



LISKEARD ARTS

South East Cornwall

Chair's May Newsletter 2025

Dear Members

Welcome to what is my last newsletter as chair. We're now 7 years on from when I was elected back in 2018. It has been a pleasure for me to lead this amazing society.

I look back with pride at what we have achieved over those years. Our outstanding illustrated talks continue to be the main draw for people wanting to be part of Liskeard Arts. Then there is the exceptional work we have completed through our Arts, Heritage and Church Recording volunteer work. I remember how successful our collaboration has been with the art departments of the local secondary schools in encouraging the older students to reach high standards with their art. We have also supported local primary schools so that their pupils could enjoy a more enriched arts curriculum. Our last major heritage project was before my time as chair when we digitalised the photographs at Port Eliot. However our team of Church Recorders led by Pat Francis continue to evidence the heritage of our local churches.

It hasn't always been easy! Adapting rapidly to the challenge of covid which led us to go digital was a success and allowed us to keep going but I did have a few sleepless nights over it. Mind you, I shouldn't complain as it would have been many more sleepless nights if I'd still been leading a school; thank goodness for retirement!

I am assuming that Ian Tunbridge will be elected into office at the AGM as there are no other nominations. I'm confident that he will lead us well and he will have your full support.

There are still challenges ahead; the biggest being to raise membership numbers so we are financially secure. However there is also the problem that we have no new members volunteering to sit on the committee or just even help us out at our Tuesday talks. You will see later in the newsletter that we are launching our 'Just One Thing' Pledge request. Please do support Ian and the rest of the committee with this.

I am not stepping down from the committee as I will continue to be the lead for publicity and to organise our Discovery Days, visits and tours.

Thank you all for your kindness and support over the years. I am looking forward to no longer having to be at the front but instead mingling at the back and having more time to talk to you all.

Mary Utton
Chair

AGM

Don't forget that we will be holding the AGM at 7.20pm this Tuesday prior to the talk from Ashley Gray which will begin at the usual time of 7.30pm.

I do need you all to join us for a 7.20pm start so we are quorate! You should all have received the papers for the AGM which Liz Undy sent out on 22nd April.

About the Speaker

ASHLEY GRAY



Ashley Gray is a leading specialist and curator in Modern Textiles and their history. He is regularly invited to lecture on the subject both in the UK and the US and sits on the advisory board of The Frances Neady Collection at FIT, New York.

As a curator and archivist, he works with institutions and foundations on many major conservation and exhibition projects. He also curates the acclaimed exhibition *Styled by Design* that celebrates the innovation of Modernist textile design alongside a comprehensive lecture programme that accompanies the exhibitions.



Patrick Heron (1920 – 1990) *Nude* 1947
Cresta Silks 79 x 75 cms
Credit: The Gray MCA Collection

A YORKSHIRE TEXTILE RENAISSANCE: Tom Heron, Cryséde and Cresta at the birth of Modernism Textiles in the 1920s – 1940s

Ashley Gray

Tuesday 13th May 2025
at 19:30
(AGM at 19:20)

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

Guests (£10) are always welcome

An epic tale of two extraordinary figures from the same valley in Yorkshire who were destined to change the world of fashion and design for all time.

A story that takes us from the mills of Yorkshire in the 1920s to the coast of Cornwall. From Welwyn Garden City to the corridors of power at Westminster. Art, design, textiles, fashion, politics, publishing, philosophy, and the very genesis of modern art in Britain.

This talk tells the story of creativity, determination, passion, and resilience of a true textile maverik.



Alec Walker (1889 – 1964)
A Cryséde Silk dress c1930
Credit: The Gray MCA collection

Looking ahead: Talk on 10th June

Sarah Cove will explore **'Fakes and Fortunes; or have I discovered a Constable in my attic?'**

A behind the scenes talk where renowned Constable expert, Sarah Cove talks about her discoveries on the BBC show Fake or Fortune. Beyond the show, she has many more stories of highs and lows in the art world.



@ Sarah Cove

'JUST ONE THING'

Your One Pledge for 2025

As members of a society, our society is part and parcel of the support we all contribute. So this year, we are launching a new means of becoming involved in some small way by asking you to contribute 'just one thing' for 2025, whether it is to meet-and-greet at the door, befriend a new member or something else from the list. We will be giving out forms at our May and June talks. Please support us in this.

'JUST ONE THING'

Name Email

Date

I pledge to do one task for The Arts Society Liskeard in 2025

This is an opportunity for all members of our Society to contribute a little time and / or expertise to help our society in a small way.

Email to mary.utton2@gmail.com or contact 07731380715 for queries.

I AM ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN (please tick)	I AM INTERESTED IN HELPING IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF OUR SOCIETY (tick all that apply)
Befriending a new member	Community Arts projects
Being a welcome host at a talk	Church Recording
Helping at registration at a talk or other event	Financial planning, accounting or audit
Helping to promote membership	IT projects: computer, database, website, social media
Helping to design forms or promotional material	Fundraising
Providing art work for promotional material / front covers	Marketing and publicity
Helping to organise a visit and/or provide ideas and contacts for a visit	Programme planning and contact with speakers
Helping set up a coffee/tea event	Membership: recruitment, communications (phone or email)
Helping to serve refreshments at a talk	Events and visits planning
Serving on the committee	

We value your views so we will also be asking you to let us know what would suit you best with regard to the time our meetings start and, when we return to 9 talks per year in 2027, whether we should drop January or June's talk. This will be the second form we hand out at our May and June talks.

UPDATE from THE ARTS SOCIETY

The wish of Head Office is that all Members become better informed about the strategy and activities of The Arts Society; so here is the latest news from Trustees

Appointment of Ian Arnold as Chief Executive Officer

The trustees are very pleased to announce that they have now appointed Ian Arnold as our Chief Executive Officer. This reflects the very positive impact Ian has had on all aspects of The Arts Society's operations since his appointment as Acting CEO in November 2024 and follows consultation with staff and all our Area Chairs. As well as prior experience as a CEO, Ian has specific expertise in marketing and has devised the detailed marketing plans that we regard as crucial in achieving our strategic aim of increasing our overall membership. These plans are now starting to be implemented and members will see more of this in the coming months.

LISKEARD ARTS DISCOVERY MORNING led by DR GERI PARLBY on

“What exactly is Byzantine Art and how do you pronounce it?

The early art and architecture of one of history's greatest empires – from Constantine to Justinian”

On 1st April 2025 31 participants, including members from four other Arts Societies as well as LAS members, gathered in Liskeard Public Hall, this time for a Discovery Morning led by Geri Parlby. The hall is a good choice of venue - plenty of room for listening to Geri's talk as well as space to sit socially around tables and be able to chat to one another at the coffee break.

We were all eager to learn more about Byzantine Art and knew that we were in safe hands with Geri as our speaker. *'Superb', 'She's just as good and interesting as ever. (No pussyfooting around.)' 'Absolutely first rate. She manages to distil much complexity into something more easily understood. I love her humour too!' 'Geri is always an entertaining and informative speaker.'*

Most of us pronounce the word as By-zantine. However Geri explained that Bizz-anteen has gained ground. We needed to be up early, especially those coming from Kingsbridge and Falmouth, as we began the day with a welcome at 9.25am and Geri's first talk beginning at 9.30am!

Geri began by providing us with the historical context before unpicking the art of the 4th and 5th centuries with the Emperor Constantine, the birth of Constantinople and the mosaics of Ravenna. The Byzantine Empire began in 330 AD when Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium, later renamed Constantinople. Christianity flourished and gradually supplanted the Greco-Roman gods that had once defined Roman religion and culture. This religious shift dramatically affected the art that was created across the empire.

We considered the sublime mosaics of Ravenna, known for their vibrant colours and exceptional depictions of biblical scenes and Geri demonstrated how mosaic art was used to exploit religion to achieve political ends.

Geri discussed in detail the Mausoleum Of Galla Placidia. Its purpose is still debated but this small building built in the shape of a Greek cross, is one of Ravenna's best preserved monuments. The interior is covered with mosaics, including famous scenes featuring the Good Shepherd and Saint Lawrence. The ceiling is tiled like the night sky: dark blue with hundreds of stars and a golden cross.



We moved onto consider the Basilica di Sant' Apollinare Nuovo which was built as a palace chapel for King Theodoric in the 6th century. It was originally designed in the Arian style but some of its mosaics were later removed by Catholics to erase what they considered heretical elements. The surviving scenes here include processions of martyrs and virgins, as well as illustrations of parables and miracles. Geri pointed out where earlier figures were removed: in one case the hands were left behind!



Panorama of the South nave wall mosaics at Sant Apollinare Nuovo – Chester M. Wood – own photo - Wikipedia



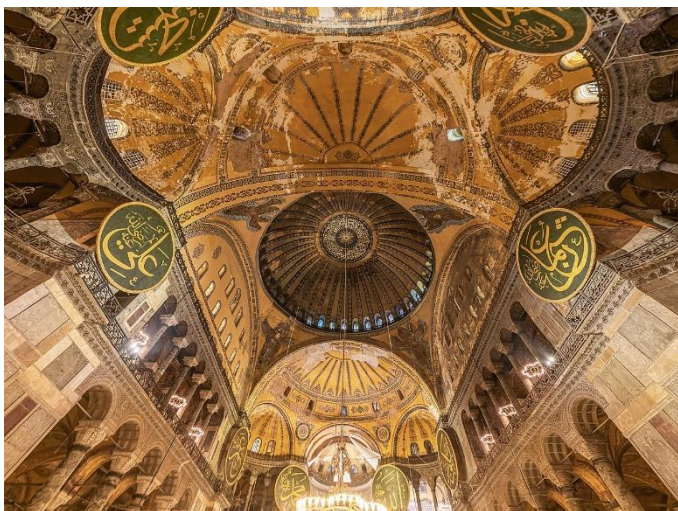
Three Wise Men or Magi wearing trousers and [Phrygian caps](#) as a sign of their Oriental origin – Username Ruge – own work - Wikipedia

There is so much to see in Ravenna that it felt like we'd only touched on what is undoubtedly the mosaics' artistic and historical importance, and also their importance for their iconography and the blending of eastern and western motifs.

Our coffee break beckoned but Geri needed to take us back to the Basilica di Sant' Apollinare Nuovo after we'd consumed our coffee and cake in order to complete this first section before moving onto the 6th and 7th centuries with the era of Justinian and Theodora (the Emperor and the Prostitute).

Justinian and Theodora bowed to no man when they ruled the world's most powerful empire during the 6th century. A former prostitute and exotic dancer, Theodora was a woman with an unsavoury past, while her husband's roots lay in Balkan peasant stock and yet together they inspired some of the most beautiful art in the Byzantine Empire. From the sublime mosaics of Ravenna and St Catherine's monastery to the miraculous architecture of Hagia Sophia - who could forget the most outrageous imperial couple in Byzantine history?

Hagia Sophia has been universally revered as an artistic and engineering marvel since its inception. The most striking and unique part of Hagia Sophia's structural design is its dome, which gives off the impression that it is floating. In the apse, the focus of the building, there is an image of the Virgin Mary known as the Theotokos Mosaic. Her position in the apse, which is situated right above a glowing row of windows, allows the viewer to understand she is the mediator for worship of her son, who sits on her lap. The gold surrounding her is illuminated, further emphasizing the connection of light as corresponding with divinity. Other mosaics depict portraits of emperors and their submission to Mary and Christ. Within each of the dome's pendentives are also seraphim mosaics, which had been plastered over at some point during the Ottoman rule and were uncovered by the Swiss Fossati brothers during restoration in the 1840s.



View of the dome interior - A.Savin, Wikipedia



Apse mosaic of the Virgin Mary and Christ the Child – Myrabella own photo - Wikipedia

I am delighted that the feedback from our Discovery Morning has been very positive. The only negatives were a wish for the Hall to be a little warmer and Geri's choice of the American pronunciation of Byzantine, a pet hate for this particular person! For several people the decision to run a Discovery Morning instead of a day has won support. However some left feeling that we wanted to hear more from Geri as she'd only just touched the surface and left a feeling of incompleteness. Here are some of the comments I've received and a thank you to everyone for sending them in to me. Apologies to those of you whose comments I haven't shared:

- "Mary, FABULOUS study day today. All 3 of us hugely enjoyed the whole event. Geri Parlby is SUPERB. So huge thanks to you and your team, and please pass on thanks to Geri too." (Tamsyn Bond)
- "Thank you for being involved in directing such a lovely occasion. Getting oneself up, tidy and out of Lerryn by 8.30am was a bit of a shock to the system, but it was also a major part of the benefits: we enjoyed two very substantial and informative sessions, with welcome refreshments between them - and cake, no less!! - and were still on our way by lunchtime, with the afternoon still to go. The quality of the presentation, and the lovely illustrations, could not be faulted. Congratulations to all involved!" (Ann Henderson)
- "I did enjoy Geri's presentation. I thought she was very brave to continue from her sitting position and not mention any pain she was in. Occasionally she apologised for giving the historical or religious context which I felt she did not need to do for me. How can I make sense of artifacts in a vacuum? I respected her easy way of handling her knowledge and choosing how to limit what she shared. She felt friendly and accessible. Like others I have been to Ravenna and also in 1978 to Istanbul. I was enraptured by Hagia Sophia and missed other sites in the city as I stayed marvelling at the church/ mosque. So for me this was very interesting. Overall a satisfying morning of excellence..... I liked the mixing at the coffee tables." (Sue Roberts)
- "The response from all of us has been highly positive. Our speaker's obvious love of her subject made it a really enjoyable morning and her clearly encyclopaedic knowledge of it, a delight. Carol and I had visited both Ravenna and Istanbul and her excellent illustrations brought back to us the wonderful interiors of the historic buildings. We also really appreciated the format. A morning's lectures with just a short break for coffee is a good use of our time and of course doing without a lunch kept the costs down!" (Mike and Carol Baker + 2 guests)

REMINDERS FROM THE COMMITTEE

Refreshments Refreshments are available from 7.00pm. 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.	Guests Welcome! Our doors are open to guests (£10). 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: 07790 821714
Hearing Difficulties 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	Raffle 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.
Liskeard Arts Website Have you ever visited and explored our website – www.liskeardartsociety.org.uk ? 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.	
Speaker Feedback Don't forget to provide your feedback on the speaker and their talk. Please go to our website, www.liskeardartsociety.org.uk 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 Liskeard and then can grade the quality of the lecture and the quality of overheads/slides. There is also a box for your comments.	

YOU MAY BE INTERESTED IN:

CORNWALL OPEN STUDIOS FIND OUT WHAT'S ON Two long weekends of Open Studios 24-26 MAY and 30 MAY-1 JUNE - 11am to 5pm daily and some dates in between the two weekends Cornwall Open Studios (COS) is run for artists by artists. It is a mutually beneficial organisation which combines individual resources to greater effect than individual artists can achieve alone. Browse through the artists pages and then decide which ones you want to see. You can set up an account online at www.cornwallopenstudios.co.uk/p/122/plan-your-visit to help you make your choices. The Cornwall Open Studios Brochure will be available for you to pick up from our registration desk.
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If you have any ideas, comments or queries or you can help us in any way please contact me.

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Chair of Liskeard Arts

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