

The Arts Society Runnymede Chairman's Report May 2019

Dear Member,

Time has flown since I became your Chairman in 2017 but so much has happened since then! Rebranding in 2017 was followed by the National Golden Anniversary in 2018 and we have now moved into our own very special 50th Anniversary Year.

It has been hectic and challenging but I have been extremely lucky to have the support of our committee and helpers who have worked hard to deliver the rebranded Arts Society Runnymede, start a new heritage project at the Royal School Windsor Great Park, Children's Trails at St Lawrence Church, Chobham and St Mary's, Thorpe, our Golden anniversary lecture at St Georges Chapel Windsor and our own Golden Anniversary Members' Lunch in October this year at Cumberland Lodge - all in addition to their regular tasks.

We are a happy bunch and I am pleased to see that support teams are growing to assist our committee members. One of the rewards as Chairman is to see how some of our committee and team members are growing in confidence as they rediscover old skills and learn new ones.

My thanks go to you all for your help and encouragement - not forgetting of course our Technical Team; John Whitney, David Underwood, and Cathy Clarke aided by Barry Moore, and Roy Forster. Also to our coffee team. Without you we simply couldn't get the lecture underway! Also to Mara Wingrove for sourcing our raffle books, the surplus from which goes to our technical equipment fund. Mara and Anne Bennett also organised our stylish members' lunch at the hall last year. How they bring such a special and enjoyable event to us I simply don't know. I am in awe.

This year, Gill Whitney has worked with me to make amendments to the Constitution so that there is more flexibility in key roles and reflects our new world of electronic communication. By spreading the tasks of Chairman and Vice Chairman we can hopefully lessen the load of these key committee members.

Last year we enjoyed an eclectic range of lectures, wandering through Canaletto's England, William Neatby's Harrods' Meat Hall, and learned about something new to me - the fascinating subject of The Green Man in English Churches, finishing with a flourish when Bertie Pearce gave us a mesmerising performance of "The Art of Illusion". Our Golden Anniversary year will finish in March 2020 when Joanna Hardy of Antiques Roadshow fame will talk to us on "The Wonderful World of Gemstones".

I have often heard that the Programme Secretary's role is popular and fun and I think Marilyn Stevens has enjoyed bringing to us lectures meeting our high expectations. Why not suggest a lecture to Marilyn and maybe assist her in organise it? A new initiative for Runnymede and other societies is to ask you to vote on the lectures as you leave the hall. Feedback is given to HQ and thus to the lecturers themselves so please vote to ensure that excellence is at the heart of our Society. We welcome and learn from your opinions on any matter in any way you wish to give it.

Gloria Ringrose is working with Marilyn Stevens to bring us our special interest days. This year's lecture is "Art & Architecture of the American Wild West" with Roger Mitchell on 12th November. Look out also for special interest days from our Area and local societies.

I was delighted when Christopher Delacombe joined our Committee as Treasurer in January. In addition to his vast experience as Treasurer, he has already brought his broader skills and experience to our meetings and I am enjoying learning from him. I add my thanks to Anne Handcock who held the fort following Barbara Thornton's untimely death, stepping in to prepare the 2016-17 accounts for audit and posting the books until January.

Our membership is growing. This can be a challenge for older societies which were founded many years ago and I am delighted that we are meeting the challenge. We can't rest on our laurels though, so please bring your friends along as guests, welcome new members and use the link on our monthly newsletter to send on details of our National Society. Your voice is the best our Society can have.

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Diana Poll has moved smoothly into the roll of Membership Secretary and brings so many ideas and opportunities to us. She led and catered our event for Alice Moller's evening when her extraordinary story (filmed by Peter Handcock) was screened; provided our birthday cake and pops up regularly with ideas. We are very lucky to have Diana and also Jan Willis, a past membership secretary, as well as our membership helpers.

This year, we are combining our visits with our Windsor neighbours. In this way, we hope to be able to fill our coaches and offer a greater choice. Our able Visits Secretary, Pat Miles is liaising with Marion Clark of Windsor to bring you some interesting trips. Our visit to Kelmscott and Buscott in June is a repeat of our June 1969 inaugural visit. I don't think we have any members who were present on the original tour but it would be interesting to compare.

In addition to her role as Secretary, Cathy Clarke has joined our technical team to help set up the equipment. I had no idea that Cathy had such a range of talents. She is giving us valuable technical support and training for many areas of our society and is always obliging when I send her my "help – can you sort this document?" email.

Another skill which has surfaced with vengeance is that of Jackie Stallwood, who writes publicity copy for our website, articles in local publications and anything else which needs polish and her experience is proving invaluable. Brian Roberts has kept our website up to date and liaised with our web provider to bring us analytics this year (feedback on visitors to our website – we all knew that!). You can also see our society on the National website as well as other societies' news and events.

Our National celebration at St Georges' Chapel was part of the Windsor Festival and very well attended. I am particularly looking forward to our Cumberland Lodge Members' lunch in October which is being organised by our special events team. The idea and ethos of the event is that our older or less able members who aren't able to join in other events are able to come along and enjoy the special day but I hope to see as many of you there as possible.

I was delighted that The Prince Philip Trust was able to donate funding of £400 towards the heritage project led by Jenny Underwood. She and the team are working hard to produce an inventory of books and documents at the school as well as documentation and research of objects, some of which were donated by Queen Mary after her world tours. Jenny's experience and leadership skills are ensuring that the project is moving along smoothly and we will bring you news as it emerges.

Jenny is also my Vice Chairman and undertakes numerous tasks, which provide the glue to our teams. She supports me in so many ways with her experience and foresight. A heartfelt thank you Jenny and also to our President, Gill Whitney, for keeping me on track and providing support and encouragement with grace and humour.

As I move into my final year as Chairman I am very much aware that you, our members, are the heart of our Society and I thank you all for your support.

Best wishes,

Margo Reinold

Chairman