



Newsletter 2019

From the Chairman

John Smith

In my previous “Chairman’s report”, I explained how I had surprisingly again become Chairman of the Society. As a result of this somewhat unexpected honour, my first task is to thank all members for renewing their membership for 2020. Without your support, loyalty and good humour, Lectures, Visits and SIDs would be much duller affairs. I also particularly welcome and thank all new members, and hope that you gain the maximum you can from being part of this terrific Society. At a recent members’ meeting I explained that our costs and expenditure had increased over recent years and, sadly, from 2020, our membership fee will increase to £45 a year, an amount which is less than many other societies, and which I think offers really good value at £4.50 a lecture.

I thank the Committee for all their hard work on your behalf. This involves much that you would never know about, and a commitment to helping the Society function effectively, for which we are all grateful. My particular thanks go to three people who keep me on the straight and narrow. Diane Ball the Secretary, Margaret Sale, Membership Secretary, and Stephen Knott the Treasurer,

without whose efforts our financial situation would not be as healthy as it is. I also express gratitude to Val Woolford (Visits), Sue Hughes (Lectures), and Alison Lornie (SIDs) for their dedicated work in organising events on your behalf in such a professional manner. Thanks must also go to Val Goodhart-Riley and her Church Recording team and the Audio Visual team who ensure that the lecturers can entertain us efficiently and effectively, and without whom there would be no lectures! Lastly, but not least, I thank Margaret Wicks and her tea team, for providing refreshments at the close of our lectures. I am also delighted that we were able to persuade Halina to organise another Tour for the Society to Madrid in June 2020, details of which were circulated with the renewal documents.

I hope that everyone continues to enjoy membership of the Society over the next 12 months. If there is anything which concerns you, or which you wish to highlight to either me or to any member of Committee, please let us know. Always remember, it is your Society!

Membership Report

Margaret Sale

This is my seventh Membership Report, and whilst there have been obvious changes, the Society continues to provide a stimulating programme of Lectures, Visits and Study Days, and I am looking forward to another year of meeting members old and new.

Once again, membership numbers have fallen and we no longer have a two year Waiting List. General enquiries and notice of visitors usually reach me by e-mail or telephone, although we are very happy to welcome last-minute visitors! I always have Application Forms and other

information with me at meetings and am happy to answer questions about membership matters.

This year we hope to update our list of ‘gift-aiders’ and you will find a Gift Aid Form in your renewal pack which you can use to register any additions or changes.

We are fortunate to have such dedicated volunteers in the audio-visual team, and we also thank those who regularly help with teas and with registering members on the ‘front desk’.



Once again, Margaret and the Committee are extremely grateful to all those members who help with the refreshments after the lecture meetings. We are always looking for new talent so if you would like to add your name to the list please tell Margaret Wicks on 01932 848253 or email margaret.wicks@theartsocietywalton.or

Visits

Val Woolford



In March 2019 we went to Kensington, starting with a tour of Kensington Palace with its magnificent State rooms and history dating back to 1609 when it was a mansion. It was later

acquired by William and Mary and remained a royal residence to the present day. We then took the coach to the Design Museum for lunch and to spend the afternoon in its newly opened spectacular building in Kensington High Street, with its important record of the key designs which have shaped the modern world. We also had tickets

for a special exhibition of yesterday's ideas of what the future would hold.

Our trip in May to Chelsea Hospital and the Physic Garden was regrettably cancelled due to confusion with our booking.

In July we took a coach to Waddesdon Manor, built for Baron Ferdinand Rothschild in the style of a Renaissance French chateau in the 1870s, to house his fabulous art collections and to entertain his family and friends in his famous weekend house parties. It was a lovely summer's day, perfect weather for enjoying such an interesting house with its fascinating array of decorative arts including important 18th century French paintings, porcelain, furniture and clocks, surrounded by beautiful gardens.

Special Interest Days

Alison Lornie

Last December we were pleased to welcome Christopher Bradley as the speaker at our Festive Supper. He talked about St Nicholas and the various stages of the evolution of his public image from being a Christian bishop in a Turkish town several centuries ago, to the rather commercial presentation of Santa Claus in the modern era.



In April the Chief Executive of the Royal School of Needlework, Dr Susan Kay-Williams, gave a sparkling presentation on "Luxury Textiles: Embroidery and Tapestry from the 10th to the 16th Century", which also had some amazing pictures of what modern-day students can produce.

Even the men in the audience seemed fascinated! Just before this newsletter is circulated, we will have a morning of lectures from Jo Mabbutt about some of the objects and

stories associated with the many treasures owned by the London Livery Companies. At our Festive Supper in December Clare Phillips, a curator from the Victoria & Albert Museum, will be talking to us about "Stocking Fillers from Faberge" – useful tips for anyone looking for Christmas present ideas?? Next year, in 2020, we will try an experiment with a Christmas lunch, instead of a supper, as quite a few of our members no longer drive in the dark.

In April 2020 we have secured the talents of Ian Swankie, who will talk about "The Brilliance of British Architecture and Design": his first lecture will concentrate on Sir Christopher Wren, and his second on the gleaming spires of modern London – and he will sneak in references to the work of Thomas Heatherwick, who in some ways bridges the gap between the two. Then, in September 2020, Linda Smith will come and talk about "Great Tarts in Art", which promises to be an amusing morning.

Treasurer's Report

Stephen Knott

This last year has been one of consolidation for the Society as far as its finances are concerned. We have reduced the adverse gap between our expenses and our income to a manageable sum and the aim is to revert to surplus in the year 2019/20. The increase in membership fee, to a level in line with other local Societies, will assist. We expect that, in the year 2019/20, this will allow us to continue to provide our members with a wide range of interesting lectures. We also hope that it will allow us to expand our involvement in the local arts movement – something we have done successfully in the past and which the Committee is keen to continue.

Once again, the Special Interest Days and Visits have been self-financing, and my thanks are due to the organisers for their successful hard work.

The financial uncertainties we face are the possible re-opening of Hersham Village Hall with possible associated costs, although the latest news suggests that this may not happen in the near future. Our finances also rely on maintaining a level of membership renewals.

Lastly, my thanks are again due to Peter Hare for his professional and patient examination of the accounts.

This was a tour like no other before; the weather was cold some of the time, very wet most of the time and uniquely good humoured all of the time. In fact, the group of 40 participants, accompanied by an excellent driver and an experienced Blue Badge Guide, felt like an extended family brought together for five days by their interest in the heritage and history of Norfolk.

And there was much to see of both during the tour: from the architectural splendours of medieval cathedrals in Ely and Norwich to the restrained Tudor mansions – the moated Oxburgh Hall and the E-shaped Kirstead Hall, as well as the grand Jacobean architecture of Blickling Hall.

For many of us the highlight of the tour was the visit to Sandringham Estate, partly because of its appeal as the favourite residence of four generations of British monarchs, and partly due to the only day of sunny weather that allowed us to appreciate fully the house, its splendid collections and extensive gardens.

We had less luck with the weather during the next three days, but it did not prevent us from enjoying a comfortable boat trip on the picturesque Norfolk

Broads and a soaking wet but memorable visit to the Beth Chatto Gardens, a green gem created from an overgrown wasteland near Colchester.

Much of the good atmosphere and enjoyment of the tour was due to the excellent accommodation, food and professional staff at the George Hotel in Norwich and the superb services of our driver and Blue Badge Guide.

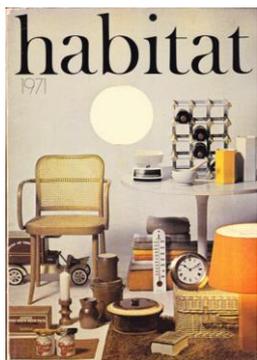


(Photograph courtesy of Mike Watson)

Lecture Programme

Our 2019 programme began with a very lively lecture : “Mad Men and the Artists” by Tony Rawlins, on the exploitation and use of fine art paintings by advertisers and agencies. He showed how artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo provided a rich source of material for creative campaigns. We moved away from the West to Asia for “Cosmonauts and Cotton-pickers – Soviet Central Asian Mosaics and the use of public art as propaganda” by Chris Alexander. It was fascinating to see how Russia superimposed her beliefs on the decorative art of towns such as Samarkand to try and disseminate communist views.

In “Habitat Catalogued – an insider’s story” Caroline Macdonald-Haig demonstrated how Terence Conran’s vision and imagination changed the way we live now. Her nostalgic images reminded many of us of familiar items we had bought from Habitat. London’s Tite Street was one of the most influential artistic quarters in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Jennifer Toynbee-Holmes revealed the fortunes of Whistler who was bankrupted here, Oscar Wilde who was



Sue Hughes

imprisoned, John Singer Sargent and Augustus John, to name but a few. In May, an early morning phone call from Karin Fernald regretfully told me that she had lost her voice and would not be able to give her lecture “Hester Thrale – friend of Samuel Johnson”. We were exceptionally fortunate to be able to call on Peter Scott (husband of our President, Pamela Scott) to lecture instead. A highly professional guide, he gave us a very informative and illustrated talk on the new “Van Gogh and Britain” exhibition at the Tate, which had just opened. I cannot thank him enough!

In June, a departure from the norm, as lecturer, Adam Busiakiewicz arrived with his lute and music stand. In “The Queen of instruments: the lute within Old Masters Paintings” we learnt that the lute was second only to the voice in importance in the 15th-17th centuries. Adam played us some delightful lute pieces that enhanced the image we were viewing. In July, Monica Bohm-Duchen examined a neglected yet extremely topical aspect of British cultural history “Belonging and Not Belonging – the Immigrant experience in Modern British Art”. In September we had a most exhilarating lecture from Louise Schofield entitled “Temples, Tombs and Treasures: in Search of the Queen of Sheba”. We will end the year with “Sorolla Comes back to London” and the “Roaring Twenties”. We have an equally exciting year of lectures in 2020.

Church Recording

Val Goodhart-Riley

There is little to report for 2019. We finished recording in the Church this year. The checking of our eight sections by experts and amending by us is taking place; this is a lengthy process, as some experts are busy people. Hopefully we will be putting the Record together before too long.

Appreciation to ...

We send renewed thanks to Laurence Shafe – who continues to devote his time, ideas, and professionalism to our website “theartssocietywalton.org”. We are indebted to Laurence, who is always there, especially at our hour of need!

The Committee is always grateful for any offers of help and remains indebted to the IT team who are always 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, Michael Tripp and Simon Wilson. If you would like to volunteer to help the Committee – perhaps on the front desk as we check members into the Hall, or with the refreshments after the lecture – please do not hesitate to talk to a member of the Committee.

Special thanks to

Lindy Wilson took on the task of sending Newsletters via MailChimp, to those members with an email address. We thank Lindy for assisting us to keep you in touch with the latest news for the Society. Last, but by no means least, we are delighted that Halina has volunteered to arrange another tour to Madrid in May/June 2020.

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.

Hersham Village Hall

We heard at the beginning of September that the money for the repairs and renovation to Hersham Village Hall has been approved by Elmbridge Borough Council but bookings cannot be made until April. We will continue to monitor progress.

Membership Card

Enclosed with this Newsletter is The Arts Society 2020 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.