

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2023 - 2024 (Incorporating the Committee's annual reports)**

This has been a most successful year for the Society. The reports from the different members of the committee testify to its vibrancy. Our membership has remained steady at over 300 since Covid as many new members have joined after sampling our lectures via the free guest pass scheme. It is a delight to welcome new members before each lecture and my thanks to you all for letting friends and neighbours know about what the Society offers. The lecture programme has been varied and consistently high in standard. As a committee we regard your reviews of the lectures as most important and there have been so many positive comments. The virtual tour of the Borghese gallery was visually stunning and Benedict Morrison's comparison of the Ealing comedies with the culture of the era was thought provoking. Of course, not all lectures receive so many compliments and Angela Findlay certainly caused polarity in members' views on her lecture. The creation of a lecture programme is a long and demanding task and Lorna, our programme secretary, has many years of successful experience in choosing a varied and enjoyable programme.

For me, the year has been dominated by two organisational issues. The abrupt closure of the Core Theatre in September caused a scramble for a new venue and we were fortunate that a previous lecturer had suggested we look at cinemas as an alternative. Cineworld have been most supportive in improving what they had to offer, particularly in their investment in personal microphones, and we have agreed to stay with them throughout 2025. As Lorna says in her report, many members like the comfort of Cineworld and are impressed by the visuals. The fact that it is cheaper than the Core is also attractive and has allowed us to reduce the membership fee for 2024/2025. We have been told that the Core will not be fully functional until the summer of 2025, possibly September, and this also was a factor in retaining Cineworld as our venue. However we are aware of the precarious state of global Cineworld's finances so we are watching the situation carefully. The other issue has been the debate within the Arts Society nationally about corporate governance. There was considerable opposition from local societies as they would lose control of the finances and the government of the Central body. In a vote, the proposals were defeated and the trustees, bar one, have resigned en masse. Those who spearheaded the campaign against the proposals are standing for election at the end of August and promise to restore faith between the centre and locality.

As a fundamental objective to introduce more people to more art, the lecture programme is but one part of what we offer. The vibrancy I mentioned at the beginning is reflected in the tours and events programme. Rosemarie's report indicates the variety of what is offered, and has involved seven different events, from several days away in Cardiff and Exeter to an afternoon talk (with tea, naturally) at Wren Hall. The trip to Birmingham Royal Ballet was innovative and very popular and will be repeated next year and the popular Christmas meal will move to Nuthurst Grange. We are keen to take art into schools and in January at St Mary's and St Margaret's Primary school we were able to fund two days of expressive arts which involved drama and music activities and, for the first time, we funded a sixth form student on a pre- university course in architecture. Such involvement in the community is also exemplified by the heritage group's work at Packwood. As Maureen's report suggests, it is now reaching its natural end but it was right and fitting that the group received a highly commended award in the national Marsh Awards for heritage work. All of these things – lecture programme, tours and events, young arts, heritage work – form the weft and the weave of our society and is made possible by an amazing committee. It has been a joy and an honour to be their Chair for the past three years and I look forward to remaining as a member of the committee under Judith Carver's leadership as we approach the fortieth anniversary of the Society's foundation.

### **Programme Secretary (Lorna Bosley)**

We returned to The Core Theatre, however, within a short space of time we were informed that they had a problem with RAAC concrete and that we would no longer be able to hold our meetings there until further notice. We were very fortunate to source Cineworld for 2024 and 2025. Some members much prefer the comfort of Cineworld and others prefer The Core. However our lecturers

have been delighted with Cineworld and the huge screen has been a bonus, especially for the lecture on the Bayeaux Tapestry where it was possible to see every stitch.

Gavin Plumley gave us a lecture of Bruegel and The Seasons of the World in which he compared village life in a village in Gloucestershire with those of Bruegel's paintings. It gave an insight into how life has changed and how many of the traditions are still alive today.

We enjoyed a most interesting tour of the Borghese Gallery with Stuart Harvey. This was not only a lecture but a video walk through the Gallery. It was a great start when we virtually walked up to the museum doors.

We had an early taste of the general election with a lecture by Rupert Dickens, 'Hogarth at the Hustings', Rupert highlighted many of the similarities with our times and those in Hogarth's time. It was interesting to see the cartoons and compare them with present representation of politicians.

Art Behind Bars by Angela Findlay was most thought provoking, not to everyone's taste, but a fascinating insight into what both art and the arts can play in the rehabilitation of prisoners.

The lecture given by Benedict Morrison was an overwhelmingly outstanding lecture according as your reviews attest. It was not only a trip down memory lane but will encourage us to view some of the post war movies that he shared with us.

The lecture in November will take us over 300 years of Christmas at Covent Gardens which should start our Christmas Festivities.

Hopefully, you will agree, that the programme for 2025 is both varied and interesting covering a wide range of subjects such as Bauhaus, Textile Revolution Post War, Lindisfarne Gospels, Freemasonry and The Knights Templar, The Art of Illusion, Healing Power of Plants, Fashion, Banksy, Monopoly Board Properties and the Collection of King Charles 1.

### **Membership Secretary (Judith Carver)**

Another interesting and successful year for membership.

Losing September's lecture due to the sudden closure of The Core Theatre was a shock to our system and could have seriously affected membership numbers. However, such is your resilience that despite massive organisational changes, attendance to lectures at Cineworld has proved popular and numbers have been maintained.

Throughout the year you have continued to bring your friends along to give them the opportunity to experience the high quality of speakers and the variety of topics our programme secretary organised for us.

100% of those who joined us 'in-year' have renewed their membership and become part of our society; a resounding show of support.

We are pleased to have been able to reduce our renewal fee to £50.00 this year to reflect the change of location for lectures. Numbers as of June were at 317 and with renewals still coming in (and more new members joining us) I am optimistic that with your continued support and encouragement we will make sound progress this year.

To those members who have moved away or do not feel that they can make the visit to a lecture anymore we thank you for your support.

We are looking forward to the coming year and are busy making preparations for our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary which begins in September 2025.

Thank you for your support and enthusiasm

### **Heritage Volunteers (Maureen Hill)**

Your Heritage Volunteers have now completed the covers for the six chairs located in the Long Gallery, leading to the Great Hall at Packwood House.

Due to unforeseen circumstances the upholstery work has been delayed. However, we are pleased to report that we expect completion of this work soon. This will complete our project with National Trust and when our Members next visit Packwood House the work carried out by our Heritage Volunteers will all be in situ for them to admire.

### **Tours and Events (Rosemarie Cope)**

Since the last AGM, we have had a busy programme of tours and events, starting with our very successful four-day holiday in Cardiff in September. Highlights included a tour of the Castle, the Royal Mint, St Fagan's National Museum of History and a Whisky Distillery. This was followed in November by a trip to the beautifully decorated Chatsworth House and its Christmas market. We rounded off 2023 with our always popular Christmas lunch at Copt Heath Golf Course, but because of rather disappointing catering arrangements, we have decided to switch venues to Nuthurst Grange for this year's Christmas lunch.

The first event this year, in February, was a performance of the Royal Ballet's spectacular production of The Sleeping Beauty at Birmingham Hippodrome. By popular demand, we have booked Cinderella at The Hippodrome for next year. In March we spent a pleasant morning at the market town of Alcester, followed by a bespoke tour of Ragley Hall. This was followed in April by afternoon tea at Wren Hall, where we were entertained by an amusing talk from Ian Carnell, retired head teacher.

Our holiday in May to Exeter and South Devon was very interesting, with a mix of trips to memorable venues, including Exeter Cathedral, Ugbrooke House, Buckfast Abbey and Coletton Fishacre, as well as visits to pretty towns and a river cruise. Lastly, we had a delightful day in Gloucestershire, visiting Berkeley Castle and Dr Jenner's House in June. Later this year, in September, we look forward to a guided walk around Ludlow and a visit to Shrewsbury Prison in November. We are already planning our holiday next year, which will be in May at the Isle of Wight.

The Tours and Events Group includes Judith Carver, Diane Grainger and Anne Butcher and we are grateful to the members who go on the visits for your enthusiasm and positive feedback, not to mention your excellent timekeeping.

### **Young Arts/Arts Volunteering (Annette Shillaker)**

Grants have been awarded to the following projects in the last academic year:

- August 2023 - funds to support a local 'A' level student's attendance at a residential course "Architecture for 15-17 year olds";
- December 2023 - we donated 20 Art Sets to the Smiths Wood Food Bank for children aged 6-9 years;
- January 2024 - 2 days of interactive story-telling workshops for pupils aged 4 -7 years led by performing artists "Expressive Explorers ". The children took part in drama and music activities , role play and re-telling of familiar stories in their own words .

### **Communications (Lynda Donaldson)**

Mailchimp has become fully embedded as the means of communicating with the membership as a group, with our Gmail email address being used for individual responses. The Mailchimp subscription was upgraded this year which means that emails can be scheduled to be sent out at a specific date and time.

The Chairman's newsletters are now sent out as a PDF with only a few members receiving a paper copy.

The Arts Society introduced a West Midlands Facebook page last year and I still manage the Arts Society Solihull contributions. Using Facebook continues to give us an opportunity to share what we have been doing to a wider audience.

The monthly PowerPoint, which is shared with members before the lecture, is also available as a PDF on the website.

The number of members who are evaluating the lectures via the website has increased this year to an average of around 70 reviews each month. We welcome the reviews as these help the Committee when reviewing them for the Arts Society.

Airedale Solutions manage the website for us and those members who visit the site will have seen that it has been improved over the last six months. It is still difficult to put photographs of events on the website but members who regularly attend lectures will have seen the most recent photographs as part of the Power Point.

**Phillip Griffiths, Chairman**

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## **TREASURER'S REPORT 2023 – 2024**

### **Introduction**

I am pleased to present the final account for the year-end 30 June 2024. The accounts continue to reflect a sound financial position for the Society.

Our independent financial examiner is satisfied that the accounts have been correctly prepared and has not raised any matters of concern regarding the accounting records nor practices

### **Income and Expenditure**

Our concerns at the start of the year about a possible shortfall between income and expenditure have not materialised. The position at the year-end is a surplus of £2980.00 which is due mainly to the closure of the Core theatre from September 2023 when we had to cancel the September lecture and relocate our theatre venue to Cineworld from October, with an associated lower hire charge.

In addition there was no annual increase in the National Arts Society Service charge as a result of pressure from local Societies following previous years' high increases  
Our income figure was slightly higher than we had anticipated due to a good level of membership retention, a significant number of new members and continued support from members towards gift aid and our raffles.

The interest shown in this year's income figure is the final payment from Shawbrook Bank on the closure of our £20,000 savings account. In July 2023 we transferred the management of this fund from Shawbrook Bank to a Community Saver account with Skipton Building Society in order to

receive a more favorable interest rate. The interest will be paid annually in October; the first payment is due October 2024.

### **Balance Sheet.**

The pattern of assets and liabilities on the balance sheet continues to be similar to previous years. The slightly higher net assets figure is explained by the fact that this year we do not have an accrued hire charge for the Core Theatre for the months of April May and June 24.

**Diane Grainger, Hon Treasurer**

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**THE ARTS SOCIETY SOLIHULL**  
**Income and Expenditure Account**  
**For the year to 30th June 2024**

	2023/24	2023/24	<u>2022/23</u>
<b><u>Income</u></b>			
Subscriptions 2022-23		16,998	15,525
Visitors' fees		243	210
Study Days & Events		14,742	10,365
Interest		12	142
Miscellaneous income		351	451
Gift Aid		2,981	2,619
The Arts Society Grants for Young Arts		250	250
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		35,577	29,561
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>			
Lecture fees and expenses	3,971		5,188
National and Area Arts Society service charges for year ending Dec 2024	5,506		5,649
Hire of Lecture Theatre	6,835		10,618
Printing, stationery and postage	583		296
Administrative Expenses	161		57
Study days/Event/virtual walks Expenditure	14,276		9,837
IT Expenditure	365		261
Total expenditure		<hr/>	<hr/>
		31,697	31,906
Surplus/ (deficit) before awards and discretionary expenditure	<hr/>		<hr/>
	3,880		(2,344)
<b><u>Awards and discretionary expenditure</u></b>			
Arts Volunteering (List)	900		1,588
A Level Student Contribution to Sumer School Course - £100			
Smiths Wood Food Bank Arts Packs - £200			
St Mary & St Margaret's Primary - Workshop - £900			
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	900		1,588
<b><u>Surplus/ (deficit) for the year</u></b>	<hr/>		<hr/>
	2,980		(3,932)

THE ARTS SOCIETY SOLIHULL  
Balance Sheet  
For the year to 30th June 2024

	2023/24	2022/23
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash at bank (No. 1 Acc)	23,250	24,256
Cash at bank (No. 2 Acc)	11,750	12,152
Cash on deposit	20,000	20,000
Cash in hand	50	50
Other debtors		
Loan - Patricia Fay Fund	500	500
Prepayments Shrewsbury Nov 24	200	
Prepayment Xmas lunch Dec 24	250	
Prepayment Wren hall Oct 2025	28	
Prepayment Cineworld July 24	720	387
	<u>56,748</u>	<u>57,345</u>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Creditors & Accruals	11,800	15,378
Bank reconciliation No. 1 Acc.		
Bank reconciliation no. 2 acc.		
	<u>11,800</u>	<u>15,378</u>
<b>Net assets</b>	<u>44,948</u>	41,967
<b>ACCUMULATED FUND</b>		
Balance as at 30th June 2023	41,968	45,900
Surplus/Deficit for the year	2,980	(3,932)
	0	
Balance as at 30th June 2024	<u>44,948</u>	<u>41,968</u>

Approved on behalf of the Committee, July 2024

Chairman



Philip Griffiths

Treasurer



Diane Grainger

**REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ARTS SOCIETY SOLIHULL**

I have examined the foregoing Balance Sheet as at 30th June 2024 together with the Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended on that date and in my opinion they are correctly prepared in accordance with the Society's records produced to me.

Independent Examiner



Carole Orford