



STRADFAS

A member of the Arts Society



Newsletter and Programme 2020-2021

Chairman's Report

Handing over as Chair, Ursula Russell predicted I was in for an easier ride. With the unexpected closure of the ArtsHouse resolved, and the move to charitable status and a different year end achieved, I was inclined to agree.



David Triggs

The challenge at the start of 2019-20 was declining membership, a common problem across TAS nationally. However, publicity leaflets, flyers and enthusiastic members introducing friends have increased our membership this year.

As Chair I greatly appreciate the committee's support. Two of its members are stepping down after three years, Ruth Bartlett, Membership secretary and Charlotte Triggs, Day Visits coordinator. I want to thank them for their valuable contribution. Lynne Reekes and Nick Lister moved from the committee to the board of trustees. Nick stepped in as temporary Treasurer. Following a break from the committee Di Hill and Stevie Shakesheff returned to manage Extended Visits. Caroline Johnson stepped up as Secretary, succeeding Ann Langton whose temporary management of the role was greatly appreciated.

Despite the impact of COVID-19, Di calmly shepherded a reduced tour of Florence and Siena. The decision to cancel the March lecture was taken reluctantly but became inevitable. We are now tackling the situation caused by the health crisis proactively using new technology to present our lectures.

Despite significant changes in current lifestyles, our shared love of the Arts and a desire for continued community and camaraderie will, I trust, see us through. Finally, special thanks go to Judith Dorricott for her continued editing of this newsletter, a task complicated this year by the uncertainty of future plans.

Day Visits in 2019-2020

Last June we visited Kettle's Yard in Cambridge. Originally four small cottages, the house was transformed into an inviting home and exhibition space by the late Jim Ede, a one-time Tate curator. Today the sensitive displays, including paintings, sculpture and pebbles, are enhanced by vases of fresh garden flowers, and continue to charm students, locals and visitors. After lunch we explored the magnificent Kings College Chapel, famous for its annual Christmas Eve radio broadcast.

In September we visited London, starting with Chelsea Physic Garden. Its fascinating plant collection is complemented by information boards explaining the various species' medicinal uses. Later we were warmly welcomed to Crosby Hall, a "Tudor Palace for the 21st century" by the owner Dr Christopher Moran and his attentive staff. Dr Moran treated us to a comprehensive introduction to the history of his unique private residence, in which the 15th century great hall was brought from Bishopgate to be reconstructed on the banks of the Thames in Chelsea. Dr Moran told us many fascinating anecdotes and answered our questions while we marvelled at his fine collection of Tudor furniture, pewter and paintings, and a selection of treasures curated especially for our visit.



Wall of the Guild Chapel

Closer to home, we enjoyed an entertaining pre-Christmas tour of the Guild Chapel with local expert, Tim Raistrick. From there a short walk led to the RST Rooftop Restaurant for a festive meal, and time to catch up with friends old and new.

Visits to Italy and Romania

On our trip to Florence and Siena in March, our guide Iacopo met us at Pisa Airport and we were taken to our hotel, on the banks of the River Arno. The Ponte Vecchio was just a couple of hundred yards away!



Ponte Vecchio

The trip happened shortly after the start of the Coronavirus outbreak (and some members sadly had to miss the trip), so because of the restrictions, Iacopo had to adapt our programme. However he still showed us many interesting places including a guided tour of the wonderful Uffizi Gallery.

In Siena, we were met by Nicoletta, who gave us a marvellous tour of the town, ending up in the Piazza del Campo, where the famous Palio horse races are run.

We visited Florence and Siena in unusual circumstances but we were privileged to have seen both cities without the crowds and we agreed that (to quote one of our party) despite, or even because of, all that happened to us, we really enjoyed our trip.

In July 2019 a group travelled to Romania. Many expected to see a grey, depressing, Communist-era Bucharest, but instead we were greeted by wide, Parisian-style boulevards, bustling cafes and Art Deco Buildings, and our guide at the imposing Palace of Parliament delighted us with his amusing anecdotes. We thoroughly enjoyed our wine-tasting and lunch at Conacul din Capture vineyard on our way to Sinaia in the Carpathian Mountains where we visited Peles Castle and Monastery. Our farewell dinner in Brasov was outstanding and we loved our final destination, medieval Sibui, also known as Hermanstadt. Altogether an unforgettable trip!



Piazza del Campo

Young Arts



Anne Maguire

Our continued support for The Young Carers and bereaved children at The Hospice has resulted in some very imaginative work exemplified by a photographic exhibition on the subject of "Grief" for Grief Awareness Week. The resulting images proved to be quite thought-provoking!

The Primary School Consortium undertook their last project together when they made sea-creatures from recycled materials, to be exhibited at The Stratford-upon-Avon River Festival. The imagination of these children provided some spectacular fish, which have never been caught in any sea and certainly not in the local river!



Fish in the Sea

Three schools have received funding for a variety of projects. Welcombe Hills School will be using the money to bring in people to teach the children on some aspect of Music while Stratford-upon-Avon Primary will be concentrating on Art. Thomas Jolyffe Primary have used their money in a number of ways including Butterflies in the main entrance!

Heritage Volunteers



Kay Anderson

STRADFAS Heritage Volunteers completed the conservation of the Ecclesiastical embroideries for St. Nicholas Church Alcester. By carefully removing the rotting gold silk, revealing the natural Linen background we were able to conserve these unique embroideries, with great effect. Work is still in progress to complete the centre panel. In April work will begin on conserving the Altar Frontal and Burse for Claverdon Church, with a new Altar Frontal needing to be designed and made at a later date.

An exciting new educational project at Hall's Croft, "The making of six Tudor Costumes" will get underway in May whereby Heritage Volunteers will be working in a studio setting creating two adult, two teenager and two child costumes, male and female. The public will also be able to view the Tudor costumes being made and gain a rare insight into their construction.



Presenting the completed Burse and Veil to the Vicar of St. Lawrence Church, Mickleton

Church Recorders



Jean Vaudeau

Our team of ten members is part-way through recording the contents of St. Lawrence's Church in Mickleton. We meet at the church once a month to spend a few hours collecting information and swapping notes, before we research and write up our notes in our own time. It will take a few days this summer to photograph every item in the church, and, weather permitting, we hope to enjoy a group lunch in a local pub garden.

A selection of items in the church include a 13th century stone cross, a large 18th century engraving of "A New Map of the Land of Promise", a 19th century mosaic



Reredos St. Mark

reredos, and 38 memorials that span four centuries and challenge our school-boy Latin!

The recent decision taken by the Arts Society to remove Church Recording from its volunteering portfolio after fifty years - and approximately 2000 records - was seen by some as inevitable. However STRADFAS will continue to support the activity of documenting works of art, craft and architecture that offer great insight into the history of our community.



Detail of East Window

Funds, Administration and our Membership



Nick Lister

We successfully navigated the change to the start of our membership year from March to September, and have managed to improve upon our membership numbers, which now are about 530. Our publicity leaflets have proved to be effective and have brought us a good number of visitors and new members. You can help the society by giving our publicity leaflets to friends who may be interested.

We have had a positive response to Gift Aid through your subscriptions, increasing the percentage from 46% to 61%. Your membership renewal forms encourage you to do this, if you have not done so already. We all thank the volunteers that raise or save us money - including those organising the raffles, the coffees and our technical group. STRADFAS also receives discounted Playhouse hire rates from the Town Trust, and all these measures save us about £18 per subscription.

The New Members Coffee Morning was held in January and we had an excellent turnout. This was an opportunity to explain the work of committee members, and to encourage our new members to take an active part in STRADFAS. Anyone who joined us after January will be invited to the New Members Coffee Morning next year.

Looking ahead, we have been able to increase our grants budget by 33%. This goes towards arts projects run by local organisations, which justifies our charitable status.

We go forward with adequate financial reserves, thanks to the work of our volunteers and previous Treasurers. Hence we can maintain our subscription at £45 for the next year. Our Arts Society, London Head Office, takes £13 of that amount for their administration costs, which results in you, our members, paying £3.20 per STRADFAS lecture.



Ruth Bartlett

If you would like more information about STRADFAS, a member of The Arts Society, please contact us at membership@stradfás.org.uk
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