

THE ARTS SOCIETY LEICESTER

Chairman's Report to 42nd Annual General Meeting

I am pleased to report on a successful year. We have come through the year, but it has not been without its difficulties. The Arts Society nationally has struggled to maintain membership and our society is no exception to this problem. Although we have a reduced membership from the halcyon days of yesteryear, our membership is very loyal to the society. I thank all members for that loyalty.

As usual we have had an excellent and varied series of lectures over the last year arranged by the team of Tim Hogarth Jones, Ann Allsop and Chris Mason. The programme was complemented by a eye catching and colourful programme leaflet produced by Nicky Drucquer. The review and assessment of each lecture by the committee has, almost without exception, given the lecturers top marks. On your behalf I thank Tim, Ann, and Chris for their efforts in arranging such a successful programme.

Our autumn visit in October 2024 took us to Birmingham, to Winterbourne House, an Arts and Craft House built by the Nettlefold family, and after lunch to the Barber Institute of Fine Art, a short walk away. Lois and Maggie managed to arrange this for a superb autumn day, such that most of us had lunch on the terrace at Winterbourne House. In January we visited the Milton Keynes Art Gallery and a comprehensive exhibition of the works of Vanessa Bell. We also had stopped for morning coffee at the Cock Hotel, a coaching inn on Watling Street in Stony Stratford which with the nearby Bull Inn is reputed to be the origin of the expression 'a Cock and Bull story'. Our final trip took place on a very hot day in June when we visited Ely Cathedral. The cool of the Cathedral interior was a welcome relief to us all!

Our study day in early May saw almost 60 members and guests come to hear Gavin Plumley who gave a lecture on each of the three principal cities of the Habsburg empire: Vienna, Prague, and Bucharest. Gavin is a very professional speaker who made sure that he spoke to many of those at the study day. Your chairman's blood pressure suffered a sharp increase when Gavin telephoned at 7.45 am on the day to say that he had driven his car into a deep pothole on the way and the car was undriveable. Fortunately, his parents came to the rescue and drove him to Billesdon where we had a very successful day.

Our Social evening in July was a successful evening without a speaker so that those who attended were able to chat and socialise with friends.

The work at the Leicestershire Record Office continues under the leadership of Catherine Watt. We have a very friendly team who meet on Wednesday mornings from September to April working on the digitisation of building plans. I thank Catherine for her work on this programme over many years.

We have been fortunate that all members of the committee have agreed to continue in post for the next year. On your behalf I thank them all for the support that they give to the society.

As usual our lectures for the forthcoming year will begin at 7.30 pm. I shall be at the door of the auditorium to welcome you.

Martin Wragg

Chairman

20 August 2025