

Your committee needs you ...



COVID-19 has made the operating of the Society a real challenge. However, the Society has been well served by its committee.

A number of committee members, all of whom have served well beyond their

terms of office, now wish to retire. Their retirements will take place at our next AGM - June 2022.

We have set out overleaf the Committee roles that will fall vacant and what they entail.

I cannot stress strongly enough that if the key roles are not filled, the Society will fold. After a glorious 50 years existence, this would be a tragic outcome!

David Anderson
Chairman

Chairman's Column

We have an exciting programme lined up for the new season and I hope all members will renew their subscriptions and that lapsed members will return to the fold.

Before I retire next summer, I want the society to get back to a membership of 200 plus to make it totally financially viable.

As I explain on Page 1, it is vital that we fill the upcoming vacant committee roles.

To assist the incoming Chairman – whoever that may be – I will stand as Vice Chairman for one year.

From October lectures will be held in the Village Hall. COVID-19 rules will be in force for everyone's protection – good ventilation, with all doors open and sanitisation of hands will apply on entering.

Our committee will take names and contact numbers of attendees. Wearing of masks is up to each individual. Tea and coffee will be available if they can be arranged and volunteers found. No visits are planned until 2022.

We will be having two wine and cheese parties. The first will be after our October lecture to enable members to socialise. The second party will be to celebrate the Society's Golden Jubilee in July.

Planning for that special occasion is now underway

THE CHAIRMAN'S ROLE

1. To lead and represent the Arts Society Blackwater, maintain Arts Society standards, and improve them if necessary.
2. To meet and greet members attending our monthly lectures and other Society events.
3. To introduce and thank the visiting lecturers on the day and at the Day of Special Interest. Make housekeeping announcements at the start of lectures and by email to membership.
4. To chair committee meetings, assess issues brought up, and deal with them. Keep a watchful eye on finances.
5. To support committee members and their particular brief.
6. To organise the annual general meeting with the Secretary, including preparing the Chairman's annual report.
7. To head recruitment of committee members and membership.
8. To take part in Essex Area meetings, of which there are normally three a year.
9. To liaise with head office in London.

David Anderson

VISITS TEAM MEMBER

Being a Visit Team member is a good way to start on the committee. We have our table in the corner of the hall during lectures and working under the guidance of our team leader, we collect payments for upcoming visits and promote new ones.

I always found our little corner a very good way to chat to members and get to know their names. The team also meets informally over coffee to discuss new dates and venues for day and extended visits.

We also go to venues to see if they are suitable to take parties of members there. Our aim is to maintain a high standard for all our planned outings and make them as enjoyable as possible for everyone. It's a good feeling when a visit has gone well, and members show their appreciation.

Since I joined the Society, I have had a number of jobs on the committee. I've been Society chairman and vice chairman as well as holding down various other committee positions and have found all of this such an enjoyable and rewarding part of my life. I can really recommend it.

Sue Roache

and it is hoped that the Lord Lieutenant of Essex will attend along with other civic dignitaries. There will be brief speeches by our President Dr Bill Allen OBE and myself.

Many thanks for supporting

the Society especially during the past difficult period. I look forward to seeing you all on 7 October.

David Anderson

SECRETARY

The role of the Secretary during lectures is to set up the Information Display Board, updating as and when necessary. For committee meetings, the Secretary books the Church Hall for two hours and settles the account. Agendas are drafted in consultation with the Chairman and emailed in advance to committee members.

The Secretary takes minutes of the meetings, types them up while checking with the Chairman and distributes them.

At the Annual General Meeting, the Secretary plans the timetable, distributes Notice of AGM and calls for motions (hardly ever); drafts the agenda and distributes in May. Takes minutes and, if required, runs elections. Provides new committee members with information, ie, dates of committee meetings and agendas, a set of last minutes and name badges.

The Secretary is also required to undertake record keeping, updating, and maintaining in consultation with the Chairman. Correspondence includes sending out invitations etc and dealing with any written requests. Store and retain the Society archival records.

Helen Desmond

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

I have thoroughly enjoyed the position of Membership Secretary and its responsibilities, especially meeting and greeting new and old members of The Arts Society Blackwater at the monthly lectures in the Village Hall. However, it is now time for someone new to take over this role and, to facilitate this, shadow me for the 2021/22 season.

The Membership Secretary is responsible for:

- 1) keeping and maintaining the membership records and list for Blackwater and The Arts Society
- 2) preparing and sending membership renewal forms annually
- 3) ensuring all members receive a Programme card on payment of their subscription
- 4) recording attendance of members and visitors at lecture meetings

Jennifer Allen

VISITS TEAM MEMBER

The aim of the team is to arrange two day visits and one extended visit each year - more if the membership wishes. Visit the chosen venue with one to two of the team to determine the suitability of the facilities – such as ease of access and toilets, and the cost of entry and guide hire. Book an appropriate size coach for the day and calculate the cost per member.

Publicise the information on our Blackwater website and at lectures. On the day of the visit check members onto the coach and generally oversee the day.

This may initially sound complicated but it isn't. It is actually good fun and a great way to get to know everybody.

Carole Tibballs

YOUNG ARTS

REPRESENTATIVE

Set up arts related projects for individuals or groups of young people, making use of the Young Arts resources, the Handbook from The Arts Society website, and the experience within the society of past projects.

Projects are funded by money raised by the Society's Christmas raffle and also may be partly funded from the Society's funds.

- Identify a project and suggest it to the committee
- Liaise with the artist, school and/or project venue
- Report to the committee and complete a Young Arts Project Form
- Inform the membership about current projects
- Publicise the Young Arts projects
- Attend information/support group meetings with other Young Arts representatives
- Organise the Christmas raffle

Stephanie Jones

ASSISTANT YOUNG ARTS REPRESENTATIVE

I have been in a supporting role with Stephanie Jones since she succeeded me as the Young Arts main representative some years ago.

I have worked closely with her; each of us using our strengths with ideas and inspiration.

Sometimes actually working with the children as when the Maldon Museum took part in the Big Draw and involving other members who were interested.

Although I am stepping down from this role, I will continue with Heritage Volunteers.

Sheila Batess

Book Review by Sheila Bates

The Bookseller of Florence
by Ross King. *The life of*
Vespasiano da Bisticci and the
manuscripts that illuminated the
Renaissance.

The street of booksellers, Via dei Librai, ran through the heart of Florence, between the town hall and the cathedral. Many others traded in this street, but the shops of the many booksellers and stationers, known as cartolai, that gave it the name. They sold paper, carta, from nearby paper mills, and parchment from the skins of calves and goats, prepared in stinking vats. But the cartolai also sold manuscripts, handwritten books.

Customers could buy old volumes from them or borrow books to have them copied by a scribe, have books bound in leather and illuminated in paint and gold leaf. The best booksellers could deal with scribes, illuminators, parchment makers and even a few authors. The Florentines excelled at this trade, as so many citizens purchased books; seven out of 10 being able to read and write. In 1420 even a humble dyer possessed books by Dante and Ovid. Into this world, and one of the largest book shops, came in 1433 a new assistant, an 11-year-old boy named Vespasiano: so began his astounding career as a maker of books and merchant of knowledge.

Soon the Florentine men of letters would gather inside the shop, not in the street as before. Ross King is a renowned expert on the Italian Renaissance and his knowledge shines through every page of this book. We will meet as you would expect, the Medici, Cosimo and Lorenzo, the Sforzas, and many popes and cardinals, the book collectors, among whom was an Englishman, William Grey, who became bishop of Ely.

Vespasiano lived to see the invention of printing which made books more affordable but heralded the death of the manuscript and all those who contributed to their manufacture.



From Downton to Gatsby

It is a sad fact of the human condition that we really do not appreciate something until it has gone. But the other side of the coin is that when it is restored - it is just wonderful!

So it was for our first Arts Society Blackwater lecture post lockdown back in the Village Hall in September, after what seems a very long time.

We could not have had a better lecturer to start us back again than Andrew Prince. He is so knowledgeable, humorous and entertaining, and the whole day, including a lovely lunch, was joyous.

Andrew brought with him a treasure chest of beautiful tiaras and necklaces and jewellery for us to look at - and in the case of Jane Anderson and me to actually try on. Well, we did book him!

The first sessions were about the architecture, design, fashion and social life of the aristocracy and the nouveau rich at the turn of the 20th century and setting it in

Savonarola in his witch hunt of the vanities used printed pamphlets to spread his dreadful message. Vespasiano eventually earned a small plaque in the basilica giving

its historical and social context, and how they all influenced one another.

When we think of the very distinctive Art Deco movement, which originated in France in the 1910's, we think of a new and exciting style that influenced the design of buildings, furniture, cars, cinemas, trains, ocean liners, dance, fashion, even everyday objects like radios - and fabulous jewellery. It combined modern styles with fine craftsmanship and rich materials.

During its heyday, Art Deco represented luxury, glamour, exuberance, and faith in social and technological progress.

After lunch, we heard about Andrew's career as a jeweller and how he became the designer and maker of all the jewellery for the long running television series Downton Abbey. How he insisted that all the jewellery was of the period and appropriate for the character wearing it.

Patricia Pullen

him a modest presence amongst the tombs of Ghiberti, Machiavelli, and Michelangelo, well deserved as the books he produced are to be found in all the great libraries of the world.