



AGM Reports 2025/2026

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It has been a privilege to have kept in close touch with our committee over the years, but I am delighted that our next president will ensure continuity for all the exciting recent developments within our very special society.

I was pleased to have been involved in establishing our 'bite size' local visits. Earlier this year, I arranged for groups of members to visit and marvel at Staffordshire's amazing museum stores at Beacon Park. The recently escalating costs of coach travel have, sadly, reduced the possibility of those days and weekends away that forged so many friendships within our members. If you have an idea for a relatively local day trip, please share your idea with the committee.

Thanks to our shared love of the arts, ours is a very friendly society and, as a result, more and more people are joining. Your ideas for the continuation of this happy situation will always be welcomed!

Lisa Henderson

CHAIR'S REPORT

It is with mixed emotions that I pen my final report as chair of this wonderful Society. With the help of my most hardworking committee and a supportive membership, I feel that the Arts Society Stafford is in a good place. We must not however become complacent. We must strive to keep on increasing our membership – surely we can reach 200!

In the last year we have introduced our Bite Size trips. Visits to the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham and Stafford Archives. Future visits to The Mayor's Parlour in Stafford and Sandon Church are in the pipeline.

We were one of the sponsors of St Mary's Festival in the Summer.

We sponsored Staffordshire History Centre to bring historical / art related assemblies to 8 primary schools in Stafford Borough. I was delighted to attend the one at St Patrick's.

It is increasingly important to champion the arts, in whatever format that takes and we know that it is good for the soul. Anyone who came to the lecture on Edward Elgar in the Summer must have been moved by the power of his music. Our children and grandchildren deserve better than a world driven by AI.

I am delighted that Gina is taking over as chair. I am sure that you will all give her your full support.

Best wishes

Elizabeth Crutchley

TREASURER'S REPORT

Stafford Arts Society has enjoyed another successful year with our programme of monthly lectures, study days and various trips.

Due to an increase in membership numbers our subscription income has risen but other income is down this year from 2025 largely due to fewer events and a significant rise in costs.

Major cost rises have occurred pretty much everywhere - in the affiliation fee we have to pay for each member to the main Arts Society, hire of the Gatehouse and Wedgwood, lecturer fees, coach costs etc.

We made one donation this year of £480 and otherwise have almost broken even.

It is a sign of things to come and the fact that we need all members to spread the word about us and encourage friends and family to join and to participate in the events that we put on for you to enjoy.

There was no increase in subscription cost this year but from next April we will be increasing this by £5 to £65 per annum. I am sure you will all agree that this represents tremendous value for money. The affiliation fee for 2027 that has been set by The Arts Society will be £17 per member so that here is Stafford we will only have £48 of each membership subscription to work with.

I am stepping down as Treasurer after three years and standing for election as Chair. Tim O'Malley has very generously agreed to take this role on for which we are all very grateful. I am sure we will all give him our full support.

Gina Krupski

See also attached supporting paper: Financial Accounts 31/07/26

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The committee has met formally five times since the last AGM, with meetings underpinning all the other work required in between times to keep the Society active and vibrant. We have continued to send regular email reminders about lecture dates etc and have recently introduced a monthly Newsletter to keep members up to date with developments.

Thanks to all Committee members who have hosted our meetings and whose input has supported me in my role of Secretary.

Jane King

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

As at 31 July 2026 we had 185 members including 26 new members and with the loss of 25 who did not renew. Attendance April-September 2026 averaged out at 102, or 55.14%, which is slightly lower than last year (104/56.5%) with an average of 6 visitors per lecture. Unfortunately, one long-standing member, Glenda Harding, passed away suddenly on 29th September 2026, our condolences to David and the family.

Another successful and well-attended New Members Party was held at The Gatehouse after the July lecture.

I said it last year, but now I really must stand down at the 2027 AGM, so if there is anyone willing to shadow me for the next year with a view to taking over, I would be very grateful. You gain a lot by being a committee member, but I have done it for 6 years and am getting too old!!

Joan Holmes

PROGRAMME REPORT

We have had a successful year of lectures ranging from The Icons and Art of Byzantium through The Enigma of Elgar and The Antiquity's Market to Pantomime, when the Fairy's over 50. Overall the members have voted the lectures Outstanding and Excellent.

I am currently putting together the lecture programme for 2027/28 with the help of David Crisp who is shadowing me to become Programme Secretary himself.

The lecturer fees have risen by approximately 15% over the last two years and travel expenses have also gone up so we have to budget carefully when choosing lectures.

Looking forward to an interesting and thought-provoking selection of subjects next year.

Sue Cottiss

STUDY DAYS REPORT

We have had two study days this year, and both were well attended, and feedback was excellent from members attending.

In March our Study Day was titled Cartoons, Hoaxes and Magic and Ian Keable kept us all entertained and amused, even performing some intriguing magic tricks! A very enjoyable, informative and fun day.

On October 1st we were lucky to have Colin Shindler giving his Study Day covering The Wartime Films of Britain and Hollywood, Hollywood in the 30s and Sixty Years on. His depth of Knowledge was incredible and he lectured without any notes! His personal anecdotes and contact with the world of film and literature made it a very special day.

We were especially grateful to him as he had a serious back injury and did not cancel, coming all the way from Surrey on the train.

Next March 4th we have Connie Gray coming to Wedgwood to give her lecture series on Fashion in a time of War, including a lecture she is writing specially for us on Lee Miller's photography for Vogue and Carl Erickson's fashion designs. This will use material from an exhibition she curated in London

October 7th 2027 sees Christopher Garibaldi visiting us to talk on Leonardo's Horses, George Stubbs and Alfred Munnings.

Study days are very sociable and held in the excellent venue of The Darwin Centre at Wedgwood. Due to the cost of venue hire and lecturers we do need to attract at least 40 attendees to make it viable so please support these days if you can.

Lesley Brandon

SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

Again I have been re-elected to be the Vice-chairman and Trustee to the Charity Commission for *Stafford District Arts Council*. The District Arts Council awards grants to local arts organisations to support them and has given support to our society in the past. Being on the council helps me keep in touch with the council policy about support for local organisations, such as our own, and whether they will support us in the future if we need help. We also receive a reduction in the cost of staging our meetings at the Gatehouse theatre.

Support for the arts in Stafford may change if the government plan to merge local councils and the County Council goes ahead. This was planned for next year, 2027, but has now been delayed for a while. I will continue to monitor this process and keep our society informed about any developments that may take place.

I still post notice of our meetings on *The Arts Society West Midlands* Facebook page, and also on about twenty other Facebook pages that serve our local community and Staffordshire in general; so that local people interested in the arts can hear about our activities and join us if they wish. We also use our entry in the *Stafford District Council* website to publicise our events. This has resulted in quite a few members joining us in the last year.

If any members have other suggestions for initiatives to widen our social media profile please get in touch with me and I will pursue any ideas that you have.

Jack Barber

Website Report

The website continues to be accessed for information on Lectures, Study Days, Visits and how to join the Society. It reflects the wide range of topics covered, not just 'paintings' but - Decorative and Fine Arts covering history, architecture, painting, sculpture, furniture, gardens, music, drama, costume and literature. It also offers a quick route to a wealth of information about properties, places of interest, cultural centres and organisations throughout the UK. Increasingly people have used the website to enquire directly about the lectures, attending as a visitor and how to join the Society.

I will be resigning as a co-opted member of the committee and from running the website this year. However, I will initially support Dave Pickard who has agreed to take over the running of the website.

Bill Cottiss