

Committee Report 2009/10

Welcome to the 8th AGM of Chester DFAS.

Our Society is thriving with 250 members and 78 on the waiting list. We carefully monitor the attendance at our lectures and only accept a limited number of guests in the months where traditionally there has been spare capacity, for example the summer months. Please continue to check with the Membership Secretary regarding availability of places in the month before the required lecture. As you know we have to abide by the Fire Regulations of our popular venue and this has meant that on a small number of occasions we have had to turn people away.

The committee will continue to review the situation, making assessments of other venues and alternative options. We will endeavour to keep you informed of any possible changes and in the meantime appreciate your co-operation.

This year we have introduced a number of evening lectures which we have opened up to our waiting list, plus members' guests. These have proved very popular and have included lectures on two British artists of the 20th century – David Hockney and Lucian Freud together with “Scandal in Paris: John Singer Sargent’s Mysterious Portrait of Madame X”

Looking back over the year’s lectures arranged by Liz our Programme Secretary, here are just a few highlights. We examined the colourful textiles of Peru with Chloe Sayer, learnt about the Importance of Colour in Painting with Alice Foster, discovered the paintings and songs of Noel Coward, and explored the Arts of Islamic Persia with John Osborne.

We value your feedback on the lectures as we have to complete the NADFAS Lecture Review form after each lecture. In turn the lecturer completes an assessment form – to date we have been rated very highly.

In June Esther arranged a visit to Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, an outstanding example of the 18th Century Palladian Country House, decorated by Adam and furnished in a similar style. From there we travelled to nearby Sudbury Hall, a 17th Century mansion built in the Jacobean style with detailed plasterwork ceilings and fine collections of furniture, paintings and oriental porcelain.

Our visit in October began at the elegant Harris Museum and Art Gallery of Preston whose enthusiastic curators gave us an extensive tour of part of its collection of paintings and ceramics. We then travelled to Blackburn’s Museum and Art Gallery to admire the spectacular Japanese wood block prints, the Russian Icons and Victorian Art.

Our Study days, organised by Margaret continue to be very popular. In November the day featured “Caillebotte the Unknown Impressionist” with the lecturer Margaret Davis. She examined the artist and his paintings, as well as the considerable influence he had in promoting the work of the Impressionist Movement as a whole. Then in February, Tom Duncan examined “The Work of Angels” presenting the glories of early medieval art found in the Irish Church, particularly the Book of Kells.

We continue to be committed to volunteer issues and thank you for your generosity in buying raffle tickets. Marie our Young Arts organiser began with an Arts Day at Kingsley Community School where the artist Russell Kirk, with help from two committee members, worked with the children from years

2 & 4 to create colourful banners based on earth, wind, fire and water. These were used to brighten up the school assembly hall.

An exciting inaugural meeting between North West Young Arts and the Government's Gifted and Talented Scheme took place at Neston High school in October. Chester DFAS have offered "seed" funding for this enterprise which will create a North West Young Arts Gifted and Talented hub based at Neston's art Department.

Norah, our Heritage Volunteers Representative had a busy year beginning with the handover of the Church Kneeler Catalogues to the Cathedral Library. The main group of Heritage Volunteers continued to work at the Chester Records Office, on a range of tasks until August. They have been "on leave" for a few months but will be re-starting their efforts in March. Our "nimble fingered" volunteers, under the leadership of Margaret, have now completed almost 70 Costume Covers for Grosvenor Museum's Costume Collection. The Historic Garden Recording group co-ordinated by Lynne continues with its efforts in researching and recording a range of gardens. In May Norah arranged a private tour at Erdigg for the Heritage Volunteers. At the request of Chester Civic Trust volunteers helped steward the touring Victorian Society's exhibition in July and the Heritage Open Days in September. Also in September Norah organised a lecture by Peter Boughton, the Keeper of Art at the Grosvenor Museum for Heritage Volunteers and other members of the Society.

Many of you will have seen the two Church Records and the photographs on display at January's lectures. You will appreciate the many hours of research spent by the Church Recorders from the joint Tarporley and Chester group and the leadership shown by Liz Lea in collating these records. We plan to create a new Church Recorder group later in the year.

At our monthly lectures we have three dedicated projectionists, Elizabeth Whitfield, John Pemble and Basil Thompson. We thank you all for your efforts in helping to support trouble free lectures.

Chester DFAS has an excellent website created and managed by Cilla, one of our members and of course we have our newsletter edited by Jan, complete with a "Dates for your Diary" section.

I am very fortunate to have such a hard working committee and I send my thanks to all of them. Sadly it is time to say goodbye to Pam, our highly efficient Membership Secretary, to Esther who has led many enjoyable visits, to Judi who has helped with hospitality and finally a special thank you to Liz. She was an inaugural member of the committee and has served as Membership Secretary, Vice Chairman and Programme Secretary – not all at the same time! We also say goodbye to Norah who is standing down as Heritage Volunteers Representative. Our thanks go to all these dedicated workers and of course to the enthusiastic membership.

All good wishes,

Dorothy