THE ARTS SOCIETY EAST HERTS
TRUSTEES' REPORT FOR 2026
Charity No 281752 Member Society of The Arts Society

Introduction

This Report is produced and agreed by the Committee, as Trustees of the Society, to provide an account of what the Society has accomplished during 2026. Attached to this Report are:

- the Minutes of the November 2025 AGM
- the Accounts for the financial year ending 31 August 2026
- Notice of the November 2026 AGM

Public Benefit

The Arts Society East Herts is a registered charity. It delivers benefit to the public through promotion and advancement of the arts through a programme of talks, outings, volunteering, recording local artefacts and financial support of the arts in local schools and other organisations. Membership is available to all for a modest annual subscription. As a registered charity, donations are made to support local educational arts activities - primarily schools and other initiatives involving young people.

The following sections of the Report cover each of the main areas of the Society's activities.

Joint Chairmen's report 2025/26

In November 2025, Sandra Wallace stepped down from the Committee after taking responsibility for Young Arts for several years. Fortunately, her unofficial position as Flower Provider and Arranger for our Summer Lunch was maintained and we were able to enjoy our lunch again this summer with the customary bouquets on the table which make the occasion extra special.

Colin Gordon also stood down as Chairman/Vice Chairman, a role he had fulfilled since Covid. He deservedly received the applause and thanks of the Society for his dedication in maintaining it during taxing times, in taking up the reins again following the death of Malcolm Gordon and in running both the Committee and Overseas Tours so successfully. His position was taken over by Beverley Maunder Taylor and Rosemary Davis who took on the role of Joint Chairmen on the understanding that it would be a shared position. They have been magnificently supported by a hardworking and talented Committee who, together, have maintained a healthy membership, a welcoming presence at our lectures, a reliable and regular chain of communication through monthly on-line newsletters, website and six-monthly magazine, a uniformly interesting programme of lectures and Special Interest Days, a stimulating series of outings, plus an overseas tour to Spain and a steady support for volunteering and charitable activities to Young and local Arts.

We will be losing some of these excellent colleagues in November and it is essential for the continued health of the Society that members come forward to take their place. It was with some reluctance and trepidation that Beverley and Rosemary assumed the role of Joint Chairmen simply because the very survival of the Society required someone to take on the position. It has proved both interesting and not too onerous so they would strongly recommend anyone who felt a similar reluctance to consider Committee work to please volunteer now. Learning "on the job" is easy and pleasurable. We look forward to hearing from at least two or three members who feel they can respond to this plea.

Everyone has their part to play, of course, in encouraging friends and neighbours to come along to sample our lecture programme and, hopefully, translate their occasional attendance into permanent membership. We genuinely believe that the "buzz" and welcome that we offer provides a happy and interesting morning; and if anyone feels the need for a chat and an even warmer welcome, they should head over to the Welcome Table where a friendly face and a plate of biscuits can always be found!

Subscriptions/Membership Secretary

We finished the year in a healthy position, up by 10 members on last year at 348, just below our target of 350. We lost the usual level of annual memberships (28) sadly through deaths, illness and logistical issues but were more than able to replace these with 38 new members mainly through recruiting some of the visitors who attended our lectures.

This healthy position enabled us once again to maintain our membership fees at the same level (£85 couple / £45 single) for the eighth year running.

Committee

At the AGM we shall be saying goodbye to Valerie Stock who has served the Society superbly in her role as Treasurer. She has been a steady, calm influence throughout her time in office and her advice and experience have been of huge benefit. She will be very much missed.

The Joint Chairmen, Rosemary Davis and Beverley Maunder-Taylor still report on Church Recording and Young Arts/Volunteers, respectively. Other Committee members who will continue in post for next year, subject to vote at the AGM are as follows: Philip Juniper, Membership Secretary; Sally Paque, Secretary: Trevor Hampton, Website; Robert Bewick, Outings; Sue Geddes, SID, Pat Fairbrass, Programme Secretary. Nick Eden Green continues as member without portfolio. Kathleen Kirby was co-opted onto the committee in January 2026 and will be standing for election at the AGM.

Financial Position

Income for the year was £22,612 which was an increase of £1,664.

We allocate Gift Aid and raffle takings to support local and young arts and therefore exclude this when we look at the income generated for the operation of the Society. Total income excluding Gift Aid and the raffles was £18,067 as compared to £16,783 in the previous year.

The increase in income is attributable to an increase in member numbers and therefore subscriptions plus small profits made on the winter and summer lunches, SIDS and outings.

Expenditure before charitable donations was £16,410 which, as anticipated, was higher than last year's figure of £15,289. All costs showed an increase with the most significant being capitation fees and monthly meeting costs.

It is encouraging that looking at the income and costs of the operation of the Society there was a surplus of £1,657. This compares to a surplus of £1,494 last year.

We were delighted that so many of you responded to our appeal in respect of Gift Aid and income from this source increased from £3,268 to £3,666. Our raffles at the winter and summer lunches are always successful and we raised £879 this year. The total income from these sources was £4,545 and charitable donations totalled £2,889. We have the funds to make more donations but need recommendations of suitable beneficiaries.

Our reserves are now £33,818. Full financial details are set out in the Accounts.

Lectures

Julia Musgrave opened our season with her lecture on the life and work of the avant-garde painter, designer and decorator Vanessa Bell. In October we were transported to the theatre by **Simon Whitehouse** with a fascinating account of the life of Oscar Wilde. The Christmas lunch was preceded by an interesting insight into some unusual food and presents enjoyed by royal families in the past with **Roger Askew's** lecture A Right Royal Christmas.

The new year opened with **Carole Petipher** transporting us to Paris to look at Notre Dame: its iconic status in France's history after its rebuilding following the damage caused by fire in 2019. In February Douglas Skeggs opened our eyes to Picasso and Cubism, looking at his life and how Cubism developed. March took us into Constable country with a lecture entitled Down Fen Lane by **John-Paul Stonard** on the 250th anniversary of John Constable's Birth.

We had a musical delight in April when **Peter Medhurst** talked about, and played us, excerpts from The Magic Flute. In May **Roger Mendham** taught us a lot we didn't know about our capital city with his lecture on Monopoly looking at how the game developed from the original "Landlord's Game" of 1903. In June **Paula Nuttall** took us to **Botticelli's Florence** and we enjoyed the beauty of the city and its influence on Botticelli's work. Paula then joined us for our summer lunch in the beautiful garden of one of our members.

Outings

Our September 2025 'On your Doorstep' outing to Copped Hall was attended by over 40 members who, having split into two groups, enjoyed fascinating guided tours of this former grand Georgian Mansion and extensive garden. Members enjoyed a trip around the extensive walled kitchen garden before finishing the outing with a welcome afternoon tea and cakes.

KING's CROSS WALKING TOUR - 16th April 2026
Following Ian Swankie's well received 2025 lecture on Thomas Heatherwick, this guided walk of the King's Cross/St Pancras redevelopment contains three examples of Heatherwick's work including Coal Drops Yard and the new Google HQ. The popularity of the event necessitated arranging a morning and afternoon walk which explored the art and architecture of this rapidly changing area. Irrespective of whether members went on the morning or afternoon walk, the popularity of the event showed that members were entirely happy to organise their own travel and grasp the opportunity to explore the exciting area for the rest of their day and visit the wide range of hostelries for refreshment.

KETTLE'S YARD, CAMBRIDGE- 26th May 2026
Our coach trip to Kettle's Yard took place on a very hot day in May but this did not detract from the interesting part-guided tour of the University of Cambridge's Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery set in a beautiful house which hosts a remarkable collection of contemporary furniture, ceramics, sculptures, paintings and other artefacts. Following a short journey into the centre of the city we had lunch in the Cambridge Tap and then members had free time in the afternoon to explore some of the nearby museums and other places of interest before returning home.

Special Interest Days "SIDs"

In our first SID, in November 2025, Scott Anderson presented 3 lectures extolling Joaquin Sorolla's dexterous representation of people and places under the bright sunlight of his native home in Valencia. He explained how Sorolla encompassed his version of Impressionism, making paintings composed like snapshots. Often painting outdoors, sometimes on very large canvasses, his art seemed to be completed at a fast rate. Sorolla seemed to be rather forgotten when Cubism and Abstractionism came on the scene but has recently had a revival through exhibitions devoted to his work.

In February, Art historian Rupert Dickens presented three lectures, in chronological order, showing Album Cover Art. Rupert had with him many records to show and play to us, starting with early record sleeves from the jazz era followed by Elvis Presley, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. This was followed by the covers of the 70s, with examples from Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin produced by the famous design collective, Hipgnosis. Rupert talked of the basic purpose of a record cover in terms of marketing and conveying information about music and musicians adding a visual element to the listening experience.

Church Recording

This year the Team has been working at Little Munden. This church is renowned for its splendid medieval tombs of the Thornhill family. We were, again, so lucky to have the support and knowledge of local

enthusiasts who made our weekly visits to the church so very enjoyable and rewarding. Our work at All Saints, Little Munden, rather took our focus away from St Catherine where a new organ was being purchased. This held up the completion of the record but we were delighted to finally present it to the church congregation at a service in the church in August. The record for Litle Munden was presented at the beginning of October.

We have lost another member of the team through declining health but very much hope that we will be able to start a new church in the near future. It would be good, therefore, to hear from anyone who is interested, or who knows anyone else who might be interested, in finding out more about our work. Members don't really need to be very knowledgeable; they learn on the job. They just need to love churches.

Young Arts and Volunteers

The combination of Gift Aid, raffles from the Winter and Summer luncheons and various donations has enabled us to contribute a little under £3000 (*£2800*) in grants and donations this year. Music, either singing or playing, has formed a major part of our charitable giving, including a drum kit and support for a choral scholar. Beavers and Brownies continue to be recipients of our help and, new this year, an art workshop for children in Broxbourne. A prize for the popular Hertford Art Society was won by an amazing ceramicist. It is always worthwhile popping in to view their Summer Exhibition. Also new to us this year was the purchase of a badge making machine for Courtyard Arts; perhaps some of our members saw it in use at the Hertford Festival.

Some of our members are continuing to volunteer as guides at The Henry Moore centre and our Church Recorders are as busy as ever. If you know of any other members who volunteer in similar capacities I would love to hear from you or the members concerned.

Finally, please do contact me or any member of the committee if you know of any person or group who might benefit from our support.

Summer Lunch

Dining Al Fresco during an English Summer is always an anxious business for the organisers. This year was no different, albeit excessive heat rather than inclement weather!

Sue Rogers made us very welcome at her lovely home of Holwell Manor. The marquees beneath the trees, the beautiful lake and garden, the ease of access and parking contributed to a most enjoyable day. We are sincerely grateful to Sue for being such a welcoming and accommodating host. As usual, members enjoyed a delicious lunch provided by Julia Maddox.

Overseas Trip

The trip to Valencia in October 2025 was aptly recorded in our Society Newsletter as a visit to a City of Surprises. The tour encompassed so many fascinating aspects of Spanish history and heritage, from Roman antiquity through Arab invasion and occupation to the modernist architecture of the modern City of Arts and Sciences. Truly, this was an exceptionally enjoyable experience for the members who took part. Next year the Overseas Trip will take us to Marrakesh, a little later than is usual for these annual jaunts, in November 2026.

As we complete our first year as Joint Chairmen, we would like to thank all members for the support they have given us. We are particularly grateful to committee members who have made the society operate so seamlessly, completing another successful and enjoyable year. This is teamwork of a high order and we are all very lucky to be able to call on their time and skills in order for our society to thrive.

Beverley Maunder-Taylor & Rosemary Davis