



Mary clap worthy

THE ARTS SOCIETY SHREWSBURY

www.theartssocietysrewsbury.org.uk

Enriching lives through the arts

Chairman's Annual Report for the 36th Annual General Meeting to be held at the Lord Hill Hotel on Wednesday 17th October 2018 at 1.45pm

June 2018

Dear Members

This has been a momentous year for The Arts Society with celebrations for the Golden Jubilee. In 1965, Patricia Fay placed an advertisement in her local paper asking if anyone would be interested in forming a Chiltern Antiques Group. By 1968, 11 societies had been formed, and the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts was created. Our Vice-Chairman, Deborah Yates, and I attended the National AGM in London. The highlight was a very moving service in the glorious setting of Westminster Abbey followed by the AGM in Westminster Central Hall. It was wonderful to hear Sir Roy Strong, who knew well all the pioneers of the early days, speak so highly of the work of historical importance carried out by the Heritage Volunteers, Church Recorders and Young Arts over the last 50 years – and he urged us not to stop.

At The Arts Society Shrewsbury, we held our own dazzling celebration with a Reception of sparkling wine and canapés, organised so meticulously by Ceri Lewis, and a Lecture by Lady Jane Choy-Thurlow of the Mauritshuis in the Netherlands at the Blackburn Theatre, Prestfelde School on Saturday 19 May 2018. We were honoured to have the presence of the Lord Lieutenant, Sir Algernon Heber-Percy, and Lady Heber-Percy; the Mayor, Mrs Jane Mackenzie; the High Sheriff, Mr Rhoddy Swire; and Mr Roger Duckworth, a Trustee from Head Office. Our distinguished guests included also a party of 10 from Shrewsbury's twin town of Zutphen reciprocating the warm welcome we received on our visit to Holland in September 2016. Their delegates included Mr Gerard van der Brug, the Chairman of the twinning and Mr Christiaan te Strake, the Curator of the Zutphen Museum. Thanks to Bob van Mook for forging this link between our two societies, contact details have been exchanged, and we hope there will be some future visits.

At this event, we were delighted to launch The Arts Society Shrewsbury's Golden Jubilee Young Arts Bursary through the generous sponsorship of Lowe & Fletcher, Tanners Wines and Award Proud to Serve which enabled us to raise the funds to offer support to a young person educated in Shropshire. Please tell any talented 18-25 year olds with a Shropshire connection and a passion for the Arts to keep an eye on our website in the autumn term so that we can make their dreams come true. See <https://theartssociety.org/home>.

At The Arts Society Shrewsbury, we have had a busy year, most recently with our UK tour in May, organised by Corinne Russell (as with all our other wonderful trips) when we visited some glorious houses and gardens in Norfolk during which we had a very interesting and enjoyable time basking in the most beautiful sunny weather.

In Heritage Volunteering, we were very sorry to hear of the death of Gwen Iland who led our team in Shropshire Archives so loyally and devotedly for over 20 years. There are fascinating opportunities for members to volunteer in the important work here and in the Ironbridge Museum, so please contact Caroline Auger if you are interested.

In Church Recording, the wonderfully scholarly and detailed record of the Unitarian Church was handed over in a brilliant presentation by our team leader, Martin Locke. Thank you to the team for their dedicated and meticulous work on this project. It is very fitting that in token of his leadership in Church Recording, his work for many years as Projection and Sound representative, his hours of work as our photographic recorder of events and trips, and his support of Margaret in her work in charge of Visits, then Chairman of The Arts Society Shrewsbury and latterly in charge of Days of Special Interest for the West Midlands Area, that Martin should have been picked as one of eighty from the national membership of over 90,000 to attend Her Majesty's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace this year.

In Young Arts, we provided the prizes for Shrewsbury Bookfest's Book Awards Art competition. Jerry Wallace and his team judged 450 pictures illustrating scenes from the short-listed books. Through generous sponsorship and members' support of the monthly raffle organised so well by Marion Mitchell, The Arts Society Shrewsbury awarded a prize to inspire further art work of a 92-piece painting set in a wooden box to the winner in each of the 24 schools which entered, and an overall prize which was presented at an exciting event at Theatre Severn by our President, Howard Franklin. Thank you very much to Jerry and his team for judging the art, and mounting all the paintings for display after the

ceremony at the Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery. Hours of work have gone into this very worthwhile event, and we all appreciate what they have done to promote The Arts Society Shrewsbury's Young Arts.

Of course, at the heart of The Arts Society are the lectures and our Days of Special Interest. They are the core of what we are all about. We have had a very varied and interesting year of talks enhanced by our splendid new audio visual equipment and the wonderful support we get from the staff at The Lord Hill Hotel. The knowledge, ability to communicate and professionalism of the lecturers made possible by the rigorous selection and evaluation procedure on which Patricia Fay insisted right from the start mark a gold standard in the Arts today. My personal favourite was Douglas Skeggs' inspirational and outstanding talk on *Titian* just days after our return from our own fabulous trip to Venice. My advice is not to cherry pick topics that appeal but to come to everything. You will be surprised how much you appreciate the seemingly most unpromising titles! Thank you to Deborah Yates, Pippa Walker and Jane Benson for their organisation of these wonderful speakers for our enjoyment, to Rachel Woodward and her team for their work with the Projection and Sound, and to Anne Wignall for recording with such flair everything we do on our website and on social media.

The Committee Reports which follow show you what a lively and busy society we have. I know you will want to join me in thanking our wonderful committee and the Golden Jubilee committee for all their imaginative ideas and all their work they do for us – all on a voluntary basis. We are extremely lucky to have such a great team, and I am very grateful to each one of them, and for the support of our President, Howard Franklin.

This year we say farewell to Briony Cooper who ran originally our Days of Special Interest and then chaired the committee for the selection of our Queen's 90th Birthday Young Arts Bursary winner. As you know this was awarded to Callum Bles who has been a fine ambassador for our society as we saw in the short video he sent to us in January. Briony has made links also to Shrewsbury College Art department when the Day of Special Interest speaker organised by Jane Benson, David Rosier, gave his time free to give the students a memorable study day. This was a new initiative for our society. I thank Briony very much for her help and support over the last five years and wish her luck with her future plans.

Mary Clapworthy, our Treasurer, is stepping down after three years. Special thanks to Mary for having kept a close eye on our finances to enable us to do all the things that give us so much enjoyment including buying our superb sound and projection system that lecturers tell us is the best on the circuit. I appreciated very much her help in our application for a grant for our Golden Jubilee celebration that resulted in the generous sponsorship from Lowe & Fletcher, and Award Proud to Serve. We wish her luck for her future plans.

Deborah Yates is stepping down as Programme Secretary this year. She has done a brilliant job and brought so many varied and stimulating speakers to lecture to us and has been particularly keen to bring painters and painting to the fore as a subject. Her introductions have been so fluent and articulate; she has been a joy to listen to. We have certainly benefited from all her knowledge and expertise accrued through her recent History of Art degree; she must have been the most qualified Programme Secretary on the circuit. I thank her for everything she has done for our programme over the last three years – not just coordinating it but, with Martin Locke and Anne Wignall, rebranding it to the stylish product we have today. I am delighted she will remain on the committee as Vice-Chairman. I appreciate her advice and support very much.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for your support and appreciation of our efforts. We are fortunate in having a vibrant society with a lovely membership of about 265 with nearly 180 attending each month. In a time of enormous social change, Patricia Fay's brainchild continues to thrive because what does not change is our thirst for knowledge and need for friendship and fun in which the Arts are a vital part of lifelong learning for every member of whatever background, interest and ability. If you enjoy working as a team and would like to get involved in any of our volunteering activities including the committee, we would love to hear from you. Meanwhile, I look forward to sharing a happy year ahead with you.

With very best wishes to you all

Yvonne Bridgeland

Chairman

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Shrewsbury

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**The Arts Society Shrewsbury
Committee Reports for the 36th Annual General Meeting
to be held at the Lord Hill Hotel on Wednesday 17th October 2018 at 1.45pm**

PROGRAMME This is my final year as a programme secretary, a role which I have thoroughly enjoyed over the last four years. It has been a real pleasure on three counts.

Firstly, it has been a real privilege to interact with our wonderful speakers. The programme secretaries not only choose the speakers and their lectures, but also have the joy of chatting to them while we drive them to and from the station and host them at lunch. What an amazing opportunity this is. How else would I be able to talk to Toby Capwell (armour expert) about his work for the Metropolitan Museum on a newly purchased medieval manuscript, or listen to Julia Korner (art conservator) enthusing about the possibility of finding a 'lost' Rembrandt, or hear Oliver Everett (Queen's Librarian) on his fears for the library during the Windsor Castle fire, and his love of Marmite?

Secondly, we programme secretaries work as a team; there are always two of us, so that we can cover all the meetings, and often three, since a new person will be learning the role and sitting in on our discussions. Teamwork also helps to ensure that we pick a balanced selection of lectures for the year. I have worked with Marion Mitchell, Ceri Lewis, Pippa Walker and, our newest recruit, Lucy Harvey Scholes and it has been a great pleasure to work with, and learn from, each one. Talking about the arts is a wonderful way of developing friendships.

Lastly, can I say thank you to all of you; to everyone at The Arts Society Shrewsbury for being such a receptive and appreciative audience. I've spoken to programme secretaries elsewhere who say their societies 'don't like modern art', 'aren't interested in architecture', 'never touch archaeology' or 'wouldn't do music'. In contrast, your enthusiasm has made being a programme secretary at Shrewsbury a very rewarding role. Thank you.
Deborah Yates

VISITS The visits continue to be well supported. The annual ballet trip in February to the Birmingham Hippodrome was to see *Sleeping Beauty* which was a spectacular performance. In May, a group of 45 made a 3 day visit to Norfolk by chartered coach. En route, we stopped at Burghley House near Stamford. Basing ourselves in a Norwich hotel, we visited Sandringham House, Houghton Hall, the outstanding gardens at East Ruston Old Vicarage and The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts. On the way back to Shrewsbury, we visited Boughton Hall near Kettering. In June, we are visiting Great Witley Church and Hanbury Hall and, in July, there is a visit planned to Hatton Grange. Inspired by the exhibition of John Piper's work that we saw at Tate Liverpool last October, we are planning to go to Coventry Cathedral in October this year to see more of his work.
Corinne Russell

DAY OF SPECIAL INTEREST – 24 JANUARY 2018 EMPEROR QIANLONG – 1736-1796 (Son of Heaven, Man of the World) WITH DAVID ROSIER

60 people attended our Day of Special Interest on 24 January to hear David Rosier, who has lived in the Far East for many years, enthral us on the Qian Dynasty (1644-1911) and in particular the influence of the longest living Emperor, Qianlong. We heard about the formation of the dynasty following the Ming period, Qianlong's forefathers and the long eventful reign of a man who had a strong work ethic and brought wealth and culture to China. He was a prolific poet, collector and in particular encouraged the art of Italian Jesuit, Giuseppe Castiglione. The three lectures were accompanied with pictures of The Forbidden City portraits, costumes, treasures and art, giving a broad impression of the era.

David also brought part of his extensive collection to show the intricacy of the embroidery of the period and explained the symbolic signs of ranking within the court. The workmanship and colours were exquisite and attendees were delighted to see them at close hand.

David Rosier gave a fluent, extensive and highly informative set of lectures which were enthusiastically received and appreciated.
Jane Benson

HERITAGE VOLUNTEERS On 31 January, our Treasurer, Mary Clapworthy, presented a cheque for £50.00 from The Arts Society Shrewsbury to the Ironbridge Museum's cast iron tile mould project on which some of our members have been working with TAS Wrekin. The Ironbridge Tile Mould project is almost complete. Everyone has found it a most interesting project if a little dusty. We hope there will be another project in the future and we are very grateful to Paul Joseland of The Arts Society Wrekin for organising this project so well. We are hopeful that we have a few more people interested in taking part in this ongoing project, but we should welcome some more volunteers.

In the Shropshire Archives, there has been a dedicated group who have been working away for years cleaning and conserving historical documents. Shropshire Archives would like more volunteers for their projects, and on 22 March, they held a Volunteer Showcase Event to publicise the work done by their team of helpers. We were very sorry to lose our dedicated past team leader, Gwen Iland, who died this year.

If any of the above projects appeal to you, please get in touch. Also please let me know of any heritage projects that require volunteers. Members who have volunteered over the past few years have really enjoyed the involvement and have found the experience very interesting. We would encourage you to give it a try. Caroline Auger

CHURCH RECORDING After two years recording, researching, writing-up, formatting and extensive proof-reading by the 12 Shrewsbury Church Recorders the group leader presented a bound copy of the Record of Church Furnishings at the Shrewsbury Unitarian Church on 20 January this year. After a short presentation group leader Martin Locke handed over the document to the Unitarian Church Chairman at a special ceremony attended by the Mayor, The Arts Society Shrewsbury's President and Chairman, some society members, and the Unitarian Church congregation.

The Church Recording group have yet to decide on their next project and are, following Martin's decision to stand down, looking to appoint a new group leader. More Recorders are currently being recruited and several members have shown interest in getting involved.

Martin Locke

CHURCH TRAILS After recent renovations, Claude Owen and Jane Horsman plan to update our first Church Trail which they created for Shrewsbury Cathedral. Margaret Locke and Ann Jackson plan to start a new Church Trail later this year.

Margaret Locke

YOUNG ARTS Shrewsbury Bookfest Book Awards Art competition

Following their sponsorship of the Drapers Guild textiles competition last year, The Arts Society Shrewsbury has sponsored two main events. Over the winter we sponsored the brilliant production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* by the Shropshire Youth Theatre. Our sponsorship was £500 towards the cost of materials for scenery, all of which was designed and put together by members of the Group.

Later in the year, we once again sponsored and managed the Shrewsbury Bookfest Book Awards art competition for KS2 children in Shropshire. Some 450 children from 24 schools took part and the top four prize winners were presented with their prizes by our Society's President at the Bookfest Book Awards ceremony in Theatre Severn.

Jerry Wallace

David Rosier's Visit in January 2018

We extended our close link with local schools by arranging after our Day of Special Interest for David Rosier to visit the Arts Department at Shrewsbury College. He is one of the most popular and well respected Arts Society's lecturers, and he donated his time generously with both morning and afternoon lectures on the historical background of Chinese Imperial Court costume. He also took with him to show the students part of his valuable collection of antique embroidered textiles from this period. The day was a great success and much appreciated by everyone who attended - seventy five students were there (more than the anticipated twenty five), and the College very much hope it might be possible to repeat this link with The Arts Society Shrewsbury.

Briony Cooper

EVENTS In December we had our very enjoyable Christmas lunch after Ian Keable's lecture on *Charles Dickens: Conjurer*. Thank you to the Lord Hill staff for looking after us so well.

In Shrewsbury we celebrated The Arts Society's 50th anniversary with a reception and lecture. Yvonne Bridgeland was keen for this to be no ordinary lecture, but to be a large and sparkling event. With this in mind, Prestfelde's Blackburn Theatre was booked.

On Saturday 19th May 2018, 270 guests enjoyed canapés and Prosecco, before listening to Lady Jane Choy-Thurlow talk on *Rembrandt: Bohemian or Businessman, Romantic or Rebel?* To mark the significance of the celebration, we were delighted to have our special guests listed above. At the lecture Yvonne was able to announce that profits from the event will go towards another The Arts Society Shrewsbury bursary awarded to a second young Shropshire artist who would benefit from our support. But celebrations did not stop there. Yvonne was keen for the twinning of Shrewsbury with Zutphen, in the Netherlands, to be continued. Amongst our special invited guests were 10 Dutch people who were welcomed into the homes of Committee members from Friday until Monday. The weekend has been a great deal of work for all those involved with organising it, but it also seems to have given much real pleasure.

Ceri Lewis

WEBSITE and PUBLICITY The website has been re-branded and is regularly updated with news items, photographs and other information. A Mailchimp newsletter is sent out to members who have signed up to receive the monthly email. This includes details of both the topic of the next lecture and of the lecturer. Mailchimp is also used to inform members of additional information.

Highlights of the Arts Society Shrewsbury's activities are included not only on our website, Facebook and Twitter, but also on the national Arts Society's website and occasionally in The Arts Society Review. Social events are covered in the Shropshire Magazine, whilst other stories are sometimes picked up by the Shropshire Star and BBC Radio Shropshire.

Anne Wignall