



# LISKEARD ARTS

## Chair's April Newsletter 2024

Dear Members

Easter has now come and gone; and what a shame there's only been the occasional hint of sun and warmer weather! I hope you have had an enjoyable time catching up with family and / or friends over the Easter weekend and maybe even getting out into the garden to do that much needed tidying up.

Thank you for using the 'Lecture Feedback' facility on our website. It's clear from the responses that you thoroughly enjoyed Tim Mirfin's talk last month. He was a very engaging speaker using humour to draw us in. He offered us a wealth of information along with bits of gossip from the operatic world.

This month's talk will be very different as we learn about forensic botany from our speaker, Mark Spencer.

I am delighted how well our Discovery Day went on 20<sup>th</sup> March. I have included a write up of the day later on in this newsletter.

With the AGM looming I ask you once again to consider whether you would put your name forward to join us on our committee. It is so important that we make sure our committee retains its strength.

Mary Utton  
Chair

### AGM

You will have received from Liz notification of our AGM which is on **7<sup>th</sup> May** at 7.20pm followed by the talk from Lois Oliver, "Betrayal – the story of Samson and Delilah in Music and Art", at the usual time of 7.30pm. Documentation for the AGM will be sent out on 16<sup>th</sup> April.

### THE ARTS SOCIETY – GOVERNANCE REFORM

Following an external review in 2023, The Arts Society nationally has put forward proposals for its future governance structure.

The purported purpose of these changes is to enable the Society to have a structure which equips it to meet the challenges it is facing post pandemic and one that is designed to be supportive of its new goals.

Your LAS committee has been considering the proposed new governance structure and the implications for local societies, engaging with other Chairs and considering a range of comments and feedback. There is much concern. I will be voting on behalf of LAS at the EGM convened by TAS on 15<sup>th</sup> April and the vote I cast will be based on the majority decision of the committee.

Members can access and download the Arts Society's governance proposals using the link <https://theartsociety.org/governance-reform>.

I will update you more fully on the outcome of the vote in my next newsletter.

## About the Speaker

**DR MARK SPENCER**



Mark has been fascinated by plants since he was a small boy. Originally a horticulturist, he studied horticulture at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. He also studied botany and mycology at university, after which he worked as a field botanist for a regional conservation organisation.

After 12 years as a senior botany curator at the Natural History Museum, London he is now a consultant forensic botanist, public speaker and occasional radio and TV presenter.

He is the honorary curator of Carl Linnaeus's herbarium at the Linnean Society of London, one of the most significant collections in the history of science.

His interests include the history of botany and botanic gardens, invasive non-native species and the flora of NW Europe.

## MURDER MOST FLORID – HOW PLANTS HELP SOLVE CRIME

**Mark Spencer**

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024  
at 19:30

Join us in Liskeard Public Hall from 19:00  
Refreshments available

Guests (£8) are always welcome

Mark, as a forensic botanist, helps police with cases where plants can unlock clues to solve crimes, from murder and rape to arson and burglary.

This is not a new science; indeed, it has played a role in solving major cases for decades, including the infamous murder of aviator Charles Lindbergh's infant son.

Plants are silent witnesses; their presence at a crime scene can help to identify a suspect or locate a victim. Even mundane plants such as brambles and nettles can provide insights into when a crime was committed and fragments of leaves and seeds on the footwear of a suspect can place them at the scene.

An understanding of landscape history and land-use helps to distinguish between a clandestine burial site and a medieval grave.



### Looking ahead: Talk on 7<sup>th</sup> May

Lois Oliver's talk will be on "Betrayal – the story of Samson and Delilah in Music and Art".

This tale of love and betrayal inspired virtuoso works by artists including Rembrandt, Rubens and Van Dyck, and composers such as Handel.

The doors will open from 7.00pm but don't forget that we are holding our AGM starting at 7.20pm with the talk commencing at 7.30pm as per normal.

I do need you all to join us for a 7.20pm start so we are quorate!

### Looking ahead to

**23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024**

### **BOCONNOC HOUSE SUMMER EVENT**

**House Tour,  
Cream Tea & Fizz!**

Come and join us for our "Summer Event"

A fascinating private history tour of Boconnoc House and Boconnoc's stunning Dorothy Garden and Shrubbery.

Followed by a delicious Cream Tea, including a glass of fizz!

Tickets cost £27.50

Deposit of £7.00 and the booking form is required to secure your place

Full information and the booking form is available in hard copy from the registration desk at our meeting. You will also find it online at [www.liskeardartsociety.org.uk](http://www.liskeardartsociety.org.uk) under the Visits and Tours tab. This event is open to members, their family and friends.

### Looking ahead:

**TOUR of  
'The Houses, Gardens &  
History of Wells,  
Gloucestershire &  
Wiltshire'**

**24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

**Run by Liskeard Arts in  
conjunction with Tailored  
Travel**

**Day 1:** En route to our hotel, the 3\* Limpley Stoke Hotel, we stop off to visit the National Trust's Dyrham Park

**Day 2:** We visit Wells for a guided tour of the Cathedral followed by time to explore the Bishop's Palace and Gardens. In the afternoon we walk to Stobery Park Garden for a welcome talk. We also enjoy an included cream tea.

**Day 3:** After checking out of our hotel we journey to Bowood House and Gardens for a tour of the house and time to explore the gardens and grounds landscaped by 'Capability Brown'.

Full information and the booking form is available in hard copy from the registration desk at our meeting. You will also find it online at [www.liskeardartsociety.org.uk](http://www.liskeardartsociety.org.uk) under the Visits and Tours tab. The PDF version has been emailed out along with this newsletter. The tour is open to members, their family and friends.

*Please note that the deadline of **22<sup>nd</sup> April** is fast approaching. If you are interested in joining us please make sure your booking form reaches me by that date. It would be great to get our tours off the ground again. For this tour to go ahead we need a minimum of 25 people. I'm very much looking forward to this event; an occasion to get to know other members.*

## **LISKEARD ARTS DISCOVERY DAY led by DR HELEN WILSON on "THE REMARKABLE PINWILL SISTERS"**

On 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 26 participants, including members from other Arts Societies and local organisations as well as LAS members, gathered at St Martin's Community Hall, Looe for our latest Discovery Day. The hall was an excellent choice of venue - plenty of room, without any noisy passing traffic, and all the right facilities including plenty of parking. Alastair, our technician, was there to make sure the technical side ran very smoothly.

We were all eager to find out more from Dr Helen Wilson about the Pinwill sisters, Mary, Ethel and Violet. Helen's intensive research has led to her book on the subject. At a time when running a company was deemed an exclusively male preserve, the sisters established a thriving business whose output in terms of quantity and quality is only now being recognised as among the most significant in ecclesiastical woodcarving at which craft the Pinwills were sublime artists. However it is Violet's carvings that we could admire in our visits to the two churches, St Martin by Looe and St Martin's Liskeard. Many of those who came along to the day already knew a great deal about these remarkable ladies but are always keen to learn more.

Before handing over to Helen, our first session was on the work of our Church Recorders. Four members of the team gave individual presentations, each picking out several items to talk about that have enthused and challenged them. Pat Francis, our lead on church recording, gave an overview of what the work entails whilst Francis Impey focused on woodwork.



*Women's Work Bench, St Martin by Looe*

Susan Barnes shared her interest in textiles



*Wall Hanging, St Martin by Looe*

and John Davis' love of metalwork shone through!



*Paten St Wenna, Morval*

Church Recording is not something many of the audience had heard about previously and this session *"threw new light on yet another world"*. Other comments received from participants similarly support the enjoyment and interest people gained from the presentations: *"We were amazed at the level of detail that went into this"*. *"The church recording pitch was compelling."* *"An excellent opening overview followed by enthusiastic and authoritative insights into individual fields of study."* *"I knew nothing of this sort of voluntary work, but it's good to know that it exists, and that it's carried out by such knowledgeable and committed people."*

Pat, Francis, Susan and John deserve our thanks for agreeing to take part as their contributions helped get the day off to an interesting start. It was through our Church Recorders and their work on St Martin by Looe church that we got to know about Helen Wilson and her research on the Pinwill Sisters which subsequently led us to arrange the day.

After a break for coffee and cake (a very big thank you to Susan and David Barnes for taking charge of refreshments), we then handed over to Helen Wilson who gave her wonderful talk on a subject which has taken over her life and brought so much interest to so many people!

Helen is a delight to listen to and has an informal presentational style. She is informative and interesting and what she has to say makes one want to go to visit all the churches with Pinwill carvings. *"It was well worthwhile taking notes of the many places to find Pinwill works in case of opportunities to visit them"*.

There has been nothing but praise for Helen's talk. *"Although I have read her book from cover to cover on more than one occasion, what is impressive is that her research is continuing, and she is therefore able to add to the story - wonderful!"* *"I admire the depth of her research e.g trawling newspaper archives for information about other female wood carvers."*

Helen managed to cover several aspects of the Pinwill story with direct reference to St Martin's by Looe and Liskeard churches which greatly enhanced our visits to these two churches, St Martin by Looe before our lunch break and St Martin's Liskeard afterwards.



Helen answering questions within St Martin's, Liskeard



Carvings from St Martin by Looe

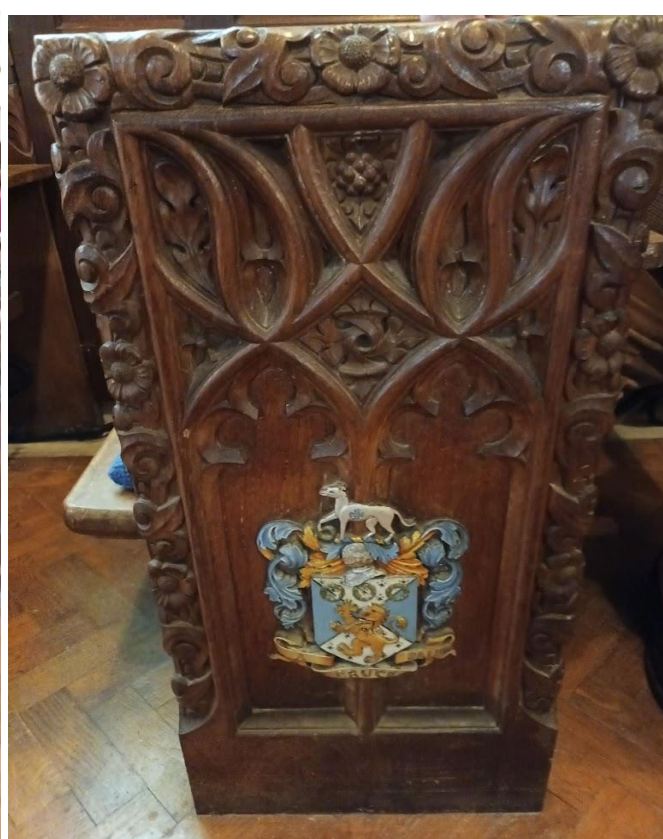




Participants listen to Helen explain Violet's carvings in the screen between the chancel and the War Memorial chapel



Angel on a pew end in the Lady Chapel, St Martin's Liskeard



Painted pew end



Screen between the nave and Lady Chapel, St Martin's Liskeard

From the feedback received, it would seem that the vast majority of participants enjoyed having a mix of activities whereby they could wander round the churches and chat to other participants as well as listening to the morning talks. *"The day was well organised with enough time to listen, learn, see and enjoy, and everyone who attended mixed well despite it being people from a wide area who didn't know anyone else there. Many thanks for hosting this event".*

## REMINDERS FROM THE COMMITTEE

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <b>Refreshments</b><br>Refreshments are available from 7.00pm. As well as teas and coffees we also serve wine which is £3.50 per glass. If you wish to partake of a cup of coffee or tea, price £2, bringing your own cup would help us in our attempts to be as environmentally friendly as we can be.                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Guests Welcome!</b><br>Our doors are open to guests (£8). If you have family nearby or visiting, or have friends interested in seeing what we're about, please do encourage them to come along with you. Even better would be for you to persuade them to become members! Membership contact: <b>07790 821714</b> |
| <b>Hearing Difficulties</b><br>If you have difficulty hearing our speaker, please email me or Liz Undy by 9.00am on the day of each talk if you wish to reserve seats at the front                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Raffle</b><br>Please bring your £1 coin for the raffle. Tickets will be on sale for £1 / per ticket with a chance to win a bottle of wine.                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Liskeard Arts Website</b><br>Have you ever visited and explored our website – <a href="http://www.liskeardartssociety.org.uk">www.liskeardartssociety.org.uk</a> ?<br><br>If not, I encourage you to do so. There's all the relevant information there about talks, Discovery Days, visits, tours and other activities we have been, are and will be involved in. You can also give feedback on the speakers and their talk.                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Speaker Feedback</b><br>Don't forget to provide your feedback on the speaker and their talk.<br>Please go to our website, <a href="http://www.liskeardartssociety.org.uk">www.liskeardartssociety.org.uk</a> You should see on the front page a box saying 'Lecture Feedback'. Click here and it will take you to a page where you enter a password which is <b>Liskeard</b> and then can grade the quality of the lecture and the quality of overheads/slides. There is also a box for your comments. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

If you have any ideas, comments or queries or you can help us in any way please contact me.

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