



## THE ARTS SOCIETY BLACKMORE VALE

### Trustees' Report for 2025-2026

*President: Sheila Williams*

#### 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 Team sees fit from time to time.

#### Trustees

The Team, 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 Team:

|                 |                                  |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| 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 Team:

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Georgina Scott | Summer Party |
| Lincoln Waller | Website      |

#### Vacancies on the Executive Team:

|                 |                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Position Vacant | Secretary             |
| Position Vacant | Publicity & Marketing |

#### Other Representatives

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

This year has included a full lecture programme, a DOSI and our annual Summer Party, 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, a full programme of lectures was held, as per the brochure, with one exception. Due to family illness, Imogen Corrigan had to cancel her lecture, *The dregs of the people remain: the Black Death and its aftermath*. She was replaced by Susie Harries, who told us *Stories in Stained Glass*. 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 of the programme and for the

extra work involved in replacing lecturers. Additional thanks to Sue Harvey, who has taken over from Margaret, who steps down at the end of this season. Sue and Margaret have worked together on the 2026/27 Programme. Our most sincere thanks go to Margaret for her brilliant work on the Programme over the past 5 years. Many Blackmore Vale members, as well as those from other Arts Societies have commented on the attractiveness of our Programmes. Margaret has also given us the most penetrating and witty post-lecture votes of thanks to our speakers.

- As last year, we held a fascinating Day of Special Interest at Cucklington Hall on 16 October, featuring Caroline Holmes on *Impressionists, their Gardens and the impact of WW1*. Our gratitude both to Hennie Walton for her topic selection and to Peter Evans for his technical and projection skills. Once again, I thank Pippa Schofield and her helpers for the delicious lunch and to all the team for their hard work in setting up the event.
- 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.
- For our 2026 Summer Party, on 18 June, we rang the changes. On a delightful mid-June evening, we visited Athelhampton House, close to Puddletown. We began with drinks and canapés, followed by a fascinating and entertaining tour of the house and its history from Owen Davies, the Estate Manager. Surprisingly, attendance was low but, as it turned out, a smaller group worked much better than a large one would have done. Our thanks, once again, to Georgina Scott for organising the whole event with her usual eye for detail and creative thinking.
- The Coffee Rota runs the refreshments for our lectures and has continued most successfully, managing the transition to better quality coffee with ease. We are very grateful to the team for their sterling work and to Alix for her co-ordination.
- In similar vein, we have depended heavily on Anthea Payne's calm efficiency in dealing with all aspects of Membership for 7 years now, aided by her tick-in helpers – especially Sally Bolton and Sophie Hulton.
- Work is under way on a major redevelopment of our website. Lincoln Waller is working with Joe Waters of Lollystick. Watch this space...
- 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 and Lincoln) are relentless. Stalbridge Hall's new Trustees are planning to replace the current screen with a significantly larger one, but progress is slow, though we are providing them with energetic support. During this financial year, we purchased a new speaker microphone and, since the year end, have also purchased a new laptop.
- Pippa Schofield runs Arts Volunteering and is vice-Chair (as well as providing stellar lunches). This year's project was to enable young carers to take a break to do creative art projects
- Next year, we will again run a Day of Special Interest on 15 October, another Summer Party in June 2027, the New Members' Lunch and Christmas drinks after our December lecture.
- As ever, the lecture programme for 2026/27 is attached. Full details can be found on our website: <https://theartssocietyblackmorevale.org.uk>

Turning to financial matters, the Society recorded a deficit in 2025/26 of £2,899. The attached Treasurer's Report details the reasons for this. In order to ensure that the Society's finances remain stable, we propose to raise the membership subscription for 2026/27 to £60.

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 5 years.

Last year, The Arts Society's Governance proposals, which would disenfranchise individual societies, were soundly defeated. This led to all but one of the Trustees resigning and a new team being installed. Much innovation is now happening.

At Blackmore Vale, we believe that The Arts Society's most important asset is its panel of lecturers. To this end, Sue and Margaret have prepared another richly varied programme for 2026/27, details of which accompany this letter.

We ended our 2023/24 season with 138 members. Pre-pandemic, membership was 256. In 2024/25 membership again dropped, and last year ended at 127. This year, we have managed a small increase to 133. This is mainly due to Sheila Williams' beautiful revision of the brochure. We printed vastly more copies than in previous years and distributed them extensively. We also began to publish our lecture dates in *Sherborne Times*. For the past 2 years, I have emphasised the problem of the reluctance of members to help run the Society, exacerbated by a smaller membership. The team roles for Minutes Secretary and for Publicity and Marketing have been vacant now for more than 5 years, and, by July 2027, all the current Team will either stand down or will have already done so, having served the recommended 3 years (in some cases much, much more).

Running all these events and activities successfully depends on an enthusiastic team. The world around us continues to change at an alarming rate so innovation and flexibility is more important than ever. If you can offer enthusiasm, expertise and/or creativity, we would love you to join the team. If you think you can help, please get in touch with me at [ann.tasker@gmail.com](mailto:ann.tasker@gmail.com).

I believe strongly that The Arts Society provides both brilliant lecturers and a friendly and welcoming social environment. I would be very sorry for Blackmore Vale to lose these things. I am very lucky to have been supported by a hard-working and effective team. The Society cannot run without one. My sincerest thanks to everyone. Special thanks to our President, Sheila Williams, for her continuing support, her advice and, as described above, for her delightful creative work on our Membership Booklet and publicity material.

On behalf of the Committee, please accept our best wishes for the summer. We look forward to seeing you next season at our lectures, our Day of Special Interest and our Summer Party.

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

Chair  
The Arts Society Blackmore Vale