



ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2022

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT DECEMBER 2022

This report focuses on the events of 2022 but also outlines lectures and events being planned for 2023. Last year saw a welcome but somewhat cautious return to the traditional format of live lectures being held at Tapton Hall as members received their Covid booster inoculations and ventured out more willingly into social group meetings and we all tried to move more towards a state of pre-Covid normality. It was a delight to welcome everyone back to Tapton and to catch up on everyone's news. We reinstated the visits, while mindful of the desirability of maintaining as much space as possible on the coaches and in the conduct of groups around the sites, and we have been planning more for the future.

It has been a great pleasure to welcome new members to the society and hear their views on what they hope to gain from membership. There was an inaugural visit, primarily for new members, to the Cutlers Hall, to hear from their guides the history of the institution and to see some of its treasures, followed by a very pleasant afternoon tea hosted in the Mistress Cutler's Parlour. This was an opportunity to get to know the new members in a smaller setting, but others were welcome if they wished to attend. It is hoped to arrange something similar in 2023.

Lectures: The programme maintained its usual high standard and provided an eclectic range of topics covered by the wide brief and definition of the arts: from architecture, with lectures on the contribution of Lutyens, the influence of the Islamic Caliphate on Spanish architecture, sculpture and ceramics, and British Colonial Buildings of India, to the portrayal of Asian Art in Medicine, and the artistic depiction of the opening up of the American West and the lives and conditions of the nineteenth-century European settlers. Other presentations covered the evolving graphic design of the London Underground from its inception through the influence upon it of the arts and crafts and of the art deco movements, and a history of Meissen porcelain, so valuable that it was termed 'white gold'. A lecture on a 'behind-the-scenes' forty years of significant discoveries made by the BBC's Antiques Roadshow ranged far and wide over art, ceramics, and other antique artifacts.

However, the pandemic continued to have some effect, not just on the members but on lecturers too, as illnesses and unexpected early retirements occasioned changes to the programme at short notice. Although we were sorry to forego the promised lecture on King Charles 1 Spectacular Arts Collection it was a delight to welcome instead a fascinating talk by one of our members on the Secret Places of London, a journey around the inns, markets, streets, statues, and houses associated with a variety of architects and artists, including Jacob Epstein, Inigo Jones, Dickens, Shakespeare, and Samuel Pepys.

Visits: Following two fallow years with no visits, the Society managed, in May, to resurrect its promised visit to Halifax.



Members visited Shibden Hall which dates from 1420 and has a mix of architectural styles, reflecting its history and its usage. It currently houses a museum which devotes itself mainly to the life of the nineteenth century diarist Anne Lister, the subject of a noted BBC series, Gentleman Jack.

We subsequently admired the architecture of the Piece Hall, accompanied by two knowledgeable local guides expounding on its significant history in the wool trade, and its current usage as a show place for large scale works of art. Our visit coincided with the first public UK exhibition of Sophie Ryder's six imposing sculptures of the 4.5 metre high 'Dancing Hares'. Ryder had originally made maquettes in wire but was encouraged by Elisabeth Frink to cast in bronze.



The third part of the visit was spent in listening to an excellent guide on the history of the Halifax Minster and subsequently exploring its nooks and crannies.

In late October a coach party of members set off for an enjoyable three-day visit to Glyndebourne to hear its last performance of the season of Floris Visser's new production of *La Boheme*. The coach was very well appointed, the hotel in Eastbourne was comfortable, the weather was kind, the Blue Badge guide was entertaining and informative, and the opera was superb. The singing of Bekhzod Davronov, Luthando Oave, Gabriella Reyes, and Mariam Battistelli as, respectively, Rodolfo, Marcello, Mimi, and Musetta well deserved the rapturous reception they received.





In the words of one of the participants:

The trip to hear Puccini's *La Bohème* was seventh heaven, though fortunately less eventful than the last ASH visit to hear Verdi's *Rigoletto*!

The weather was gorgeous, the coach luxurious & the matinee performance allowed us ample time to stroll around the beautiful gardens and observe, discretely of course (stare, if you will), at the 'wicker hamper picnic brigade' dressed in their finery and quaffing 'lovely jubbly' to their hearts content. I'm sorry to report that the ASH party had not prepared adequately for that social event!

The opera was superb and though some may have felt the stage setting was rather dark and depressing, for your reviewer the stage evoked the Parisienne Latin Quarter to perfection and there were some notable performances in the leading roles. For those familiar with the tunes, there were many delicious arias all accompanied by the outstanding 'in house' orchestra and there was hardly a dry eye in the house as the curtain fell for a final time.

Were that not enough, we all repaired to the magnificent dining room to enjoy a sumptuous 3-course supper topped off with Glyndebourne's very own complimentary chocolates - yours truly managed to secure a few extra samples by smiling appropriately at the right time!

A fabulous outing and all down to Ann le Sage's wonderful arrangements and such a shame that she was not able to participate on this occasion.

Geoffrey Craig

On the journey to Sussex we paused to visit Polesden Lacey, which is furnished mainly in the Edwardian and early twentieth century styles, and a garden set with modern sculptures.



The house was the honeymoon location in 1923 for the then Duke and Duchess of York, later George VI and Queen Elizabeth, loaned to them by Mrs Margaret Greville, a noted Edwardian society hostess descended from a Scottish brewing magnate.



Before returning north we made two further visits. The first was to Anne of Cleves House which is a sixteenth century timber framed house located in Lewes, with the interiors and the garden being maintained as they were in Tudor times.



The second visit was to Michelham Priory, established in 1229 by the Augustinian Friars. Given the early hour at which we visited, we had exclusive use of the site and a knowledgeable local guide, who expounded the intricate history and usage of the buildings through the centuries, to its current preservation and ownership in trust by the Sussex Archaeological Society.





PROGRAMME FOR 2023: The Society has usually taken a broad approach as to what is encompassed by the term ‘the arts’ and that stance is also reflected in this year’s programme. The lectures on offer in 2023 promise to be as interesting as in previous years, with topics ranging from: modern Australian art, Salvador Dali, and van Eyck, to the history of textiles ‘Imperial Purple to Marie Antoinette’s fleas’, the honourable and dishonourable art of acting, classical music in the modern media, glass from Art Nouveau to Art Deco, classical music in the modern media, and others.

VISITS: We are currently planning at least two visits this year: the first is to visit the Vermeer exhibition at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, which will be the largest retrospective exhibition of Johannes Vermeer paintings ever held and will include paintings on loan from all over the world. The visit will be from March 17 – 20th and will also include the Mauritshuis in The Hague, and explorations of Leiden and Delft.



The second visit, later in the year, will be a guided tour of Oxford, with an emphasis on the city's rich treasures in the arts field. This will be led by the speaker who so entertainingly guided us around the secret places of London in 2022.



All of these activities are willingly undertaken by the committee and others, but the Society does need more help from its members. If anyone would like to offer general assistance, or become involved in programme planning, or helping with communications and publicity, technical help for the presentation of lectures, overseeing the raffle, or simply helping to welcome and sign in members at lectures, then please do let any member of the committee know of your interest and you will be warmly welcomed.

As ever, my sincere and grateful thanks go to those members of the committee and the society who have put so much time and effort into planning, organising, and conducting the Society's programme. Their hard work makes it possible for all of us to have the opportunity both to learn new things, and to see familiar objects in a new light.

Katherine Leni Oglesby: Chairman

MARCH 2023 AGM AND FINANCES

The financial year for the Society is concurrent with the calendar year, and the first opportunity for holding an AGM, at which the audited accounts can be presented, is March. The AGM will be held at Tapton at 7.00pm on Wednesday 15 March 2023 immediately before that evening's lecture.

The deficit for 2022 has been significantly reduced, helped by surpluses from successful visits organized and run by the current and previous committee members. We do have some reserves but need to strengthen the Society's finances to be confident of continuing to thrive

beyond the next three years. Three obvious measures which could reduce costs and increase income are:

- a) Reduce the cost of lectures in the future by using more local lecturers, but without compromising the variety and quality of the lectures.
- b) Raising the membership fee to a level charged by comparable regional and local arts societies. This might mean an annual increase of more than £10 but would inevitably reduce membership, and a possible spiral of decline.
- c) Increasing our membership. This has declined from 195 pre Covid to 145 in 2021, and 126 in 2022. As of the beginning of January, only 75 members have so far rejoined the society for 2023.

I would urge you all to make every effort to renew your membership if you have not yet done so, and to recruit your friends and acquaintances to the Society, perhaps initially by bringing them as guests.

David Ratcliffe: Treasurer

FOUR SOCIETIES LUNCH.

This lunch meeting has previously been a joint venture between the Hallamshire, Sheffield, Cavendish, and Dove arts societies, with responsibility for hosting it rotating annually between the four. Unfortunately, in 2022 the Cavendish Society had to cancel their arrangement because of committee pressures, and Dove was not in a position to take over, so the decision was reluctantly made to defer this event until times are more favourable and there is the workforce available to organise it.

COMMUNITY ARTS REPORT

This year the committee decided to support the environmental and cultural heritage work being undertaken by the Friends of the Porter Valley as they seek to develop further access to the valley, with all its environmental, agricultural, and unique industrial heritage and history.

REPORT FROM THE NORTH EAST (NE) MEETINGS

Our excellent Chair of the last three years, Lizzie Darbyshire, retired in 2022. As she was an Arts Society (AS) lecturer she was privy to much that we would not otherwise have known! We welcomed Claire Wesley as our new Chair. The NE meetings are a conduit for important information which local Societies should know and in October 2022 a representative from AS HQ came to answer queries.

Issues rumbling on are the fares pool survey – currently those in London have a big advantage going to local meetings but for those outside travel can be very expensive without a fares pool. However, the Guilford St HQ is up for sale at around £3.2m and is mortgage free. It has not been fully utilised since lockdown, so running costs cannot be

justified. Investments amount to over £1m so a member from the Sheffield Society understandably asked how the affiliation (now recovery) fee, could justifiably be raised by 15% in 2024 with such huge assets. A letter was drafted back in late 2022 to the CEO but information from that is pending.

In lieu of central London location thoughts are whether to have something cheaper in, or near, London or whether to hire a venue as and when. Staff at HQ have been thinned and the excellent Joanne Martin in charge of heritage (my area) among other things has left with no replacement as yet. She is already much missed.

Some good suggestions re promotion of the AS and collaborations with other groups were put forward by NE representatives.

From the Area Support Teams meeting (previously Advisory Council) Claire reported that HQ are putting four strands together: trying new initiatives eg book clubs; innovation focussing on the membership profile; talent and new lecturers; membership and recruitment.

There is active work promoting the AS after the ravages of the pandemic and good publicity is considered vital. The AS has its own You Tube channel; we can request boxes of magazines for distribution and join training videos on their website. There is much innovation and hope for reinvigoration of the Society post Covid to make it fit for the modern world.

Sally Craig: North-East Area

PROGRAMME OF LECTURES FOR 2023

Australian Artists. Who are They? January 18th

Paul Chapman explains how Australian Artists have been largely neglected over recent years. With the aid of examples of the works of such artists such as Sidney Nolan, John Olsen, John Brock, and Jeffrey Smart, he will examine the understanding and appreciation of modern Australian art, and its place in the history of Western Art.

Imperial Purple to Marie Antoinette's fleas; the colourful history of textiles. February 15th

From the earliest times man has sought to enhance the 'environment', and colour has been one of the principal add-ons. But how were the colours discovered? Who was allowed to wear them and what did they signify? Dr Susan Kay-Williams shows how colour in textiles is a fascinating story of money, power, the church, Royalty, serendipity and, of course, sex.

Salvador Dali, 21st Century Renaissance Artist. March 15th

'The secret of my influence has always been that it remained secret'. The truth of this quotation from Dali, is explained by Julia Musgrave using an in-depth description of his 'artwork, In the broadest sense, since he was artist, sculptor, architect, scientist, photographer and designer. His work always reflected that of the Renaissance artists whom he so much admired.

The Honourable and Dishonourable Art of Acting. April 19th

Although acting is now regarded as a honourable profession, as indicated by knighthoods for actors such as Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, Edith Evans and Peggy Ashcroft, this has not always been the case. Malcolm Jones plots the road to respectability from the middle ages, when actors were often regarded as rogues and charlatans, to the current day.

The Mysteries of van Eyck and the Arnolfini Portrait. May 17th

Painted in 1434 by van Eyck, the Arnolfini painting is world famous. Anna Bianco attempts to interpret the painting, while explaining some of the artistic techniques of the elusive painter. How did his planned drawings convert into the finished portrait? And what was added as an afterthought?

The Art of Trickery How Magicians are seen in painting, prints and Cartoons. June 21st

Magicians have appeared in Art throughout the last few centuries. Ian Keable plots the association of 'magic' with artistic pictures; from the tarot cards and astrology, in early work, through cup and ball tricks in the 16th century, to more recent times, when cartoonists delighted in linking politicians with skulduggery, using the three card trick or pulling a rabbit out of the hat.

Baroque on a roll. Classical Music in the Modern Media. September 20th

Tony Rawlins will talk about the popularity of classical music amongst the young; for example enhancing the 'mood' of a film (tension, drama etc); how an obscure piece of 17th century German music has become a popular wedding or funeral piece; and about how classical melodies and chords have been borrowed for large number of 'hit' records.

The Art of Glass; Emile Gallé, Rene Lalique; from Art Nouveau to Art Deco. October 18th

Charles Hajdamach contrasts the achievements of the two great French masters. The cameo vases of Gallé were the highlight of European glass (during the French 'Symbolist' movement). Lalique was originally a jeweller, but he moved into the production of glass by 1910. He used many of the same images, but transformed them into stylish graphic designs, which continue to maintain the Lalique name in the forefront of desirable glass.

The Treasures of Kelvingrove. November 15th

Elaine Hansen guides us round The Kelvingrove Museum, opened in 1901 to house a collection of local objects of interest. It has since become a leading European Art Gallery and Museum, but with an emphasis on Art from Scotland including works by the Glasgow boys, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Scottish colourists. There is also a collection of the French Impressionists and the Dutch masters paintings.

John Green: Programme Secretary

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