Shropshire Art Society annual report for 2025/2026

As this annual report shows it has been yet another busy and greatly productive year for Shropshire Art Society.

The demand for the Society's workshops, classes, gallery trips, paintaways and clubs demonstrates not only the quality of what's provided but also the creative drive of our members.

This is all too evident in the excellence of finished works our members submit to the Society's Summer and Autumn Exhibitions and to our permanent exhibition space in St. Mary's Church in Shrewsbury.

The massive 'footfall' of people visiting the exhibitions also pays testimony to the quality of our members' work and the place our exhibitions now have in the annual cycle of events in Shropshire.

None of this is possible without the leadership and commitment of volunteers who present, organise or convene our workshops, classes, clubs, trips and exhibitions, and guide the Society as members of its governing Committee.

You are all stars and the Society is deeply indebted to you.

This was also the year we, sadly, saw the passing of Alan Townsend. So long a mainstay of the life and development of the Society, his love for and commitment to it over so many years was instrumental in making the Society the organisation it is today.

Finally, I would like to extend my personal thanks to John Willetts who stands down from the Committee at this AGM. For many years 'the hand on the tiller' as the Society's Exhibitions Secretary and a long standing presence on the Committee, John's practical, direct and insightful contribution will be deeply missed.

Paul Cronin

Chair

Webmaster Report 2026

In my first year in this role, my primary goal was to evaluate the Society's needs and assess our current digital footprint across our website, email communications, Focal Points newsletter, and social media channels.

Working closely with our Secretary, Jayne, we redesigned Focal Points into a visually engaging, printable PDF. This updated format serves as a vibrant showcase for the Society's activities while allowing members to easily save and print each issue without losing formatting.

Regarding our current WordPress website, I have been researching options to migrate to a hosted platform. Making this switch would simplify future site management and unlock valuable new features, such as online event booking.

On social media, we have launched a new public Facebook page that does not require member approval to view, and we will begin transitioning away from the old group page shortly. We have also created a new Instagram account to broaden our online reach.

Finally, I have volunteered to produce a pilot online video workshop for members. Structured as a three-part, on-demand "paint-along," this initiative will offer a flexible alternative for members who are unable to attend our regular Saturday classes or Wednesday workshops.

Laura Kemshall

Exhibitions

The Society held two Exhibition as usual in St Mary's Church, and Bear Steps. Both were a great platform for members to exhibit their work.

41 and 37 members exhibited with 130 and 120 pictures. It was lovely to see some new members contributing and everyone's work together was a fantastic sight.

Sales were slightly up on last year at £5600, and £2300, but as last year members should be aware that both exhibitions make a loss - the summer exhibition particularly after all the fees we owe lost just over £1000.

Of note it was lovely to show some of Reg Harrisons work - a previous member from the 1940s. Next year we are exploring the idea of perhaps having an Exhibition at the Shrewsbury Museum and Art gallery.

Tim Parker

Gallery Trips

In January 2026, 42 of us visited the Lady Lever Art Gallery and the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool for the Turner Exhibition. In March, 28 of us braved the chilly weather to see the Breugel to Rembrandt Exhibition at Compton Verney, and the Garman Ryan Collection at The New Art Gallery in Walsall. With better weather in May, 24 of us joined the trip to Oriel Ffin y Parc Gallery, Llandudno to see the work of Neil Canning, Claudia Williams and Gwilym Prichard, and to the Royal Cambrian Academy of Art in Conwy to see an exhibition of Welsh Contemporary Art. A trip to Wightwick Manor and Wolverhampton Art Gallery was organised for September but had to be cancelled because insufficient numbers booked to cover the costs. Two overnight trips to London were organised for March and October for major exhibitions but had to be abandoned mainly due to late release of exhibition tickets and hotel and exhibition reservations requiring up-front payments. A survey has been issued to collect guidance from members on how best to plan future gallery trips.

Paintaway Holidays

Seventeen Society members joined the Paintaway in Anglesey this year. Just over half completed a feedback survey, which was overwhelmingly positive in terms of the inspiring venue and friendly atmosphere, and also established that we shouldn't change the format of the Paintaway, but rather keep artistic activities relaxed, informal and optional. Despite the weather not being optimal during the Paintaway this year, an exhibition of impressive Paintaway artwork was hung in St Mary's in August and September. The Paintaway planned for 7th – 11th June 2027 at Tŷ'n y Cornel Hotel, beside Tal-y-llyn Lake in Snowdonia is fully booked and the Society will have exclusive use of the hotel.

Kirstie Edwards

Sketch Club Report

We would like to begin by expressing our sincere thanks to Gillian Mortimer for volunteering to join the Sketch Club organising team. Gillian's knowledge of Shropshire's hidden places will be a fantastic asset when planning the 2027 calendar and will help ensure the club's ongoing success.

This year, 31 members signed up to participate in Sketch Club activities an increase on 2025. This level of interest reflects the club's continued appeal and members' enthusiasm.

Member exhibition

The Sketch Club held a six-week exhibition across February and March 2026, featuring a diverse range of work by six members. The sketches depicted locations

visited over the last few years. The exhibition aimed to showcase typical sketches produced during outings rather than finished pieces.

Events and Locations

Throughout the year, the Sketch Club visited a diverse range of locations, including Blists Hill, Dudmaston Hall and Norbury Junction. Subjects included historic buildings, elements of our industrial heritage, and garden settings, providing varied inspiration for members. We were fortunate to enjoy excellent weather on our planned dates, allowing almost every scheduled event to proceed as intended.

Attendance and Activities

An average of 15 members attended each event, demonstrating strong participation. During the lunch break, members had an opportunity to share their works in progress and receive constructive critique, with Bob facilitating these discussions. This supportive environment fostered both improvement and camaraderie among participants.

Tamara Hackett and Bob Spendlove

Saturday Workshops 2026/27

A series of eight workshops taking inspiration for their paintings from an artist or group, suggested by the workshop members. The sessions are held over the autumn and spring of each year.

This year we continue to have a large number of members enrolled on the Saturday Workshops, 47 in total, the largest number so far, with most attending in person, and 8 preferring to take part by email. Further bookings for in person attendance for this season are now closed.

After each workshop members submit an image of their paintings for inclusion in a PDF document circulated to all participants, which is currently averaging at approximately 35 high quality works for every session with most members submitting more than 1 painting each.

The first workshop of this season opened with a study of Ann Blockley and Georgia O'Keefe's floral paintings. As usual, we had a display of flowers resulting in some excellent paintings. This floral display has become a regular feature, having been the subject of the very first Saturday Workshop created by Judy and Alan Townsend.

The October workshop was also very successful, studying the work of Kim Day and John Elwyn's semi-abstract landscapes, producing some very colourful paintings from members. The November workshop will involve a portraiture session, with members Graham Hall and Melanie Houlder sitting as models inspired by artists Frida Kahlo and Scottish colourist John Ferguson. Our December workshop will be a

festive one as usual with home-made cakes, while studying the work of contemporary landscape artists Peter Moore and Calum Wallis.

Our venue at Upton Magna Village Hall continues to be very suitable and is proving very popular with members. The hall is comfortable and warm, providing parking, no stairs, a good kitchen with 2 kettles and 2 fridges and plenty of hot water.

The current cost for participation in the workshops is still only £30.00, extremely good value at £3.75 per session.

Lynne Morgan and Mick Krupa

Wednesday Classes

The Society has hosted 4 sets of classes over the last twelve months, on a variety of themes, all of which have been fully subscribed and very enjoyable. We are still using the Village Hall at Upton Magna, which is fully accessible, has great facilities and is set in a beautiful village.

Gillian Mortimer

Print Club

The Print Club now meets all year round and has grown from a handful of members following the lifting of lockdown to a thriving group of twenty regular attendees in 2026. The Club holds its own annual exhibition in St. Mary's which is open from the day of the AGM until January 2027.

Paul Cronin