



Website: theartssocietytaunton.org.uk
Email: theartssocietytaunton@gmail.com

Chairman's Report on behalf of the Committee 2026

After seven years as Programme Secretary for the Taunton Vale and Taunton Societies and three years as Chairman for Taunton, I am stepping down from the committee. I will hand over the Chairmanship to the capable hands of our Vice-Chairman Margaret Way.

I attended the National AGM in York in June. The hottest week of the year! That did affect attendance but it was very upbeat with an excellent address by our President Hilary Kay and contributions on future plans for The Arts Society from the Chairman of Trustees Jeremy Thomas and CEO Ian Arnold. At the AGM one of our members, David Yates was awarded a Marsh Award. These awards celebrate the outstanding contribution of people who are committed to social, cultural and environmental causes. David has been a key figure in the South West Area of the Arts Society, serving as Area Chair from 2017. He founded the Taunton Evening Society, supported multiple societies, and helped expand courses, volunteering, and member trips. He has been of enormous help to our society in the annual production of our trifold leaflet.

The Society is in good shape with 187 members. I am pleased that we have been able to keep the subscription at £50 for another year. We are lucky to have a strong committee who have given me support over the last three years. My thanks are due to Margaret who has run the very successful and popular Special Interest Days and administered the Christmas Lunch, also to Jane Barrie who has created our excellent programme of lectures the majority of which you have rated as Outstanding or Excellent. Congratulations are due to Jane who has recently taken over as Chairman South West Area. Jean Eales our membership secretary has kept our records in immaculate order. David Balston has kept a firm eye on our finances and I am very grateful to Penny Whitefield for taking on the refreshments rota as well as producing minutes from our committee meetings and today. Andrew has as ever been a wonderful technician for all our meetings again this year. However our appeal for more members to come forward to help run the society still stands, so please think about ways you could contribute. I know many of you have contributed over the years and we are very grateful but we do need new people to come forward.

Tours and Visits

A group of us have just returned from a very successful tour of Italy in partnership with Tailored Travel. Several members from other societies joined us. Based in Bologna, we also visited Parma, Ferrara and Ravenna with its amazing mosaics. Our thanks are due to Helen Phillips for all her organisation and care for everyone who went on the tour. Next year our destination will be Portugal and Helen will again be the organiser.

We have also enjoyed several visits. In February we visited the new and very impressive Shoemaker's Museum in Street. Thank you Helen for organising that day. Then in June we went to Mapperton House in Dorset and in September to another Tudor mansion in Dorset, Athelhampton House – two very interesting and enjoyable days ably organised by Liz Osborn. Nearer to home we had a fascinating visit to Holcombe Court, Holcombe Rogus and another one is planned for this historic house in the spring 2027.

Charity

Our Committee is intending to apply for charitable status next year. This will bring many financial and other advantages. Head Office is encouraging local societies to become CIOs or Charitable Incorporated Organisations. There will be an Emergency General Meeting to seek your approval when we are ready.

We were given a collection of art books, the property of the late David Langmead and a sale was held at the October meeting. £125 was made in aid of The Children's Hospice South West. We will be selling Christmas cards for this charity again at the November meeting.

Cheddon Fitzpaine Memorial Hall was in need of a new digital projector. Many of you may have noticed a deterioration in the quality of the images. The committee agreed a donation of £300 towards the purchase of a new one which was installed earlier this year.

We also donated £1000 to an advertising campaign in the South West for The Arts Society. This was broadcast on Classic FM this autumn. Not all societies in the area are as successful as ours and they are in need of a boost to their membership. We will learn later if the campaign was successful.

The Art Bags project distributed through the Taunton Food Bank and funded by the proceeds of the raffle will go ahead shortly.

Heritage Volunteering

I am pleased to report that we have several enthusiastic volunteers engaged in the cleaning and conservation of pre-1850 railway maps at the Somerset Heritage Centre. Two members are also taking part in the transcription and digitisation of all 671 tithings of land tax returns for Somerset 1766-1832.

Email

We have a new email address which will be valid from December as Central Office have ceased to support the previous ones. Our main address is now **theartssocietytaunton@gmail.com**

Barbara Shaw
Chairman
November 2026