



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - August 2021

I am delighted to be able to let you know that our final appeal resulted in enough members renewing their subscriptions that the committee are able to run the 2021/2022 season of AS Borders talks. This is still only 60% of our previous membership however and, as we have had to dip into our reserves significantly for both the 2020/2021 season as well as the upcoming one, the committee feel that unless there is a large influx of new members, this may be the last year that the society can run.

The members of the committee have been stellar during this time but most have been in position for a number of years and several members would like to step down at the end of this season. As we have not been able to host in person talks during the last year it has been difficult to recruit new members for the society, let alone people who are happy to join the committee. **However if there is no committee there is no society, so please do volunteer to help if you can.**

I am pleased to announce that as Government regulations on social distancing have been eased, any member of the society who wants to can now attend the talks at the Tait Hall without using the booking system we had put in place. However current rules mean we must still wear masks and that doors and windows need to be open for ventilation. We therefore recommend that you wrap up well, perhaps bringing rugs to the talks.

Should social distancing restrictions be reintroduced (maximum 80 people in the hall) we will revert to the following system. It will be a first come first served arrangement - you must get in touch with me either by phone - 01573 410620 or email charmianf@aol.com with your contact details (for Live Borders track and trace) and I will get back to you with a number. If more than 80 want to watch, members will go on a waiting list in case someone drops out. They will be given first right of refusal for the next talk. Members will not be able to invite guests if distancing restrictions are enforced. We will not be able to serve tea and coffee beforehand and ask that members please do not congregate in the lobby but go upstairs and take their seats from 10am onwards, after checking in as usual.

We have arranged a mixed programme of both in person and Zoom/YouTube talks this season, partly because we were not sure what the Covid situation would look like and partly as we felt members would prefer not to travel distances to sit in a cold hall during the winter months.

Dear Members,

It's been a funny old year. I want to thank our wonderful committee who have been extremely supportive and helpful, in a season where we have all had to become much better acquainted with technology - not really my forte. I especially want to thank Harry Cockerill and Andrew Findlay for getting our Zoom/YouTube lectures running so smoothly.

I would like to thank Clova Reid and John Barker who retired from the committee at the end of the 2019/2020 season. Clova worked tirelessly for the society for 25 years and I think she held most posts on the committee. John was our Treasurer for several years and also in charge of AV (as his assistant, I worried what would go wrong when he went to Australia for a couple of months each year, so was always very pleased to see him back).

I would also like to thank Anne Mason Brown and her committee at EDFAS who so kindly agreed to let our members watch their fantastic Zoom talks, when we were not sure whether AS Borders would run more than a couple ourselves. All the EDFAS talks have been outstanding and I know that members from other societies in Scotland have appreciated and enjoyed the talks too.

We started the season late, in November, with a riveting talk about Cleopatra; a powerful and capable political operative in her lifetime who has been seen in the years since as everything from a good little housewife to a dangerous foreign temptress. Our December lecture on The Nutcracker ballet was outstanding. The ballet that premiered as a flop is now a Christmas favourite and we learned about some of the pitfalls (literally) of staging the production, from the 30ft tree that rises from a deep hole in the floor to the dry ice which is used to create mist and frequently means the orchestra cannot see the conductor.

In January, our talk on the art of wine covered representations in art, glasses, bottles and the ceramic labels that were created by all the British porcelain factories. The item with most patents is the corkscrew. In February we were told how garden design is affected by colour, light and shade and how it can influence our moods - "In a garden we are painting a picture". We looked at English Cloisters in March, from Canterbury Cathedral which has two and Salisbury Cathedral which has the largest in Britain to Gloucester Cathedral's cloisters which were used in the Harry Potter films.

In April, Linda Smith showed us that though modern artists command money and prestige, it was only during the Renaissance that artists wanted to break away from being considered artisans to command the same status and financial reward as scholars did at that time. It took northern European artists far longer than their Italian counterparts to achieve the same level of fame. In May, we were given a fascinating tour of Tate Modern which covered the history of both buildings and overviews of some twenty of its most famous works - my taste does not often run to modern art but Ian Swankie's talk was so inspiring that I may well visit the gallery when I am next in London and perhaps ask him to take me round. When Ian is not lecturing he is a guide at Tate Modern. In June, we looked at three mansions built by anglophiles in America - copies of Jacobean Wakehurst Place, Clarendon House based on drawings in Vitruvius Britannicus by Colen Campbell and the Mills Mansion in the Hudson valley which was based on Prior Park outside Bath. The owners of these houses had enormous sums of money to play with and were quite colourful characters in their own right.

We are looking forward to our first visit in nearly two years on 14th September when we will be having tours around Bamburgh Castle.

We are in discussion with the lecturers who will be giving live talks about filming their talks to put up on the website. The lectures will be put on a password protected page on the AS Borders website and be available for 24 hours after the lecture so that members can watch when it is convenient for them. We will let you know when this facility is up and running. As it is the society's 30th anniversary this season, the committee decided to put on an extra online talk in December in celebration - 'Portrait of Jewels: following missing treasures through canvas' - by Andrew Prince.

The committee and I thank you for your continued support. We hope you will introduce new people to the society or perhaps get involved with its running. We look forward to you joining us for the 2021/2022 season of lectures and to seeing you back at the Tait Hall.

Charmian Findlay

Website - asborders.org.uk

Contact Charmian to book in for lectures in Tait Hall

Tel: 01573 410620

Email: charmianf@aol.com