

Letter from our Chair

Welcome to The Arts Society Fylde's Autumn newsletter. It has been a busy year and we have all enjoyed some fantastic lectures and social gatherings.

The hard work of the Committee has ensured that the Society has run smoothly with many members picking up extra work as we have some roles still vacant. We are a good team and work well together, supporting each other in our roles. If you would like to join us, please do contact either a Committee member or myself. If you'd just like to come along to one of our meetings and see what it's like before joining, please do. You will receive a very warm welcome and whatever support and help you may require. If you'd like to join us without a specific role that would be good too. We have the following roles vacant: Vice Chair and Membership Secretary.



I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the Committee for all their hard work and support, and also to the many members who have expressed their support for the Society and pleasure for the wonderful lectures each month. I must say a special thank you to Tony and Olga Depledge for taking on the membership renewals this year (on a temporary basis), which ran very smoothly. If anyone feels they would like to help with this in future years please do make contact. We often get asked why members have to complete the membership forms again each year. There are a number of reasons including: the Gift Aid acceptance, new telephone numbers or addresses, or other changes in circumstances. We are grateful to everyone for completing the form and renewing their membership.

The events and lectures over the last few months have been thought provoking and interesting, with talks on our beautiful English parks, Wentworth Woodhouse and English country churches amongst others. The feedback from members has been extremely positive for all lectures, with so many of you commenting on the variety of subjects and quality of the speakers. If anyone would like to be involved in choosing the next set of lecturers, Anne Gaskell, our Programme Secretary, is looking for volunteers to join her group.

The 2025/26 lecture programme continues on into the spring and summer with stimulating lectures, and the Committee and I look forward to welcoming you and your family and friends to each one. Please do spread the word of the Society and what we do. We welcome new members at all times to come along and join us at lectures and the social events we hold.

We held a cream tea in August and had a wonderful and very interesting talk from Alistair Armit on his life and work in the theatre. We hope to hold other social events in the near future, so please keep an eye on our website and at lectures for news of future events. If you have any ideas of what you'd like the Society to do, please do get in touch.

I must not forget to thank the wonderful volunteers who support the Society. Of course, there is the Committee, but many of you also undertake a variety of volunteer roles. We would encourage any of you to join the band of volunteers and get involved with like-minded people to further the Arts across the Fylde.

We have been invited by The Arts Society to be part of a marketing campaign pilot. There will be a number of different strands including Google Ads, leaflet drops to specific areas and special invites to lectures. If you see any of these or are asked by friends or acquaintances what it's about, please encourage people to come along to a lecture and join our group.

The Arts Society Fylde is **your** society and belongs to each and every one of you. Its success is down to how much members get involved and offer their support in attendance at lectures, social events or a few hours volunteering – long may it continue!

Sarah Clayden
Chair, The Arts Society Fylde



Dates for your diary

Please note that we sometimes have to make changes to our programme. Please see our website at www.theartssocietyfylde.org.uk for the latest news on all upcoming lectures and events.



WED 1ST OCT 2025

Worth & Winterhalter: the Mid-19th Century's Masters of Design & Draughtsmanship

Scott Schiavone

Whereas one man depicted the finest and most luxurious fabrics in paint, the other sculpted these fabrics into gowns for the fashionable elite. This lecture brings together a blend of fashion and art, two disciplines that continuously overlap throughout our cultural and social history.

WED 5TH NOV 2025

The History of Musicals

Jamie Hayes

The AGM will be at 1.00 pm prior to the lecture.

Examines the journey of the musical, from its almost accidental beginnings of *The Black Crook* of 150 years ago through to the modern phenomenon which is *Hamilton*. The lecture will highlight the great musical productions, and focus upon the game changing moments of both composers and productions.



WED 4TH FEB 2026

Edith Durham's Bold Edwardian Collection of Beautiful Balkan Things

Elizabeth Gowing

The lecture is illustrated with rich fabrics and great stories from Edith Durham's travels in the first decades of the 20th century. In watercolours and in seven published books she recorded the objects she collected, the landscapes she visited and the people she met.

WED 4 MAR 2026

Charles: King & Collector

Barbara Askew

Charles I's obsession for collecting works of art began when he travelled to Spain and saw the magnificent collection of the Spanish King, Philip IV. Once King, Charles purchased the collection of the Gonzaga Dukes of Mantua which included works by Titian, Raphael and Andrea Mantegna's series of paintings The Triumphs of Caesar.



WED 1ST APR 2026

There's More to Life Than Lowry: Painting in Northern Britain in the 20th Century

Ed Williams

Who were these, often forgotten, individuals who sought to challenge the conventional wisdom of their training and metropolitan art market? This lecture considers these artists and painters who sought to embrace the new visual language of modernism, but whose approach recognised and embraced the urban and natural landscapes of Northern Britain.





RHS at Wentworth Woodhouse: breathing new life into Britain's grandest stately home

By Pam Foster

Our April 2025 lecture, Scandal, Spite & Shuttlecocks: Wentworth Woodhouse - Britain's Largest & Least Known Country House, by David Winpenny, aroused a lot of interest. This largely unknown Georgian house, in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, with a façade more than twice the length of Buckingham Palace, and a history stretching across political revolutions, industrial might and artistic grandeur, is entering a new chapter in its evolution - thanks to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), who chose Wentworth Woodhouse to be a new Flower Show venue for 2025. The RHS was already working with the Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in restoring and developing the extensive gardens and grounds, and saw the Flower Show as an opportunity to reach out to local

communities, schools, designers, nurseries and other stakeholders. Wentworth Woodhouse won *Historic Houses' Garden of the Year* in 2022 and became an RHS Partner Garden at the beginning of 2023.

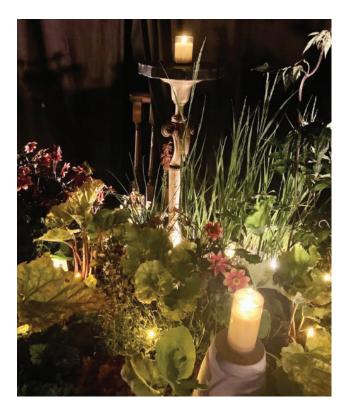
The House's immense grounds showcased both a series of feature and show gardens, including a miner's cottage and a Teenage Dirt Park for BMX bikes; a Floral Marquee housed 52 growers and nurseries, as well as community groups and colleges. There were a series of events providing advice and demonstrations from gardening experts, including a talk by our very own Greg Anderton from Leafy Lytham! We're delighted that he also won a Gold Medal at the show – congratulations Greg.



The house was also open, providing visitors with a glimpse of the grandeur of a couple of the rooms. Floral tributes to paintings of horses were dotted around, a reminder that one of the most important British paintings of the 18th century, *Whistlejacket*, by George Stubbs, was painted at Wentworth Woodhouse after being commissioned by the second Marquess of Rockingham to paint a commemorative life-size portrait of his prize horse.

On display in the chapel was an installation piece, *RHS Rhubarb by Candlelight*, by Jordan Lister. This slightly surreal piece was a tribute to the West Yorkshire Rhubarb Triangle forcing sheds, where heat and the lack of light forces the plant to grow at such a rate that you can hear it cracking. A creaking soundtrack mimicked the sounds for visitors.





Overall, the show offered the high standard and variety we have come to expect from RHS Flower Shows - the house and estate certainly offer a vast space for such events and, according to the RHS, it will more than likely return in 2028. However, there were some problems with the infrastructure - jams on the roads getting into the estate - no coach park so that passengers were left waiting for over an hour before getting picked up - problems that will, hopefully, be resolved before 2028.

Wentworth Woodhouse has often been described as a 'sleeping giant', but with the RHS's arrival and the Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust's dedication to restoration, the estate is undergoing something of a renaissance. We look forward to seeing the revival of this Grade 1-listed house as a catalyst for positive change in the South Yorkshire region.

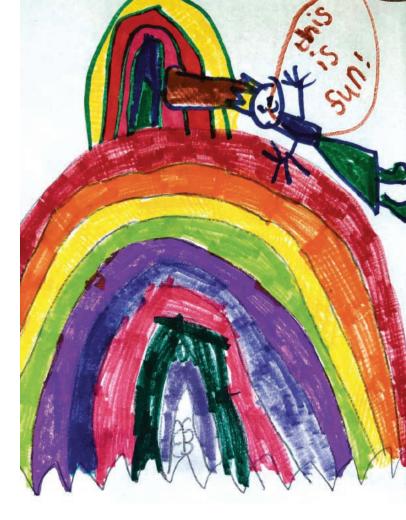


Art is a powerful tool for children's well being

The Arts Society Fylde is proud to support the Children's Clinic at Blackpool Victoria Hospital and Brian House (the Specialist Children's Unit within Trinity Hospice), by providing art materials to improve the hospital experience for sick and ill children. For over 10 years now, money, raised mainly through our raffles, has funded this community project. Our thanks to all who have contributed over the years and to our volunteers who liaise with the hospitals to make this happen. We have received a thank you letter from the Hospital Play Specialist at the Children's Clinic Out Patients Department, at Blackpool Victoria Hospital:

To Everybody at The Arts Society,

Once again, I would like to say a very BIG Thank You for deciding to choose the Children's Clinic at Blackpool Victoria Hospital as one of your chosen causes. We are ever so grateful and thankful for supplying us with art materials for our poorly children. They truly love making things - it puts a smile on their faces. Having art in hospitals has so many benefits and is extremely important



Using art and craft sessions in hospital improves the hospital experience for children, acting as a powerful tool to reduce stress, anxiety and pain. Art plays a significant role in improving these. It helps children cope with illness, hospitalisation, emotional well-being and even with recovery rates. In the Children's Clinic OPD I use art as a distraction from what can be a stressful environment and medical procedures, this providing a sense of normalcy and comfort. I also run play sessions for children who are struggling coming into hospital for their procedures. The art sessions are to promote emotional expressions; they provide a creative outlet for children to process their emotions, cope with difficult feelings and encourages them to express themselves when words are not enough. It is vital as a Health Play Specialist I use art - and your continued support to provide materials is imperative for myself to create sessions for children in my care.



A Grand Cream Tea

In August we held a Summer Cream Tea at the Glendower Hotel in St Annes. As we don't have a lecture in August, the event provided an opportunity for members and their friends to get together before our new season of lectures started in September. As is usual with these sort of events we were treated to a short talk, this time by Alistair Armit, Chair, Blackpool Grand Theatre Arts & Entertainment Board of Trustees, who spoke on 'My Life in Theatre'. And what a lively and entertaining talk it turned out to be!

A former theatre consultant and arts professional, Alistair was appointed Chairman for the Arts & Entertainment Board, at the Grand Theatre last year. He is from an extensive arts background, having spent the first 11 years of his career as a professional opera singer, appearing in performances at Glyndebourne and the Royal Northern College of Music for Carl Rosa Opera and Royal Opera North. His career then took him to behind the theatrical scenes and he worked his way up through theatre management roles before moving into IT, working with theatres and visitor attractions on both Broadway and London's West End. He worked on the launch of Moulin Rouge on Broadway, being a consultant for stadiums ranging from the Dallas Cowboys to Manchester City, to the installation of software at Buckingham Palace.



More recently, his career has taken him away from theatre to run the technology office of the Ingeus global company, which provides government contracts to support people back into work, engage and inspire young people and provide outreach work into the prison service. In all, quite a career, especially when you factor in two years spent as a member of the cabin crew for Easy Jet!

We held our usual raffle, with the lucky first prize winner collecting two tickets to see Noel Coward's Blithe Spirit, which is on at the Grand Theatre, 28 October until 1 November.

We hope to hold another of these popular Coffee Morning/Afternoon Tea events very soon.







Legacies

By Fiona Walmsley-Collins

I recently read, with interest, Diane Abbott's piece in the Saturday Guardian's Supplement Journal (21/06/25) entitled This Windrush Day, I celebrate that proud and bold generation. In her article she describes attending a Windrush Day reception in the gardens of No 10 Downing Street, earlier in her week. The event was also attended by survivors of the Windrush 'Scandal'. In her piece she describes her own childhood, living with the experience of her father buying a house in 'a shabby' part of west London, renting out rooms to tenants to help pay the family mortgage. In the basement was an Irish family, headed up by 'Uncle Jimmy'. Uncle Jimmy was later used as a 'decoy' by her parents to answer the door to passing Teddy Boys looking for Black families to victimise, racially and violently!

The reason I was so interested in Ms Abbott's article was because I had just finished reading, the historian Clair Wills' book, *Lovers and Strangers: An Immigrant History of Post-War Britain* (Penguin Publication 2017). Like me, Ms Willis is the daughter of an Irish mother from the 1950s Diaspora, who came to England for work, akin to my own mother. The Diaspora consisted of many people from rural areas of both Northern and Southern Ireland. What Ms Abbott's comments did in her article, for me, was bring to life a flesh and blood story onto the bones of the facts from Ms Wills' book. Ms Wills discusses at length the difference between migration and immigration between the post war years and the mid-1960s.

Last December, my husband Michael and I were invited to the preview of the documentary *Breaking Barriers: The Paula Dunn Story*, screened at the Contact Theatre in Manchester. The subject of the documentary is the successful athlete, coach and former track sprinter Paula Dunn MBE. It was made by her son and a team of his media friends, to pay homage to her as the first female and woman of colour to be the Head Coach for both the Para Athletics and Olympic (Paris 2024) UK Athletics Team. These recent career achievements follow on from her successful competitive achievements as a sprinter.

We stayed overnight in Manchester and the next day we attended *Being Here*, the first major survey exhibition of the acclaimed British artist Barbara Walker MBE, at the Whitworth Art Gallery. Barbara Walker is a successful artist and a woman of colour. She makes art work that reflects her family origins and cultural background, often including subjects of colour that have, in the main, been omitted from mainstream 'Art History'. The exhibition brought together over 70 works spanning Walker's career from the 1990s to today, including her Turner Prize nominated portrait series *Burden of Proof* (2022-23) and rarely seen drawings, alongside a major new wallpaper commission.



As well as her huge figurative portraits, the exhibition displayed more 'provocative' work, two pieces of which I found particularly interesting: firstly, the collection of images worked on the Stop and Search forms entitled Louder Than Words (2006-2009), which had been issued to her son by the West Midlands Police during the early 2000s; and, secondly, her 'wallpaper' entitled Soft Power (2024), which covered an entire wall of the gallery and included portraits and images of a Windrush population in British 'working-class' roles such as soldiers, a bus conductor and my favourite, as a former trained nurse, a group of nurses grouped around a hospital bed being 'lectured' by a white doctor.

The audience at the documentary and visitors to the exhibition were both great examples of inclusion and diversion of all ages, races and genders, which reflects the cultural diversity in the city of Manchester.



Part of Soft Power wallpaper, by Barbara Walker

Both events reflected how important it is, in a cultural context, to acknowledge the successes of 'migrant/immigrant' families and their descendents.

Further information on Barbara Walker is available on her website at www.barbarawalker.co.uk.

Royal days out

By Pat Mobley

I recently had one of those milestone birthdays - I'm not admitting which one! My sister, who is a Blue Badge Guide in London, bought me the unusual present of three Royal Tours, two of which took place recently.

The first was a tour of the newly refurbished East Wing of Buckingham Palace, not previously open to the public. This is the wing that faces The Mall with the famous balcony. At one time the Palace was three-sided and open at the front - it was Victoria's husband Prince Albert, who decided to build a fourth wing and enclose the courtyard. When Victoria sold the Brighton Pavilion to Brighton Council in 1850 for over £50,000 (it wasn't spacious or private enough for her), Albert insisted on stripping the interior of fixtures and fittings, including the wallpaper! (He put me in mind of a previous occupant of a house I once bought who removed all the light bulbs!). Everything was stored in Buckingham Palace and then re-used to furnish the new wing when it was built. The style -Chinoiserie - will be familiar to anyone who has

visited the Pavilion, as the council refurbished it as it was originally. The wallpaper has recently been restored by a conservation studio in Cumbria and looks like new, as do the beautiful wall panels depicting Chinese scenes. There are no chandeliers but amazing glass light fittings resembling upturned parasols. There are a number of ceiling-high painted china pagodas, and many Chinese lamps, rugs and ornaments. The yellow drawing room immediately behind the balcony is in more conventional style, and it was quite a thrill to peer through the lace curtains and look directly down the Mall, the view the Royal Family have when they stand on the balcony, which is surprisingly narrow. We had an excellent guide but security is paramount and you are even escorted to the rest rooms.

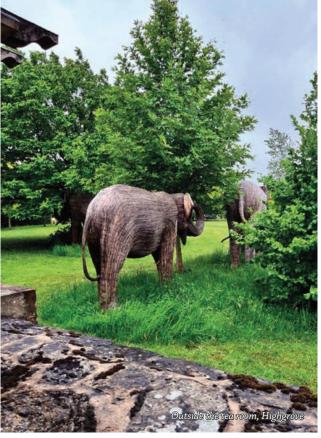


The second tour was of the gardens at Highgrove, the King and Queen's private residence in Gloucestershire. Sadly, it poured with rain for most of our tour with another excellent guide, but we could still appreciate the beauty of the gardens designed as a series of 'rooms.' When the King took over the house over 40 years ago, it consisted of a neglected kitchen garden, an overgrown copse, pastureland and a few hollow oaks. Today, each area represents the King's interests and enthusiasms. There are Cottage, Mediterranean, Sundial and Kitchen gardens, a wildflower meadow and much more. The last garden to see is the Carpet garden, based on a Turkish rug in the house, with tiles designed by the King. There is a lovely, purpose-built tea room and shop - all proceeds from these and the tours go to the King's Foundation.

I would strongly recommend both tours. Unfortunately, photos are not allowed on either tour apart from the tearoom.

The third tour will take place later – Buckingham Palace again, but this time including the Royal Mews and an art exhibition. It's not well known but Prince Charles, now of course King Charles, takes an artist or artists (expenses paid) with him on foreign tours, with the brief to sketch and paint scenes and people in the country visited. He then selects some works for the Royal Archive and the artist is free to sell the others. Some of those selected will be displayed in the King's Tour Artists exhibition opening 10th July to 28th September 2025. I am looking forward to the last of my birthday presents!









A tale of two houses

By Allan Foster

In mid-June, during a lovely spell of weather, we went on a road trip to the area I grew up in Somerset and then on to Devon. We visited four very interesting 'houses' – Hestercombe House (near Taunton), Agatha Christie's former house, Greenways (near Dartmouth in Devon), Castle Drogo (Drewsteignton, near Exeter) and Harbury Hall (near Droitwich Spa in Worcestershire).

I will concentrate on the latter two which are both National Trust properties and, whilst very different in architecture and histories, illustrate some common elements in the role of the aristocracy in the social, cultural and political framework of England.

Hanbury Hall is an 18th century country house located in Worcestershire, a few miles off the M5. It was built in 1701 for Thomas Vernon, a wealthy chancery lawyer and landowner. The hall is a fine example of early Georgian architecture, with brick construction and a symmetrical design. This 'William and Mary' style country house, is set in beautiful

landscaped gardens and parkland, and it is known for its stunning interiors and ornate decorative features.

Vernon's ancestors gradually accumulated land in the Hanbury area but it was Thomas and his successful legal practice who developed the estate, which at the time of his death in 1721 had grown to almost 8,000 acres.

The National Trust took over the ownership of the House and Gardens in the early 1960s.

A notable feature of Hanbury Hall is the rather extraordinary painting of the staircase, hall ceiling, and other rooms by the English painter Sir James Thornhill. Thornhill (1675-1734) was also responsible for some large-scale schemes of murals, including the Painted Hall at the Royal Hospital, Greenwich, the paintings on the inside of the dome of St Paul's Cathedral, and works at Chatsworth House and Wimpole Hall.



The Grand Staircase is the jewel in the crown of Hanbury Hall. Designed to wow and impress, all four walls and the ceiling are painted with great dramatic scenes from Greek mythology.

Starting with the ceiling, there is the Assembly of the Gods and Goddesses staring down on all who visit the House. The stairwell ceiling is a depiction of Mount Olympus, home for a small group of the gods called Olympians.

One particularly interesting aspect of this work is the intrusion of politics to the world of fine art. The pictures include a small representation of Rev Henry Sacheverell being cast to the furies – this relates to an incident in 1710 when Sacheverell, a Tory, was put on trial for sedition by the Whig government, and dates the paintings to that year.

The House owner, Thomas Vernon, was a staunch supporter of the Whig Government, which during Queen Anne's reign was sidelined and then overthrown as Anne preferred the Tories. The Whig party at the time were opponents of Queen Anne and Thomas would have been happy to have the political disputes played out within his wall paintings. His guests and clients would have been in no doubt as to his political affiliations when they viewed the paintings. He became Whig MP for Worcester in 1715.

The focus of the paintings around the stairwell is the life of the Greek hero Achilles, as told by a range of classical sources. They are surmounted by a large representation of the Olympian gods on the ceiling.

These paintings themselves justify a visit to the Hall along with the splendid gardens originally designed in 1705 by George London, one of the most celebrated garden designers of his time, creating gardens for royalty and nobility at Chatsworth, Hampton Court and Kensington Palace.



English gardens at the time were heavily influenced by William of Orange's gardens at Paleis Het Loo in the Netherlands, as well as those of Louis XIV at Versailles. In George London's interpretations, garden designs became softer and more incorporative of the surrounding English Landscape. London created gardens where people could escape the tumultuous early 18th century world with his formal designs, using mathematical precision and newly imported plants. He created a haven for drama, fun and recreation.

Two hundred years later and 160 miles further south, a very different venture was undertaken in the bucolic setting of the Devonshire countryside. Castle Drogo is a 20th-century mixed revivalist castle, designed by the famous architect Edwin Lutyens. It was built between 1911 and 1930 near Drewsteignton, Devon, high above the beautiful Teign River. Constructed between 1911 and 1930, it was the last castle to be built in England. The client was Julius Drewe, the millionaire founder of what grew to be a vast chain of retail outlets, which some of us may still remember, called the Home and Colonial Stores.





The Castle has a distinctively modern design with some traditional elements. It is known for its impressive views of the surrounding countryside and its extensive gardens. Drewe was inspired by the rugged Dartmoor tors that surround it and was shaped and chiselled by hand out of local granite. The project caused a significant burden on the locality as the county's two large granite quarries in the south and north of Devon were denuded of their materials due to the demand of building the Castle. Given that Dartmoor is founded on granite then that underlined the volume of stone required!

Drewe chose the site in the belief that it formed part of the lands of his supposed medieval ancestor, Drogo de Teigne. The architect he chose to realise his dream was Edwin Lutyens, then at the height of his fame and reputation. Lutyens lamented Drewe's determination to have a castle but nevertheless produced one of his finest buildings. The architectural critic Christopher Hussey described the result: "The ultimate justification of Drogo is that it does not pretend to be a castle. It is a castle, as a castle is built, of granite, on a mountain, in the 20th century".

The relationship between Julius and Edwin Lutyens was 'problematic'. Drewe was insistent that the design of the Castle should incorporate a flat roof. Lutyens tried to persuade him otherwise. He said to Drewe "You do know that this is one of the wettest areas of the country. Constructing a flat roof will cause problems of water ingress." However, Drewe was the stubborn client and reaffirmed his wishes. Early on, but after Drewe's death in 1931, Lutyens warning proved entirely correct and it took a number of years and a considerable amount of money to sort out the problem. The lesson is when designing buildings, always believe an architect rather than a businessman, however successful!

The castle was given to the National Trust in 1974, the first building constructed in the 20th century that the Trust acquired. The castle is a Grade listed building. The gardens are Grade II* listed on the National Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.



New museum for St Annes: the birth of the British jukebox

By Pam Foster

Along with the growth of milk and coffee bars, the jukebox gave 1950s teenagers an opportunity and the freedom to explore and listen to music aimed at them – remember there were few outlets for young people to listen to popular music in the fifties and sixties – the BBC had a near monopoly on broadcasting and would censor music, primarily on the grounds of lyrical content deemed too sexual, morbid, or suggestive of drug use. No wonder then that jukeboxes were central to the growth of youth culture.

During the fifties a British jukebox industry, based in large part in Blackpool and Lytham, flourished by creating a distinctive, original machine that owed little in its design to its US equivalent. Ditchburn Equipment Ltd of Dock Road in Lytham, which closed about 50 years ago, was one of the first manufacturers of jukeboxes in the UK and was the only maker of British jukeboxes for a decade.

Local engineer Karl Dawson was originally a collector of slot and pinball machines, but after selling his collection he started to look for a Ditchburn jukebox to restore, as the basis of a new collection. He soon became fascinated with the company and began collecting photos and documents connected with Ditchburn. These are now available on his website ditchburn.co.uk, which provides an extensive electronic archive devoted to the history of the company - its machines, its people, etc. Meanwhile, Karl's passion for buying and restoring Ditchburn jukeboxes has seen his collection grow. His ambition was to open a local museum devoted to exhibiting the machines and in May this year, his mission was fulfilled with the opening of the Ditchburn Museum and Coffee Bar at 19 Alexandria Drive, Lytham St Annes FY8 1JF.



It is thanks to Karl Dawson that this important piece of local history and its influence on British youth culture is being kept alive. The Museum is solely funded by Karl and through donations from friends, visitors and ex-Ditchburn employees. Pop along for a coffee and cake, and take the opportunity to play some tunes from your youth - and enjoy a trip down Memory Lane!

(An episode of the BBC's Antiques Road Trip includes a visit to the Ditchburn Museum and a short interview with Karl. Please <u>click here</u> – the Ditchburn item starts 11.20 minutes in)





The Arts Society Fylde theartssocietyfylde.org.uk

A member of The Arts Society

Members pursue a mutual interest in the arts through lectures on a wide range of decorative and fine arts topics including art, sculpture, jewellery design, architecture and garden design. Lectures are on the first Wednesday of the month at 2pm at the Lowther Pavilion, Lowther Terrace, Lytham St Annes FY8 5QQ.

In the Picture is edited by Pam Foster. It is published twice a year in spring and autumn. If you would like to submit an item please contact the editor at pamfos@gmail.com.

Front cover: Hestercombe House, Somerset