



THE ARTS SOCIETY BLACKMORE VALE

Trustees' Report for 2024-2025

Charitable Objectives

1. The promotion and advancement of the aesthetic education of the public, the cultivation, appreciation and study of the decorative and fine arts and the giving of aid to the conservation of our National Heritage for the benefit of the public.
2. The relief of those persons in financial need or hardship, in particular students in arts projects, as the committee sees fit from time to time.

Trustees

The committee elected annually under the Rules of the Constitution dated 8 May 2004 are also trustees of the Charity.

Honorary Officers and Trustee Members of the Executive Committee:

Ann Tasker	Chair
Pippa Schofield	Vice Chair and Arts Volunteering
Andrew Torrance	Treasurer
Anthea Payne	Membership Secretary
Margaret Martin	Programme Secretary
Hennie Walton	Days of Special Interest

Non-Trustee Members of the Executive Committee:

Georgina Scott	Evening Celebration
Maggie Mowbray	Website
Lincoln Waller	Website

Vacancies on the Executive Committee:

Position Vacant	Secretary
Position Vacant	Publicity & Marketing

Other Representatives

Peter Evans	Projection Team Manager
Alix Brooke	Refreshment Team Co-ordinator

This year has included an (as yet almost) full lecture programme, a DOSI and our annual Evening Celebration, the New Members' lunch in November and Christmas drinks after our December lecture. We have continued to hold a Book Draw at our Thursday lectures and, historically, the proceeds have supported art classes for young carers. Since April 2024, Book Draw proceeds are used to support The Arts Society Blackmore Vale's general finances.

- Lecture programme. This year, very bad weather forced us to postpone our January lecture until Thursday 4 September – so we have not yet concluded our 2024-25 season. Members' feedback indicates that most lectures were rated either Excellent or Outstanding. As ever, grateful thanks to Margaret Martin, our

Programme Secretary – both for the excellence off the programme and for the additional work involved in juggling dates.

- As last year, we held a fascinating Day of Special Interest at Cucklington Hall on 17 October, featuring Mary Alexander on John *Singer Sargent*. Our gratitude both to Hennie Walton for her imaginative topic selection and to Peter Evans for his innovative technical and projection skills. Our thanks (yet again) to Pippa Schofield for the delicious lunch and to all the team for their hard work.
- The New Members' Lunch in November was well-attended and very successful – and the Christmas drinks after our December lecture was much enjoyed. Pippa Schofield again provided her brilliant sandwiches and snacks for these events. Thank you Pippa.
- Our 2025 Evening Celebration, also at Cucklington Hall was held on a hot evening in June. We began with drinks and canapés, followed by a fascinating and entertaining lecture on *The Queen Mother's Lifelong love of Jewellery*, given by Jeremy Mainwaring Burton. Pippa provided stunning canapés, Andrew Torrance, our Treasurer organised drinks and Georgina Scott ran the whole show – to great effect - including (for the second year) beautiful and much-admired displays of garden flowers. Once again, I cannot thank Georgina enough for her hard work and her creative thinking.
- Alix's Coffee Rota runs the refreshments for our lectures and has continued most successfully. We are very grateful to Alix and her team for their sterling work.
- In similar vein, we depend heavily on Anthea Payne's calm efficiency in dealing with all aspects of Membership, aided by her tick-in helpers – especially Sally Bolton and Fiona McEwan.
- We continue to monitor and develop our website. Lincoln Waller, who last year was joined by Maggie Mowbray, are currently developing a Members' Area and are setting up a Facebook page. Our thanks to them both for keeping pace with the ever-increasing speed of developments in the digital world.
- Peter Evans is our energetic Projection Team leader. As with the website, Projection never stands still so the demands on him and his team (Mike Hall, Peter Williams and Lincoln) are relentless. Last year we reviewed our AudioVisual needs –necessary due to the increasing AV sophistication of our lecturers. Implementation has been delayed, partly due to changes in the panel of Stalbridge Hall Trustees, but we are hoping to make progress very soon.
- Pippa Schofield runs Arts Volunteering and is vice-Chair (as well as providing stellar lunches and canapés for our social events...). This year, we have financed an Arts Workshop, run by Briony Bricknell of Magic Lantern, at Bourton Primary School, funded by a £250 Community Grant from The Arts Society. It is becoming almost impossible to get teachers and others to accept financial help for the arts. As last year, if any members know of or are involved with local arts-related community projects and thinks we can help financially, please let Pippa Schofield know at schofield.pippa@googlemail.com
- Next year, we will again run a Day of Special Interest on 16 October plus another Summer Evening Celebration, in addition to our New Members' Lunch and Christmas drinks after our December lecture.
- As ever, full information on our plans and the lecture programme for 2025-26 can be found on our website: <https://theartsocietyblackmorevale.org.uk>

Turning to financial matters, we are pleased to report that, despite all challenges, careful management has allowed our finances for 2024-25 to again generate a small surplus. The Treasurer's Report describes how this has been achieved, but we should emphasise the role that digital communication has played. We are grateful for your increasing co-operation in using email and the website, so enabling us to keep costs down. As you know, most of our costs are unrelated to member numbers, so a larger number of members means more control over subscription levels. Our lecturers are still keeping their fees level, though this is unlikely to last for ever. To keep our

finances stable, we propose to keep the membership subscription for 2025-26 to its present level of £52.

Please also note the Treasurer, Andrew Torrance's comments on the GiftAid scheme in his report. As usual my sincerest thanks to Andrew for his calm and orderly management of our finances – a job which he has now done for 4 years.

Last year, The Arts Society's new Governance proposals, effectively disenfranchising individual societies, were soundly defeated. This led to all but one of the Trustees resigning and a new team being installed.

At Blackmore Vale, we believe that The Arts Society's most important asset is its panel of lecturers. To this end, Margaret has prepared another richly varied programme for 2025-26, details of which accompany this letter.

We ended our 2023-24 season with 138 members. Pre-pandemic, membership was 256. In 2024-25 membership has again dropped, and currently stands at 126. Last year, I outlined our twin problems of membership numbers plus the reluctance of members to get involved in running the Society. The committee roles for Minutes Secretary and for Publicity and Marketing have been vacant now for more than 4 years, and, by July 2026, all the current Committee will stand down, having served more than the recommended 3 years (in some cases much, much more).

Unless we can attract both new members and, even more crucially, new Committee members, The Arts Society Blackmore Vale will therefore have close at the end of the 2025-26 season. The Trustees will review the position at the end of September.

Running all these events and activities successfully depends on an enthusiastic team. The world around us is changing faster than ever and, more than ever, survival requires an innovative response. We need people with enthusiasm, expertise and creativity. If you think you can help, please get in touch with me at ann.tasker@gmail.com.

One particular request – we need some occasional paid help to keep us abreast of the digital world. If anyone knows of someone reliable (6th former or student) who could help, please let me know.

I am very lucky to have been supported by a hard-working and effective committee. The Society could not be run without them. My sincerest thanks to everyone. Special thanks to our President, Sheila Williams, for her continuing support, her advice and for her delightful creative work on our Membership Booklet and publicity material.

On behalf of the Committee, please accept our best wishes and we look forward to seeing you next season at our lectures, our Day of Special Interest and our Evening Celebration.

Ann Tasker (Trustee authorised to sign on behalf of all Trustees)

Chair
The Arts Society Blackmore Vale