

The Arts Society Severn Valley  
AGM Summer 2020  
Chair's Report

Our 2019-2020 Season started promisingly: our lectures and Days of Special Interest were delivered with éclat and our visits well up to their usual high standard, offering us all a wide range of topics either to discover or to learn more about. Many of us were looking forward to our trip to Tuscany in April. Life in Severn Valley was buzzing – as it usually does, I notice.

This does not fall about by accident but is the result of the dedicated work of just a few members who have given a lot of thought and time into offering us all the best possible choices of what is on offer. After a most successful Pre-season coffee morning, Lars Tharp trail-blazed our lectures with his talk on Chinese dragons, and Julian Halsby led a truly memorable Day of Special Interest on the Pre-Raphaelites. A walking tour of Bristol's street art was well attended in the autumn and a visit to the Mary Quant exhibition, in London, was enjoyed by all who attended. Anne Colbourne has looked into destinations for foreign tours and will lead our trip to Lisbon in April next year. On behalf of us all, I would like to thank Val, Margaret and Anne for their valued contributions to our programme.

Our Volunteering Arms have been busy too. Their project at Winterbourne Barn was so well received that our Heritage Volunteers were immediately "re-hired" for another project. Concurrently, they made three sets of overalls for the Concorde Exhibition at Aerospace Bristol. At present, the design for a new altar frontal for Marshfield Church is nearing completion, and our needlewomen cannot wait to get started in earnest. Regarding our Young Arts, pupils at Yate Academy are greatly enjoying learning to play instruments Severn Valley co-funded with Yate Rotary and we felt our money had been wisely spent in supporting this. Other Young Arts projects were unable to come to fruition due to circumstances beyond our control, but plans for a mosaic to be made by the pupils at North Road School in September, as a "welcome back to school" project, have been finalised, and already we are excited about that on the children's behalf. Unfortunately though, our Church Recorders suffered a blow when The Arts Society decided to stop funding them with effect from December 2020. However, the Committee was unanimous in their support for them and agreed to support their work with Severn Valley funds until at least their current projects are completed. Well done Siân Rogers, Linda Griffith and Barbara Mitchard, and thank you to all three ladies and your teams.

A lot of other work goes on behind the scenes, of course. Helen Cooper, our Membership and Guest Bookings Secretary, never sleeps. And which organisation prospers without assiduous administrative support? I am thinking of Irene Miller and Judy Brason, Olly Simmonds and Anne Colbourne here. Kate Ellis and Clementine Smith also help: we enjoyed our Magazine last autumn and had the promise of an exhibition of members' work to look forward to – these never fail to amaze. Clementine's What's On table adds a welcoming ambience to the Main Hall when we come in. Martin Farrell has ensured that our name is spread locally and that our good work in many fields is on the radar of those who may wish to join us.

Maurice Maple keeps his head low and our website up to date and Ian Cooper remains Severn Valley's unofficial full-time employee, supporting Helen on non-Severn Valley days and being our projectionist when we meet together. Cherry Hollyhead has audited our accounts, another necessary job. Many thanks to you all.

So all was going swimmingly when the axe fell. Who had heard of Coronavirus and who could have anticipated that it would bring such an abrupt end to something we all valued so much?

We cancelled our Season with effect from mid-March and, as I write, many of us use Zoom (or similar) to keep in touch with family and friends. Martin, who deserves a halo, has kept Severn Valley in touch using Mailchimp.

TAS House too has helped us to navigate these uncharted waters; we have been able to hear lecturers talking on subjects about which they care enormously and their enthusiasm and adaptability have been really impressive. And the *Instant Expert* series has offered us some interesting insights into lecturers' areas of expertise. TAS House has offered us training too, in software we had never heard of before the pandemic. We admire and appreciate their leadership and send our thanks to all at Guilford Street.

There will be a few changes to our Committee going forward into next season. Having served as Chair for the last three years I hand over the reins to Linda Griffith. Judy Brason will step up to Vice Chair and officially take on the Secretarial role which she has been admirably filling since Irene's departure. Anne Colbourne will be our Treasurer for just one year as Olly, for personal reasons, has decided not to continue in the role.

Having said that, we are all aware that the future is another planet. What I can tell you is that we will fight tooth and nail to work towards what we so much enjoyed before. I hope to see you there.

Mariette Farrell  
Chair  
August 2020.