

Chairman's Report for 2019

Ray Keppler

1) Introduction

2019 was a year of gentle transition for *THACS*. We ran a familiar range of nine successful events, against a backdrop of significant changes in the way we operate. Let us start by reviewing the events.

2) Review of events

2.1) AGM

The first event of 2019 was the eighteenth *THACS* AGM, which took place at Tewin Memorial Hall on Monday 14th January. It was followed by an interesting talk by Chris Bell entitled *How Photography Changed Painting Forever*.

2.2) Shows

The Spring and Autumn shows ran smoothly and showcased some of the many skills of the exhibitors. As usual, there were exhibits of Flower Arranging, Horticulture, Arts and Crafts, Photography and Culinary, all enhanced by delightful displays of childrens' art.

2.3) *THACS* plant stall

Nick Whiting organised the *THACS* plant stall at the Tewin Village Fete in June. The proceeds of about £375 went to the Tewin Memorial Hall.

2.4) Visit to Cliveden

I organised a coach trip in July to Cliveden, which is a National Trust estate in Buckinghamshire. This was a popular choice and attracted 47 people. It all went well and was a great day out.

2.5) Arts & Crafts Fair

Hilary Tipping organised the annual Arts & Craft Fair, which was held in Tewin Memorial Hall in early December.

2.6) Workshops

There were three workshops in 2019, all ably organised by Joanne Allen. The Creative Writing workshops in March and October were run by Frances Wilson whilst the Art workshop in November was run by Jude O'Sullivan. Frances and Jude are both very positive and encouraging tutors, so workshop participants feel they want to do more.

By their very nature, these workshops can only accommodate a small number of people. Unless you took part, you may not realise what they provide and why they are so worthwhile. Joanne Allen provided an insight into this with the following observations: -

“The creative writing days have settled to a number of regular attenders who jostle for the number of places available. Participants come because they like the opportunity to experiment with their writing and increase their skills. They also come because they have things they have wanted to write about for some time, usually from their own experience or their past. It can be cathartic.

With regard to the art day, in the past few years Jude has been able to offer a different subject matter each year which enables participants to produce a finished piece of artwork in one day or something with which they can carry on at home. The one-off art day appeals to women particularly who have demands which mean they cannot sign up for a whole term of art but love the idea of getting away and doing something artistic for one day with a lovely lunch and good conversation.”

I think that Joanne’s comments clearly show why workshops like these are such an important part of our work to encourage village arts and crafts.

3) Changes made in 2019

There were several changes in the way we operate and the most significant of these changes involved the way in which we communicate with our members.

The last *THACS* Newsletter was published in December 2018. In it, we announced the new *THACS* communications and publicity approach and we have been implementing it throughout 2019.

Some aspects have not changed, such as our use of regular articles published in the *Tewin Magazine* and our use of posters for events in the village. However, without the regular *THACS* newsletters, we have relied more on email and web pages.

We have refined and developed our use of email as a primary way of communicating with most of our members. Previously, these emails were mainly sent out when a *THACS* Newsletter was published. Now, we send emails whenever there is sufficient news. This has meant that news can be sent to our members in a more timely manner and in a more immediate and accessible form.

The demise of the *THACS* Newsletters was the catalyst for a re-design of the *THACS* webpages. This was an interesting project and I was delighted to announce the launch of our new webpages on the *Tewin Village* website in September. It’s a great improvement on the previous version and is now maturing well.

These changes had significant risks associated with them, which we recognised and considered. All of them were either mitigated or accepted. I am pleased (and relieved) to report that the changes have been successfully implemented without any significant adverse impact on finances or membership numbers.

The membership numbers have remained steady at around 190 and the uptake of the emails has increased. At the end of 2018, 74% of members took our emails. By the end of 2019, more than 80% of members took our emails.

4) Helpers

The committee works well together and I am very grateful for their ongoing dedication and support. They have done a great job.

We are also thankful for the staunch support of those people who have freely given their time and effort to the benefit of us all.

In particular: -

- 1) Joanne Allen for organising the two Creative Writing workshops and the Art workshop,
- 2) Hilary Tipping for organising the Art & Craft Fair.
- 3) Nick Whiting for organising the plant stall at the village fete.
- 4) Malcolm Allen for leading the development of the new webpages.
- 5) Felix Green for her help, advice and technical support on the webpage development.
- 6) Linda Crawford and her team for organising the catering at the two shows
- 7) The show judges, who generously put their experience and expertise to such good use at our shows.

We have also benefited from the considerable support from numerous organisations: -

- 1) The staff, helpers and children at Tewin Cowper School, Tewin Under-Fives Pre-school and the Tewin Parent and Toddler group, who supported our shows.
- 2) Bull's Green Nursery for donating plants for the plant stall.
- 3) Tewin Stores for being a collection point for the show schedules.

Thanks also go to all the many other willing members and supporters of the society, who help so reliably with many diverse tasks. Thank you all.