

Poole & East Dorset Art Society

Annual General Meeting

11 July 2021

Chair's Report

As Chair it is my role to report on the activities of the Society over the last year and to outline the plans for the future. As we are holding the AGM by Zoom, this is being circulated in advance.

We have all had a rather different experience of PEDAS over 2020. Minimal physical meetings, virtually no exhibitions in 2020, no coach trips, few Galleries to visit, no Christmas party, no pantomime and a cancelled PEDAS holiday. The reasons for this situation do not need re-stating.

New initiatives over the last year

Your Society quickly rose to the challenge of the new reality. What we had instead was a whole new portfolio of activities, just experienced in a completely different way - online. Like every other organisation the world over we have had to use the digital technology at our disposal to keep our activities going. Our Thursday programme went on online, with a diverse and varied range of artistic challenges on a weekly basis, and hopefully something for everyone to participate in and enjoy. Liz McGee initiated a Facebook group Pedas@Home, a members only platform for sharing posts on anything to do with art, but which mainly functioned as a wonderful forum through which to share what art we had been doing, including from the weekly exercises and from our extended En Plein Air programme. Thank you to Liz for our Facebook presence, and to the programme team, led by Sally Holland for the constant flow of new ideas, and for the help afforded by every member who also generously contributed ideas and online activities and even courses.

Because this was the safest and most permitted form of activity, our summer en plein air programme was extended to enable members to experience a physical 'meet up' and to share doing art together but separately. Our thanks to David Roberts for producing a varied, stimulating and enjoyable set of venues over an extended period of very variable weather conditions! This continues throughout the summer, and the better weather.

No exhibitions possible? Well let's start an online gallery! Thanks to those of you who have submitted pictures to this. These can be changed, moved around and refreshed at any stage. Despite good online publicity, through our Facebook page, our blog and of course our website, we have not attracted a lot of viewing, and although Sue Smith sold a picture, it wasn't from the online Gallery. However, we will continue to find different ways to promote this opportunity.

We have an additional database of 'Friends' of PEDAS, who are not members but who have expressed an interest in keeping in touch with us and our activities. Instead of a regular Friends Newsletter, Sally Holland started a regular, but not too frequent Blog, aimed at keeping the community of Friends, as well as members informed and interested. Thank you Sally for managing this.

The protracted lockdown period presented an opportunity to address our Archives! This was mentioned at last year's AGM and our thanks go to Pat Burnham for being willing to take on this massive task of sorting through and weeding out and collating the historical records of PEDAS. As a result Pat was able to write a fascinating article for the March Newsletter highlighting some interesting facts from the past. Our Society will be 100 years old in 2024, and this will be something to celebrate! Watch this space.

Exhibitions

Did we manage any exhibitions in the Gallery? Liz will report on this but we did manage to draw breath and squeeze in, 'A Breathe of Fresh Air' last October. Talk about taking every opportunity afforded to us! I think this just finished before the next lockdown! This involved carrying out a detailed risk assessment for UCP approval, which has involved a lot of work for many, especially all the GUS team. These additional procedural requirements have really tested the team's tenacity and resilience to keep the Gallery running. Many thanks to the GUS team and everyone who helps with the Gallery Upstairs. Very recently of course we exploded out of our Covid box once again in May as soon as the restrictions on Galleries were lifted, participating in the restored Dorset Art Weeks, with our exhibition 'Tree'. We had arranged a programme of structured support from Abi Kremer for members leading up to this but like everything else this had to be handled in a different way, and we are thankful to Abi for being willing to fully engage with technological solutions.

Charity update

In addition to our normal activities as a membership society and running a community gallery, in our first year of being a charity we were unable to run or participate in any community outreach activities. We are in the process of writing our first formal report to the Charity Commission, which will be rather thin on public/community benefit. However, we are in the same boat as most other charities and are working on our plans for the coming year. Along with an activity report, we have to submit consolidated accounts to the Charity Commission. This will run from 29 July 2019 (commencement of charity status) to Dec 2020, our financial year end. We owe Pam Marshall a big vote of thanks for all her hard work on this and to Joy Gow for her excellent control over the Gallery accounts. We are required to have them independently examined and Peter Barber has agreed to handle this role for PEDAS. I know that Pam has worked well with Peter, who has given us tremendous support.

From the start, John Biggs has led the charity side of our activities and he is busy compiling our first annual report for the Charity Commission. Thankyou John for your continued time and acumen spent on this.

Membership

Thankyou to all of you reading this for renewing your membership of PEDAS in the midst of a pretty downbeat year. Your loyalty has been much appreciated. We currently have 87 members. We have lost a few members for good and sufficient reasons, including moving away. To this end we have started a new category of 'country member', open to existing members who have moved away, meaning they can not attend regular meetings, but still wish to keep in touch and feel part of PEDAS, and vice versa. Again, like other organisations we need to generate new interest, new participation, new blood. Please interest friends or any one you know with an interest in an art practice in coming along to one of our sessions, to see what PEDAS is all about. Our thanks go to Carol Cox for diligently administering the membership function, which is so important.

We have seen the passing of two more long standing members during 2020, David Hendry and Chuck Savoy. I would also like to acknowledge the hardships that I am sure many of you have personally suffered over the last 18 months, whether or not this has been linked to Covid, or whether that involved you personally or a member of your family or friends. I know of some cases or not all of them.

I guess none of us knew that a long-standing member called Yvonne Bottwood had died in 2017, or that she had left PEDAS £500 in her will! If only we could thank her!

We have written about this in a recent Newsletter, informing you that we will be using this AGM to ask members to vote on the most favoured way of spending this money.

Further, I would like to say a word about President. It is over a year since John Bowen died and since then we agreed that when the right person revealed themselves, we would like to replace John and retain the role of President within PEDAS. However, we have learnt that this is a tough role that asks a lot of the incumbent! We are determined that this person must be right for our Society and thus up to now we have been unable to secure a new President. Ongoing suggestions from members are welcome. We will continue to scour the local art world!

So what of the future and (assuming) the lifting of restrictions

When I started writing this, we were expecting a lifting of all restrictions on 21st June. Alas, we continue to live with uncertainty. The delayed AGM has been affected by this and our future plans may be also.

However, assuming we can proceed after July, room bookings are in place for the new season. Do not miss the first Sunday session in August with Sue Smith on the

subject of Shirley Trevanna. Thursdays resume in September in the usual way. Until then the *en plein air* days continue! David Roberts will be looking after the Thursday bookings and he already has a very varied programme in place.

Liz will tell us about the Gallery activities planned for the year ahead. The lifting of restrictions on galleries has led to a flurry of activity. Highlights include Dawn Goodson's retrospective in late July, our Autumn exhibition 'Art in to View' and our OPEN 2021 with the theme of 'Wild'.

I am both extremely sorry and rather shocked that the long awaited and re-instated PEDAS holiday to East Sussex has had to be cancelled again, this time through lack of bookings. Who would have thought? Our thanks go to Carole Gadsby and to John Biggs for the effort they consistently put into this event, designing a trip that is attractive and affordable to as many members as possible. These are always well designed, well run and highly enjoyable!

We intend to build relationships with organisations and individuals to gain reciprocal benefits for our members, building a growing list of Friends, including working more closely with other art groups in the local area, eg our plans for working with Broadstone Art Society which have been outlined to members.

We want to build our Social Media presence and are currently investigating Instagram as a way forward to get our message out there in this age of digital communication and marketing.

Upton Country Park

At the last AGM I reported on the exciting developments in UCP as a result of their successful Lottery bid and how we were on track to work more closely with them to build a stronger partnership. This will help us in a number of ways, but not least for the community activities we have plans for. Over 2020, events were cancelled, tearoom and Gallery closed so their plans and objectives were set back as well as ours. However, new plans are in place. We will be participating in a Wellbeing event in a few days' time and we have a ProLoco art event planned for the Bank Holiday. When the tearoom opens again, we will be able to promote the Gallery through the TV Monitor we paid for (reported by Joy last AGM), and as their work and activity plans unfold, there will be further opportunities for us.

After a year, we still have not finalised our new contract, or Licence to Occupy with UCP. PEDAS has not held up the progress of this and earlier this year we formally employed the services of a Solicitor to advise us on the draft from UCP. This was returned to them within 3 weeks. Their inability to physically meet up under Covid restrictions has been one reason for the delay, but there has also been an issue with our Gallery insurance policy and the extent to which it covers the risk of third party hirers.

Finally, our committees and members

We have to vote in our Trustees for the coming year at this meeting. This is a little more complex now we are a charity but the process will be explained to you in the meeting.

Steph Jones is willing to step up as Trustee and stands as a nominee.

As far as the GUS Committee is concerned, since the last AGM Norma Rawlings has stepped down from her publicity role for the Gallery and we have not been able to replace her. So, once more, your Gallery needs you!

We have already publicly acknowledged the tremendous job Linda Honeyborne has done for PEDAS to help us to benefit more fully from the use of technology, but as Linda steps down from being a Trustee, she has promised to continue as our IT support to smooth our operations and help with new initiatives. Thankyou Linda.

Finally, as well as a massive thanks to all committee members, my thanks go to all of you and your continued support, especially through this most unusual and difficult of years.

I trust that the worst effects of the pandemic are now behind each and every one of us and whatever suffering and chaos it has wreaked, that we can all look forward to the coming year with renewed energy and optimism. Onwards with the art practice!

Jacqui Gush

Chair