

CHAIRMAN'S SPRING BULLETIN 2021

Greetings to all our members! You will receive this bulletin by e-mail in lieu of the traditional Annual Newsletter which, with the advent of the regularly updated Website, has become superfluous.

Incredibly, we have only two scheduled lectures left of our 2020/21 programme which I am sure you will agree has been of exceptional quality once again, despite, or dare I say even because of, the Zoom lectures. I referred to our scheduled lectures, but at the last Committee we agreed we would seek to put on two additional Zoom lectures in July and August. Watch this space - and no extra cost!

Membership.

Our members numbers have been maintained at over 300, and we have even recruited new members during the pandemic, which is so heartening. We look forward to welcoming all new members before too long. As already previewed, we have decided to set next year's subscription at the slightly reduced rate of £35, to include the extra lectures and six Study Day lectures at no extra charge. We believe that using our healthy financial balance in this way is greatly in members' interest. Tony Batchelor will be sending out renewal notices in May and I thank him on your behalf for his excellent work as Membership secretary.

Programme.

Gunta Krummins and Erica Kendall are in the process of compiling a draft programme for the 2021/2022 season which will be finalised in May ready for the Programme Card. We intend to use images on the card cover of the Pebble Garden work the children of Oundle Primary School did, with the help of our earlier grant. Below is one example of their work.



Details of our ex officio members who normally help with projection, coffee and chairs, will be on the card as usual in the fond hope we will all meet during the season. We haven't forgotten you! The Zoom lectures have been a great success and the quality overall has been excellent. We have to remember that, for many of the lecturers, Zooming has been as much a learning experience as it has for us, or even more, given it is their livelihood. They have appreciated the thorough preparation Stefan and our Programmers, Gunta and Erica, have done with them in rehearsal and on the morning of lectures, so thanks again for all that hard work. We are planning to continue with Zoom lectures into the new season until it is absolutely safe to meet indoors again, and we will almost certainly offer a combination of Zoom and live lectures even when we can meet in the Hall.

Events Secretary.

There will be a vacancy on the Committee for this role, which normally involves organising trips and visits as well as Study Days. Charles Cornford is stepping down in September, so our thanks to him, especially for getting the highly successful Zoom Study Day lectures up and running. Sandy Cooke, our other Events Secretary will also stand down, for the time being anyway, but our thanks too to Sandy for her work in the past and hoping she may re-join the Committee in due course.

IT and support from the Arts Society.

We must pay tribute to the Arts Society for their support in negotiating a favourable Zoom contract, which will continue, and for their response generally to the pandemic. The range of lectures and virtual tours they have promoted has been excellent for anyone wishing to take advantage of what's been on offer.

This is coupled with special thanks to Stefan Pijanowski for managing our Zoom programme (and us!) with such effective mastery. At this stage we are not planning hybrid lectures - simultaneous Zoom with Hall lecture - but don't rule anything out either.

Volunteering Sections.

The pandemic has severely curtailed activities, but some things are ongoing:

Trails of Discovery (previously Church Trails) - Chris Cooke has completed collection of information and photographs for the Apethorpe Church Trail ready for final collation. We will then be looking to start a new trail.

Church Recording - all information that could be recorded is now being collated. The team, many months after finishing their recording, will meet over Zoom, once Compiler Michael Daking has processed it, ready for putting together as a finished document for the Church of St Peter, Aldwinckle. The Arts Society no longer supports Church Recording as a Volunteering section (a new organisation, The Church Recording Society, has been formed to produce modified versions of Church Records). Whilst our Record of St Peter's won't have been as rigorously audited as would have been the case, we feel it will still be a valuable document for the Church.

Arts in the Community - this programme, led by Jackie Leasons, does have ongoing activities, grants and sponsorship to report as well possible initiatives in the pipeline:

* Sponsorship of Young Musicians Award at Oundle Drama and Music Festival, July/August 2021 (£750)

* Sponsorship of Recital for Two Pianos, Oundle School Chapel, Tuesday 13 July 2021, as part of Oundle International Festival (£500)

* Grant to The Arts and Crafts Club for young people at Oundle Library (£300)

* Grant to Pink House Arts Club for adults for gardening materials (£250)

* Grant to Glapthorn and Polebrook Primary Schools for artwork project to be completed in 2021 (£500)

Jackie is also investigating our possible involvement in a project, promoted by the Arts Society, to provide ongoing professional development for teachers of Art and Design in secondary schools.

We are very pleased to be able to support local groups and societies involved in the arts and hope to be able to continue to do so.

In conclusion, we can't pretend that the 2019/2020 season was anything other than a shock to the system from last March onwards, or the current season anything other than 'unusual'. Having said that, we can feel proud that we have not just carried on with our lecture programme, but actually increased the number of lectures we've made available whilst keeping costs down. Your support and encouragement have made this possible, so a resounding thanks for backing our efforts and for your many messages of appreciation. Once again, on your behalf, I want to thank your Committee for their terrific work in making this happen, not least when I was laid low in September and October last year. A special personal thanks to Lidia Douglas, our long suffering and patient Secretary, who has cheerfully steered us through 'unusual times'.

I am sure we all look forward to meeting again in the Hall, however good a substitute Zoom lectures have been - but, with no apologies for repetition, this can only happen when we ALL feel completely safe again in an indoor social setting. We will follow the guidance and consult with you in due course.

Nigel Harper, Chairman, April 2021