Newsletter

Spring 2026

A message from Christine

Welcome to our Spring 2026 newsletter, which I hope you will enjoy reading as it contains information from a number of committee members to give you some insight into the activities of our society over the past few months.

In February, I had a very productive meeting with **Matthew Effemey**, the General Manager of the Capitol Theatre, and as a result of this, with the full approval of the committee, we have made the decision to return to the Capitol from January 2027. This news was met with rapturous applause when I announced it at the March lecture, and I hope is welcomed by all of you reading this newsletter.

Details about arrangements for our lectures, and particularly the cost of hire, are still to be finalised but once more holding our lectures in a proper theatre (and one fully refurbished!) with professional technical support is something to look forward to.
We have been very well-served by Brighton Road Baptist Church during the past 2 years, and we are keen to maintain our working relationship with them. So, keep your eyes out for other events that we may hold there in the future!

I recently attended an Area Chairs meeting in Haywards Heath, along with **Simon Machin**, our Secretary Elect, where all 23 of the Sussex societies were represented. **Ian Arnold**, the AS CEO, and **Joe Little**, Head of Society Development, were in attendance and both gave presentations to up-date us all with current issues and policy development.

They were particularly keen to have one of us act as the Area Chair as Sussex was the only area in the country currently without someone acting in this role. **Penny Spurrell** from Wealden Society stepped up, and **Sarah Rose** from Arun and **Ray White** from East Grinstead agreed to assist her. It was good to meet with other Chairs and there will be another meeting in the autumn.

I was delighted to welcome David Hide, Chair of the Shelley Memorial Project, and **Carol Hayton**, the Treasurer, to our April lecture, where they gave a joint presentation on the background of the project and its current status. They made a request for a donation of £3,000, which would make us a main sponsor and allow us to choose one of the four poems to be displayed on the plinth. A vote of members present was held, and it was the overwhelming majority decision to grant the request.

We therefore look forward to hearing that planning permissions have been granted and that other fundraising events are successful, so the project can be finally completed.

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

Membership

Our membership currently stands at 423 but we would love to increase this so please spread the word amongst your friends and acquaintances. We have an excellent and diverse programme for the rest of this season and the next; there will be something for everyone.

We have been trying to raise our profile within Horsham; our promotional stand in Waitrose in January, our lecture reviews in the local media and local volunteering activities are some examples of our efforts. However, if you have any other suggestions on how we can reach out to new members we would love to hear from you.

You can send any thoughts to artssocietyhorsham@gmail.com or come and chat with any committee member on lecture day.

Pat Trout
Membership Secretary

Lectures

It may have been a false Spring with its broken promises before the Cherry blossoms convince us that Spring is finally here, but our members have continued to enjoy a colourful and illuminating array of lectures, rain, shine or snow!

Picture Credit: Roger Mendham

NOVEMBER - Our last lecture before Christmas was a fun reminder of the world's most popular and enduring board game **Monopoly**! We were surprised to learn much more in this fascinating exploration into the origin of the game and the hidden connections behind the iconic landmarks. Our lecturer **Roger Mendham** explained that the original "Landlord's Game" was conceived by American Lizzie Magie in 1903 but it took an opportunistic unemployed salesman, Charles Darrow to transform the board game for its commercial value. The game crossed the Atlantic In 1936 when Waddington bought the UK rights and replaced it with London properties, rail stations and key landmarks whose iconic names are now indelible on the Monopoly board!

JANUARY - A frosty morning in January did not deter members and visitors to the first lecture of the new year for we were **Wilde about Oscar**! Most of us know about Oscar Wilde's life, his rise to fame as a playwright, his witticisms and his tragic demise. However, as with all great stories, it is the way they are told and we were totally captivated by our vivacious raconteur **Simon Whitehouse**.

We revisited Oscar Wilde's Irish roots in Dublin of privileged Anglo-Protestant upbringing and his precociousness - fluent in French by the age of 9 and went on to study at Trinity College, Dublin and later at Oxford where the flowering of Oscar began! It was a time of self-image making and an aesthetic life style of idiosyncratic fashion and blue china! His literary success and reputation attracted celebrities from the artistic and theatrical circles of the day including Lillie Langtry, Ellen Terry, and Richard D'Orly Carte.

Tragically, Oscar's fame was followed by his infamous and ill-judged libel case against his young friend Bosie's father, The Marquis of Queensberry. A sensational trial ended with Oscar spending 18 months of hard labour at Reading gaol. He left prison broken and impoverished, ending his days in France and died on 30 November 1900, aged only 46 years. Despite the tragic demise, we were reminded of Oscar's enduring brilliance which continue to inspire contemporary actors, artists and pop icons. His most performed, most translated play "The Importance of being Earnest" continues to be performed in theatres worldwide.
"**Nothing to declare but my genius** …" *Oscar Wilde (on entering the US at New York Customs)*

FEBRUARY - With love in the air, we were treated to a lecture about the love, life and art of self-styled **art deco diva Tamara de Lempicka**. Our lecturer **Alexandra Epps** narrated the glamorous and sensational life of this 20th century icon. Most of us will remember those instantly recognisable images on advertising posters and book covers for their bold colours and glamourous female forms, but often fail to link these iconic images to the name Lempicka. It was therefore fascinating to learn about her life - a privileged childhood in Petrograd of Russo-Polish family and the early influence of Renaissance art from a grand tour of Italy with her grandmother.

Her marriage to Polish lawyer Tadeusz Lempicki and the October Revolution of 1917 were turning points for Tamara. Life as a refugee in Paris was impoverished but sharpened Tamara's survival instinct. The transformative moment came in 1925 with her one woman show in Milan which established her reputation as a portrait painter for the high society. Tamara adopted a new identity with a name change to Lempicka. Her self-invention emblazoned in her "Autoportrait 1929" in a green Bugatti was complete! This instantly iconic image evokes the independent modern woman who was about rule breaking and living dangerously! Commissions came from the rich and famous including the Duchess de la Salle and Suzy Solidor.

All the while, Lempicka was experimenting and defining her style which is distinctive by its strong vivid colours, very close frame of her models, exuding vitality and sensuality. Her full embrace of modernity, fashion and beauty was supercharged from her time spent in New York and Hollywood. Skyscrapers form the backdrop of paintings and Tamara styled herself in the image of Garbo and Dietrich. The Art Deco Diva was born! It was a story of resilience, self-invention and a life lived to the fullest.

MARCH - If the mention of "**quantitative easing**" still sends shivers down your spine with its association to an economic crisis, worry not! In this fascinating lecture, **Tim Kidd** guided us on a secret tour of the **Bank of England**, in which we learnt about the founding of the Bank, the architecture and design of the building, the symbolisms of the art works and many aspects of the social and political history of this famous institution.

We learnt that Bank of England was founded by a Royal Charter granted by King William and Queen Mary in 1694 but the present building on Threadneedle Street was reconstructed between the war years under the successful collaboration of architects Herbert Baker, Sir Charles Wheeler and Boris Anrep who completed the interior decoration with beautiful mosaics to reflect the site's Roman history. Our attention was drawn to the architectural details with their rich and auspicious symbolisms relating to the history of London as a port and centre of commerce.

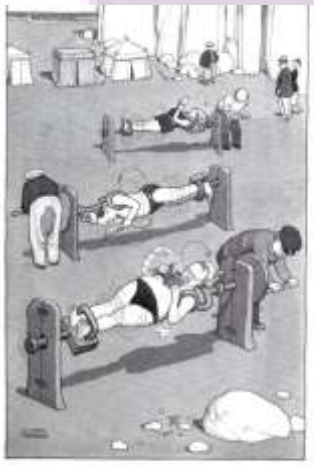
Until 1797 currencies issued by the Bank of England could be exchanged for gold. However, with the imminence of a French invasion, the government under William Pitt the Younger reformed this

practice and all bank notes now simply bear a printed undertaking "I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of …." Was this the beginning of quantitative easing?

Like all knowledgeable guides full of useful tips, we now know the finest toilet in London is located at the Bank of England's Museum! We also know about the weight of a gold bar and that we can visit the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street in person to exchange an out-of-date bank note for a new one! And so, the gems of knowledge kept showering on us like pennies from heaven until Tim's kitchen timer sounded! No gold bar to take home but it was an enriching and entertaining morning nonetheless!

APRIL - provided the perfect antidote to the surreal reality we are living in! Our lecture on **Cartoons and Contraptions** by **Barry Venning** landed us in **the wonderful world of W Heath Robinson**!

We learnt about his quiet, unassuming character, which contrasted with the ridiculously complicated machines and gadgets invented in his cartoons and illustrations, often used as a gentle satire and to great effect as a morale booster for the British troops during the two wars. As early as 1912, the name Heath Robinson entered the Oxford Dictionary as a by word for ludicrously elaborate contraptions that invite a good laugh rather than for their practicality!



Heath Robinson's early career as book illustrator flourished under the mentorship of Sir Bruce Stirling Ingram. Over the course of his career as cartoonist, he had published thousands of illustrations of hilariously absurd inventions, often reflecting the political and social backdrop of the time - the two wars, the art deco period of Bauhaus and modern designs - such as the "one piece dining room suite of tubular steel" after the Wassily chair. His reputation was indelible - apart from the entry in the Oxford Dictionary, a code breaking machine at Bletchley Park was named after him in his honour.

Today, the legend of Heath Robinson lives on with a large modern day following of artists, writers, architects and film makers including Nick Park of Wallace & Gromit, Philip Pullman and Thomas Heatherwick. Indeed, the delightful homage is cleverly reinvented in "The Wrong Trousers" of Wallace & Gromit! Heath Robinson's "inventions" are prolific, but who can forget "The Multi-Movement Cat Silencer", "The Sun Bathing Wheel" or "The Wart Chair"?

In May we will visit 15th Century Florence and learn about the secrets of the Renaissance Wedding Chests and the Art of Marriage.

June will take us on a vintage shopping trip to the London department stores of the 1950s!

Rowena Kerr, *Lectures Secretary*

Visits enjoyed and Visits to come…

JANUARY: Rerun of our popular behind-the-scenes tour of the National Theatre

Picture Credit: National Theatre

There is something very intriguing about the thought of going backstage, of taking a sneak peek behind the velvet curtain and gaining a glimpse of the inner workings of a theatre. This, after all, is where the real magic begins and sparks the viewer's imagination. And all the more so when the playhouse in question is the National Theatre, the UK's flagship venue, on the South Bank.

We first ran this outing last October, it sold out fast, leaving a lot of our members feeling very disappointed. To meet the demand, we offered it again in January. This means that altogether 60 of our members had a chance to share in the experience. On both occasions, we used public transport, which worked well.

Luckily, we were able to enter all three of the NT's auditoria (the Olivier, the Lyttleton and the smallest theatre, the Dorfman), as there were no performances that day. Our guides – in the main jobbing or out-of-work actors -- were delightful, very knowledgeable and engaging. Their passion for theatre in general and, in particular, their love of the NT and the company's unique ethos, was infectious. Many of us left wondering why on earth we don't go to the NT more often. Another New Year's resolution in the making...

MARCH: Guided tours of Leighton House and Sambourne House in Kensington

Arab Hall and Narcissus Hall at Leighton House © Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Image courtesy of Dirk Lindner

These two houses (often visited as a pair) are the extraordinary legacies of two eminent Victorians: the renowned painter, sculptor and collector Frederic Lord Leighton, and Edward Linley Sambourne, the celebrated illustrator and cartoonist for *Punch* magazine.

The first was designed as a combined home/studio for its owner, the President of the Royal Academy, Frederic Lord Leighton (1830-1896), and was built specially to showcase his own works. It also houses a dazzling selection of art treasures and exotic artefacts collected on his extensive travels in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The lavish Arab Hall with its gold mosaic frieze, magnificent tiles and fountain is a central feature of this 'private palace of art', which has been likened to the product of an aesthetic imagination run wild.

Unlike Leighton House, Sambourne House was a conventional Victorian terraced house that had to be adapted to the needs of a young family. Sambourne could not compete with the quality of

Leighton's collections, but working within his financial constraints, he created his own version of the Victorian '*House Beautiful*' in keeping with fashionable Aesthetic principles and showcasing William Morris' new wallpaper and fabric designs.

Neither house disappointed in any way. Quite the opposite. And what an enjoyable day out we had! To begin with, the weather could not have better, and the train journey (a mere 69 minutes from Horsham to Kensington Olympia) was very straightforward. The walk from the station to Leighton House through an enclave of beautiful artists' studios and gleaming white Arts and Crafts houses with beautifully tended gardens with magnolia trees, flowering cherries and striking architectural plants, was visually stunning – a treat for all the senses!

APRIL William Nicholson exhibition at Pallant House Gallery

Pallant House Gallery is one of Britain's most distinctive modern art museums. Set in a beautiful Grade I-listed Queen Anne townhouse in the historic centre of Chichester with a striking contemporary wing, it contains a renowned collection of more than 5,000 modern and contemporary artworks, and has been described as "second only to the Tate". In its 20 galleries, visitors can view works by Lucian Freud, Barbara Hepworth, John Piper, Eduardo Paolozzi and many other great names in the history of modern art.

William Nicholson: The Lustre Bowl Picture Credit: Pallant House Gallery

On a beautifully crisp, sunny morning in April, we set off by coach to view the current exhibition: *William Nicholson,* which runs until 10 May. Sir William Nicholson (1872–1949) was one of the most distinctive British artists of the early 20th century. A prolific painter, printmaker, illustrator and designer, he gained acclaim for his remarkable still lifes, landscapes and masterful portraits that captured the spirit of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. His refusal to be pigeonholed or to bow to the latest artistic trends left him somewhat overshadowed by other artists, notably by his son, the abstract artist Ben Nicholson.

The current exhibition brings together about 150 of William's works, many of which have never been seen before. As ever, we had an excellent lecture before visiting the exhibition, which threw light on William's artistic legacy and gave us insights into the great man and his works.

Wednesday 17 June 2026 – Henry Moore: Monumental Nature at Kew Gardens

Reclining Figure Bunched 1969 Picture Credit: Jonty Wilde

From 9 May 2026 until 31 January 2027, Kew Gardens in London will host a once-in-a-generation exhibition of artworks by Henry Moore (1898-1986), one of the most influential and internationally recognised sculptors of the 20th century.

This will be the largest and most comprehensive showcase of Moore's outdoor works anywhere in the world to date. In all, it will feature more than 100 works, including 30

large-scale sculptures that will be displayed across Kew's 320-acre UNESCO World Heritage site, with smaller works installed inside the iconic Temperate House, the largest surviving Victorian glasshouse in the world.

Nature also sits at the heart of the accompanying indoor exhibition at Kew's Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art, which will feature more than 90 works, including bronzes, stone and wood carvings, prints and drawings, and explore Moore's creative responses to the fragility of the natural world, and the role that humans play.

We will travel to Kew by coach. We have also arranged guided walking tours (at a leisurely pace!) that will focus on a selection of Moore's monolithic works. Details will go online shortly and we advise booking early, as this exhibition is expected to be popular.

Thursday 16 July 2026 – A bloomin' loverly day at Chichester Festival Theatre

To round off the current season, we will spend a day at Chichester Festival Theatre. In the morning, we will have a private, guided backstage tour which -- like our behind-the scenes tour of the NT -- will give us insights into some of the secrets of stagecraft and the specialist skills involved in bringing a production to life (note the theatre's bold thrust stage design!). Like the NT, Chichester Festival Theatre is one of the finest examples of Brutalist architecture in the UK, though it still divides opinions.

After lunch, we will take our seats in the auditorium for a matinée performance of the ever-popular 20th century musical masterpiece, *My Fair Lady*. Although the musical is well known, this is the first time the show has been produced in Chichester, so wait for some surprises. It is hoped that the production will transfer to the West End once the summer run is over. Oh, wouldn't it be loverly?

There are only 30 places available on this outing because the theatre cannot accommodate more than two backstage groups on a day when there is a matinée performance.
Although the visit is sold out, it is worthwhile applying to join the waiting list in the event that someone drops out at the last minute.

Vivien Smith
Visits Secretary

Many Arts Society Horsham members are also Friends of Horsham Museum and Art Gallery.

The Friends of Horsham Museum & Art Gallery is a voluntary organisation of around 150 members that exists to provide valued support and funds for the museum to enhance and maintain the many collections which are available for the public to view, free of charge, in the period setting of Causeway House.

Membership benefits include:

- Invitations to private views at the museum
- Get a 10% discount on FHM publications at the Museum shop
- Social events and outings, illustrated talks. See below.
- Regular newsletter

Events are held at the Wesley Hall, London Road Methodist Church, Horsham.

- Wednesday June 10 at 7.30pm - Dr John Hilary will talk about Nymans and the Messel family.
- Wednesday 29th July at 14.00 - Jeff Thomas will tell the story of Daisy the Tandem Bicycle.
- Wednesday September 23 at 7.30pm - Dr Alexandra Loske looks at Turner and Constable in Sussex.

Non-members are welcome at all events for £7.50 on the door, no need to book.

See the full list of events at The Friends of Horsham Museum and Art Gallery website
https://friendsofhorshammuseum.co.uk

Ann Rattray
Secretary of FHMAG (and former chair of the Arts Society Horsham.)

Christmas Coffee Morning – *Save the date*

Saying farewell to the Baptist Church

In addition to the published dates for lectures in 2026, we will be holding a farewell **Christmas Coffee Morning on Wednesday 9th December 2026** between 10.00 - 12.00 at the Brighton Road Baptist Church.

This will be our last planned event at BRBC before we return to the refurbished Capitol Theatre and will celebrate the wonderful 2 years that we will have been using their excellent facilities. Hot mince pies will be served with your coffee and we hope to have music and other attractions, and special guests, as we say farewell to the lovely staff and volunteers of the church.
Put the date in your diary now. Note there will be no lecture at this extra Arts Society special event. More details to follow.

Ann

Support for local groups

The Society keeps its reserves in an interest-bearing account, and we use that interest to make grants to local groups to further Arts in our community. It is always gratifying when those recommendations for grants come from our members, as was the case with the **Strawford Centre**.

I spent a lovely morning at the Centre with local artists **Becky Melliard** and **Elizabeth Ellison,** who is also a Horsham Arts Society member, making small wire nests. Becky brought a vast array of colourful, tactile materials such as fabric strips, yarns, pom-poms and beads that could be used to weave, wrap and thread onto the wire.

The activity worked beautifully with the participants all showing their creativity, choosing their favourite colours and working at their own pace. Everyone made a nest, and a small egg for the nest. These were then hung on some beautifully arranged branches from the Centre's own garden.

It was a lovely and satisfying way to spend a morning, and felt to be a very good use of our resources. If you know of groups that you would like to support in this way, please let us know and we will consider your request.

***Kate Cooper**, Treasurer*

As part of our support for local groups the Arts Society Horsham sponsored the **Horsham Refugee Support Group** with money to buy materials for their Christmas party. This was a group that was suggested by an Arts Society member who volunteers with them and, although we were not allowed to attend the actual event due to safeguarding, the photo shows that a lot of fun was had by all!

I also attended a workshop at the **Strawford Centre** where, over 2 weeks, a group worked on producing a piece of their own music.

This was done using a digital programme which allowed them to choose their instruments and blend the sounds together in a specific style (which varied from heavy metal to pop).

Doing this, they all came up with a piece of music individual to themselves. Thank you to **Andrew Ferguson** from **Education and Bass** who delivered the workshops, and also gave the Centre details of a free programme which they can use going forward so the group can carry on making music!

***Mandy Van Reysen,** Arts Volunteering Secretary*

THE ARTS SOCIETY HORSHAM

Lectures

Open to all - scan QR code for details

Brighton Road Baptist Church - 10.45am

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13 May 2026

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

Anna Warrillow

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10 June 2026

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

Tessa Boase

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8 July 2026

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

Lucy Hughes-Hallett

Change of Society Email Address

We have a new Society email address; it is now artssocietyhorsham@gmail.com.
The new email is on our website home page, which remains the same, https://theartssociety.org/horsham

The main difference you will see is that our emails to you will now be sent from **Arts Society Horsham** artssocietyhorsham@37437077.mailchimpapp.com.

Jane Wilcock
I T Manager