

The Arts Society Fylde

Annual Report 2024-2025



I have the pleasure of introducing the Annual Report for the 2024/25 season of The Arts Society Fylde. The other members of the Committee have included an outline of the activities that they have been involved with on behalf of the Society as part of this Report.

It has been another busy year for the Society with a full programme of lectures and social events taking place across the year. Membership numbers have seen a small growth and we would like to see this expand further over the year, especially as we are part of the National Pilot. The number of visitors has continued to rise and we are sure that this is due, in part, to the increased publicity that is provided by the Lowther.

The lecture programme this year has, yet again, been excellent, with members voting them as 'Outstanding' or 'Excellent'. There was a well-attended Special Interest Study Day, which detailed 'Vanessa Bell's Art and Her Tangled Bloomsbury Group Relationships'. This interesting and stimulating day was very well received by all who attended.

Our social events play an important part of the Arts Society Annual Calendar with coffee mornings, a New Year Lunch and a lovely cream tea and talk being arranged. Our members value these times to get together, socialise and share in each other's company. Some members joined together with the Samlesbury Society and went to see an opera at Glyndebourne along with a visit to a couple of National Trust properties and a day in Brighton.

I'm sure you are aware that the Society's Constitution states that the role of President is only for ten years and we have been very privileged that Hugh Ellwood has performed this role over the last ten years. Hugh is to stand down as President at this AGM but we are pleased to announce that he has agreed to take on the role of Vice President. The Committee, in due course, will be looking at potential candidates to take up the role of President.

As a Society we have been very privileged to have such a prestigious person as Hugh, not only as a member but as our President and the Committee and I would like to thank Hugh for all the support, help and guidance that he has provided to the Society over the years. Hugh is also an accredited speaker for the Arts Society, and he has provided some very interesting and stimulating lectures to the Society.

The fact that the Arts Society Fylde remains a flourishing organisation is down to the commitment of the hard-working Committee members to whom I am very grateful. As volunteers they give up their time and energies to ensure the Group remains successful. There is also a big thank you to all the volunteers - without their support at lectures and social events the group would not be able to function.

I must also thank the management and volunteers at the Lowther; their hard work really makes a difference to our lecture programme. The final thank you goes to all the members of The Arts Society Fylde who continue to support the lectures and social events throughout the year - Thank you! and we all look forward to welcoming you to all our lectures and social occasions over the coming year.

Sarah Clayden
Chair, Arts Society Fylde

LECTURE PROGRAMME

Our 2024/25 programme once more covered a wide range of topics and appealed to many different interests amongst our members. The majority of our lectures were rated extremely highly by everyone.

Our season was opened in September by Connie Gray whose lecture was on 'The Golden Age of Fashion Illustration'. This was a fascinating and informative start to our programme and was well received by all.

To coincide with the 150th anniversary of the birth of Gustav Holst we enjoyed a lecture in October by Roger Askew titled 'Holst, the Planets and Beyond'. This was an enthralling talk accompanied by rousing music.

The first lecture of 2025 was again both entertaining and very informative. 'A concise history of our Great British Public Parks' given by Paul Rabbitts was unusual but thoroughly enjoyable. Another highlight of the programme was the talk given in April by David Winpenny. This was about Britain's largest but least known country house, Wentworth Woodhouse. This lecture certainly caught everyone's attention and prompted several members to visit the house itself.

At our November lecture, Pepe Martinez spoke very entertainingly on the subject of 'Banksy – Fraud or Genius?' His approach was very even-handed, and provided plenty of information about the enigmatic artist, leaving us to make up our own minds about whether or not Banksy was indeed 'Fraud or Genius'.

In November we had a very successful Special Interest Day which was attended by approximately 70 people. Ray Warburton spoke on the subject of 'Vanessa Bell And Her Tangled Bloomsbury Group Relationships'. The format on this occasion consisted of just two lectures, one before and one after lunch and this seemed to be preferred by the majority of attendees, who were very complimentary about both the topic and the format.

Directory Day 2025 was not held in London, but instead was an online event which, unfortunately, did not give us the opportunity to listen to the potential speakers and then meet them in person. Hopefully, Directory Day 2026 will revert to its previous pattern and be held in London again.

Once again we must thank everyone at Lowther Pavilion for giving us a warm welcome and in particular the technical team for their help in ensuring that our speakers could be certain of truly excellent audio and visual facilities during their presentations. This was particularly evident when Roger Askew, after his lecture on Holst, commented that his musical examples 'sounded just right' on the Lowther sound system.

I hope that our programme for 2024/25 contained something for every member and that this will continue for the next season. The Programme Committee are currently looking at the available speakers for our 2026/27 series of lectures and will shortly begin bookings to finalise our schedule for that year. I continue to be grateful for their support and would like to extend my thanks to them all.

A final thank you also to all our members who continue to support us, not just at our monthly lectures but also at our other social events.

Anne Gaskell

EVENTS AND TRIPS 2024–2025

Ray Warburton was the lecturer at our well-attended *Special Interest Day*, held at the Fylde Rugby Club in November 2024. The two illustrated lectures were chronological, starting in the 1870s, and finishing in the

1960s. Ray Warburton has been an accredited lecturer with the Arts Society since 2017. Ray read art history at the Open University and the University of Buckingham, where he was awarded a Master of Arts in 2017.

The *Annual New Year Lunch* was held at The Fairhaven Golf Club, Lytham St Annes. Members and guests enjoyed a glass of wine or orange juice on arrival, followed by an excellent three-course meal, tea or coffee. It was the first time we have held the New Year Lunch at the Fairhaven Golf Club, a very social atmosphere in a very smart venue.

A *Spring Coffee Morning* was organised for members and friends at the Fylde Rugby Club on 16 April 2025. Mike Bullock, a TASF member, described how he used paint, colour and stitching to create a fabric painting of the Fylde's windmills. After the talk Mike answered questions on creating fabric art.

A *Cream Tea and Talk* in the Georgian Room, Glendower Hotel, St Annes on the Sea, was held on 7 August 2025. Alistair Armit, Chair, Blackpool Grand Theatre Arts and Entertainment Board of Trustees gave a short talk – 'My Life in Theatre'. This social event was very well attended.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday 19 November 2025: A trip to the Harris Museum with introductory tours, lunch and transport. This event has already sold out. There is a waiting list available.

Monday 1 December 2025: A Mince Pie and Coffee Morning to take place in the Georgian Room, at the Glendower Hotel. A short talk by Kerry Vasiliou, Partnership Director of Creative Blackpool, one of the driving forces behind Showtown and previously having worked at the Grundy Art Gallery. Booking is essential.

Wednesday 14 January 2025: New Year Lunch at the Fairhaven Golf Club. Booking is essential.

Elaine Wolstencroft

MEMBERSHIP

First, we must thank Lesley Peabody-Brewer for her past service in managing the membership records of the Society and dealing so well with the administrative processes. Lesley took the decision to step down from this role earlier in 2025 for health reasons. We send Lesley our thanks and best wishes.

Having been Membership Secretary some years ago, Olga Depledge offered to undertake this role on an interim basis, particularly so that the important membership renewal process could continue as smoothly as possible. Olga is proposed to the AGM as Membership Secretary for the coming year; if any member would like to consider taking on this role in subsequent years, Olga or Tony will be happy to talk this through. We do need members to volunteer for the various jobs that keep the Society running – please give this some thought and ask yourself what you could do to benefit the Society.

The renewals process for the 2025/6 season has gone well. At the time of writing this report, we had 158 members. We are looking to increase this number to help maintain the Society's viability. An apology and an explanation: some members ask why they need to complete a Membership Form as part of the renewal process. The reason is, of course, that we need to keep our records up-to-date: a surprisingly large number of members have moved house, changed their email address, moved to a mobile phone number or cancelled their land-line, all of which we can only pick up when Membership Forms are completed each year. Sorry if this seems an unnecessary bit of work – it does help us have accurate membership records.

One big change over recent years has been the increase in the use of credit and debit cards to pay Membership fees. About 75% of members pay either by BACS or credit card – and of this group, slightly over half chose the card payment option. The importance of credit cards was highlighted at the September lecture when a technical issue locked all the credit card readers on the Society's account. We are working to resolve this problem as soon as possible, given the importance of credit and debit cards to our payment processes.

COMMUNICATIONS

With costs in mind we are continuing with our paperless policy to communicate with members wherever possible – very little is printed now. Members have got used to receiving lecture leaflets, booking forms, newsletters, etc. electronically. We realise that not everyone has email access and/or a printer so we do still offer a few event booking/membership forms in a paper format for members to complete at lectures.

Nearly all members provide us with an email address and this is our primary channel of communication to distribute news. With recruitment of new members in mind, we are conscious that we need to use social media to communicate to a wider audience. We primarily use Facebook as this is the fastest growing social media option for people in our target demographic. The Lowther distributes news of our forthcoming lectures via its website and printed brochures, which provides us with extensive publicity. When we question visitors as to where they heard about us they often mention the Lowther brochure and Facebook – but word of mouth is mentioned most.

Our society's newsletter *In the Picture* is published twice a year and distributed to members electronically. Thanks to those members who have submitted items for this year's issues. We very much appreciate your contributions.

We are partaking in a marketing pilot organised by The Arts Society over the next few months and it will be interesting to see how we experiment with new ways of communicating with existing members, but mainly how we engage with our local community.

Pam Foster

HERITAGE PROJECT

Ten members of The Arts Society Fylde have been involved in a Heritage Project at Lytham Hall during the last year. A few members had to retire from the project and they are thanked for their contribution; and we are pleased to welcome two new volunteers. We are assisting the Archivist by preparing documentation listing the main objects, furniture, pictures, ceramics, etc., in each room of the Hall. We provide a detailed description of the item together with any distinguishing marks and photograph it. The project is progressing well and the Hall are grateful for our help.

Hilary Cresswell, project coordinator

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2024-2025

Chair	Sarah Clayden
Vice Chair	Vacancy
Treasurer	Hilary Cresswell

(Acting) Secretary	Jane Robson
Membership Secretary	Olga Depledge
Programme Secretary	Anne Gaskell
Communications Officer	Pam Foster
Events Coordinator	Elaine Wolstencroft
Tony Berwick	(co-opted)
Tony Depledge	(co-opted)
Kirsteen McGlashen Hansen	(co-opted)
Matthew Willey	(co-opted)

TREASURER'S REPORT

In March this year Lloyd's Bank started imposing monthly Bank Charges at a basic rate plus an additional amount for transactions. The Committee decided that it would be sensible to manage the Good Causes account as a part of the General Account. To this end the Good Causes bank account was closed at the end of July and the balance transferred to the General Account. All Good Cause transactions such as income from raffles and charitable expenditure will be separately identifiable. The Reserve Account and the Savings Account do not incur bank charges.

To meet best accounting practice all payments are now authorised by two people.

Expenditure for speakers, their travel expenses and the hire of Lowther Pavilion has risen considerably and each lecture now costs us nearly £1,000. This cannot be met by membership subscriptions alone so fundraising events are important in helping the society to meet its running costs.

The increasing use of the Zettle machines has made payments easier for members and we now have four people with access. There is a small fee per transaction.

Hilary Cresswell, Treasurer

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

THE ARTS SOCIETY FYLDE CURRENT ACCOUNT

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31/7/25

INCOME

C/F 31.07.24	1695.08
Subscriptions	10418.00
Gift Aid	166.00
Visitors Fees	870.00
Bank to Bank transfers	1354.49
Events	5335.50
Good Causes AC	997.60
Refund	427.59
donation	15.01

Cream Tea	540.00
TOTAL	21819.27

EXPENDITURE

Lecture Fees	3511.00
Lecturers Expenses	1055.58
TAS Affiliation Fee	2881.18
NW Area Fee	153.90
Bank to Bank transfers	1444.29
Bank Fees	24.21
Hire of Lowther	4189.80
Website	126.90
Storage	629.88
Committee Expenses	261.35
Printing/Newsletter/Postage/	480.90
Events	4753.29
Zettle fees	131.30
Cream Tea	100.00
Good Causes	26.98
TOTAL	19770.56

SURPLUS/DEFICIT AT 31.07.25

<u>£1111.11 plus £937.62 Good Causes</u>	<u>2048.73</u>
Cash Floats	40.00

GOOD CAUSES ACCOUNT

INCOME

B/F 31.07.24	997.00
Income from raffles at lectures & Study Days	883.00
TOTAL	1880.00

EXPENDITURE

Raffle prizes	292.00
Craft Materials for Brian House & Victoria Hospital Children's Ward	304.00
Panto Tkts	324.00
Bank Charges	22.00
Transfer to General A/C	938.00
TOTAL	1880.00

SURPLUS/DEFICIT AT 31.07.25

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RESERVE ACCOUNT

INCOME

C/F 31.07.24	5477.00
Interest	53.00
Interest Fixed Savings Acc	444.00
TOTAL	5974.00

EXPENDITURE	0.00
SURPLUS/DEFICIT AT 31.07.25	<u>5974.00</u>

FIXED SAVINGS ACCOUNT	
DEPOSIT AT 31.07.23	10000.00
From Reserve Account	100.00
TOTAL ON FIXED SAVINGS ACCOUNT	<u>10100.00</u>

ALL FUNDS SUMMARY	
CURRENT ACCOUNT	10198.00
GOOD CAUSES ACCOUNT	0
RESERVE ACCOUNT	5974.00
FIXED TERM DEPOSIT ACCOUNT	10100.00

