From the Chairman

I'd like to thank you all for staying with us in our new home. Much of the reason for you doing so is that you enjoy our Lectures, Visits and our Special Interest Days so I clearly need to thank Sue Hughes, Val Woolford and Alison Lornie. However, our Lectures at All Saints Church Hall would not be possible without the continued loyal involvement of our Audio Visual team.

Not all of you will be aware that from last January, as well as me, there were 3 new faces on the Committee whom I'd like to thank. Stephen Knott has kept watch on the Accounts, Alison Lornie has organised the Special Interest Days and Margaret Wicks has been the main organiser of your Teas. Don't forget that any member can offer to help Margaret, even if it's only once a year.

I'm delighted to say that our Exhibition at the Riverhouse Barn in September attracted 36 local artists and crafts-people (non-members) who offered art and craft work for display. Helping me have been Halina Heyworth, (formerly Young Arts) and Laurence Shafe (our Webmaster) both of whom worked hard to ensure that we met the request from The Arts Society to raise awareness of TASW amongst local people.

Diane Ball as Secretary has been a tower of strength for me – almost taking the place of a Vice Chairman and Margaret Sale as Membership Secretary turns up very efficiently to register us all. Not currently on the Committee, I'm particularly grateful to Halina Heyworth who kindly organised TASW Tour to Turin.

As many of you will remember, John Smith was Chairman before I took over in October 2017. He had served for the regulation three years but didn't have a Successor. As President of TASW I was aware of this and offered to stand as Chairman for a year in the hope of finding some new Committee Members. Sadly, despite approaching well over 30 members, and making approaches from the platform, no further volunteers have surfaced. So, when a few months ago John Smith emailed asking if I was still looking for a Chairman, I explained that I would be very happy for him to return to the Chairmanship. His Committee will look a little different without Catherine Carter or Tony Collins and I cannot close without recording my thanks to them for serving several years on the Committee.

Enjoy your 2019 selection of Lectures and Visits. Pamela Scott

Special Interest Days

At our Festive Supper in December: the food historian Dr Annie Gray proved a fount of knowledge about food-related Christmas customs in Mrs Beeton’s day – and there was not a single mention of Brussels sprouts!

Mary Alexander had been a popular speaker on her first visit to us, and her return in March certainly did not disappoint: her subject was “Riviera Paradise”, describing the scene on the French Riviera in the 1920s and 1930s, when there was an eclectic mix of artists such as Matisse, Picasso, Dufy and Cocteau, and the worlds of fashion, theatre and interiors. Add to this the impresarios Serge Diaghilev and Paul Poiret who helped create a fusion in the creative arts, of which Cole Porter, Scott Fitzgerald and the American socialites, Gerald and Sara Murphy, and the result was a very lively creative scene.

In September we welcomed Rosalind Whyte, who gave two fascinating lectures about “250 Years of the Royal Academy”. We learned about the people responsible for its foundation, the collection which, until now, have rarely been seen by the general public. Many artists have been proud to put the letters “RA” after their names, not least Sir Winston Churchill; there have been many who have caused violent controversy, including Sir Alfred Munnings, who opposed anything that could remotely be described as “modern” during his tenure as President. With its new, extended, premises to the rear the Royal Academy, this venerable institution is ready to cater even better for artists and the general public in the next 250 years.

In December we welcome Christopher Bradley, who will help us to disentangle the story of Santa Claus, or St Nicholas; then at the beginning of April Dr Susan Kay-Williams, the CEO of the Royal School of Needlework, will talk about tapestry and embroidery, and in September Jo Mabbutt will be talking about some of the amazing objects owned by the City Livery Companies.

Alison Lornie
Treasurer’s Report

The finances of the Society last year were affected by costs associated with the move from Hersham Village Hall to All Saints Church Hall and the consequent need to invest in, for example, new audio-visual equipment. That left the Society at the end of the year with smaller reserves than in previous years. I am hopeful, however, that 2019 will be a more stable financial year for the Society and that we will be able to re-build the reserves to a more satisfactory level. Costs are, nevertheless, rising all the time and it may be necessary to review the membership fees for next year if we are to maintain what we believe is the very high quality of lectures we offer.

Our finances are, of course, affected by the membership numbers and their associated fees. The 2019 renewal is now underway and its completion will provide a clearer picture of the funds available to us for the next year. Thanks go those who organise our excellent Special Interest Days and Visits for their accurate budgeting. These Days and Visits require no finance from the Society.

Outside of the lecture meetings, the Society continues to provide support for causes that share the Society’s aims. The Committee is also offered expenses to attend Arts Society Area meetings and courses, to make our views heard and to assist in the running of the TASW.

Stephen Knott

Programmes

Our 2018 programme began with a very informative talk: “Smiths, Singers and Shapeshifters”. Justine Hopkins took us back in time to discover the development of the Celtic style in the British Isles where it survived long after the coming of Rome had extinguished it elsewhere. February took us to “The Guggenheim in Bilbao” and other fascinating examples of the architecture of Frank Gehry, in the expert hands of Sian Walters.

March’s talk proved to be one of the most popular with members. “Pevsner in Surrey” presented by Susan Harries, gave us plenty of opportunities to revisit well-known local landmarks and remember some that have now been lost.

“The Scoliotic Knight: Reconstructing the real Richard III” by Tobias Capwell explored how such a diminutive person, suffering a significant spinal condition, could have been skilled in the fighting arts and fight in full armour in three battles. “From Magic Lanterns to MGM” introduced by Geri Parlby, gave a fascinating insight into how the Motion Picture industry developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, and changed the face of entertainment.

The excellent standard of talks was continued by Hilary Williams with “A Feast for the eyes: The Frick Collection, illustrating the superb collection of paintings, porcelain and enamels amassed by Henry Frick. Our last talk before the summer holidays was given by Kevin Karney and titled: “How Time has been told throughout the Ages”, a talk that was both fascinating and illuminating.

We completed the 2018 programme:-

In September with “The Sackvilles of Knole and Sissinghurst” by William Forrester, and examined the turbulent marriage of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicholson and the gardens they created at Long Barn and Sissinghurst. In October, Clive Stewart-Lockhart will explore why some objects are worth so much while others are worth so little in “The Art Market: How does it Work?” and finally Leslie Primo will consider the demands that drove the interest and need for portraiture in his lecture: “Titian to Van Dyck: The Art of Portraiture”.

We have booked another exciting programme for 2019, including talks on how the advertising industry has exploited fine art; Hester Thrale – friend of Samuel Johnson, the contribution of émigré artists to this country; major archaeological discoveries in the search for the Queen of Sheba, the Spanish artist Joaquin Sorolla, and the innovative art and design of the Roaring Twenties.

We look forward to seeing you at the lectures and hope you enjoy the programme.

Sue Hughes

Membership Report

This year we have become more familiar with our new name, venue and time, and, although membership numbers are slightly lower than in previous years, about 50% of members have regularly attended a series of excellent lectures. I am looking forward to next year’s programme and to meeting you at lectures, SIDs and Visits.

During the year we enjoyed meeting 30 new members and welcomed back 3 former members. I realise that over the years members’ situations can change dramatically – moving house, family responsibilities, medical appointments….. – making it difficult to attend every lecture, but please don’t forget that should you feel unable to renew your subscription, we will be very pleased to see you as a guest when your commitments allow, and to renew your membership in the future. Many of you do bring guests who go on to become full members – thank you.

Thank you to those who have volunteered help when I needed it – Tony and Jayne, Gill and Margaret. My particular thanks go to my regular helpers Diane, John and Catherine; helping with registration at meetings is a great way to catch up with the news!

Margaret Sale
Tours

The destination of the Society’s 2018 Tour was Turin, the capital of the Piedmont region in northwest Italy and one of the country’s most important cultural and business centres. Our 33-strong group explored the city and the surrounding area over five very busy days taking in sights that ranged from the 8th century Romanesque Vezzolano Abbey nesting in the lush hills outside Turin, to the glittering Baroque interiors of the royal residences of the House of Savoy. We were most impressed by the quality of displays at the recently renovated Egyptian Museum which houses a vast collection of Egyptian antiquities, including the most ancient copy of the Egyptian Book of the Dead and a spectacular tomb of a high-ranking architect and his wife. We were overwhelmed by the size and scope of the Cinema Museum which traces the history of cinema from the earliest optical devices to the latest developments in film technology.

For those with extra stamina, one of the highlights of the tour was the visit to the FIAT Motor Museum and the test track above which rises Pinacoteca gallery housing 25 masterpieces from Giovanni Agnelli private art collection.

We had covered miles of ornate palace galleries and state rooms, crossed vast cobbled squares, occasionally sheltered from the rain under Turin’s neoclassical arcades and consumed impressive amounts of local culinary specialities. The unsettled weather and the quirks of Italian organisation did not spoil the mood of the group and the tour was considered an unqualified success.

Halina Heyworth

Church Recording

2018 has been a sad year for TASW Church Recording team as it has lost some key people including our joint leader, Gill Barnett from Claremont Art Society, who has retired. We have slowed down due to the reduced number of volunteers but the end is in sight with checking and compiling the Record. When we find a new Church to record we will need some more people to join us in this worthwhile and fascinating interest. You would be most welcome!

Val Goodhart-Riley

Visits

The final visit in October 2017 was a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament followed by lunch in Westminster Central Hall. A tour of the catholic Westminster Cathedral completed a most interesting day.

Our February trip to the newly opened Postal Museum was in icy conditions and traveling was slow and difficult but we arrived eventually to explore the museum and its amazing underground railway.

The afternoon was spent at Charterhouse, with its long and varied history, stretching back to 1348 and the plague burials, as a Monastery, through royal ownership, as a school to the current community of Brothers. It had also recently opened its doors to the public.

In April we visited the fabulous Spencer House with its elegant Georgian architecture and lavishly decorated rooms built by Princess Diana’s ancestors beside Green Park, and then were lucky enough to have tickets for the Monet Exhibition at the National Gallery. A brilliant day.

In July was had a fascinating trip to Chalfont St Giles where we explored the beautiful parish church and spent a most interesting time in John Milton’s Cottage. After lunch we were welcomed by the owner and spent a sunny afternoon in the historic Chenies Manor and its award-winning gardens. Our 2018 Visits end in October with “All our Waterloos”, a tour of London’s French Quarter followed by the V&A.

Val Woolford

Celebration Arts in Elmbrode – The Arts Society Golden Anniversary Exhibition

As I am sure you are all aware in September The Arts Society celebrated its Golden Anniversary and, for our part, TASW hosted an exhibition of art works in the Robert Phillips Gallery at the Riverhouse Barn Arts Centre in Walton. The theme “Celebration” was open to amateur artists – including those producing craftwork, who are residents of Elmbrode or members of TASW. As I am sure anyone who visited the exhibition will appreciate, the event proved to be very successful and we would like to thank all those who helped to make it such a success, especially Laurence Shafe, Halina Heyworth, Pat Crisp and, of course, Pamela Scott who masterminded the project, and those artists who contributed their magnificent artwork.
Appreciation to ...

Laurence Shafe – who continues to devote much of his time, ideas, and expertise to our website “theartssocietywalton.org”. As mentioned above, Laurence has also been influential this year in assisting with the “Celebrating Art in Elbridge” exhibition. We are extremely grateful to Laurence for all his help and guidance.

We remain indebted to those members of the IT team who are always there at our lectures to set up the audio visual and support the lecturer. We certainly could not function without James Moore and Lindy Wilson together with Spencer Needs, Harry Oliver, Robin Sutton, Gordon Swain, Hugh Taylor and Simon Wilson.

Lindy has also agreed to take on the task of sending Newsletters via MailChimp, to those members with email addresses. We wish to thank Lindy for assisting us to keep you in touch with the latest news for the Society.

Last, but by no means least, is Margaret Wicks (and her team) for organising the teas after the lecture and her ability to persuade members to help her every month. Margaret is always in need of volunteers so, if you can assist, do please tell Margaret who will be most grateful.

Payment for Visits and Special Interest Days

May we remind members that regrettably we are unable to accept cash, and only cheques for a maximum of two people can be accepted for Visits and Special Interest Days.

Membership Card

Enclosed with this Newsletter is The Arts Society 2019 Membership Card. It can be used at certain Museums and Art Galleries and Exhibitions to obtain a discount so remember to carry it with you.

Guests

We're always happy for Members to bring guests and for Waiting List members to come to lectures. Just remember to contact Margaret Sale, our Membership Secretary (or Diane Ball), and arrive with £5. For those “on-line”, it is more convenient to receive notification by e-mail: margaret.sale@theartssocietywalton.org or diane.ball@theartssocietywalton.org. However, you can of course, still ring Margaret on: 01932 840583 or Diane on 01784 254792.

The Committee

As you know from our appeals during the year, we are always keen to encourage new Volunteers to assist the Committee. This year our plea is more urgent! Pamela Scott is standing down as Chairman having come to the rescue last year when John Smith had to stand down after serving the customary three years as Chairman. John has kindly agreed to take the Chair for another term from January 2019. We are very grateful to John and will give him every support. I know you will join the Committee in thanking Pamela for her influence and contribution, especially for the exhibition at Riverhouse “Celebrating Arts in Elbridge”. However, we still urgently need new Committee members, especially as this year we will say goodbye to two vital members, Catherine Carter and Tony Collins. We desperately need more help to ensure that the Society continues to flourish beyond 2019.