

## The Arts Society Chester - Chairman's Annual Report 2020-2021

Thank you all for coming to my final Annual General Meeting as Chairman of our Society. I'd like to pay tribute to the initiative, hard work and perseverance of all my predecessors, especially those who set up our Society nineteen years ago, the inaugural lecture being in March 2002. These things don't happen by magic, so I should also like to thank my excellent committee members, who have kept the society going through the pandemic, which hit just as I took on the chairmanship in March 2020. Thank you all. Special appreciation is due to Fiona Neame and Jenny Rogers, who have been my invaluable Programme and Membership secretaries during my term as your chairman, and to Ruth Lane who has been our IT Guru during the pandemic as well as events secretary,

Chester remains a thriving Arts Society, with over 250 members, an enthusiastic Committee, and a strong financial position. We have an exciting Programme of lectures and Events this season. During the last year we've enjoyed virtual lectures on Zoom and YouTube. We were all set to return to the Zoo lecture theatre for our first live lecture in hybrid mode in October when the Zoo wrote and cancelled the contract they had agreed only a few days before the lecture. We were fortunate to be able to go ahead at Boughton Hall Cricket Club instead where it was also streamed on Zoom and YouTube. Events didn't stop because of the pandemic. Thanks to Ruth Lane and Sheila Lister, our Event secretaries. we visited the Law Courts and art around St Paul's virtually as well as visiting Vienna virtually with Peter Medhurst and then enjoying a live performance by Peter on his grand piano. In addition, many of us visited Rome virtually last week with Stuart Harvey seeing its squares and fountains and the treasures of the Borghese Gallery.

The Arts Society is all about engagement with its community, and we were delighted thanks to the energetic approach of our Community Arts secretary Caroline Robinson to fund art activities for Dementia classes at Wesley and the Boaty Theatre Company at Ellesmere Port as well as a willow sculpture pig in the Countess of Chester Country Park and a mural at the Spider Project, which is a Crisis Space for people in distress linked to the NHS. These grants were entirely funded by your past raffle ticket purchases, and we hope the raffle ticket sales will recommence in time. Our Heritage Volunteers have been staying safe during Covid, but I am delighted to be able to report they have recommenced activities with Kevin and Trish at the record office.

And finally...

My thanks go to Sue Heather, your President, and to all your committee, especially those taking on new responsibilities today; and to you, our loyal Members, without whom none of this would be worthwhile. It's been a real pleasure, as well as a privilege, to serve as your Chairman, and as Treasurer prior to that, but, subject to your approval at this meeting, I shall be delighted to hand over to Jenny Rogers and the new committee. Thank you, Jenny, and every good wish for an inspiring and enjoyable future for The Arts Society Chester!

BL 14.10.21