



MEET OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES



JEREMY THOMAS

Jeremy was elected as a Trustee in August 2024 and appointed as Chair by the Board of Trustees.

A sometime member of The Arts Society Bookham, he joined The Arts Society Brighton & Hove on moving to the South Coast in 2021. Here he became Treasurer in 2022 and Chair in 2023, also taking on the new role of Study Day Organiser. In 2024 he was part of the team at Rottingdean Heritage that organised the exhibition *Prydie: the life and art of Mabel Pryde Nicholson*, which received national press coverage. He is a chartered accountant with experience both in practice and the banking sector, and more recently as trustee of a number of small charities. He is a passionate believer in shareholder democracy and the need for accountability of all those involved in public life.

Married with 4 grown up children his great loves in the art world are fine art and opera, and in his spare time he enjoys painting, as well as tennis, croquet, skiing, and gardening.



JO WARD

Jo was elected as a Trustee in May 2023, and is Vice-Chair of the Board. She has previously been Chair of the Area Support Team for Mainland Europe Area for five years and prior to that Programme Secretary and Chair of The Arts Society de la Frontera in Southern Spain.

Born and brought up in London, then moving to Surrey to raise her family, Jo moved to Spain with her husband in 2000 where she undertook an Open University course in Humanities with Art History and Creative Writing, being awarded a BA (Honours) on completion. This led to Jo becoming involved with local Arts Societies and to a career as a journalist and writer, working for magazines along the Costa del Sol and in Gibraltar.

Jo also has a background in PR and as a social media co-ordinator and content creator, working for clients by setting content strategy and driving engagement on their social platforms. Jo enjoys painting and crafting, belongs to two book clubs and a wine and tapas group and enjoys travelling, especially back to the UK where her three daughters and seven grandchildren live. She is also an aspiring novelist and hopes to find the time to finish one of her 'works in progress' in the future.



JACK LEONARD

Jack was elected as a Trustee in August 2024.

Jack was educated in Ireland and England. He worked in industry and as a teacher before qualifying as a solicitor. He practiced law in City firms before setting up what is now the largest firm of litigation-only solicitors in England. He chaired The Arts Society Helmsley in North Yorkshire for five years before becoming a National Trustee and has a particular interest in Irish paintings.



MICHAEL SHIRLEY

Michael was elected as a Trustee in August 2024.

Michael has been a NADFAS member since 2006 and has served in various posts including being Chair at Englemere (2009-12) and a member of the New Societies Committee 2012-15 where he assisted the opening of three new societies after which he was elected to the Trustee Board 2015-18.

He is currently Vice Chair at TAS Wokingham where he has recently revitalised a sponsorship agreement for the benefit of the society.

For many years he has been a member of a City of London Livery Company and spent time during the pandemic serving as a Warden of the Fuellers Company where he was fortunate to help maintain membership numbers and preserve sponsor arrangements during this difficult period. He continues to have business interests relating to land and the housebuilding sector – (his company was formed in 1996). As a younger man he spent many years in the electrical appliance industry working for Kenwood, Braun and Clairol.

His interests excluding the Arts include playing golf, watching test match cricket, rowing for charities and reading history. With his contacts in the City and elsewhere he will endeavour to address core issues to advance the Association.



LESLEY JONES

Lesley joined the Board as a co-opted Trustee in August 2024. Her whole working life was spent in HR management roles. For the last 11 years of her career, she was Head of HR Operations for the National Blood Service. This was a nationwide role in a complex, geographically spread, organisation which relied on achieving its main objective of collecting Blood on the goodwill of its voluntary donors. In this she sees many parallels with the functioning of The Arts Society.

Her own interest in the Arts covers a variety of areas including Textile Art, Music, Drama, Dance and Theatre. In retirement she has managed to combine these interests with playing a part in a number of organisations which promote them, both as a practitioner and administrator. Within the Embroiderers Guild she held local, Regional and National Roles. She is a practising Textile artist and belong to an Embroiderers exhibiting Group, TOP Stitch. She is an Ambassador for the Theatre Royal in Norwich and a supporter of the Britten Symphonia.

She is currently the Membership Secretary of the Arts Society Wensum with the luxury of a full membership list and a waiting list! She looks forward to promoting the interests of the whole of the Arts Society and its members.



TONY CALLENDER

Tony joined the Board as a co-opted Trustee in August 2024. Tony's past experience of being a Trustee was with a National Charity for 12 years (Secretary for the last 6 years) until 2005. Part of the role was responsibility for the constitution, ensuring that it was in line with the then current Charity Commission requirements. More recently, since 2016, he was IT Administrator for a local u3a, including its webmaster role. In parallel, Tony was Chairman and Trustee of that u3a for 4 years (2019-2023), also responsible for its constitution.

He has been Chair/Treasurer of various other organisations in the past and has been a practising JP for over 20 years. Until this July year, he was a Chair (and Trustee) of The Arts Society of West Suffolk, previously being its Secretary and IT Support. His employment career was in IT and Project Management including 26 years with IBM (5 in USA), followed by several long-term contracts with IT companies (e.g. ICL) and local authorities. He also has some experience in website development.

His leisure pursuits include cycling, walking, swimming, reading, visiting art galleries, museums and country houses and gardens. Tony enjoys art in all its forms, as an observer - painting, sculpture,



GERI PARLBY

Geri joined the Board as a co-opted Trustee in August 2024.

Geri began her career as a journalist before becoming Head of Press at United International Pictures UK. She then established and successfully managed her own London-based PR agency, specializing in film. After a career pause to raise a family, she pursued further education, earning an MA in History of Art from the Courtauld Institute, followed by a PhD in religious art.

Geri has taught History of Art at the Universities of Exeter, Plymouth, and Roehampton, and for the past 18 years, she has been an accredited lecturer with The Arts Society, delivering lectures both in the UK and internationally. She also leads courses for The Arts Society South West Area and the Devon Archaeological Society.

In addition to her teaching and lecturing roles, Geri sits on the committee of The Arts Society South Devon and currently chairs the Tavistock Heritage Trust, a charity dedicated to preserving Tavistock's rich history as a UNESCO World Heritage Town.

Geri has long been committed to projects that enhance well-being through the arts and has served on the Prime Minister's Dementia Challenge Champions Group. She now aims to leverage her expertise to help The Arts Society enhance its profile, brand awareness, and engagement across all age groups and communities.

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