

The Arts Society Chester - Chairman's Annual Report 2019-2020

Thank you all for coming to my third, and sadly final, Annual General Meeting as Chairman of your 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 eighteen years ago, the inaugural lecture being in March 2002; Fiona's remarkable database lists 360 events since then. These things don't happen by magic, so I should also like to thank my excellent and amiable Committee members, and the helpers we can call on to assist at events or on lecture days, always willing to do that little bit extra to make things run smoothly. Special appreciation is due to Sylvia Price and Fiona Neame, who have been my invaluable Vice Chairmen during my three-year term. My warmest thanks to you both.

Chester remains a thriving Arts Society, with over 300 members, an enthusiastic Committee, and a strong financial position. We have an exciting Programme of lectures, Special Interest Days and Visits to look forward to, this season and next. During the last year we've enjoyed Events including a new members' Coffee Morning, generously hosted by Sue, and a Study Day on Collectables at the Grosvenor. We've had a fascinating trip to Liverpool's Victoria Gallery and the Garstang Museum; our overseas excursion to Bologna is coming up next month, and one to Manchester Victoria Baths and Gorton Monastery in June. Special thanks to Ruth Lane for continuing to organise these visits during her long illness.

The Arts Society is all about engagement with its Community, so Chester has provided generous Student Bursaries to the University, funded entirely by your Raffle Tickets; and despite the current lack of a Community Arts coordinator we have at least three initiatives for funding this year. We have also supported our Heritage Volunteers, who, in addition to their valuable work at the Record Office, produced an excellent brochure about St Mary's on the Hill in Chester, which they staffed on its Heritage Open Days.

And finally...

My heartfelt thanks go to Sue Heather, your President, and to all your Committee, especially those joining or 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 Bruce Lane, who is concluding his three years as Treasurer today. Thank you, Bruce, and every good wish for the future of The Arts Society Chester!