



Chairman's Report January 2025.

At the beginning of December we set the tone for Christmas with a tasty 2 course lunch in the beautiful setting of Porters Park golf club. We held a raffle which was well supported and very ably organised by Cherrie and Inga. There was a lovely friendly atmosphere amongst those who attended and I think was enjoyed by all.

After our very successful trip to the Isle of Wight last year, we have recently released our 5 day holiday at the beginning of September to North Wales, It is a full itinerary with many interesting and varied places to see , including Caernarfon Castle, Beaumaris Castle on the Isle of Anglesey, Plas Newydd Country house and gardens, the beautiful Bodnant gardens and much more . We have also included a boat trip which offers spectacular views of Snowdonia, Llandwynn Island and the isle of Anglesey while for train lovers there is a ride on the UK's longest narrow gauge heritage railway from Caernarfon to Porthmadog. We break the journey to and from Wales with visits to National Trust houses and gardens



I have already received application forms from many of you. If you would like a hard copy of the holiday flyer, then please ask or call me or you can download it from our website The holiday is a wonderful opportunity for you to meet other members of our society socially and maybe make new friends
Closing date for applications is April 30th 2025

The society continues to exhibit paintings in the Harpenden Building Society window -we do this several times a year and it creates much interest from the general public - our most recent was the end of January

Our Thursday afternoon workshop remains popular - we have ideas for more live models to sit or pose for us and we will be organising a full day workshop later in the year - all members are welcome!

Finally the committee and I would like to thank Margaret Follett most sincerely for compiling our quarterly newsletter over many years.

It involves a lot of hard work and complicated formatting and was designed for printing hard copies as well as online information. Since almost all our members are on line now, the committee has decided that we will issue the newsletter in email form starting this year.

Margaret will continue to research and compile the flyers which are circulated before our monthly lectures - for which we are most grateful

Best wishes
Gill

Lecture Report 2024

'Great Railway Stations - Architecture and Art' Lecture given by Ian Swankie on 21st November 2024

Ian Swankie, a familiar and reliable speaker for our RAS Lecture series, showed over 40 pictures to illustrate this interesting talk. Indeed, rather than supporting any particular proposition or narrative the locations pictured were themselves the subject. Saving us the trouble of long-distance travel Ian showed examples of wide-ranging architectural and decorative art of so many types to be found in railway stations.

No surprise that the tour started with the enormous decorative Gothic Revival pile of St. Pancras, whereby the Midland Railway, as a latecomer to London, loudly announced its arrival, then its much plainer (and to my mind more pleasing) neighbour Kings Cross with its strictly functional double archways, one for arrivals and one for departures (a function preserved in the station's new arrival area, 'Breezy modernism tempered by historical context' according to Simon Jenkins).

He then turned to the oldest of the London stations featured, the unique three naves and transept of Brunel's Paddington whose glories all lie inside the station being inherent in the method of its construction; engineering as architecture and art. Paddington featured in art also as the setting for Frith's famous human panorama 'The Railway Station'. And its tracks westward could not be ignored being the setting for Turner's 'Rain, Steam and Speed'.

The sinuous former Eurostar trainshed at Waterloo again demonstrated how architectural beauty (designed by Grimshaws) as the curved, narrowing site demanded novel forms of flexible roof castings, strongly referencing the Crystal Palace.

Elsewhere in the UK, function was also the determining factor in the glazed fantasy of Wemyss Bay Station, designed to facilitate swift passenger transition between Glasgow trains and the Isle of Bute ferries. And the original Bristol Temple Meads represented a conscious adoption of a Tudor exterior and immense wooden hammerbeam overall roof.

After a brief visit to the classical exterior and curving trainsheds and Corinthian columns of York station, Ian transported us to continental Europe. Highlights included High Baroque at Antwerp, Monet's steamy atmospheres at Paris St. Lazare, enormous decorative tile tableaux at Porto and the repurposing of the trainshed as a tropical garden at Madrid.

Then to the British influence in the former Empire; the rich mixture (to say the least) of Italianate, Gothic and Mughal of Victoria station, Mumbai, an extraordinary Gingerbread style at Dunedin, and the New Southern Cross station of Melbourne, also by Grimshaws.

Finally Ian took us to the USA, with a look at the church-like Union Station in Los Angeles in the Spanish Colonial Revival style and finally and inevitably the 67-track multi-level art-nouveau wonder of Grand Central, New York.

Ian acknowledged that he would be bound to omit the favourites of many attenders (mine being Newcastle) but this was an excellent hour's survey of a subject that would justify much further time and exploration.

Edward Cross

Thursday 6th February Demonstration by PETER KEEGAN.

We welcome back the ever popular Peter Keegan for an evening zoom painting demonstration in oils. Not only is Peter an excellent artist, he is also a wonderful, very knowledgeable and inspiring teacher. This session will be of interest to both painters and those interested in the process of painting. Peter has previously demonstrated for us on zoom - doing a portrait from a photograph, and achieving a fantastic likeness. Portraiture is his specialist subject. On a separate occasion he demonstrated a still life.

Next week, Peter will be painting figures in oils.



Peter lives and works from his studio in Buckinghamshire. He follows traditional techniques but uses them in a modern and original style, he also finds time to organise interesting painting courses at home and abroad

As well as portraiture he paints local landscapes, still life and figures. He exhibits widely in and around London.

Summer Exhibition - Advanced Notice

Hanging Friday 6th June Private View in the evening
Open to the general public Saturday 7th June 10.00 - 5.00
And Sunday 8th June 10.00 - 4.00

Please do start creating your masterpieces and thinking about framing if they need framing. We are very happy to include 3D works in our exhibition - so if you sculpt, make pottery or ceramics or other 3D creations, please consider entering them in our Summer Exhibition. Further details available nearer the time.

Forthcoming Lectures

Simone Bloom architect and artist will give a zoom lecture on March 6th on 'The art and architecture of Le Corbusier'.

Le Corbusier's name is synonymous with modernist architecture, but for him art was just as important as designing buildings. His art didn't just embellish his buildings, it informed their design in many ways: particularly in the freeing up of traditional forms and iconography. "Through my painting I arrive at architecture. Art is the source of my free spirit. Drawing, painting, sculpture, building are one and the same to me. Art and Architecture should always work together in perfect synthesis"



*Nature Morte et Figure 1944,
Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamp 1955*

Val Woodgate an RAS favourite returns on April 3rd 2025 to give a live/zoom lecture on her personal pick of the 'Treasures of the National Gallery' which was founded in 1824 and is celebrating its Bi-centenary celebrations.

The National Gallery is home to one of the finest collections of Western European paintings in the world. The paintings date from the 13th to the early 20th centuries, enabling the visitor to explore the history of Western paintings, from the medieval period and Early Renaissance to Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and the beginnings of modern art.



Val will look at 'Venus and Mars' c1485 by Botticelli, the 'Arnolfini Portrait' 1434 by Jan van Eyck, 'The Ambassadors' 1533 by Holbein, 'Portrait of an 83 year old Woman' by Rembrandt, 'The Fighting Temeraire' 1838 by Turner, 'Boating on the Seine' 1879-80 by Renoir and much more.....

Boating on the Seine' 1879-80 by Pierre-Auguste Renoir in the National Gallery

Frances Ross will give a live/zoom lecture on May 8th 2025 entitled ‘Sargent, Creator of Fashionable Society Portraits.’

The talk is based on research from the Tate’s 2024 exhibition on John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) which combined his full-length paintings with a selection of the dresses worn by the iconic society sitters of his day, especially the infamous Madame X and her controversial black dress.



The Fascinating story of Madame X (1884) by John Singer Sargent

Frances explains how Sargent was ground-breaking as a stylist fashioning the image of his sitters presented to the world through his personal sartorial choices and poses. Sargent changed portrait painting from the formal stiff poses of past patrons and his style is possibly comparable to contemporary lifestyles on Instagram. Also considered, is how Sargent’s glamorous portraits of his ‘Gilded Age’ sitters doubled as an elite cross-Atlantic marriage market representation.

Another opportunity for RAS members to view his work will be the 100th anniversary of his death, ‘Heiress: Sargent’s American Portraits.’ Representing the women who married into British and European aristocracy. The exhibition opens 16 May - 5 October 2025 at Kenwood in Hampstead, London

Display of Work by Art Society Workshop Members in The Harpenden Building Society window January 2025



Forthcoming Trips

Visit to Dulwich Art Gallery Wednesday 2nd April 2025

A visit has been arranged to DULWICH ART GALLERY on Wednesday 2 April 2025 to view "Tirzah Garwood: Beyond Ravilious. Given four stars on two reviews.



This is the first major exhibition devoted to the visionary artist and designer, wife of Eric Ravilious. She excelled as a Fine artist and printmaker. This retrospective marks the first time the full extent her output has been shown, giving these captivating works and critical examination and public showcase they deserve.

See Dulwich Art Gallery website for further full information.

<https://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/2024/november/tirzah-garwood-beyond-ravilious/>

Visit to Flatford Mill on Sunday 18th May



A guided visit has been arranged to Flatford Mill, Suffolk on Sunday 18th of May to discover the scenes that made John Constable famous. Also included is a visit to the house to view some of his paintings. Discover the views that John Constable painted in the hamlet of Flatford, set within the Dedham Vale countryside. This is a

National Trust property so members of the society will be able to enter free of charge.

There are facilities on site for refreshments and lunch.

And finally, the latest Lecture Report 2025 :-

Franz Hals - Riotous drunk to modern idol. Lecture by Julia Musgrave on 16 January 2025

Franz Hals has the reputation of having been frivolous, a drunk and a bankrupt. Julia Musgrave set out to demonstrate that this is almost completely a myth.

He is recognisable through the familiar portrait, wearing a hat with a fashionable tilt. Born in or around 1582 he lived a long life, especially for the period, passing away in 1666. This was against the background of the 80 years' war. Although born in Antwerp, his family moved to Harlem in the newly-established Dutch Republic to escape chaotic government in Spanish-occupied Antwerp. Here, he became a pupil of the Mannerist painter Karel Van Mander (1528-1606) but little of Mander's style is evident in Hals's work. In 1610 he joined the Guild of Painters, which qualified him to teach. His first signed paintings date from 1610-11.

Harlem was a brewing town and many of his paintings depict drunkards. But he was plainly in demand for portraits of the wealthy and established burghers of Dutch society. Features of such works include striking depictions of lustrous fabrics, not least in the black cloth and white ruffs of the pious rich. It is of interest that Hals's father had been a fabric merchant. In his portrait of Isaac Massa he employed a wet-on-wet technique for black and grey silk and a dry application for lace.

1610 was plainly an eventful year as he also married. His wife died after five years, leaving him with three children. It was said that he beat her to death; this was confusion with another man of the same name. He did however find himself in Court for buying without making payment. In 1617 he remarried and this union produced eight children so it is not surprising that he was known to have had financial problems.

A characteristic portrayal of a young male would show the sitter holding a book with one hand on his hip, a pose denoting authority and known as 'the renaissance elbow'; this can be seen in 'The Laughing Cavalier'. This well-known portrait also displays lustrous and expensive linen, an underslashed doublet (complex to make) and decoration with love-knots on the upper sleeves. Such garments were symbols of fortune, diplomacy and experience of travel and part of a very expensive fashion.

He also painted groups; Guards of the local Militias in particular.

Hals made numerous portraits of those outside the pious, genteel and wealthy strata of society. Well-known is Pekel-Haring a stock character in morality plays, but this was probably the work of his pupil Judith Leyster. Another is The Pommel-Pot player, whose open-mouthed laugh indicates his coarseness.

Five of Hals's sons became painters. After his death his reputation languished. It was not until the 1860s when local Guard Militias were disbanded and their paintings became municipal property and were placed in a museum, that he was rediscovered by Theophile Thore-Burger and his work was soon taken up by Manet, John Singer Sargeant, Whistler and Van Gogh.