trip was a visit to Stratford-upon-Avon, and a fascinating backstage tour of the Royal Shakespeare and Swan theatres, before moving on to Charlecote Park, for a tour of its house and grounds. Staying at the Wroxton House Hotel enabled us to explore the village, and Wroxton Abbey parkland, before an afternoon at stunning Broughton Castle - the location for many period films. En route for home, we had lunch and a tour of Upton House. All were agreed - a thoroughly enjoyable few days - both culturally and socially.

### **Special interest days**

On 19th February in the excellent venue of Hemingford Abbots Village Hall, we gathered for a day of fashion. Carole Pook, our Treasurer and U3A lecturer, gave us an entertaining and well researched talk on the fascinating life of fashion designer, Coco Chanel, who with talent, ambition and business acumen, became a household name and whose brand continues to this day.

Following an excellent lunch we welcomed Sharon Paul, the originator of 'Simply Hats', made for weddings and other special occasions. It was a nice connection that both she and Coco Chanel began their careers by dressing up simple straw hats. A hat parade was a happy finale to a well organised and interesting day.

The pleasing combination of lecturer and venue is such that we hope to run a further Study Day at a similar time of year in 2021 in Hemingford Village Hall where there are such first-rate facilities.

On 6th March a group visited Willingham Auction House for a talk by the auctioneer on the history of this family business, and an introduction to the bidding and selling delights of auction sales. Following a delicious lunch in the cafe, members brought forward their own items, for valuation. So successful was this visit, that a second is planned, Covid 19 permitting.

**Sue Denney**

### **MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Total membership as we come to the end of the 2019/2020 academic year currently stands at 187. Those lectures that have taken place were attended by an average of 115 members each month, plus paying visitors.

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**

## **HERITAGE VOLUNTEERS COORDINATORS' REPORTS**

### **CHURCH RECORDERS GROUP**

Following an impact review in 2019, The Arts Society has announced their decision to stop supporting all aspects of Church Recording as of December 2020. The decision was greeted with dismay in many quarters.

Thankfully, it is now clear that Church Recording will continue at a national level under the direction of a new body, the Church Recording Society, without the involvement of The Arts Society.

Recording will continue using the present format but with common sense flexibility for groups to tailor their records to suit the skills of their recorders as well as suiting the nature, size and special requests of the church being recorded.

The Huntingdon group is currently recording St. Andrew's, Swavesey, although due to COVID-19, we have not met since March 2020 and at this time have no idea when we will be able to resume. We are a small group (10 volunteers) and would hope to have observational work in St. Andrew's completed by summer 2021.

After four years, the recording of St. Peter & St. Paul, Fenstanton, is completely finished.

The final record has been hardbound and was delivered to a representative of the church in May 2020. It will be formally dedicated in a special service when COVID-19 allows.

Over the past year, various group members have attended study days on general church recording and the recording of textiles. 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.

New members are always welcome.

**Pat Hamilton**

### **YOUNG ARTS**

*It was all going so well - until 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, when everything stopped for all of us.*

Our ongoing project of filling the corridors of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital with work from local schools has been very successful. Currently we fill 20 boards; two were at the request of one of the wards. Each board holds eight or nine A4 pieces of work, so a minimum of 180 pieces

of work is always on display. We change and mount three or four boards every four to six weeks. This work comes from an ever-increasing number of local Primary Schools and six Secondary Schools from our area.

Cambridgeshire Young Artist Competition was also very successful with 31 Schools participating and 129 pieces of work displayed. Approximately £300 was taken in sales on the day and orders for notelets. We are particularly proud of this, as the idea for the notelets was put forward by a very active member of the Young Arts Group, Ros Neugebauer, and it is a wonderful way of keeping her name and memory fresh in our minds.

Our other big success was with the Arts Society and the Royal Society of British Artists Competition in having a painting chosen to be hung at the Royal Overseas League. Unfortunately, Coronavirus put a stop to that, but Hinchingsbrooke School was delighted that work by one of their pupils was chosen.

It seems very strange not having much to do but I am sure we will all make up for it when we are able to meet once again. I would like to add a big thank you to all the volunteers who are part of the Young Arts Group.

**Margaret Gledhill**

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

We voted last year at the AGM to keep subscriptions at £42. We decided then that while we have sufficient reserves, it would be unfair to put up subscriptions, even though we were aware that our costs for the speakers and the hall are rising.

Despite these rising costs, we are pleased to have just about kept a balance this year between our costs and our receipts. We have been helped in this by careful budgeting, more visitors and successful visits and study days.

The end of our financial year was disrupted by the Coronavirus lockdown. This did mean making two payments, in total £250, to speakers whose lectures we had to cancel, at the same time holding the money for the visit to Willingham Auctions, a visit we had to cancel. Those members who had booked to go have had the offer of their money refunded.

At this time of writing, we cannot see what are the financial implications for next year, so we are suggesting that we keep the subscriptions as they are. You will continue to be members of the Arts Society and receive all the benefits from the national Society - the magazines, the online material, etc. Any substantial extra costs will come from reserves, and any savings will be reflected in next year's subscriptions.

**Carole Pook**

**See also the Financial Statement for the year 1st April 2019 - 31st March 2020.**