

# The Arts Society Chester - Chairman's Annual Report 2017-2018

Dear Members,

Thank you for reading my first Annual Report as Chairman of your Society. I was flattered to be asked to succeed Lynne Emerson, and I hope I shall be able to live up to the standard she set. I am also acutely conscious of the initiative, hard work and perseverance which went into the setting up of our Society in the first place, and I am determined to respect that. As many of you know, a lot goes on behind the scenes, and I'm fortunate to have inherited an excellent Committee from my predecessor ; and in addition to the business, we do have a bit of fun and laughter at our meetings. We also have many helpers whom we can call on to assist at events or on lecture days, and who always seem willing to do that little bit extra to make things run smoothly.

We have - or rather, you are - a vibrant Society, with about 350 members, and our financial position remains strong. Most importantly we have a very exciting Programme of lectures to look forward to, this season and next, the result of a lot of effort and vision over the years by our Programme Secretary Sylvia Price, who is standing down from the Committee today. She will be very much missed by all of us, and I should like to express our appreciation on your behalf by a modest gesture of thanks, at the AGM.

Phil Nuttall has indicated a willingness to extend his term as Hon. Secretary a little longer, for continuity; Bruce Lane stepped into my shoes as Hon. Treasurer at the last AGM, and has just completed his first Audit in the role; and Jenny Rogers has shown great initiative in taking over the demanding task of managing our Memberships. We have a job-sharing team of Fiona Neame and Ruth Lane to maintain the impetus of Programmes, Study Days and Visits, which they have already been working on for some time; as a real glutton for punishment, Fiona has also agreed to be my Vice-Chairman; and we welcome a newly co-opted Committee Member, Glenice Robinson, whose position is to be ratified today.

We're always looking for new Committee members, so if any of you would like to join in, do please have an informal chat or e-mail one of us – you'd be welcome to come to a meeting or two, with no commitment at all.

We have excellent representatives for Heritage Volunteers and Young Arts in Jo Hinnigan and Juliet Staines - now Mrs Edwards. Income from the monthly raffle goes towards our volunteer projects. Most notably your ticket purchases have made possible generous Student Bursaries to the University of Chester, and working funds for a new Storyhouse youth theatre project. We also supported our Heritage Volunteers, who carry out inconspicuous but very valuable work at the Cheshire Record Office, and recently in Church Recording. Juliet's work with the JH Goodwin School in Blacon continues, and the Memorial Garden is shortly to be completed with ceramic poppies made by the students.

2017 saw the rebranding of NADFAS to The Arts Society, and Chester DFAS is following suit, not only in name but in our branding and a new website, hosted by The Arts Society (TAS) in London, which I hope you will visit at <https://theartsociety.org/chester> . All our lectures and other events are being published on that platform, and as it develops there will be additional content such as a photo gallery and news items, so please add the address to your "favourites".

Among the background activities of your Committee are participation in National and Area events of The Arts Society. We send delegates to the National AGM, which will be in London in May this year, and I would remind you that any Chester member is welcome to go as well. We also attend TAS Training Events and Directory Days - there's one in March - where we have an opportunity to hear their accredited lecturers giving brief "tasters" which can help us select our forthcoming Programme. As I'm sure you realise, the affiliation fee which your subscription includes goes towards the maintenance of their central directory of lecturers, without which we wouldn't have a programme. There are several meetings of the North West Area each year, at which Jo is our Heritage Volunteers representative, helping to initiate and coordinate activities across the region. For example, NW Area is celebrating The Arts Society's 50th Anniversary this year by publishing a book of "Treasures you may not know about", to which Chester contributed three ideas, all of which have been accepted, and there will be other celebratory events, regionally and nationally, so do look out for those.

Looking back, we've had some great lectures and activities - the Berlin trip in June was terrific, and, for me, Peter Medhurst's study day on Paintings and Music, and our Christmas lecture on Giles, were other outstanding events. I can assure you that there will be many more to enjoy together. The "rolling programme" which Ruth prepares for you to read before the lectures gives a hint of what's coming, as well as a retrospective of recent events and news.

And finally...

My heartfelt thanks go to Sue Heather, our President, and to the hard-working Committee; and to you, our loyal Members, without whom none of this would be possible. I do hope you will be able to join us at the AGM.

Best wishes,

Steve Pardoe, Chairman  
The Arts Society Chester  
6. February 2018