



**THE ARTS SOCIETY WIRRAL**



*[www.theartsocietywirral.org](http://www.theartsocietywirral.org)*

**Committee Report 2025-2026**

**Annual General Meeting  
Monday 16th March 2026 at 2pm**

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**THE ARTS SOCIETY WIRRAL**  
**Notice of Annual General Meeting**  
**Heswall Hall, Monday 16th March 2026 at 2pm**

**Agenda**

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 17th March 2025 be adopted.
3. RESOLUTION: That the Committee Reports for 2025/26 be adopted.
4. RESOLUTION: That the statement of Accounts for 2025/26 be adopted.
5. RESOLUTION: That Mr C.N.H. Pursglove FCA be re-appointed Independent Examiner of Accounts for the year 2026/27.
6. Election of Committee Members for the year 2026/27.  
 RESOLUTION: That the Committee Members for the year 2026/27 be elected as per the list of nominees below.
7. Election of Honorary Officers for the year 2026/27.  
 RESOLUTION: That the Honorary Officers for the year 2026/27 be elected as per the list of nominations below.
9. Date of next Annual General Meeting : Monday 15th March 2027.

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**Election of Officers and Committee Members**

Chairman	Miss Judith Wheat	Proposed by	Mrs Na'amat Little
		Seconded by	Mrs Yvonne Woodhead
Vice-Chairman	Mrs Jenny Toomey	Proposed by	Mrs Moira Fletcher
		Seconded by	Dr Martin Woodhead
Hon Secretary	Mrs Denise Hill	Proposed by	Mrs Anita Stokes
		Seconded by	Dr Julia Lecky
Hon Treasurer	Colonel Martin Amlôt	Proposed by	Mrs Hilary Gatenby
		Seconded by	Mrs Sue Bullivant
Membership Secretary	Mrs Chris Reid Davies	Proposed by	Mrs Libby Lanceley
		Seconded by	Dr Bryan Lecky
Programme Secretaries	Mrs Daphne Amlôt Mr Ben Duncan	Proposed by	Miss Judith Wheat
		Seconded by	Dr Martin Woodhead
Outings Secretaries	Dr Caroline Evans Dr Vivienne Clark	Proposed by	Mrs Jenny Toomey
		Seconded by	Mrs Chris Reid Davies
Web Manager	Mrs Helen Sutcliffe	Proposed by	Colonel Martin Amlôt
		Seconded by	Mrs Denise Hill
Church Recorder	Mrs Denise Hill	Proposed by	Mrs Daphne Amlôt
		Seconded by	Mrs Karen Griffith
Heritage Volunteers & Athenaeum Project	Mrs Suzanne Cook	Proposed by	Dr Caroline Evans
		Seconded by	Mrs Siobhan McCormick
Arts Volunteers Young Arts	Mrs Amanda Arthur	Proposed by	Dr Caroline Evans
		Seconded by	Mrs Cathy Rathbone
General Technical Support	Mrs Anita Stokes	Proposed by	Mrs Denise Hill
		Seconded by	Mrs Cathy Rathbone
Committee	Mrs Karen Griffith	Proposed by	Mrs Amanda Arthur
		Seconded by	Mrs Siobhan McCormick

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## THE ARTS SOCIETY WIRRAL

### Minutes of the AGM held on Monday 17th March 2025 at Heswall Hall

Chairman Yvonne Woodhead read the notices and housekeeping items at 1.55pm. She wished Paul Dufton, Secretary, a very speedy recovery and return, she then invited the President, Fenella Billington to take the AGM.

1. There was one apology, from Mr Paul Dufton
2. Minutes of the AGM held on Monday 18th March 2024 were presented:  
Martin Amlôt proposed that these be adopted, subject to the minor amendments identified (*Norman Pursglove was appointed Independent Examiner for year 2024/25, not Honorary Auditor for year 2023/24, Dr Caroline Evans and Mrs Christine Barnes proposed and seconded the increase in members' subscriptions, as well as the adoption of the increase in visitors' fees.*)  
This was carried unanimously.
3. Resolution: Committee Reports for 2024/25 be adopted.  
Maureen Blackham proposed, and Judith Whitely seconded that these be accepted.  
This was carried unanimously.
4. Resolution: Statement of Accounts for 2024/25 be adopted.  
Martin Amlôt explained that the accounts were very simple and thanked Norman Pursglove and Hilary Gatenby for their continued support throughout the year. He thanked the membership for accepting the increased membership fee, still lowest in North West Area, and for using BACS for paying fees, as this helped enormously. Both income and expenditure were down this year, although there is a small profit – there have been less grants made and there have been savings made on printing. 39% of our costs go to AS Head Office, who run the membership/training/insurances nationally. There were no questions. Caroline Evans proposed, and Hilary Gatenby seconded the resolution. This was carried unanimously.
5. Resolution: Re-Appointment of Mr C. N. H. Pursglove, FCA, as Independent Examiner of Accounts for 2025/26.  
Martin Amlôt proposed, and Hilary Gatenby seconded the resolution. This was carried unanimously.
6. Election of Committee Members for the year 2025/26  
Resolution: That the Committee Members for the year 2025/26 be elected as per the published list.  
This was carried unanimously.
7. Election of Honorary Officers for the year 2025/26  
Resolution: That the Honorary Officers for 2025/26 be adopted. be elected as per the published list.  
This was carried unanimously.

8. Yvonne Woodhead, outgoing Chairman welcomed Karen Griffith and Ben Duncan, new Committee Members were welcomed. It had been a great honour to be Chairman, and she thanked the President, Vice Presidents, Committee and members for the opportunity. Incoming Chairman, Judith Wheat, thanked Yvonne for her Chairmanship and presented her with a planted arrangement.
9. Judith asked Fenella Billington, President, to address the members.  
Fenella looked forward to another year of excellent lectures. She wished Paul Dufton a very speedy recovery, welcomed our 2 new Committee Member and thanked Yvonne for her excellent, very successful Chairmanship, always very hardworking, conscientious and approachable (and backed up behind the scenes by her husband, Martin). Fenella welcomed Judith to her Chairmanship and wished her every good fortune and a happy, trouble-free and stimulating term of office.  
Fenella thanked the members for attending and then closed the AGM at 2.12pm and Judith introduced the speaker, Amy Lim.
10. There were 153 members in attendance at the meeting.

Date of next AGM 16th March 2026

Signed.....

Date: 16th March 2026

## Chairman's Annual Report 2026

It is an honour to be able to offer this report as Chairman of our Wirral Arts Society. I am fully aware of the support that I have needed and received in my new position.

Thanks to all.

One aspect of my new position that I look forward to, is getting to know more of our wonderfully supportive membership. We have a thriving, lively society, one to be proud of and to recommend to others.

Our President, Fenella Billington, continues to play a very active role in the society. Her wealth of experience on both sides of the coin benefits us all. Some new members may not know that Fenella was a venerated accredited lecturer for the Arts Society.

Our Vice Presidents, Suzanne Cook and Susie Noble offer a friendly and if necessary, critical eye on proceedings. All three attend one of our committee meetings each year.

I do not want to pre-empt the reports from various committee members, but I need to reference some aspects of our work.

The committee meets ten times a year and they bring a myriad of talents and experiences. For that, sincere thanks.

Firstly, I want to pay due tribute to those retiring.

Paul Dufton, long serving member as both our Secretary and Heritage volunteer. Paul's contribution included expertise and a dry wit.

Libby Lanceley has been a super effective Membership Secretary. Tirelessly working to ensure our healthy continuation.

Yvonne Woodhead, our past Chairman, kindly stayed on the committee this year to support me in my first year of office. Her guiding hand has been invaluable.

Siobhan McCormick is stepping back from her role as our Young Arts coordinator, regularly contributing to our role in the greater arts scene on the Wirral.

Paul, Libby, Yvonne and Siobhan - thanks - our society was all the better for your contributions.

Our Vice Chairman, Jenny Toomey, continues to bring her wisdom to our meetings.

Martin Amlôt oversees our financial matters with an assured skill.

Daphne Amlôt takes responsibility for searching out a varied programme of lectures for our monthly meetings. Daphne also ensures that our speakers reach Heswall Hall, often having to collect then return our speakers to Lime Street Station. All in all, a demanding task that she fills with aplomb.

Caroline Evans and Vivienne Clark have ably continued our tradition of offering a programme of interesting visits and have organised a holiday for this September.

Helen Sutcliffe manages our website. This web page is where all members can access up to date information about all aspects of our business. Helen diligently and expertly keeps the website refreshed and relevant.

Denise Hill is looking forward to the completion of the Church Records comprehensive study of the Parish Church in Neston.

Suzanne Cook ably leads the team of volunteers at The Atheneum, Liverpool.

Mandy Arthur and Siobhan McCormick have diligently led our efforts to engage with and financially support local arts initiatives.

Ben Duncan and Karen Griffith joined us this year and have engaged with the work of our teams.

Anita Stokes returned to the group in a supportive role.

We welcome Chris Reid Davies. She is following Libby as Membership Secretary.

The Arts Society London is now settled with established leadership. Hilary Kay is our President. A largely new Board of Trustees is led by Jeremy Thomas. A new Chief Executive has been appointed, Ian Arnold. All three have vowed to make increasing the membership of the Arts Society, here and abroad, their primary focus.

The NW Area Arts Society grouping meets twice a year at Brockholes. This opportunity to network with other societies helps us to reflect on where we are and how we can develop.

Our venue for the monthly meetings, Heswall Hall, is an excellent setting for these sessions. We appreciate all the help and support that we receive from the Hall's staff.

Now I look forward to the coming year.

Judith Wheat

## Membership Report

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of our members for their continued support throughout another year. Your involvement is invaluable to the success of our society, and I encourage everyone to renew their membership for the coming year.

Nearly all of our members now use email, which makes it easy to stay updated with our latest news, lectures, and other important information by visiting our website. We also distribute notices and updates through Mailchimp. To ensure you receive all notifications from us, please add our email address – [asw.membership@gmail.com](mailto:asw.membership@gmail.com) to your contact list. It is important to remember that our membership records are only as accurate as the information we receive. Therefore, please notify us promptly if any of your contact details change.

Thank you to everyone who pays their subscription promptly. Timely payments help us to avoid the need for reminder calls to those who may forget to pay by the end of April. Your annual subscription of £55.00 covers the costs of our excellent speakers, who often travel from London to share their expertise with us. It also funds the hire of Heswall Hall, your subscription to the Arts Society in London, and provides grants to worthy causes, as detailed in our committee reports.

As I am retiring from the committee at the upcoming AGM, I am pleased to announce that Chris Reid Davies will be assuming the role of Membership Secretary. I am confident she will enjoy getting to know as many of you as possible, just as I have during my tenure.

Although our membership numbers have seen a slight decrease, we still have a robust membership of 309, with an additional five individuals on the waiting list. In the coming weeks, I will be inviting those on the waiting list to join as members. These new members will be joining a vibrant society that encourages active participation in our events and support for our various volunteer groups.

As you are aware, all attendees must sign in for lectures, which allows us to keep an accurate count of attendance. Typically, around 120 members attend each lecture, along with some invited guests. Members are encouraged to introduce friends as guests; the charge for guests is just £7.00 per lecture. We are fortunate to have Heswall Hall as our meeting venue, as it is both convenient and comfortable for all our activities.

Libby Lanceley

## Annual Report 2025/2026 - Programme Secretaries' Report

Directory Day is held in London when the Arts Society accredited lecturers share their chosen subjects, each giving a one-minute presentation. Attending the three hour-long sessions held that day is the basis for the difficult task of then selecting only eleven to make up our annual programme of lectures from the very high-quality range of options available to us.

The first three speakers for our 2025 programme presented a diverse range of topics: Scott Schiavone with his *Fashionable Folds: The Fan as the Ultimate Fashion Accessory*; Paul Rabbitts with *A Concise History of our Great British Public Parks*, and Amy Lim who spoke about *Queens, Consorts and Courtiers: Female Art Patrons in Late Stuart England*. Each one gave a most enjoyable presentation.

Our 2025-26 season opened in April with Sarah Pearson who delivered her well researched and informative lecture entitled *How to Build a Renaissance Palace*.

In May, Toby Faber transported us to the Americas. With a wide variety of superb images, we were able to experience *Indians, Buffaloes and Storms: The American West in 19th Century Art*. With her many visuals, Alexandra Epps took us into the artists' studios where they often worked in the company of their faithful companions whilst creating canine portraits and country landscapes. The lecture for June was entitled, *An Artist's Best Friend: The Dog in Art*.

After the summer break, our September speaker was Duncan Pring who took us to visit *The Mayan Civilisation of Central America* with his most detailed lecture.

October was a complete contrast. James Russell took us to sea with his lecture *Seafaring: Art and Life at Sea from Turner to Today*. He shared familiar and less well-known artists and their works with his comprehensive collection of visuals ranging from the early 1800s to the mid-1900s. An exciting voyage indeed.

In November we were delighted by the lecture from Helen Rufus-Ward who brought us the dramatic splendour of *Icons: Exploring their History, Power and the Enduring Mystery*. With colourful and detailed images of very early icons from a variety of regions this was a most memorable lecture.

The mood became festive at the December lecture when Timothy Walker brought us *The 12 Plants of Christmas. The Natural History, Botany and Folklore of the Plants that surround Christmas*. His animated presentation was a most charming and unusual approach to the Christmas season.

We now look forward to our early 2026 lectures. In January, Bill Powell, a speaker based in the North-West will present to us: *Much more than soup cans. The life and work of Andy Warhol*.

Our February lecture will be given by Nicholas Henderson: *How to 'read' an English Country Church*.

In March, Rosalind Whyte will speak about the life and work of *Dame Laura Knight*.

Daphne Amlôt

## Discovery Day - 3rd November 2025

### The Post War Textile Visionaries of Modern Art Ashley Gray

Ashley led us through an illuminating and inspiring day. His enthusiasm was infectious. He illustrated his lectures not only with the usual visuals but also with a wide range of textiles ... many rare but all offered to us to handle and admire. The day passed all too quickly. Our material needs were deliciously supported during the day by both Matt Whitby of Blind Pig and Jamie Thomas of Winston's Finest.

Judith Wheat

## Outings Secretaries' Report 2025

### Visit to Attingham Park and Benthall Hall, April 2nd

We had a very successful visit by coach to the beautiful and historic Attingham Park and gardens. It is a Grade 1 listed Regency mansion. We were given a guided tour of the exceptional collection of paintings by a knowledgeable and interesting art expert. After lunch, we travelled to Benthall Hall, a small ancient manor house. The building itself was a fascinating family home and the Trust staff there very helpful and enthusiastic. Sixteen members joined us and enjoyed the opportunity to see these two very different houses. The day was greatly enjoyed and the coach got us back to Heswall for the early evening.

### Visit to the musical "Hamilton", May 21st

Thirty-seven members met at the Liverpool Empire Theatre to enjoy the ground-breaking hit musical "Hamilton". The members expressed different views about this experience, but it was an opportunity to see a modern musical production.

### Visit to the musical "Singin' in the Rain", December 10th

Twenty-two members travelled by coach to Manchester to see the musical "Singin' in the Rain" at the Royal Exchange Theatre. The show was extremely well sung and danced and was a great success with our members. Members also had time to explore the Christmas markets and enjoy lunch in central Manchester. The day was greatly enjoyed and the coach brought us back to Heswall for the early evening.

Caroline Evans and Vivienne Clark

## Web Managers Report 2025-2026

I am pleased to share that *The Arts Society Wirral* website is experiencing a steady increase in activity. Our enquiries form is being used regularly, enabling us to respond to questions promptly and efficiently.

It is encouraging to see this growth in visitor engagement, and I hope this positive trend will continue.

I will ensure the website remains up to date with comprehensive information, key documents, and a selection of beautiful photographs from our visits, tours, and social events.

Please do check the site regularly for new events, upcoming lectures, and important 'save the date' announcements.

Helen Sutcliffe

## Arts Society Wirral

### Heritage Volunteers Report - Spring 2026

Nine Society members, in groups of three, are currently working in The Athenaeum Library one morning a fortnight helping to conserve the stock of 60,000 books.

This year we have been asked to concentrate on the Africa section as there has been great interest in the 18th and 19th century accounts of exploration in the unknown continent. Many of these books have been in demand by students and researchers looking into the slave trade, so need to be in good enough condition to be borrowed. Not only do we find torn pages, but also detached boards, broken collars and spines and we gently remove a lot of grime from them. Many contain maps plotted by the early explorers and these often require remedial attention too. It all makes fascinating reading.

We have also cleaned the mounts of some recently acquired paintings by well-known Liverpool artists and produced acid-free storage folders for them.

The work is varied and there is no time pressure on finishing any one item, so we get a great sense of satisfaction once each task is completed.

I continue to attend the Library Advisory Group meetings to liaise between The Athenaeum and Arts Society Wirral.

Suzanne Cook

## Young Arts Report

We have funded several projects locally this year: -

*Neston Little Actors* received a donation which enabled them to provide free workshop places for two Year 7 children.

The *Heswall Disabled Children's Holiday Fund* used our donation to make masks and costumes for their mini performances. The young volunteers who helped with this were able to use this project as part of their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.

*Neston High School* received a contribution from us which enabled them to perform their production of "Grease" at The Floral Pavillion in New Brighton.

We also contributed to the Wirral Schools' Concert Band.

We provided three prizes for young artists at the Deeside Arts Society Exhibition.

Our local *Children's Hospice* also received funds for materials for their Christmas project.

We also continue to support different schools displaying their artwork at the local St. Catherine's Health Centre - we provided the frames for this artwork.

Siobhan McCormick and Amanda Arthur

## Church Recording - Annual Report 2026

The record of ***St Mary & St Helen Parish Church, Neston*** is now in the final stages and being finalised for printing/binding - the record will be completed in 2026.

In 2019, Church Recording ceased to be a volunteering activity within the Arts Society, but local Societies could continue to support existing CR Groups, as our own Society has. The Church Recording Society was formed in early 2021 and has kept Church Recording as an active pursuit, but with declining numbers of those involved.

Following the appointment of a new Arts Society Board of Trustees and CEO, the possibility of Church Recording becoming, once again, an Arts Society volunteering activity was mooted and the Arts Society's Trustees resolved in favour during their meeting on 25th July. Discussions on how this should progress are ongoing.

Denise Hill

## THE ARTS SOCIETY WIRRAL

