



THE ARTS SOCIETY WIRRAL

Committee Report 2023-2024

Annual General Meeting Monday 18th March at 2pm. Agenda

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 20th March 2023 be adopted.
3. RESOLUTION: That the Committee Reports for 2023/24 be adopted.
4. RESOLUTION: That the statement of Accounts for 2023/24 be adopted
5. RESOLUTION: That Mr C. N. H. Pursglove FCA be re-appointed Honorary Accountant for the year 2024/25
6. Election of Committee Members for the year 2024/25.
RESOLUTION: That the Committee Members for the year 2024/25 be elected as per the list of nominees below.
7. Election of Honorary Officers for the year 2024/25
RESOLUTION: That the Honorary Officers for the year 2024/25 be elected as per the list of nominations below.
9. Date of Annual General Meeting: Monday March 17th 2025

Election of Officers and Committee Members

Chairman	Mrs Yvonne Woodhead	Proposed by Colonel Martin Amlot Seconded by Dr Helena Klenka
Vice- Chairman	Mrs Jenny Toomey	Proposed by Mrs Julia Lear

		Seconded by Mrs Rabia Thorneloe
Hon Treasurer	Colonel Martin Amlot	Proposed by Mrs Moira Fletcher Seconded by Mrs Hilary Gatenby
Hon Secretary	Dr Paul Dufton	Proposed by Mrs Liz Hudson Seconded by Mrs Denise Schofield
Programme Secretaries	Miss Judith Wheat Mrs Daphne Amlot	Proposed by Lady Hilary Gilmore Seconded by Mrs Judith Dufton
Outings Secretaries	Dr Caroline Evans Dr Vivienne Clark	Proposed by Mrs Lorna Baygot Seconded by Mrs Anita Stokes
Membership Secretary	Mrs Libby Lanceley	Proposed by Mrs Diana Duncan Seconded by Mrs Julia Leary
Web Manager	Mrs Helen Sutcliffe	Proposed by Mrs Yvonne Woodhead Seconded by Mrs Anita Stokes
Committee	Mrs Denise Schofield Mrs Siobhan McCormick Mrs Mandy Arthur	Proposed by Mrs Vanessa Matthews Seconded by Dr Roger Chitty

Chairman's Annual Report

May I start this Annual Report by thanking you, our members, for your support and encouragement throughout the last few, difficult years. We were all in such a different place four years ago in January 2020. As I am sure you will understand, we have to prepare the Annual Report in a timely fashion for distribution well before our March AGM, so as I write it is January.

Adapting to our lectures being on Zoom, under Fenella Billington's leadership was a leap of faith, as was tentatively coming back to live lectures in September 2021. It was a leap for many of our lecturers too of course. Happily, for The Arts Society Wirral, one which paid off and which enabled us to keep presenting our lectures, albeit not in Heswall Hall, throughout the period.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to write this in the manner of our reports in previous times.

In my last Report I ended by looking forward to our Winter Supper and lecture, so I will pick up there. Despite some difficulties with trains, which meant that the date of the Supper and lecture had to be changed to 31st January, Tyler Butterworth arrived safely with us to deliver his lecture "*An Actor's Life for Me*". It was a great pleasure to be able to meet for supper once again

having enjoyed Tyler's talk on the life of auditions, casting, rehearsals, and production in the theatre. The Committee were very much in evidence in setting up, flower arranging, (Daphne and Anita), clearing and generally doing all the backroom tasks without which things do not happen. Moira Fletcher, of course and as always, was the pivot of our interplay with the caterers. We did think it would be jolly to have the twinkling lights, and flowers for more of our meetings.

Having mentioned the train strike, other problems faced our intrepid speakers during the year, from more train problems to quite appalling weather. We see them for a short space of time and enjoy their presentations and expertise, but often that represents only a fraction of their efforts to entertain and educate us.

Early in 2023 Young Arts Volunteers were able to re-start the exhibition of school art at St Catherine's Health Centre after an enforced gap and have been able to go from strength to strength through the year.

In April and in May the North West Area had arranged trips to Delft to see the Vermeer Exhibition in Amsterdam at the Rijksmuseum, the first April trip having sold out immediately. I know that a number of our members were able to attend and enjoy these trips very much indeed. Sad that we could not all go of course.

Our own first visit of the year was on 24th April to the Tate Liverpool, to enjoy a curated tour of the exhibition *JMW Turner – Dark Waters*, musical interpretation by Lamin Fofana.

This was organised by Frances Street, who was joined by Caroline Evans in the role of Outings Secretary. She also arranged a most enjoyable coach trip to Saltaire on May 18th and had started to organise our much-missed December Theatre Trip to Manchester, for a matinée performance of "*Brief Encounter*" on December 13th. I am very sorry that many commitments meant that Frances decided that she should step back from this rôle, and we thank her very much for all her efforts while she was part of the Committee.

Having mentioned the North West Area, they organised their six-monthly meetings on 6th March and 2nd October at Brockholes Visitor Centre, Lancashire. While we were driving to the 6th March meeting we learnt by e-mail that the Arts Society Headquarters in Guilford Street had been sold on 16th February.

On 24th March, Fenella Billington our President and her husband John, helped by our Vice Presidents Suzanne Cook and Susie Noble, hosted a coffee morning at their home. A number of past Chairmen were also able to attend, as well as the present Committee and we must thank everyone concerned for the kind hospitality (and the delicious biscuits). Many of you will remember John's very long involvement with the Arts Society. Our sympathies on his loss were and continue to be with Fenella and the family.

Our AGM, on 20th March 2023, is of course run by the President and Vice Presidents, for which we extend our thanks. The announcements for election were somewhat complicated, as a number of people had to step back. Anita Stokes has kindly remained as Web Manager, joined now by Helen Sutcliffe, in place of Jo O'Gorman. Siobhan McCormick has also stayed in post at

Young Arts, joined by Amanda Arthur. Deirdre Martin had to leave Young Arts, and our thanks also go to her for all she and Siobhan have re-started.

May brought a complicated month. We had two consecutive Bank Holidays on the first two Mondays of the month, the normal one and then the holiday for His Majesty's Coronation. The Arts Society Wirral managed this splendidly and came to the unusually delayed May lecture with no problems. We had also by this stage been advertising our September Trip to the West Midlands and Birmingham.

The Arts Society AGM was this year live in Bristol, on 24th May. There was however the choice to join by Zoom. For a number of years the AGM was only on Zoom, however this changed in 2023. The Directory Day however reverted mainly to Zoom. This seemed a little strange, and I am happy to report that the Directory Day this year reverts to a live meeting in March at Westminster Central Hall and the AGM to Zoom in May.

We have been very fortunate indeed in our Programme Secretaries, Judith Wheat and Daphne Amlôt. Whether the Directory Day is live or not, they put an immense amount of time and effort into selecting and booking, (well in advance) our speakers. They provide a very well-balanced programme of course, but also do the bookings with the speakers, book accommodation if necessary, collect and deliver speakers from and to their various railway stations, and find another speaker at hardly any notice if disaster strikes. I felt I should emphasise the fact that it isn't just a matter of phone calls or e mails. They are due our gratitude indeed.

After our summer break we had the New Members' Lunch on 18th September at Heswall Hall, immediately before our lecture, *Vienna – Melting Pot of European Culture*, by the excellent Peter Medhurst.

It was a great pleasure to be able to meet this year's new members, and members of the committee were able to explain their various roles in the Society. It's only too easy to come to the lectures, meet friends and enjoy our main objective as a Society but it is so helpful to be able to introduce members to all the other aspects covered in this Annual Report that go on throughout the year. As always our thanks to Moira, Anita and all other helpers for organising the lunch.

On 28th September, 32 of the members set off on our trip, organised by Moira Fletcher, to the Midlands and Birmingham. Moira's report follows in this Annual Report, so I will just say it was great fun, very well organised, and much enjoyed. Moira has now been joined by Caroline Evans, who is organising this year's trip to Salisbury, again in late September.

November 6th saw our Day of Special Interest, when Mary Alexander gave us a sparkling day on the subject of "*Why Paris?*" The Day of Special Interest is Judith Wheat's own, particular project and she organises it impeccably. This is in addition to her normal Programme Secretary role of course. Very many thanks.

Mary Alexander was another speaker, as was our December speaker Annalie Talent, who had challenging journeys to contend with. However, they both delivered sparkling talks, and in the

case of Annalie Talent, a most seasonal offering for our Winter Lecture in December. This was followed, as is now traditional, by Christmas cake. Again, thanks to Moira, Anita, Denise and many others.

The 13th December brought our outing to the matinée performance of *Brief Encounter* at the Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester. As noted above, these arrangements were started by Frances Street, and later continued by Anita Stokes and I. The coach trip went exceedingly well, people enjoyed their time in Manchester as they wished, and then after the matinée they returned in good time to Heswall Squash Club. Anita distributed the tickets on board the coach, helped by Denise, and report general enjoyment. Sadly, some of those who had bought tickets could not attend, due to the horrible bugs doing the rounds, or other family commitments.

I have, I know, already mentioned some of those Committee members who have, or are leaving us this year. Our thanks to all, as outlined, to Francis and to Deirdre, to Jo who could not join us, and to Sally Colvin.

Welcome and thanks to Mandy Arthur, doing sterling work at Young Arts, with Siobhan. A further welcome to Caroline Evans, already mentioned, in Trips and Outings, who is about to be joined by Vivienne Clark, whom we heartily welcome. Helen Sutcliffe is taking the rôle of Web Manager, having worked with Anita Stokes during this year, and we are delighted to have her with us.

You will, I am sure, have noticed how often the names of Moira Fletcher and Anita Stokes have appeared in this report. It is with a mixture of sadness and gratitude that we see them leave the Committee at the March AGM. Anita has, she tells me been Web Manager since she joined us in 2015, and I'm not at all sure when Moira joined. In her own words, she was the tea lady for the first seven years on the Committee, and has been our complete expert on all matters catering. Thank you seems a most inadequate thing to write, to both these hugely valued members of the Committee, but there we are. We value all you have done, we shall miss you greatly, think of you with gratitude and thank you most sincerely.

I also wish to thank all those members, long standing and newly joined of the Committee. Where would we be without our Honorary Treasurer, our Honorary Secretary, our Vice Chairman and of course our Membership Secretary. We cannot manage without you all. May I also encourage any member who is interested in joining the Committee, to please let us know. I hope I have given some idea of the scope of our various activities.

At the time of writing, we still have three more lectures to look forward to. I hope that you will all continue to enjoy the speakers, the society and friendship that are part and parcel of membership of The Arts Society Wirral.

Yvonne Woodhead

Membership Report

I should like to thank all our members who have supported us through another year and urge you all to renew your membership through a BACS payment before the end of April.

We have communicated through the Website, emails and Mailchimp notices to keep those of you who have email addresses informed and updated through the year. This saves considerably on postage and printing costs.

We are pleased that the membership numbers remain steady, and we have a healthy waiting list. Initial enquiries about joining can now be made through our Website as well as by personal contact. I will contact those on the waiting list in the next few weeks to invite them to join. They will be following recent new members in a thriving society where there is plenty of encouragement to take part in activities and support the various volunteer groups.

As you all know, everyone must sign in for Lectures and I have been able to keep a count of numbers attending. I am pleased to say that there are usually about 127 members at each lecture plus some invited guests.

Libby Lanceley

Programme Secretaries' Report

As we peruse our 2023-24 Programme Card, we are prompted to hope the varied range of lectures this year suited many of our members.

We opened in April, with Brian Stater: *The Stirling Prize*. Brian ably informed us and enlightened us. He offered us the winners, the misses, and the unlucky losers; altogether a really interesting insight.

Our chosen theme in May was silver. Christopher Garibaldi's lecture was entitled *A Survey of Royal Patronage of Silver*. This talk had an added relevance considering the recent Coronation.

We welcomed John Francis in June: *The Girl with the Tutti Frutti Hat: The Magic of Busby Berkeley*. The meticulous choreography of Busby Berkeley made sense when we heard that he had been trained in military school and had learnt intricate drill patterns!

A true favourite of our Society came to us in September. Peter Medhurst: *Vienna: The Melting Pot of European Culture*. Many members commented on how they had happy memories of Peter's previous lectures to our Society. One memorable one was his Zoom offering as we endeavoured to return to a lecture programme. Peter's 'Vienna' did not disappoint.

Our speaker in October was Sian Waters: *Behind the Scenes at the National Gallery*. We had booked Sian Waters because the National Gallery opened in 1824 so we can now celebrate 200 years of that magnificent institution.

November: *The Great Age of the Shogun: Art and Culture in the Edo Period Japan*. Marie Conte-Helm's deep knowledge of her subject impressed us all.

The concluding lecture for 2023, in December, was given by Annalie Talent: *In the Frosty Season: How the Romantics Invented Winter*. Annalie skilfully reminded us of the power of nature over the arts.

Zara Fleming's lecture, *The Textiles of Bhutan*, opened our 2024 Programme. We were delighted to welcome Zara who is local, living near Ruthin. Her colourful and historic lecture gave, we feel, impetus to those members hoping to visit this kingdom and an equally valuable insight for those of us just grateful to receive such a wonderful glimpse of Bhutan life and art.

We now look forward to *Music in Art* from Sophie Matthews, our February choice. She will be followed in March by *Berthe Morisot: Une Finesse Fragonardienne* offered to us by Lois Oliver.

Judith Wheat and Daphne Amlôt

Day of Special Interest

November 6th - Why Paris? A day led by Mary Alexander.

Mary returned to our Society and what an excellent and truly engrossing day she provided for us. I feel that I should particularly make mention of the stunning visuals she used to illustrate her offering, especially those left up at the end of both lecture one and lecture two. We learnt so much during the day and were even issued with a comprehensive reading list for follow up research.

The Study Day format of three lectures gives our participants an opportunity to immerse themselves in the subject.

The buffet lunch was as enjoyable as ever and enhances our annual day together.

Judith Wheat.

Outings Secretary's Report

Saltaire Visit May 18th

We had a very successful visit by coach to the historical village of Saltaire. Twenty-eight members joined us and enjoyed the opportunity to see the Hockney exhibition at the Salts Mill in the centre of the village. There was also time to visit the displays and crafts at the Mill. After an excellent lunch at the Mill, we had a guided walking tour of the village. The guide was very knowledgeable and enthusiastic and gave us fascinating insights into the life of individuals who once lived and worked in Saltaire. The members were very impressed by both the Hockney exhibition and the beautiful village and its surroundings.

Tate Liverpool Visit April 17th

The Society visited an exhibition at the Tate, entitled “JMW Turner and Lamin Fofana: Dark Waters” Twenty four members made their own way to the gallery, where coffee, tea and pastries were served before the members were split into two groups for guided tours of the exhibition. The curators were very knowledgeable about the paintings of Turner, which were outstanding. The paintings were complemented by a soundtrack evoking the seas, depicted in Turner’s work.

Christmas Theatre Trip

In the middle of December, we took 38 members to Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester to see a performance of Brief Encounter – the musical. We arrived in Manchester in the mid-morning which enabled our members to do some last-

minute Christmas shopping and enjoy a festive lunch with their friends before the start of the matinee performance. The day was greatly enjoyed and the coach got us back to Heswall for the early evening.

Midlands Trip

32 of us had a very varied and interesting 3 day trip in September.

It started with Staffordshire hoard gold and silver from the 7th Century, a pottery exhibition and for some the high light of a real spitfire.

Two outside visits were the National Memorial Arboretum and the Birmingham Botanical





Gardens.

There was a fascinating backstage tour of the Birmingham Rep: I had no idea what went on behind the scenes of a production. We enjoyed amazing art at the Barber Institute and finally an underground barge trip of the Dudley limestone mines followed by a stop at Wightwick Manor with more art and William Morris designs.

Moira Fletcher

Web Managers Report

Over the last year I have been working with Helen Sutcliffe who will now take over the responsibility for running the website, as I will be retiring from the Committee after 8 ½ very enjoyable years. I am very confident that Helen will do an excellent job in keeping our site up to date on a regular basis.

Over the last year the numbers visiting to our website have increased which is very reassuring as there is so much really useful information on the site. This year we added another page to the menu bar called 'Membership.' This has meant that anyone wishing to join the Society can now apply directly online to our Membership Secretary.

Anita Stokes and Helen Sutcliffe

Young Arts Report

We have had a busy year for Young Arts activities. During the summer, Neston Little Actors held a summer school which we supported enabling a few free places to be made available. They also received funding for their Christmas concert which was performed in December.

The Hive in Birkenhead also had some help from us for their summer project and we followed up with further funding for the Art Competition. This was judged in November and 25 vouchers of £10 were presented to the children. (pictures on our web-site)

We asked Gayton School to decorate a Christmas tree in Heswall, this was done by their infants who were then invited to the Library to view their handiwork. The library staff were delighted for the children to visit as since Covid there has been a reduction in numbers visiting.

We presented two prizes to winners of the Deeside Arts Group competition, and Mandy and I went to the exhibition in West Kirby. The winners attend Birkenhead 6th Form College and we hope the

college will be able to exhibit their work in next Decembers Christmas Lights event held in St. Catherine's hospital.

The sewing class is due to start this week in Our Lady of Pity school in Greasby. The new sewing teacher tells me she has been involved in a variety of projects including theatre workshops and she is very pleased to be working with children again as she is an ex teacher.

Looking to the future we hope to be involved with the Heswall Handicap society who hold a summer camp in Barnstondale for children from across Wirral.

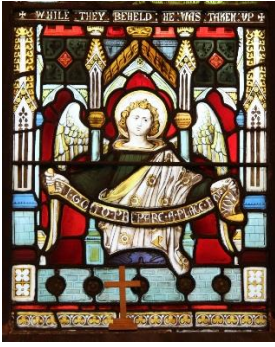
Siobhan McCormick



Christmas tree Heswall Library

Church Recorders Report

Work on the record for St Mary & St Helen, Neston, continued during 2023 and the record will be completed in 2024.



Denise Schofield

Heritage and Athenaeum

The Unilever Historical Archives in Port Sunlight have remained closed to volunteers and there is no opening date at present.

Report on AS Volunteer activity at the Athenaeum,
Liverpool, January 2024

At present there are 9 Heritage Volunteers working in three groups at the Athenaeum library. Since September one group has been concentrating on completing the labelling of the obituary boxes - this involves a lot of careful measuring, cutting and nailing. The boxes look extremely smart on their shelves and Proprietors can now be sure to be able to locate an item for which they are searching. There are photos of this project on the website.

The two other groups have been working on the books in the stacks upstairs. The three new recruits are now well established in making starch paste, mending torn pages with heat set tissue and iron and are getting to grips with re-attaching front and back covers with differing weights of Japanese paper.

One new Volunteer will be attending a training course in London in the Spring - we are looking forward to her up-to-date feedback.

We have several large maps waiting to be very carefully unfolded and repaired - a job which has to wait till we can use the very large tables in the Reading Room.

There is a lot of interesting information involved in both books and maps and our rate of work does depend a lot on how much reading we do!

I continue to attend, as a co-opted committee member, the monthly meetings of the Library Advisory Group, which is a useful means of communication between the Athenaeum and the Arts Society.

Suzanne Cook

Church Trails

No new church trails are under development at prese