



**Minutes of Tiverton Art Society's Annual General Meeting
held at St George's Hall
on Wednesday 8th November 2017 at 7pm**

1. **Apologies for absence** were read out.
2. **President's address**, given by **Heather Strong**.

She expressed the opinion that one of the strengths of our society is the wide range of members we have with a vast array of talents and experience. Anyone who joins the committee brings to it something unique and special: the person they are. This is especially true of those who become Chairman, as they put their own special stamp on the Society. She thanked Hazel-Ann for her significant contribution to the Society, both as a member of the committee and up to recently as Chairman.

She also thanked Stuart for stepping into the Chairman's role, and for agreeing to continue into 2018. A round of applause followed for Hazel-Ann and Stuart.

Heather then brought to our attention the wonderful speakers, excellent workshops, a successful exhibition, an open day in the Summer, a sketching holiday and sketching days, painting groups etc. etc. mainly organised by a depleted and overworked committee, that we had enjoyed over the last year.

She commented that we are in uncertain times regarding the Exhibitions, with a change of venue forced upon us. In this regard, I quote here certain sections of her speech verbatim: "I know a lot of people help out on handing-in days but there is a great deal more involved than that, please come forward to see how you can help. The committee feel they really need the flexibility to decide whether or not to continue with staging two exhibitions a year. They would like to see how the Spring Exhibition works out before committing to the Summer one. This will depend to quite an extent on how much help they get. Please think about it! The historical reason for having two exhibitions no longer applies, (the Summer one was selected, the Spring one wasn't); these days we do self-selection when putting the order of preference on the labels. And I believe we are the only society in the West-country to have two exhibitions, I suspect because there is so much work involved."

Heather summarised by expressing her confidence that the Art Society is still thriving in spite of the challenges, and her hope that it will long continue to do so.

3. **Minutes of the 2016 AGM**

The minutes of the last Annual General Meeting were circulated to the meeting. Their acceptance was proposed and seconded. The minutes were duly signed as a true record.

4. **Matters arising from the minutes**

None

5. **Chairman's report**, given by **Stuart Fowle**,

Stuart confirmed his intention to continue as Chairman, (which he admitted to expressing with some trepidation!) Remarking that it had been an unusual year with only one exhibition, he said how brilliantly this one had been organised by Sue Miles and Hazel-Ann, and expressed his thanks to them. Hazel-Ann was also thanked for her organisation of the TAS Open Day, which has resulted in a number of new members joining.

Also thanked were Wendy and Teresa for their varied and interesting guest speakers and workshop tutors, respectively. The organisation for both these requires a good deal of hard work, which is much appreciated.

Thanks also went to Richard and Virginia. who make a great team organising the movement of equipment and screens for the exhibitions and other events. Additionally, they continue to sell works from Peter Wickham's bequest to the TAS.

Stuart drew our attention to the publicity for the society generated by Hilary and Karen for 'traditional' advertising and Facebook. We may be expanding our use of Facebook in the near future. Karen also organises the exhibitions at the Hospital, which brings our works to the attention of the public, and provides another outlet for our members.

Other thanks went to Les as Treasurer, Peter as Secretary, Shirley as Membership Secretary, Keith for his continued support and experience on the committee, Sandy & Gillian for organising the sketching days, Sheila for the annual TAS holiday, Laurie for coming forward as projectionist, and Michael Collins for drawing up a very professional set of scale plans for the new exhibition venue. Stuart was also pleased to welcome Phil Belsham to the committee, and thanked him for taking on the running of the Portrait Group.

Stuart added that we are heading for more exciting changes, particularly the new venue for the exhibition(s), but that there will be a steep learning curve associated with this event in particular, so please bear with us.

Finally, he said one of our biggest issues is the slow decline in membership. This is something he vows to tackle in 2018. He then handed over to Les for the Treasurer's report.

6. **Treasurer's report** given by **Les Tosdevin**

The Treasurer presented the accounts for the year ending September 2017. He reported a loss of £255 but some of this was owing to timing differences on costs being received. Receipts were significantly down by 17% but payments were also somewhat down (9%). Again this year, no award from the Scott-Fox bequest (fund for 3D works) was presented because there had been too few entries received. Funds were taken from the Peter Wickham bequest to update the camera and projection equipment used at the monthly meetings – this was in line with Peter's wishes.

The general account has dropped slightly to £10,702. The Spring exhibition made a small loss of £84. Average membership numbers continue to show a decline, approx. 3% this year, which is something that Stuart intends to address. Workshops are showing a somewhat worrying Profit to Loss trend, although a profit of £50 was made on the four workshops in the 12 calendar-months to October. This is under review by the Committee.

The Treasurer ended by saying that overall it had been a satisfactory result given that the Society was not out to make a profit.

The accounts had been examined independently by Peter Woodley. Acceptance was proposed, seconded, and accepted accordingly. Both Les and Peter have agreed to continue in their roles for the next year, which news was gratefully received.

7. **Election of Officers**

The following Officers were proposed and seconded, then accepted by the meeting:-

- Heather Strong as President;
- Stuart Fowle as Chairman;
- Peter Radford-Gourlay as Secretary;
- Sue Miles as Exhibition Secretary;
- Shirley Walton as Membership Secretary

The remaining members of the committee were prepared to stand for another year:

- Phil Belsham
- Keith Benge
- Teresa Grant
- Karen de la Harpe
- Richard Holmes
- Virginia Holmes
- Hilary Tosdevin
- Wendy Vlasto

8. Motions for Voting (8a) and Discussion (8b):-

8a) That the committee is able to decide whether or not to hold both exhibitions in accordance with circumstances.

It was explained that we are still negotiating with Castle Primary for the use of their new hall, and are not in a position to determine firstly, whether we can afford it; secondly, whether it is suitable for our needs; and thirdly, whether it will be available at the times we want it. At this point Sue Searle made a generous offer for us to hold exhibitions at the Oak Room. Unfortunately, after discussion, this had to be declined because of the limited parking nearby, and the lack of disabled access.

Following this, a vote was taken and the motion was passed unanimously.

8b) The option for the Committee to request a vote from the Membership to a change of name for the T.A.S.

The matter was raised for two reasons – NADFAS have changed the name of their local branch to "The Art Society Tiverton", and there is a feeling that describing ourselves as a Society may be discouraging some amateur / younger artists to join.

This prompted a long and interesting discussion, summarised below, involving a significant number of the members present. Those contributing were: Claire Bainbridge, Lindsay Wall, Hazel-Ann, Heather Strong, Laurence Reed, Glory Radford, Sue Miles, Ken Maharajah, Chris Gundry, Jenny Baker, Peter Monahan, Keith Bengé, Lynne Dean, Hazel Morrell, Jean Watling, and Stuart Fowle.

It was questioned whether we had discussed the NADFAS change with them – it is part of a national initiative to change all their local branches' names, so not open to negotiation. As some consolation, Taunton Art Society are in a similar situation – the option to change their name has divided the group quite badly. NADFAS have agreed that we should each hold publicity leaflets etc for each- other's groups to help clarify the differences. It was pointed out that we are in fact very different, in that NADFAS organise lectures, visits and other group activities, but they do not include practical art events. CG, who's joined recently, said that he had found the two names confusing when he was trying to find out which was the one he actually intended to join.

Although changing our name would involve a change to the website, this is regarded as a minor task.

Amongst the alternative names suggested were: Tiverton Art Group, Mid Devon Art Group, Tiverton Artists, Tiverton Art, New Tiverton Art Group, [HS:- "We're not new!"]

While this discussion was going on, LD had Googled us, and was pleased to report that we came out at the top of the results. However the second line was "... founded in 1971 'to foster interest in, and encourage the practice of the Fine Arts' in the Mid-Devon region" This was felt to be more off-putting than encouraging.

Most younger members and many in the 20-30 age group that we are hoping to attract will find us through the internet so it is essential that we devote attention to "Branding". This is also supported by the quantity and quality of entertainment brought to people's homes these days making it harder to encourage people to "come out into the cold" to attend our meetings / courses etc. It was also felt that the newly-retired should be considered as potential members – they are, of course, significant users of the internet.

LW wished to congratulate the committee, and Hazel-Ann in particular, for the initiative of holding the Open Day, thus helping to spread the word about us and what we offer.

A vote was then taken to change the name – For: 11; Against: 16. The motion was rejected.

One of the suggestions that the committee had been mulling over for some time was the formation of an Evening Painting Group to attract people in full time employment who are not able to take advantage of our current groups. After discussion a vote was taken on this, but it was rejected – a good idea, but hard to achieve logistically.

A vote was then taken on re-vamping the website now to attract more of the people we're aiming at, then to re-consider the name-change before next year's AGM. This was carried with a large majority. In pursuit of this the following initiatives were discussed:-

A better 'tag line' as the first thing that people see;

Publicise the fact that potential members are welcome at our evening meetings, or painting groups, as a 'try before you buy' option;

More availability of leaflets publicising our activities, and including membership details;

As we are aiming at re-branding the TAS to make it more accessible, give the website a more punchy look and feel.

9) **Questions and Answers.**

Sue Searle commented that her name had not been included with the list of the Committee members read out during the re-election process, although she has offered to join the Committee.

Elections are not actually required for committee members, except Officers of the Society. The process is that new members attend two or three meetings to allow them to get a feel for the group; this allows both parties to decide whether it will work, after which the new member is co-opted onto the Committee.

There being no further business the meeting closed, to be followed by two quizzes and a bring-and-share supper, as well as the presentation of the Alan Rigby Award.