



## THE ARTS SOCIETY OAKHAM

### CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE AGM NOVEMBER 2020

Dear Oakham Members

In our current “new world”, technology has taken on an increasingly important part of everyone’s lives. Many of us have had the opportunity to learn new skills be it ‘Zooming’ family and friends, watching streamed lectures, virtual art gallery tours, theatre productions and concerts on YouTube or exploring even more avenues to shop online. Our daily lives have adapted to self-isolation but I, like many of you, am missing face-to-face contact and it reminds me that we are a very social society. When you joined The Arts Society Oakham you were also joining a community of like-minded people who enjoy the arts, recognise the importance of supporting arts education, volunteering and probably most important of all, enjoy having a good time and engaging with people. Since July we have been able to extend our community by inviting AS members from Grantham, Rutland and Stamford societies to attend our Zoomed lectures. And we have been delighted to receive and accept reciprocal arrangements with Stamford. Further, across the East Midlands Area. Society Chairs have been busy helping each other master the Zooming skills. Your TASO committee and I have very much appreciated how many of you, your friends and families have “attended” our Zoomed lectures so far this year and are warmed by your messages of understanding, support and thanks.

Sadly some of our other activities remain in moth balls: at present we are unable to establish any new local Arts in Education projects and the museum is not able to accommodate our small team of Heritage Volunteers. However I thank them for their participation and valuable work there last winter, and in particular thank Pauline Kenwright as she steps down from her leadership role. In January The Arts Society HQ team published the results of their national **Volunteering Impact Review**. It recognised the incredible contribution all Arts Societies have made to arts and heritage volunteering over the last five decades. Subsequently there are two changes – 1) Young Arts is renamed **Arts Volunteering**, to encompass all arts projects regardless of the age of beneficiaries, which does allow more scope 2) Church Recording will no longer be supported by The Arts Society but hopefully will continue where there are willing volunteers and interested churches.

Looking ahead please remember that we have, unusually, **on 10 December 2020**, the postponed March 2020 lecture. Then in early January we will post to you all TASO membership renewal/new application forms with a revised, lower fee than before. I think our membership fees are already ridiculously good value and, in normal times, buy more than an annual programme of first-class lectures. Further, I encourage you to spare a thought for TAS lecturers. They are the back bone of the organisation and real assets to it. Mostly freelancers, they are deserving of our continued support. Just as much brain power and adrenalin goes into a Zoom lecture as a live one. For the sake of our future we need to safeguard their livelihood as much as reasonably possible. So please can I encourage you to join or renew your membership which, when you receive the new exciting programme card of 2021 lectures, will take you round to October 2021. Meanwhile, for your diaries, I will mention that the first Zoom lecture of 2021 will be on **Thursday 28 January**.

Finally I must sincerely thank all the Committee members for their work and friendly support during my first year in office. On your behalf I will thank Roger Wiley on his retirement after 12 years of invaluable audio and visual services to TASO. And express sadness that Ann Lamin has had to stand down as our Communications Officer for personal reasons. We are now a smaller team so please do consider joining The Arts Society Oakham Committee to help us ensure that our society not only survives but flourishes in the years ahead. I look forward to hearing from you. Jill Harris