



# The Easel

Newsletter of Rugby & District Art Society

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## President's Report 2019 – 2020 Season

This report is circulated in place of the cancelled 2020 AGM meeting. The Financial Report will follow later. Apologies for any inconvenience, but hopefully we will be back in normal business by September 2021!

It has been an unprecedented year. The coronavirus erupted in March and shut down activities across the country, and we were affected along with the vast majority of societies and businesses. This left us waiting and wondering when it would end, or even ease, and what to do in the meantime, right through until the scheduled end of our season in September, and, sadly, beyond.

The season, our 83rd, started with the **Annual General Meeting**, in which three new committee members were elected to replace retiring members. They were **Colin Bywater, Ralph de la Croix and Robert Mitchell**. Many thanks were offered to those stepping down: **Joe Douse, David Judd and Gisele Pellegrini**; who had all given loyal and extremely useful service on the committee over a number of years; their contributions will be much missed. All expressed a willingness to maintain their membership and to continue to help where they can, for which we are most grateful.

As for the newly elected, it is not easy to follow and maintain continuity in these circumstances and we appreciate their willingness to step forward and take on responsibilities in the running of the Society. I must add that they have acquitted themselves admirably since.

The Financial Report for 2018/19 was also presented at the AGM, showing a generally healthy state of affairs, with a surplus in the bank and receipts slightly up on expenditure. Nevertheless it was agreed that, in view of the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of Brexit, subscriptions should be increased for the year following the 2020 AGM, the amount to be decided by the committee as the season progressed (please note, however, that the next membership fees will not now be required until September 2021). The figures were scrutinised by an independent examiner, but we will be seeking a new competent person to check next year's figures as this was the last time our current lady can do them; if anyone knows of a suitable acquaintance or professional possibility we would be very happy to contact them.

After a few questions from the floor the forthcoming programme of meetings was presented, plus notice

of a number of exhibitions, sketching evenings and workshops, before Sue Langmead made a delightful and original presentation of her colourful salt glazed dough designs.

Our fully paid-up membership has declined slightly from the previous season, and we have lost one or two long-standing and valued members during this time. Guest numbers were good until the lockdown, however, and membership attendance at meetings was consistently high, usually in the fifties or above.

The monthly speakers were well-received: **Lor Bird's** semi-abstract demonstration picture of Rugby School; **Laura Boswell's** incredible Japanese-style lino & woodcuts; **Susan Watt's** amazing collage skills; **Hashim Akib** (substituting for an unavailable Karen Pittaway) dashing away with his trademark colourful brushwork; before the virus brought everything to a standstill. We hope to retain some of the abandoned speakers for 2021, but the future is far from certain.

The **Christmas evening**, with Rugby mayor councillor **Bill Lewis** presenting awards, mystery guest **David Shepherdson** showing his superb craft pens, and a slap-up feast brought along by members, was enjoyed by all. The critique evening with **Roy Foster, John Lines and Paul Torr** also went very well until Roy's little trick with the cup of coffee had hearts in mouths, which everyone agreed (after the shock) made it all the more enjoyable!

The **Annual Awards Show** in the Floor One Gallery in the town centre looked as splendid as ever – many thanks to all who organised, contributed works and manned the exhibition. The quality and variety that members manage to provide every year is both praiseworthy and heartening, and long may it continue. A list of award winners can be found in the December 2019 edition of 'The Easel'. We also provided an award for the annual Rugby Open exhibition which went to Sarah Parr for her ceramic 'Mr Toad'.

Our long-standing arrangement with the Arnold Restaurant was reluctantly discontinued due to a major rebuilding and refurbishment programme. Well-advanced plans for an exhibition at the Houlton Barn were abandoned, doomed by the pandemic, as was the Rugby Festival of Culture, and a projected coach trip in the summer similarly vanished. We did, however, manage to fit in several workshops and costume-life sessions before the crunch.

Following the ongoing occasional difficulties with uncooperative microphones and computers (and incompetent users), we contemplated purchasing some new easy-to-use technical equipment, but did not come up with a solution before the lockdown. Nevertheless we managed to conduct some committee meetings through the internet with Zoom, and have arranged an experiment with a Zoom painting demonstration for November.

We have tried to keep members informed and in touch during the lockdown through emailed issues of 'The Easel' newsletter. Thanks go to all those members who contributed, and especially to **Jim Watson**, the editor. Thanks, too, to **Jenny Clark**, for our **Facebook** presence, and **Clare Pentlow** for maintaining our **Twitter** account. Indeed thanks go to all those who help behind the scenes to keep the Society functioning, especially the committee members, who work hard and mostly invisibly to keep things on track.

In view of the crisis and its attendant problems the committee will continue in post as an emergency measure until next September – it is impossible (and unnecessary) to arrange any meaningful changes under the present limitations. A provisional future programme has been issued, but will no doubt have to be revised. The committee also agreed to roll over subscriptions until September 2021, since so many meetings had to be cancelled, and they also decided to cancel the annual Floor One exhibition for this year (2020) since it promised to be a logistical nightmare.

It is possible that we may be able to arrange a summer show, but that is not certain. However, the **Floor One exhibition** at the end of 2021 is scheduled to go ahead as usual.

It has been a difficult year in many ways, but we hope you will bear with us until better times arrive. We have received much welcome moral support from members during the pandemic, and hope that this enthusiasm will soon be translated into meeting all our friends again in person. Until then – keep safe and keep smiling! And keep painting.

**Paul Torr / President**  
**October 2020**

### **Arnold Replacement**

The loss of the Arnold restaurant as a display space came just before lockdown, so ironically it was not missed as much as it might otherwise have been. We had hoped we might find a replacement venue, and are pleased to say that we are currently talking to the Hospital of St Cross with a view to a similar rolling programme of paintings in their main corridor.

They assure us that they have recently installed a professional hanging system, and they would be happy for us to organise the displays (and any sales) subject to certain conditions. You must all have lots of lockdown items itching for public display! More details will be available shortly.

### **Financial Help**

We are still looking for a reasonably competent person to check our annual figures. They do not have to be professionally qualified, but some relevant experience is definitely helpful! Payment is available. Please help us with this if you can; you may contact the treasurer on **01788 522365** or **rugbyprager@gmail.com**

### **Future Meetings?**

The **Zoom demonstration** in November will go ahead as planned, but without meeting in Dunchurch Village Hall. Details of how to join the fun will be issued soon, so keep an eye on your emails.

The **Christmas meeting** on 2nd December has reluctantly been cancelled – there are just too many unknowns and difficulties; this means that the mystery guest(s) will have to remain mysterious for at least another year!

The **January meeting** is likewise most uncertain, and unlikely to go ahead.

We have a speaker booked for **February** but will review the situation nearer to the time. If there are to be further changes we will let you know, hopefully well in advance, but rest assured that we intend to recommence our activities as soon as it is safe.

### **Coming Soon!**

Following queries from members here is a reassuring letter from **Mark Warner**, our scheduled **Zoom demonstrator** for 4th November. Members will be issued with the simple link, password & instructions as soon as available.

*Hi Paul,*

*There is little for you to do at all.*

*I will send a link and password to you so that you can then send it on to all who are participating.*

*I will run everything from my studio so not to worry.*

*I will open the meeting and begin to let people on 15 mins before the start to help people out and put all at ease.*

*It really is straight forward. Each person obviously just needs a device such as a laptop or ipad etc and to have downloaded Zoom on their device. Simple as that.*

*I have carried out many of these demos now and don't worry, some have tried it out for the first time but found it really good for all.*

*I will send the password/link and a photo that I will be using for reference in due course probably about a week before the demo.*

*Best wishes Mark*

### **News for Everyone?**

Copies of 'The Easel' are currently being distributed via email, so if you know of anybody who does not have access to a computer please pass on the information, or, better still, print a copy and pop it through their door. Things are difficult enough – so why not spread a little happiness?