



THE ARTS SOCIETY SHREWSBURY

www.theartssocietyshtrewsbury.org.uk

Enriching lives through the arts

Chairman's Annual Report for the 37th Annual General Meeting to be held at the Lord Hill Hotel on Wednesday 16th October 2019 at 1.45pm

June 2019

Dear Members

On behalf of everyone at The Arts Society Shrewsbury, on 15th May at the National AGM in the Friends Meeting House, Euston, I was honoured to receive the Committee Marsh Award 2019 and a cheque for £500 from Mr Charles Micklewright of the Marsh Christian Trust. It is appropriate that the citation was read by Mr Roger Duckworth, Vice-Chairman of the Trustees, who attended our Celebration of the Golden Jubilee of The Arts Society on 19th May 2018. Special mention was made of our sponsorship of Young Arts and Heritage Volunteering activities and the impact we have on the local community. As well as Martin Locke and Jerry Bridgeland in the audience, I was delighted that I received this award in front of our two previous Chairmen, Margaret Locke and Roly Trevor-Jones, who have been the most amazing support any current incumbent could want. My committee working alongside me have built on the outstanding work they and their committees did in the six years previously. In addition, Roly has been a brilliant West Midlands Area Chairman and the most outstanding encouragement to our society.

We are very grateful to Mr Brian Marsh OBE whose initiative it is to find funds to acknowledge the volunteering projects in The Arts Society and other organisations with which he is linked. The committee will discuss what plans they have in the field of Young Arts for spending this generous prize, and we will let you know of what exciting and worthwhile project they decide to support. Roger mentioned first our sponsorship of Shrewsbury's £2000 **Young Arts** Bursary in Celebration of the Golden Jubilee of The Arts Society. Thanks to a comprehensive publicity campaign including an interview on Mark Elliott's show on Radio Shropshire for Deborah Yates and me, set up by our wonderful **Website and Publicity Manager**, Anne Wignall, we had a field of 26 candidates and a strong short list of three. The two very worthwhile runners-up were Ben Davies, a cinematography student from Ellesmere, and Jacob Chandler, a young sculptor from Telford. At our meeting in April, I was delighted to present this Bursary to Gabriel Watt, a student of design at the prestigious School of Fashion at the Antwerp College of Art. Deborah Yates and her panel of Anne Wignall, Ceri Lewis, Gloria Partridge, Rosie Bynam and Sally Stote were impressed by the passion he showed for his work which was of exquisite standard. He will use the money to buy top-quality fabric for his final show, a knitting machine and/or an interlocker. They feel he will be an excellent ambassador for his home county of Shropshire and The Arts Society Shrewsbury. We congratulate him, wish him luck and look forward to hearing of his progress in the months ahead.

An important part of our win of the Committee Marsh Award was the sponsorship we received to enable us to present this generous and life-changing award. We thank again our sponsors, Lowe & Fletcher, Award Productions Ltd, and Tanners Wines for their generous support of our Golden Jubilee event.

Our other **Young Arts** projects which impressed the Marsh Award panel were the £500 we donated to the Shropshire Youth Choir's inspirational production of *Romany Wood* for the 10th Anniversary of the Opening of Theatre Severn, and the £500 sponsorship of the costumes for the Shropshire Youth Theatre's charming production of *Pride and Prejudice*. Jerry Wallace and I and our spouses were delighted to attend a rehearsal at which the cheque for £500 was presented. We were very impressed by the enthusiasm of the young people and the encouragement shown to them by the two directors, Maggie Love and Andrew Bannerman. It was uplifting to see the progress these young people had made when we attended the actual performance. Together with previous projects like our support of the Shrewsbury Bookfest Book Awards Illustration Competition in which Jerry Wallace and his panel of Blanche James, Gaynor Bowen and Patricia Payne judged 450 paintings, again, we received generous sponsorship to enable us to give each of the winners in the 31 Shropshire schools a 92-piece painting set. Jerry Wallace's initiative for The Arts Society Shrewsbury to sponsor the training of the State School teachers in how to respond to literature through art had a real impact on the local community. We know from feedback from the schools these prizes have inspired the young winners to take their art to the next level - another important impact on the local community. Thank you to Jerry Wallace for his inspiring leadership of the Young Arts team and his research and hard work to ensure we support such

worthwhile projects, and to James Handley, our wonderful **Treasurer**, for his careful governance of our finances to enable us to make this all possible.

Our **Heritage Volunteering** activities at Shropshire Archives and the Ironbridge Tile Museum have had an impact by doing important and worthwhile work that would be hard for these institutions to support from their own funds. Thank you to Caroline Auger for overseeing these dedicated teams and to David Brass of The Arts Society West Midlands for his presentation of a £150 cheque in support of the latest project of cleaning, recording and cataloguing old photographs from the turn of last century at the Archives, and the newly branded aprons and badges to be worn by our teams. The Ironbridge Tile Museum team have been working on cleaning and recording the iron moulds from old Aga catalogues. At our March meeting, it was very fitting and very well deserved that David presented Caroline with The Arts Society West Midlands's Golden Jubilee Award for her dedicated 18+ years serving our society as first Treasurer and then in her continuing role as Membership Secretary as well as heading Heritage Volunteering Representative. Her mailchimp campaign together with our Website and Publicity Secretary, Anne Wignall, resulting in 18 volunteers receiving training at Shropshire Archives impressed the Marsh Award panel.

Special thanks are due to Martin Locke for recruiting and putting together a wonderful team to be trained and to work on their latest project of **Church Recording** at the St Michael's and All Angels, Alberbury. We wish them luck with their work in this beautiful and important church, and we look forward to hearing of their progress. After the wonderfully scholarly Record of the Unitarian Church in Shrewsbury, we know we and Alberbury Church have a treat in store.

After the success in previous years of the **Children's Trails** for Shrewsbury Cathedral and St Chad's, Margaret Locke and her team have found it very hard to gain access, or even in some cases, a response, to another church. If anyone knows of an interesting church which would like a children's trail and which will be open and accessible, please contact Margaret Locke.

Patricia Fay, NADFAS founder, felt that we should aim not to just look at art, but do, and from all the activities above, you can see how much our society embraces this philosophy. If you have a passion for the arts and enjoy working as part of a team, please consider volunteering either for a project or on the committee. All the contact information is on the back of the programme for you to find out more about what is involved. You do not need lots of skills as training will be given. You will find it immensely satisfying to contribute to such worthwhile activities, and, from the chat and laughter at the Chairman's Lunch, you can tell how much they enjoy working together.

Underpinning everything in our society are our monthly lectures. Thank you to our **Programme Secretaries** past and present, Deborah Yates, Ceri Lewis, Pippa Walker and Lucy Harvey-Scholes for putting together this inspiring year of *The Art of Spain* which has generated such interest and enjoyment among our members, and for hosting and introducing our speakers so effectively. Thank you to Rachel Woodward and her team of Philip Yates and Malcolm Lewis for looking after our excellent **Projection and Sound** equipment - and for calmly putting things right as we all hold our breaths during the inevitable little hiccups. The Directory Day in London was attended by 900 committee members, with 250 accredited lecturers of whom 140 presented on stage for one minute, and 29 new lecturers presented for two minutes – and from which our brilliant Programme Secretaries have made their inspired choices for our enjoyment in 2021. Anne Haworth's lecture on *Balenciaga* in November will be followed by our support of her presentations to students at Shrewsbury College – yet another impact on our local community which impressed the Marsh Award panel. This year Lucy Harvey-Scholes enjoyed being part of the "Trial by Tweed" panel in Head Office to help select the latest new speakers who did short presentations to some Trustees and a few members. Thank you to Anne Wignall for her enticing monthly email newsletters, her Facebook and Twitter communications, and her management of our website to share the latest news and to ensure we know the details of what lecture topic is coming up – and to remember to come! Thank you to the Lord Hill Hotel for looking after us so well. Being able to have lunch makes such a difference to the friendly atmosphere of the society which we all love so much and which is commented upon often by our speakers.

This year, we say goodbye to Sarah Thomson who is stepping down as our **Secretary**. Sarah and I started in our new roles together three years ago, and I have always been grateful for her staunch and loyal support to me. Her Minutes have always been carefully and accurately taken reflecting on our busy committee meetings fairly and promptly distributed. In addition, she has collected all our media coverage and amassed a very full archive for our society and all the activities with which we are involved. Thank you very much, Sarah; I have loved working with you.

We say farewell, also, to Jane Benson and thank her for her meticulous planning and preparation in three wonderful **Days of Special Interest**. After John Benjamin's day on the fabulous jewellery of the 16th to 20th centuries, and David Rosier's wonderful talk on his exquisite Chinese Textiles followed by his day with the students at Shrewsbury College, (another impact on the local community which impressed the Marsh Award panel), this year's DOSI on *The*

Medici Family and their Role of Bankrolling the Renaissance by Douglas Skeggs was also outstanding. Thank goodness the Medicis had a conscience that underpinned their sponsorship of the dazzling Renaissance masterpieces that we all know and love. Together with the help of the committee in hosting the lunch, we had a truly memorable day at the Trinity Centre, Meole Brace, thanks to Jane's quiet and professional organisation.

Ceri Lewis is stepping down after three years organising our most enjoyable **Events** including our last three years' Christmas lunches, our Summer Parties at Preston Brockhurst and Prestfelde School, and our most enjoyable evening stroll round the beautiful gardens and delicious supper at Wollerton Old Hall Gardens this month – even if the weather did not live up to the name of “Summer” Party. We thank her, together with Malcolm's support, for all the thought and energy she has put into the detailed and careful planning and preparation to ensure that we can all relax and have an enjoyable time.

Corinne Russell took over **Visits Secretary** from me four years ago, and I know you will all agree that she has done an outstanding job. Again, it has been her meticulous planning and preparation that has ensured our visits and trips go so smoothly. She has taken us to so many interesting and imaginative places of which I know you will all have your particular favourites. My favourite is always the last one I have attended as I have loved them all. Corinne took the decision to introduce our three-night UK tours which have been enjoyed immensely by our members. After Yorkshire and Norfolk, in the last two years, we have just returned from this year's trip to the North East in which she introduced us to the important aspects of the Church, the Sea and Mining in Newcastle and Durham with interesting visits on the way up and back – and with everything underpinned by the Arts which were enhanced for us by the guides she and Travel Editions arranged for us. The Jesmond Dene Hotel was the perfect base for us with its delicious food, spacious rooms and friendly staff, and Corinne manages always to lay on the weather for us, too. Thank you, Corinne, and John for his quiet support, for all the happy and sunny memories you have given us in this important dimension of our Society, and good luck to Cathy Young who takes over from you. I know she has appreciated shadowing you this year, and we look forward to the exciting things she has in store for us.

These last three years have flown by. It has been the most enormous honour and privilege to be your Chairman. I would like to thank every member of the committee over my three years for their amazing hard work, inspiration and support. It has been a pleasure working with you. The reports below will show you just what a busy year we have had. I would like also to record my thanks to Tracey Konidaris of Travel Editions with whom it has been a joy to work in planning our overseas trips. Our trip to St Petersburg is part of their rolling publicity programme, and will be covered soon by Go Travel Magazine. I was honoured to be invited by Travel Editions as their guest at the Group Travel Awards Ceremony in London, the Oscars of the Travel Industry. Travel Editions were delighted to be on the short list, but they will need all our votes to compete with the much bigger companies. As always, I was accompanied by my husband, Jerry, and I thank him most sincerely for his unfailing, unstinting and valuable support and encouragement during my Chairmanship.

Thank you to our President, Howard Franklin, for his support to me and to all the committee. He is a wonderful ambassador for our society. Thank you to all of our members for your support of all our lectures, visits, UK and overseas trips, your volunteering, and your buying of our raffle tickets, so ably headed by Rosie Bynam and her team, that have enabled our support of Young Arts which has been such an important aspect of our winning the Committee Marsh Award 2019. I leave you in the capable hands of Deborah Yates who has been an outstandingly supportive Vice-Chairman with her sound advice, practical help (not least in co-ordinating the printing of all the mailings you receive) and her eloquent presentation skills. Together with her First Class degree in History of Art, her excellent and enthusiastic team, and the support of Phil, there will be exciting years ahead for The Arts Society Shrewsbury. I wish you luck, and, in the spirit of our founder, Patricia Fay, I wish you all friendship and fun in the years ahead. My life has been enriched by the arts in the last three years, and I hope yours will continue to do so in the future.

With best wishes

Yvonne Bridgeland

Chairman

The Arts Society Shrewsbury

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WEBSITE and PUBLICITY The website 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 other matters of interest; we were delighted to receive an excellent response following our request for additional Heritage Volunteers. 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. Our social events and occasional articles about our work are covered in the Shropshire Magazine, whilst other stories are sometimes picked up by the Shropshire Star and BBC Radio Shropshire.

Anne Wignall

PROGRAMME Deborah Yates stepped down as one of our two programme secretaries in October 2018 and we have welcomed Lucy Harvey-Scholes to the post to join myself, Pippa Walker.

Our themed year for 2019 has been on *Spanish Art* and we have sought to put together a wide ranging, balanced, interesting and informative programme. We have been delighted by the enthusiastic reception to the programme so far which has included lectures on some of the great artists such as *Velazquez* and *Goya*, to the *Art and Architecture on the Pilgrim Way to Santiago de Compostela* and includes a musical element with *Carmen in Spain* and fashion with a lecture on the *Magic of Cristobal Balenciaga*. Our December lecture on *Giles: His life, Times and Cartoons* will transport many of us back to happy Christmases when the latest Giles Cartoon Compilation kept us quiet for hours. In March Lucy and I attended The Art's Society Directory Day in London and were encouraged by the quality of Lecturers from which to choose the 2021 programme which we are currently booking. We have already booked lectures for 2020 and have what promises to be an eclectic selection of high quality speakers on a wide range of topics which I am sure you will delight you

.Pippa Walker

VISITS This is my last report in the role of The Arts Society Shrewsbury UK visits organiser and I want to start by saying how much I have enjoyed this experience which has given me the opportunity to visit so many fascinating places and meet and deal with so many interesting and helpful people. In my researches and recesses, I've found people to be very willing to spend time to help me plan the visits which have been very well supported.

The themes of the visits this year have ranged from Architectural tours at Coventry and Manchester to historic houses at Great Witney, Hanbury Hall, Hatton Grange, Brampton Bryan and each had their own story to tell.

The gardens at Morton Hall were awe inspiring and those at Coughton Court delightful. The trip to Birmingham Royal Ballet to see *Beauty and the Beast* was much enjoyed and brightened up our February.

Our 3 night visit to the North East based in Newcastle upon Tyne, embraced sculpture on our stop to the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, historic houses, two museums and a tour around Durham Cathedral with a stop at The Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle on the way back home..

We still have a visit to The Sidney Nolan Gallery and the gardens at Stockton Bury to look forward to.

A common factor to all these visits is the enthusiasm and general bonhomie of all the people on them. They have wholeheartedly entered into the spirit of things and looked out for each other so that everyone has felt included. So, I want to thank all those who have supported the visits for their cooperation, punctuality and general friendliness which has made my job so much easier.

Cathy Young will soon be taking over this role and I know that she will have lots of fresh ideas and I wish her every success.

Corinne Russell

DAY OF SPECIAL INTEREST 13 MARCH 2019 "BANKROLLING the RENAISSANCE" – a history of the Medici family with Douglas Skeggs 60 members and guests heard Douglas Skeggs lecture on the gamut of the Medici dynasty history from Cosimo, who became the unofficial ruler of Florence and leading patron of the arts, to the determined and ruthless Catherine de Medici, ending in the downfall and handing over of the estate by Anna Maria Luisa in the mid-18th century.

The three lectures took us through series of marriages, assassinations, control of the Papacy, widespread connections, political manoeuvring and family conflict to eventual downfall. This ruthless and ambitious family left a legacy of great works of art such as Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, the Fra Angelico frescoes in San Marco, Donatello's *David* and Michelangelo's sculptures in the Medici chapel for all to enjoy.

The fluent, informative and articulate presentation by Douglas delighted and inspired those who attended and who went away with a greater depth of understanding of this remarkable family.

Jane Benson

HERITAGE VOLUNTEERS This year we have managed to add to our loyal Heritage volunteers at the Shropshire Archives where we have started a new project which involves cleaning, recording and packing into safe storage envelopes glass negatives from the early to mid-20th century. These have previously been badly stored and unrecorded but now they will be available for reference purposes. The work the volunteers are doing is invaluable and much appreciated by the staff at the Archives. It will also benefit researchers in the years to come. There are about 12 volunteers who are involved, usually about 4 per week on a Tuesday morning.. There are also Heritage volunteers from The Arts Society Shrewsbury working at The Ironbridge Gorge Museum on the Aga project in conjunction with The Arts Society Wrekin. The volunteers who get involved in these projects seem to enjoy the participation as well as getting to know new people. New volunteers are always welcome and we shall continue to try and find suitable projects.
Caroline Auger

CHURCH RECORDING The Church Recording (CR) group, now eighteen strong with eight new members, began their new project at St Michael and All Angels, Alberbury, in April. This medieval church has a distinguished and complicated ecclesiastical history and has strong associations with the Leighton and Lyster families (Loton Park and Rowton Castle respectively) and All Souls College, Oxford. Recording is progressing steadily, with newer members gradually increasing in both competence and confidence as they get to grips with the required disciplines! On 6 March we received some very useful word-processing training given by the CR Area Representative, Julia Pursehouse, and, from the outset, the group has enjoyed excellent help and support from the vicar, Rev'd Val Tait, and churchwardens, especially Mary Powell. Martin Locke is continuing in the capacity of group leader while much of the more difficult photography, especially high-level hatchments and memorials, is now being done by Tim Roberts from TAS Wrekin. Sally Stote continues as a very effective deputy leader. We have also just secured agreement from a national expert to help with the somewhat arcane heraldic language required for describing coats of arms found on many artefacts in St Michael's. The group has had two preliminary progress meetings with a more in-depth one due in early September. We are most grateful to the Shrewsbury Unitarian Church for their continued generosity in allowing us to use their meeting room for this purpose, without charge.
Martin Locke

YOUNG ARTS We have had an exciting year with our sponsorship of the £2000 Golden Jubilee Young Arts Bursary which was won by the extremely talented Gabriel Watt who is studying at the prestigious Fashion Department in the Antwerp School of Art. The two very worthwhile runners-up were Ben Davies, a cinematography student from Ellesmere, and Jacob Chandler, a young sculptor from Telford. Other projects we have been delighted to sponsor are the £500 we gave to Shropshire Youth Choir for their inspiring production of *Romany Wood* in celebration of Theatre Severn's 10th Anniversary and Shropshire Youth Theatre's production of *Pride and Prejudice* in which we sponsored their making and hiring of the costumes. The Chairman and I and our spouses were delighted to attend a rehearsal at which the cheque for £500 was presented. We were able to see the work in progress under the inspiring and encouraging direction of Maggie Love and Andrew Bannerman, and to see the amazing progress this young cast had made at the actual performance. Thank you to all our members for their support of our raffles, our visits and our events, and to our Treasurer for careful management of our funds which have enabled us to support these initiatives. We look forward to supporting more worthwhile projects in the local community next year.
Jerry Wallace