

## **ARTS SOCIETY TEME VALLEY**

### **CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – 20**

Although this report is covering a much longer period than usual, because we changed our financial year end at the last AGM in May 2019, it will in fact be shorter than usual because all our normal activities have had to be cancelled since the Covid-19 pandemic has restricted all artistic, educational and social gatherings.

The Programme for 2019-20 was launched successfully enough in September with Barbara Askew's lecture on 'Victoria and Albert : Art and Love'. We adjusted reasonably well to having to use Oscars for our lectures as work had started on renovating the first part of the Assembly Rooms. Membership remained low but as numbers were limited to 80 in Oscars, there was little point in trying to increase this until the main building was available and then, of course, the progress of the renovations was much delayed by the lockdowns arising from the pandemic. However, we enjoyed our usual varied and stimulating monthly lectures up to and including the February '20 one on the Architecture of the Raj plus two excellent Study Days (held in October and March) at our usual Cawley Hall venue. The second of these, which we just squeezed in before the first 'lockdown', on 'Arts and Crafts in the Midlands' attracted widespread support. Members and guests really seem to enjoy these extended days which also provide a hot 2-course meal and the opportunity for far more socialising than the monthly lectures. My thanks go to Avis Denny for organising these events which often includes providing overnight hospitality for the lecturer.

Then, of course, came the bombshell and we had to cancel the March lecture (and subsequently April and May) at the last moment, as well as a planned visit. I suppose there is a neat irony in the title of that proposed March lecture ('The Empty Chair')! In fact both that and the April one ('The Art of the Steal') have been postponed until 2021. Here I must thank Caroline and Linda who organised this programme and have had to negotiate with lecturers to cancel and re-schedule for part of the 2020/21 season. Initially, we did not consider Zooming lectures as the broadband provision in our area can be variable in quality and it clearly would not serve the dozen or so members who have no on-line facilities. Meanwhile, we know that some members have enjoyed material put out in this way by Arts Society H.Q. in London and other local societies and are therefore now looking again at using Zoom to transmit our Spring 2021 lectures.

Over the past eighteen months your Committee has formed a small publicity sub-group, and a focus group from our membership and, once we have escaped the current dire situation, their work should bear fruit so that we can make real strides forward in increasing our membership. Here I should mention Judith, Ann, Caroline and Linda who have been very much involved in this positive planning for the future. Another positive from November 2019 was our support for a Young Arts Project which enabled a group of students from Tenbury High School to attend a glass engraving workshop at Ironbridge. Two of our committee members visited and were really impressed with what the students were learning and achieving.

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Finally, I must mention the two gentlemen on our Committee: Jeff Walker, who has continued to keep us on the straight and narrow financially; and Geoff Neden who keeps the website up-to-date and now deals with all our Mailchimping. Thank you to both of them and last, but definitely not least, to our new Secretary, Ruth Turner, without whom I would be quite lost.

Let us now look forward to a positive future where we have all been vaccinated, the Assembly Rooms are available in all their new glory, and we can genuinely increase our membership by promoting an exciting programme of lectures and events.

Lesley Shew, Chair of Arts Society Teme Valley