



THE ARTS  
SOCIETY  
FYLDE



# In the Picture

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*Newsletter #30 / Spring 2025*

# Letter from our Chair

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As we start 2025 I find we are already in March and I have been in post for 12 months. As the days get longer and the sun shines a bit brighter The Arts Society Fylde continues to blossom.

The last few months have been very busy for the Committee and the Society as a whole. 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, Secretary and Membership Secretary.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Committee for all their hard work and support, and also to the many members who have expressed their support and encouragement to me at lectures. I would also like to thank previous Chairs, Pat Corless and Nigel Bramley-Howarth, for their continued encouragement and guidance over my first year.

The events and lectures over the last few months have been thought provoking and interesting, with talks on fashion, Gustav Holst, Banksy and the great British Parks. 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. There was a fantastic Study Day last November, *Vanessa Bell's Art and Her Tangled Bloomsbury Group Relationships*, by Ray Warburton. This was very well received by all who attended and provided some interesting stories!

Some Fylde members joined with the Samesbury Arts Society on a visit to Glyndebourne last October. This was a wonderful weekend where we visited National Trust properties, Brighton and its Pavilion and of course were treated to a fantastic performance of *La Traviata* at the amazing Glyndebourne theatre.

The 2024/25 lecture programme continues on in 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 will be holding a coffee morning on the 16 April at Fylde Rugby Club with a talk from Mike Bullock on how he used paint, colour and stitching to create a fabric painting of the Fylde's windmills. Many of you will remember seeing the end result displayed at one of our recent lectures. We hope to hold other social events in the near future, so please do keep an eye on our website and at lectures for future events.

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.

*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.theartsocietyfylde.org.uk](http://www.theartsocietyfylde.org.uk) for the latest news on all upcoming lectures and events.

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WED 2ND APR 2025

## Scandal, Spite & Shuttlecocks: Wentworth Woodhouse – Britain's Largest & Least Known Country House

*David Winpenny*

The history and architecture of the house will be laid out alongside the story of the warring families that built and owned it – a story of political execution, madness, child-substitution, socialist vindictiveness, royal visits...and badminton



WED 16TH APR 2025

## Spring Coffee & Pastries Morning, Fylde Rugby Club at 10.30 am

Includes a short talk by Mike Bullock on 'Windmill Land'.



WED 14TH MAY 2025

## Scandinavian Landscape Painting (1840-1910)

*Caroline Levisse*

Will explore various ways in which nature has been represented by Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish painters from 1840 to 1910. As we will see nature mirrored a national identity or an artist's inner world.



WED 4TH JUN 2025

## How to Read the English Country Church

*Nicholas Henderson*

It is possible to 'read' the passage of time, movements, cultures and peoples in the architecture and art forms evident in many of our English country churches. We will look at overarching eras from the pre-Christian era to contemporary changes that have influenced and altered church buildings.



TUE 1ST JULY 2025

## Writers in 1920s Tahiti

*Simon Keable-Elliott*

Following in the footsteps of Paul Gauguin, Robert Louis Stephenson, Rupert Brooke and Somerset Maugham, a number of English-speaking writers settled in Tahiti in the 1920s. The lecture looks at what drew writers to Tahiti, their work on the island and their enduring legacy.



# David Hockney: Bigger & Closer

By Pam Foster

*Bigger & Closer (not smaller & further away)* explores Hockney's journey through 60 years of his art from LA to Yorkshire to Normandy – from swimming pools to landscapes to opera set designs. With its vast exhibition space, Manchester's latest art centre - Factory International - provided the perfect setting for the large scale projection of the many 360 degree perspectives on offer, all set against a specially composed score by Nico Muhly and a commentary by Hockney himself.

Vibrant colours and projections of Hockney's works, featuring his iconic swimming pools, landscapes and portraits, filled vast walls and swirled around the auditorium, showing how he experiments with perspective, and uses photography as a way of 'drawing with a camera'. Amusing animations accompanied many of the projections. His love of technology, particularly his use of the iPad, was integrated seamlessly into the exhibition. A particularly outstanding and memorable scene was a *Wagner Drive* – a drive through Californian mountains

with Wagner's music blaring. Jonathan Jones, art critic of the [Guardian](#), said of the London showing of *Bigger & Closer*: "Opera has a champion in David Hockney – just at its moment of need. While London's opera houses fight for their existence against a hostile arts council, Hockney gives a demonstration of how democratic an art form it is by driving through California with Wagner blaring out, each bend in the mountain road timed to the music's unfurling sublimity. And you feel as if you are in the open-top car with him, as a film of this joyous stunt is projected on to the deep, wide walls and floor of the Lightroom in London, with sound embracing you like the waters of a Hockney pool."

Factory International deserves praise too for its relaxed and welcoming set up. The hour long show could be viewed from an overhead balcony or, for a much more immersive experience, from the floor of the gallery where colours and shapes twirled and swirled amongst the visitors, making it a truly spectacular experience.

# The Greatest Picture Book Ever: The Birds of America - John James Audubon

By Chris David

A four volume book of bird paintings was published in the UK from 1827 to 1838. It was the result of years of effort by a brilliant ornithologist and artist called John James Audubon and comprised 435 pages or plates. The first of these is the beautifully drawn Plate 1 - Wild Turkey after which the bourbon whiskey is named.

John James Audubon was born in French Haiti in 1785 to a wealthy French plantation owner and a creole woman. His father brought him to France in 1791, but in 1803, when Audubon was 18, he sent him to his estate in the USA to avoid conscription in Napoleon's army. He became an American citizen in 1812 and spent years trying various business ventures but his main interests since childhood were birds and art.

At the time much of North America was undiscovered by Europeans, and Audubon travelled at some personal risk, drawing and painting birds, with the intention of recording them all. This was a task which was to take him 14 years to complete. He decided to paint them life size on double elephant folio (990x660cm) sheets of paper. But even with such large sheets some birds, such as the Plate 431 - American Flamingo, had to be unnaturally contorted to fit.



Plate 1 - Wild Turkey



Plate 431 - American Flamingo

What separated Audubon from previous naturalist painters were the methods he used. Although trained in taxidermy he realised that many past bird paintings based on stuffed examples looked stiff and unnatural. Instead, he shot the birds and mounted them using a frame and wires, arranging them to appear as if they were in their natural habitat. He also hired hunters to gather specimens for him. In fact, looking at the lower right of Plate 242 – Snowy Heron or White Egret you can see a hunter with a gun coming up the hill. This is one of only two of the paintings which have human figures in them.

Audubon generally used watercolour when painting, but there is also evidence of the use of pastels, chalk and gouache. He tended to limit his use of oils to portraits, which he sold to fund his activities. Although he painted the birds, many of the plant life and landscape backgrounds were painted by others, such as his assistant Joseph Mason, who was not credited at the time. The aim was to give perspective and natural backgrounds. A fine example of a background is shown in Plate 77 – Belted Kingfisher.



Plate 242 – Snowy Heron or White Egret

Having failed to find a publisher for his pictures in the USA, Audubon travelled to England in 1826 where he engaged Robert Havell to publish the works. They were engraved, printed and then individually coloured. Wealthy subscribers eventually received 87 sets of five prints: one large, one medium and three small. Two hundred copies of the 435 plates were produced in total, usually bound into four volumes. This means a total of 18,000 prints were hand coloured in an industrial scale operation, with 40 colourists working from a master copy, in one large room. The total cost of publication over a 12 year period was \$115,000. Between 1840 and 1844 Audubon also published an octavo sized (254x165mm) version which had 1,100 subscribers.



Plate 77 – Belted Kingfisher

*The Birds of America*, as it became known, and Audubon himself, became hugely popular in England and Scotland in the first half of the 19th century. He hired halls to display drawings and charged admission to raise funds. A natural showman, he created a backwoods' image to gain attention, dressing the part. He promoted scientific research and opened his own museum in the USA. In the UK he became a member of the Royal Society and George IV was a keen supporter.

Audubon died in 1851 and has now been proved to be not particularly honest. His autobiography is a mixture of fact and fiction. He is also believed to have invented at least one of the birds he painted, Plate 11 – Bird of Washington, which nobody else has seen in reality. The Audubon Society of America, the equivalent of our RSPB, has struggled in recent years over the use of his name, as he was a slave owner and an opponent of abolition. But the more positive aspects of his legacy far outweigh the negative. He produced wonderful paintings which are much admired today. He changed the approach to representing birds, and, subsequently, mammals in art, and influenced generations of ornithologists. He increased the knowledge of bird anatomy and behaviour, and documented the species in existence in North America 200 years ago. Since then seven of the species he painted are believed to have become extinct. *Plate 26 – Carolina Parrot* is one of these.



*Plate 11 – Bird of Washington*

Of the 200 sets of the original prints in four volumes, 119 are known to survive today, with many of the others probably having been split up into individual pages. Most of these remaining sets are in museums and other institutions, with just a small number in private collections. There are several sets in the UK. One of them is in Liverpool Central Library, where a



*Plate 26 – Carolina Parrot*

volume is usually on display, but with only one page viewable each day. The Natural History Museum has two sets. In 2011 it disassembled one of these and photographed each plate in high resolution. It then published a one volume book in a slip case. Although out of print, a second-hand copy today costs about £120. They do however still publish a smaller hard-back book of all the plates for £40.

On the other hand, if you fancy buying an original set, in 2010 one sold at auction for \$11.5 million, and another in 2018 for £9.6 million.

**Acknowledgement:** The images used in this article are courtesy of the John James Audubon Centre, Mill Grove, Montgomery County Audubon Collection and Zebra Publishing.

**References:**

*The Birds of America*, John James Audubon, published by the Natural History Museum, London, 2011.

The Natural History Museum website – Jay Sullivan, January 2022.

The Audubon Society website.

*The Art Book*, first published by Phaidon Press Limited, 1994.

*Chambers Biographical Dictionary*, published by Chambers Harrap Publishers Limited.



Canons Ashby

# Celebrating the 90th anniversary of Glyndebourne

By Sarah Clayden

*In October last year, The Arts Society Fylde joined forces with the Samlesbury Society for a three-day 'Glyndebourne Opera Tour'. Our Chair, Sarah Clayden, was on the trip and shares some of the highlights with us below.*

We gathered early on Saturday morning, met our coach at our designated pick-up points, and set off on our trip.

After a couple of comfort breaks, we arrived at the National Trust property Canons Ashby. We learned that the Hall is a Grade I listed Elizabethan Manor, built around 1550 and the home of the Dryden family until its acquisition by the National Trust in the 1980s, who restored it to its current excellent condition.

We arrived at the 4\* Hydro Hotel in Eastbourne later that evening, where we gathered for dinner and had an opportunity to meet more of our fellow travellers. The next day we were met by our Blue Badge guide, who gave us a thoroughly detailed and informative commentary along our journey to Brighton Pavilion. We were treated to a fascinating guided tour of King George IV's Pavilion, which is an eye-catching example of the Indian influenced architecture, which was prevalent in the 19th century.



In the afternoon we made our way to Glyndebourne for our performance of Verdi's opera La Traviata. This was an outstanding "bucket list" event, with amazing performances, on a stunning, minimalist stage setting. The 1,200-seat theatre was virtually full and created a great atmosphere. The event was topped off with an excellent dinner in the theatre restaurant.

The next day we started our return journey and visited another National Trust property, Standen House & Gardens, previously built and owned by the Beale family. Standen was constructed using local materials and traditional construction methods: only 'the best materials and workmanship' would do – a practice in line with the ideals of Arts and Crafts.

'A house should be clothed by its garden' - William Morris

The house and garden were intended to be seen as a whole and were designed to complement each other. This followed William Morris's theory that gardens were a continuation of a house and should be used as such. Standen has been called "one of the most charming examples of Arts and Crafts workmanship in the UK".

After our visit we resumed our coach journey back to Samlesbury and Lytham. All in all, an excellent, stimulating and well organised tour.



*Inside Brighton Pavilion*

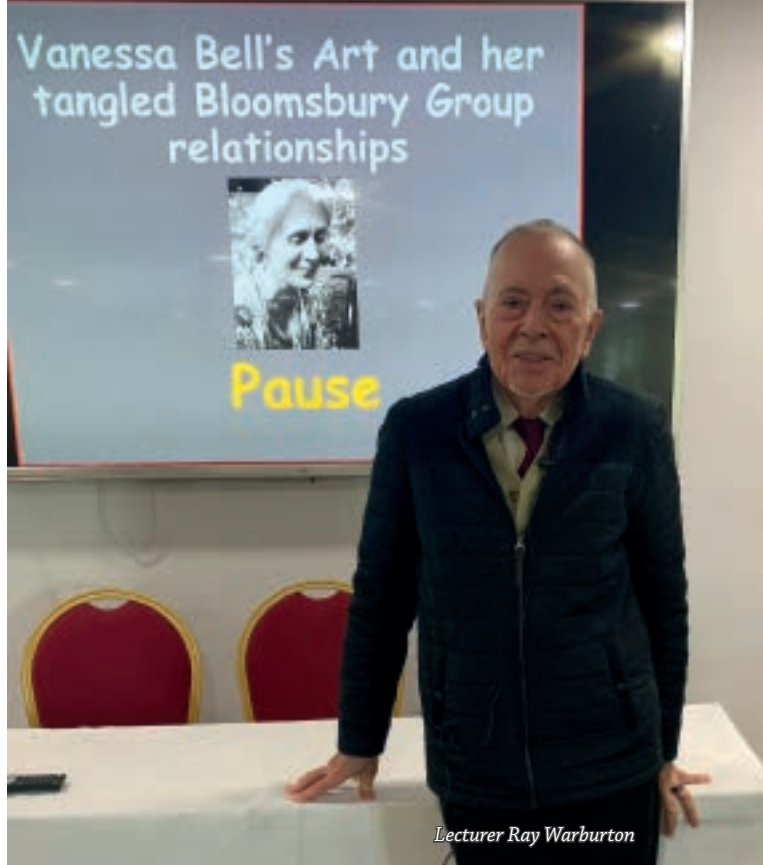


*Standen House & Gardens*

# “They lived in squares, painted in circles, and loved in triangles” – untangling the Bloomsbury Group Study Day

Speaking of the Bloomsbury set, Dorothy Parker famously said that they "lived in squares, painted in circles and loved in triangles". What a tangled web of relationships and talents it was, and who better than Ray Warburton to help us untangle it with his Study Day, *Vanessa Bell's Art and Her Tangled Bloomsbury Group Relationships*. Brian very movingly dedicated his two lectures to our past Programme Secretary, Denise Malpas, who sadly died last autumn. Brian had liaised with Denise a couple of years before when he came to lecture us in 2022 and had enjoyed her company.

Vanessa Bell was the matriarch of the Bloomsbury Group, which comprised 12 core members – Thoby Stephen, Vanessa Bell (née Stephen), Clive Bell,



Lecturer Ray Warburton

Virginia Woolf (née Stephen), Leonard Woolf, Lytton Strachey, EM Forster, JM Keynes, Desmond MacCarthy, Mary MacCarthy (née Warre-Cornish), Duncan Grant and Roger Fry. We learned something about most of the members – their relationships, their books and artworks, and their country houses. We also learned of the Omega Workshop, established by Vanessa, Duncan Grant and Roger Fry in 1913, which created and produced items for sale.

The Study Day provided a fascinating insight into the lives of a privileged group who lived by their own rules, embracing a libertarian society set against the politics and social mores of the day. It was certainly entertaining as well as informative!



Marilyn Smith wins the raffle prize



## Panto joy for local families

Thanks to the generosity of members who support our raffles at lectures and other events - and also to the Lowther who offered reduced price tickets - we were able to bring some Christmas joy to five local families, by purchasing tickets for grand/parents and children to attend the pantomime at the Lowther theatre in Lytham. The families were identified by the St Annes-based Family Hub.

The Family Hub contacted us to thank us and we also heard from some of the children who obviously had a wonderful time. The Family Hub spokesperson said:

"I am writing on behalf of our charity and the families we support to extend our heartfelt gratitude for your generous donation of tickets to the Christmas pantomime 'Snow White: A Christmas Panto' at Lowther Pavilion.

"Thanks to your kindness, many families were able to experience the magic of this wonderful production, creating precious memories together during the holiday season. It was truly heartwarming to hear of the smiles and the laughter of families who enjoyed the show.

"Here are just a few of the wonderful things the children had to say:

"We loved it!"

"We loved it sooo much, thank you again!"

"It was so funny!"

"Me and my mummy and daddy had a great time, thank you."

"Me and my sister laughed all day."

"Hey chicken we are all so excited for this afternoon, just wanted to say thank you again it means a lot 😊  
😊 xxx"

"Panto was great yesterday. The girls absolutely loved it, Evelyn especially, she really got into it! It was a nice afternoon out. X"

"These words reflect the joy and happiness your generosity has brought to so many. The day out allowed families to bond, laugh, and share in the festive spirit, something they will cherish for a long time.

"On behalf of everyone who attended, we are incredibly grateful for your thoughtful contribution and support. This means the world to us."

Our Society's Good Causes account enables us to fund community, heritage and other arts-based projects. We currently also provide art materials to the Children's Clinic at Blackpool Victoria Hospital and Brian House, the Specialist Children's Unit within Trinity Hospice.

We hope to fund more community-based groups with arts-based activities during 2025. If you have any ideas for further projects please do let us know.



*Events Co-ordinator Elaine Wolstencroft with the raffle prizes*

## Welcome to 2025!

Fairhaven Golf Club was the venue for our New Year Lunch at the beginning of January. Guests enjoyed a glass of wine on arrival, followed by a lovely lunch in a very warm and friendly atmosphere.

Our Chair Sarah Clayden thanked the committee and volunteers for their hard work, and was followed by Programme Secretary, Anne Gaskell, who said a few words about our upcoming lecture programme. Everyone agreed it was a lovely event and offered a perfect opportunity for members to catch up with each other.



**The Arts Society Fylde**  
**[theartssocietyfylde.org.uk](http://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](mailto:pamfos@gmail.com).

Front cover: Plate 242 – Snowy Heron or White Egret, by John James Audubon