The Causeway © Dennis Varey

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2025

Chair's Introduction

Welcome to our Autumn 2025 newsletter, which I hope you will enjoy reading as it contains information from committee members to give you some insight into the activities of our society over the past few months.

I was delighted to take over the chairmanship of our thriving society at the AGM in July. I was previously the Young Arts Secretary, before I left for a short time whilst I was Lady Captain at Cottesmore Golf Club, and was pleased to be welcomed back on to the committee when my captaincy ended.

It was a pleasure to welcome Ian Arnold, the new CEO of the Society, to our September lecture, and I met him again the following week when I attended the AGM in London. Our new president, antiques expert, Hilary Kay, gave an animated speech, which showed a real commitment to the role which she'll hold for the next five years, and her support for the Society's foremost aim that of increasing the membership. I did speak with her at the end of the day, and invited her to join us at Horsham, but as I was apparently the 15th person to invite her to their society, I doubt we'll be seeing her any time soon!

We listened to an excellent lecture by Andrew Prince (who we've had at Horsham in the past) entitled 'From Downton to Gatsby: Jewellery and Fashion from 1890–1929'. There was a display of some beautiful examples of his work, mainly tiaras, and a number of which can be seen in the current Downton movie.

The AGM in the afternoon was very informative, and Ian Arnold gave a concise view of the work being undertaken to promote the society, improve communications and up-date the website. There is much information and additional material on the website, which I would encourage you to view, if you are not already familiar with it.

Recently, I was at the Brighton Road Baptist Church (BRBC) to meet with Analees Lim, who along with some dedicated volunteers, runs the Craft Group there for partially sighted individuals. We had given them a grant which enabled them to buy LED table lights to help with their activities. The group which has been going for 15 years, was very grateful for our donation.

We are keen to use our charitable status to assist other community groups in the area, so if you have any ideas or projects in mind, do let us know.

Christine Knight

Lectures

Spring arrived with a tapestry of colours to feast our senses, much like the rich variety of lectures we had enjoyed!

In APRIL, we learnt about the architectural achievements of the powerful *Mughal Empire*. **Dr John Stevens** guided us through some of the most beautiful architectural gems of palaces, mosques and mausoleums, including the Taj Mahal, built by Shah Jahan for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal. We learnt that beneath the marbled facades and gold inlaid interiors, there lies a spiritual dimension of the Islamic belief of the after-life. The interaction between gardens and buildings is a significant and characteristic interpretation of “The garden of Eden”

MAY - Contemporary art expert **Colin Pink**, in his lecture on *Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc: Art and Apocalypse*, revealed the skilful art of these two innovators, influenced by a mix of ideas derived from German Romanticism and Russian Symbolism, and Theosophy's blending of Western and Eastern mysticism. We learnt how Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, (two of the founding members of The Blue Rider artists' group in Munich), embarked on creating a new art for a spiritual era that was about to dawn.

However, this endeavour took an apocalyptic turn with both artists producing visions of devastating events, which they believed were about to unfold and would hasten in a new era of spiritual perfection.

Prophetically and tragically, the new era was the brutal world that emerged as a result of the devastation of the First World War.

In 1914, Kandinsky (as a Russian national) had to flee to neutral Switzerland because he was an "enemy alien" and Franz Marc joined the German army and was killed on the western front in 1916.

In JUNE, we were transported to the Art Deco glamour of Claridge's Hotel and to the London Underground on a lecture about The Life and Work of textile designer Marion Dorn by **Pamela Campbell-Johnston.**

American born, Marion graduated at Stanford University, California with a Degree in Graphic Art soon found herself in Paris, then London. She channelled her creative talent in the design of fabrics, wallpaper and rugs, which became her iconic signature (literally, as she 'signed" all her rugs!) with their clean geometric pattern of swirls and squares, synonymous with modernity, which also found expressions in the architecture of the day.

In 1934, Marion Dorn Ltd was formed with an address in New Bond Street and commissions would come from hotels, ocean liners, department stores as well as celebrities of the day such as the Courtaulds at Eltham. Palace On a day out in London in the 1920s and 1930s, one would be able to choose a wide selection of Marion Dorn scarves at Fortnum & Mason and arriving for tea at Claridge's Hotel, one would be greeted by a dramatic circular Marion Dorn rug in the lobby area.

A ride on the London Underground would have seats upholstered in a Marion Dorn design, possibly a Colindale leaf pattern or a Caledonian! A night out at a West End theatre would most likely feature stage and costume designs with a Marion Dorn hallmark!

Such a prolific and prodigious career was not always plain sailing for a woman in business in a discipline of graphic art, but Marion Dorn rose above it all and elevated graphic art with an enduring legacy that continues to influence artists and designers of today.

JULY - Our appetite for the swinging times of the 1920s and 30s was cheerfully satiated with The Age of Jazz by **Sandy Burnett.** On this fascinating, immersive journey, we start in 19th century New Orleans in Congo Square - where black workers would gather on a Sunday to sing and make music that reminded them of their homeland in West Africa.

The legacy of the Civil War and the French colonial influence gave rise to the mournful Mississippi Blues, played on trumpets and trombones left behind by the Confederate marching bands. The blending of these traditions became Ragtime and was popularised by bands such as “The Original Dixieland ‘Jass’ Band”, “Ragtime King” Scott Joplin and Blues diva Ma Rainey.

However, it was in Chicago that Jazz came of age, making its migration from New Orleans in the era of prohibition. We hear of famous names such as Louis Armstrong and Joe “King” Oliver who came to perform there.

The swinging 1920s scene was also happening in Harlem, New York with the Harlem rent parties and night clubs – the most famous being the Cotton Club whose house band was led by Duke Ellington. Jazz became accessible, popularising the black culture and enjoyed by everyone. During this time, Jazz also crossed the Atlantic and made its fame in Europe, bringing glamour to the nightclub scene of Paris and London.

We learnt about the techniques used by the jazz musicians - scats, brass wa-was and how Ragtime music was spiced up. We even had our very own “Horsham Baptist Blues” created live by Sandy to send us on our way! We leave the jazz party with Ma Rainey’s “Jealous Hearted Blues” and “It Don’t Mean a Thing” by Duke Ellington still ringing in our ears! What a party that “wa-was”!

SEPTEMBER - Autumn's melancholy is a time for reflection and the topic of *The Art of Japanese Gardens: from Tradition to Modernity* created a mood for thought. **Professor Marie Conte-Helm** guided us through the Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, in unlocking the meaning in the design of the Japanese garden. Shintoism's homage to Nature endowed a legacy of Shinto shrines which are typically constructed in wooden materials and set in the forest. The introduction of Buddhism from China (via India) created temples that heightened the spiritual symbolism of Japanese garden design.

The beautiful cherry blossoms is a reminder of the transience of life. Bridges in gardens represent the passage between the natural world and paradise.

Ponds with lotus are connected to Enlightenment - the ultimate destiny for Buddhists. We discovered the mystery of the Zen garden with its characteristic tea house, dry garden with sand, stone path, water, and the ritual of the tea ceremony itself are all rich symbolisms for purification, peace, meditation and connection with nature. Our virtual journey of the Saiho-ji Temple (14th Century), Kyoto, known as the Moss Garden and the pure Zen garden Kare Sansui at Ryoa-Ji (late 15th Century), Kyoto, was deeply transcendental!

OCTOBER - A Visit to Leighton House: A Palace of Art

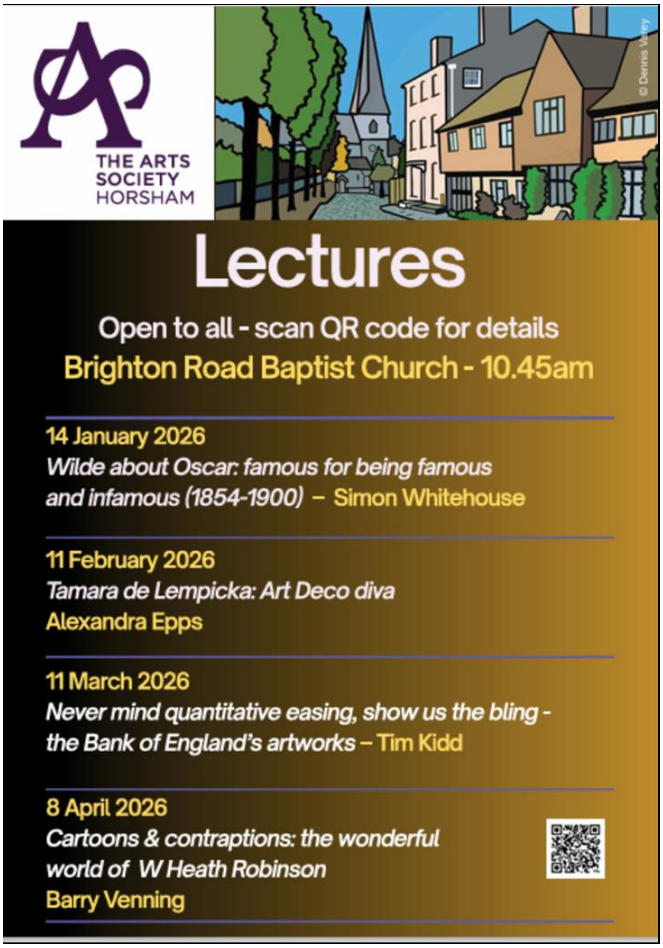
In October, we embarked on a grand tour of **Frederic Leighton's Studio House**, guided by **Daniel Robbins**. The Holland Park residence was once part of an enclave of Royal Academy artists, including **George Frederic Watts**. From the outset, Leighton designed his home to be both a showcase for his extraordinary art collection and a living expression of his vision of the artist's ideal surroundings.

The **opulent interiors** were truly dressed to impress. Visitors, including members of the public in Leighton's day, would have been captivated by the **Arab Hall**, with its authentic Islamic décor and exquisite works of art, and the **Narcissus Hall**, featuring the statue of Narcissus from Pompeii. The **Staircase Hall**, adorned with Egyptian tiles, Japanese Satsuma vases, and other exotic objets d'art, leads to the vast

Studio, where soaring ceilings and tall windows were meticulously designed to inspire awe. Leighton's early career did not immediately bring him lasting success, but he went on to achieve widespread acclaim for his **historical, mythological, and religious subjects**, and for his **sensuous depiction of drapery** - none more famous than *Flaming June*. Ironically, that single masterpiece has since outshone his own reputation.

Despite his many honours—**President of the Royal Academy**, the only British artist ever ennobled, and a favourite of royal patrons - Leighton remained an enigma. He never married, though rumours lingered of a child fathered with one of his models. His final words, spoken from his small bed in his modest bedroom, were, "Give my love to the Academy," after which he conversed quietly in German with his sister.

Rowena Kerr
Lectures Secretary



Visits

Over the past six months since our last newsletter, we've made some wonderful discoveries - and realised that you don't have to travel far to experience entirely new worlds or to see familiar places in a whole new light.

Visit to Jane Austen's House & Chawton House – Wednesday 24 September 2025

We began the new season with a long-awaited visit to the delightful village of Chawton in Hampshire, where Jane Austen spent the last eight years of her life writing and revising all six of her novels, published anonymously.

Jane Austen's House is considered the most treasured Austen site in the world, and this year - **the 250th anniversary of her birth in 1775** - it has attracted record numbers of "Janeites" and devoted admirers from around the globe. How this sleepy Hampshire village has managed to cope with the sheer volume of visitors, and greet them all with a smile, is a small miracle in itself.

We had originally earmarked May or June for our visit, but when I rang the museum, I could hardly believe my ears when a soft voice answered: "Jane Austen's House. **Emma speaking**. How can I help you?" Emma advised us to postpone our trip until the autumn, when it would be quieter. Needless to say, I required little persuasion.

So, on a beautifully crisp, bright September morning, we set off for Chawton, eager to immerse ourselves in the world of one of England's most beloved writers. Our first stop was the modest Georgian cottage with its tiny, sparsely furnished rooms, where Jane found the privacy and seclusion she needed to write and let her genius flourish unhindered.

From there, we made our way to Chawton House - the magnificent Elizabethan manor once owned by Austen's brother - where we enjoyed lunch and an engaging tour. Today, the house is an internationally respected research centre for the study of early women's writing from 1600 to 1830. Jane would doubtless have approved!

The celebrations of Jane Austen's 250th year continue apace, and it seems our paths will cross again before the year is out.

Behind the Scenes Tour of the National Theatre – Monday 20 October 2025

Picture Credit: National Theatre

All the world's a stage! Great theatre entertains, sparks the imagination, and brings people together - but how does it all work behind the curtain?

For our second trip of the season, we arranged a private tour of the UK's flagship venue: the National Theatre. Designed by Sir Denys Lasdun, this striking example of Brutalist architecture has become one of the South Bank's most distinctive landmarks.

The NT enjoys a formidable global reputation for producing outstanding theatre, presenting more than twenty different productions each year across its three stages - the Olivier, the Lyttelton, and the Dorfman (formerly the Cottesloe).

During our 75-minute tour, our guide threw the spotlight on the inner workings of this vast creative enterprise, giving us a rare glimpse behind the scenes. More than a thousand people work here, from set designers and lighting specialists to an array of highly skilled craftsmen and women who make all the sets, props, and costumes in-house.

By the time you read this, our group will (hopefully) have re-emerged from the labyrinth of corridors and workshops linking the departments for set construction, scenic painting, prop making, and costume production.

The response to the backstage tour was overwhelming but sadly we were unable to accept all the applications for this visit, as numbers are restricted.

The good news, however, is that the theatre has now offered us another date for **a Behind the Scenes tour at 11am on Wednesday 28 January 2026.**

Once again, we will travel up to the South Bank by public transport. Details will be sent out shortly by email or by post for those members who do not have access to a computer. We have space for two groups of 20 people. If we fail to achieve that number, we may open up bookings to friends and spouses.

Visit to Preston Manor and the Royal Pavilion, Brighton – Wednesday 28 November 2025

To round off the year, we've planned a gentle seaside outing involving a short coach journey and minimal walking!

Our first stop will be Preston Manor, a magnificent Edwardian estate just two miles from the centre of Brighton, famed for its glamour, opulence, and mystery — and for being one of Britain's most haunted houses. Preston Manor reopened only a few months ago after a five-year closure for refurbishment and is soon to shut again for the winter. We'll arrive just in time to enjoy it "in a new light" and experience its much-talked-about immersive Downton Abbey-style tour.

Afterwards, we'll continue on to Brighton for lunch before a guided visit to the Royal Pavilion, originally built as a seaside pleasure palace for King George IV. With its heady blend of Moorish, Tartar, Gothic, Indo-Saracenic, and Chinese influences, the Pavilion reflects the extravagant tastes of a world traveller - and, some might say, a dreamer.

By the time of our visit, the Pavilion will already be dressed (perhaps even overdressed!) for Christmas. You can watch the festive transformation in time lapse here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkHBSJfbgDM

From 22 November, the Pavilion will host "A Very Austen Christmas: Where the Spirit of Jane Austen Meets the Splendour of George IV." For anyone still experiencing withdrawal symptoms after our September visit to Chawton, this will surely be the Regency cherry on the icing!

Details of the November visit will be posted soon on the ASH website, and members will be notified by email or by post. It's worth noting that tickets for both venues can be issued as an Annual Pass, allowing free return visits for one year from the date of purchase - more information to follow.

In Closing

From the quiet charm of Chawton to the creative bustle of the National Theatre and the seaside splendour of Brighton, our journeys this season remind us how rich and varied our own cultural landscape truly is. We look forward to exploring more together in 2026.

Vivien Smith
Visits Secretary

Community Arts

Craft Club

We were delighted to provide some much-needed desk lamps for the Craft Club which also meets at Brighton Road Baptist Church. “When it was discovered that visually impaired members of the club were having difficulties carrying out their craft work, we were pleased to provide them with desk lamps, which help them see their work more clearly”, said Christine Knight. The lamps are a hit with club members, and all agree what a difference they make.

Members of the Craft Club and The Arts Society Horsham

The Craft Club meets twice a month, on Thursdays, and members try their hand at a variety of craft activities. From print making and junk modelling to paper crafts and painting, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

While it caters to older individuals, many of whom have visual impairments, the primary focus is on building connections and fostering community, with crafting as a bonus. The club is fortunate to have a fantastic team of volunteers who generously donate their time and skills to support participants.

At each session the volunteers manage to foster an environment of calm, creativity and support – the club would be lost without them! “We believe that crafting is a fantastic way to relax, unwind, and connect with others who share similar interests, and we always make sure there is a hot cup of tea and a slice of homemade cake too,” says Annalees Lim the Craft Club leader.
“We are always looking for new members - both participants and volunteers - we’d love for more to join us and see what we’re all about,” adds Annalees. Anyone interested in finding out more about the club, either as a participant or a volunteer, should contact Chris Gargano at kcgargano@gmail.com

Art with Forest School

One of the aims of the Arts Society Horsham is to support the appreciation of arts in the local community.

This summer, arts society members worked with the **Forest School** to fund a visiting artist to work with a group of pupils in an art workshop. Brighton artist **Robin Adjer** led a one-day workshop for 16 pupils. He first talked about how he got into art, before guiding the pupils on the techniques of producing artworks in acrylic on canvas.

He explained the whole process by breaking down the stages of producing a piece of art. He allowed his students the freedom to experiment and build up their own individual artwork. By the end of the workshop, all the pupils had produced amazing pieces of artwork. They were full of praise for Robin and had a refreshed enthusiasm for art.

We are looking forward to more collaboration in the future. If you have any ideas where we could help, please contact Mandy at **mandyvr4@gmail.com**

Mandy Van-Reysen
Community Arts Secretary

Our Popular Drinks Station
Volunteers Needed!

We're pleased to hear that many of you are enjoying the free tea and coffee on arrival at the Baptist Church – it's become a well-loved part of our lecture mornings. Serving around 250 cups in just 45 minutes takes some planning and teamwork, and I'd like to say a big thank you to our fantastic volunteers who've helped keep everything running smoothly this year.

Looking ahead, we'd really appreciate a few extra hands to help share the load. If you're able to lend a hand, even just once or twice, it would make a real difference.

A volunteer rota will be available at the Committee desk at each lecture – please do pop your name down for a couple of dates if you're happy to help. Or drop me a note at **ann.rattray22@gmail.com**

***Ann* Rattray**
Committee member

Membership and an invitation

As we begin our 2025/2026 season, we'd like to share a brief update on our membership. This year, we saw 51 members leave the Society, largely due to health reasons, work commitments, or family responsibilities. Many of those who stepped down told us how much they had enjoyed the lectures and visits - a lovely reminder of the value our Society brings.

On a more positive note, we retained nearly 80% of the new members who joined us in the 2024/2025 season and have already welcomed 11 new members. Our current membership now stands at 392.

For now, we do not have a waiting list, so it's an ideal time to spread the word about our wonderful programme of lectures and visits. Why not invite a friend or acquaintance with an interest in the arts to attend a lecture? Seeing what we offer may well inspire them to join.

A National Challenge – and Opportunity

Membership numbers across The Arts Society nationally have declined in recent years, with some local societies sadly having to close. In response, a major national initiative is underway to boost membership, led by our Chief Executive, Ian Arnold, and supported by our new President, Hilary Kay (well-known from Antiques Roadshow). Watch out for news and publicity in the press, online, and on social media.

Help Us Grow Locally

We're always keen to hear your ideas on how we can promote our Society in the local area. If you have any suggestions, please do get in touch with me or Stephen, our Publicity Secretary.

Let's work together to ensure the Society continues to thrive – and to share our passion for the arts with even more people.
Feel free to contact me regarding membership on: 01403 251489
or: **troutpat98@gmail.com**

Pat Trout
Membership Secretary

Treasurer

As you can see from the Membership Secretary's report, we have been successful in both retaining our existing members and attracting new ones. The high quality of our lecturers and the diverse range of subjects they bring to us mean that many visitors attend a lecture and leave as members.

These healthy membership numbers ensure that we can continue to provide our fabulous lecture programme, offer complimentary tea, coffee and biscuits to our attendees, and support the arts in our community through grants such as those awarded to The Forest School and the Brighton Road Baptist Church Craft Club. As those of you who support our visits will know, we have now started using Ticket Tailor. This industry-standard ticketing system has made the administration of visits much more streamlined, and feedback from members has been very positive - it's simple and convenient to use.

Kate Cooper
Treasurer

Friends of Horsham Museum & Art Gallery

The Friends of Horsham Museum and Art Gallery are a volunteer group of about 150 local people who support the Museum by raising funds to purchase local artefacts.

They hold events including the following lectures which are open to non-members for an entrance fee of £7.50. Tea and coffee are included.

- **Wednesday 12 November Chris Hare: Hilaire Belloc**
  2pm at Wesley Hall, London Road Chapel.

- **Wednesday 3 December John Field: The World of Magic**
  2pm at Wesley Hall, London Road Chapel

Arts Society members and friends are invited to these open events, no need to book, just turn up. You will be very welcome.

Ann Rattray

Obituary for James Wilkins at HQ.

Ian Arnold (Arts Society CEO) remembers James...

Everyone at Arts Society Head Office is deeply saddened at the passing of our Membership Director, James Wilkins. His unsurpassed knowledge of the Society, its history and a genuine love of the membership made him uniquely qualified, highly respected and essential for effective operational decisions affecting the organisation.

Whenever James' name was mentioned amongst the membership, it was always accompanied with a comment about how helpful he was. Nothing was ever too much trouble, and he dedicated himself to supporting the membership and his colleagues in every way he could whether that was answering member enquiries, supporting Areas without Area teams, assisting on his local Society's committee as website manager, or organising the provision of vital grants to promote the Arts.

He remained part of our team for ten days short of twenty-three years, a truly remarkable commitment. It would be fair to say, therefore, that The Arts Society has played a significant part in his life and he certainly has made an enormous contribution to the organisation during his time with us all. Individuals like James are rare and everyone at Head Office feels privileged to have had the good fortune to have worked with him. He will be missed greatly.

James came to our Horsham Christmas coffee morning last year and met many of the Horsham committee at various Area Meetings. He lived in Brighton.

Ann Rattray
Committee member

THE ARTS SOCIETY HORSHAM

Lectures

Open to all - scan QR code for details

Brighton Road Baptist Church - 10.45am

13 May 2026

Renaissance cassoni: wedding chests and the art of marriage in C15 Florence

Anna Warrillow

10 June 2026

***London's lost department stores: step** back in time to the golden era of department store shopping*

Tessa Boase

8 July 2026

***George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham:** the handsomest man in C17 Europe and his patronage of the arts*

Lucy Hughes-Hallett

THE ARTS SOCIETY HORSHAM