

Notes of the 69th meeting of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Chairs Meeting held at the Gurkha Museum on 3rd March 2025

Present:

Charles Harris	Area Chair (CAST)
Jeremy Thomas	Chair of AS Trustees
Emma Ridge	Guest Speaker Art-Bytes
Flavia Bateson	Guest Speaker Chesil Theatre
Pat Hindley	Hon. Treasurer
Diana Heatly	Secretary
Simon Reynier	Website Manager
Ali Green	H&IOW Jean Bolton Series Organiser
Lucy Tew	H&IOW Spring Series Organiser
Pam Meir	Consultant
Carol-Anne Harrisson	Facebook
Jane Hutchence	Liaison
plus 28 Chairs and representatives from 16 Hampshire and Isle of Wight Societies	

Apologies:

Margaret Hind, Test Valley and Rita Hembry New Milton

NOTE OF THE MEETING

1. Welcome

To all and our Guests: Jeremy Thomas, Emma Ridge, Flavia Bateson and Stephanie Danby.

2. Minutes of the 68th Area Meeting held on 7th October 2024.

Agreed. Matters arising: None.

3. CASTS update:

Chairman: The theme is 'Wonderment.' Charles spoke about:

Encouraging new members by using old copies of The Arts Society magazine left in community hotspots.

The Governance, Marketing and Website working parties set up by the Arts Society.

Unpacking best practices from Champion Societies.

Area's 'wonderful' Jean Bolton and Spring Series.

The Awayday idea for all area H&IOW committees has been transformed into one of 'clusters'. Petersfield has taken on the initiative, a template for others.

Instead, the Area committee comes to you to meet with your local peers, and we keep the costs down.

Finally, Charles introduced us to Pam's idea about Arts Volunteering with local Amateur Dramatic Societies with the help of an Area grant.

Treasurer: The Current balance is £21,742.06. built up from successful Autumn and Spring Study Days. There have been three Grant applications this year. Area will give each society £300 to donate to their local Amateur Dramatic societies. This is in addition to all other available grants.

Facebook: Four societies in the area use Facebook, a useful tool for linking with your communities. The Facebook Address is: The Arts Society & Isle of Wight Area.

Area Website: Simon invites societies to contact him with information about their Study Days and Visits, and he will advertise them on the website with a link to your society. On the website, you can find the revised Guidelines for the Area Grant application and the Arts Society Strategy for 2025.

4. **Presentations:**

a) Jeremy Thomas.

<https://d.docs.live.net/9F2DEBE20720FC6A/Documents/Area%20H%5e0IO%20W/Area/Area%20Secretary/Area%20meeting%20docs/Spring%202025%20Area%20presentations%20Jeremy%20Thomas.pptx>

In the Q&A session:

A request to reinstate the Treasurer's Induction session online.

There will be a review of the AS acting CEO this month.

b) Emma Ridge: Art-Bytes <https://artbytes.co.uk> was launched during lockdown in partnership with Wessex. It is a not-for-profit organisation. For 2024/25 four societies in the Area sponsored 5 schools between them, at a cost of £180 per school. Its partner for 2025 is Liverpool University. It costs £210 to sponsor a school for 2025/26. This is a significant discount for the school entering direct - £195+vat (Primary) or £295+vat (Secondary).

This provides a marketing opportunity for the Arts Society. Applications close in June 2025. The project targets children in years 5 and 9. Anna Simonsen (AS Solent) spoke about her project with a local school and the challenges involved. The artwork culminates in a national exhibition, the winning school receives extra resources for their school. A pack from Art-Bytes has been emailed separately to the Area Chairs.

5. **Society chairs 3 minutes Update:**

Three society anniversaries were celebrated last year: 40th Portsdown, 45th Meon Valley and Winchester. This year, Grayshott celebrates their 40th.

Some societies have seen an increase in their membership numbers. Meon Valley is recruiting younger members. NB. Membership is the BRAND.

Recruitment to committees is still a problem. Developing volunteer roles to help the committee worked.

There has been a renewed interest in Day trips. coaches are pricey, and self-driving is becoming more frequent. Stratfield Saye, Reading, is a popular venue this year. Travelling abroad has become challenging for some. The deposits are greater and required sooner. The flights run at inconvenient times: early in the morning or late at night. As a result, one society cancelled their trip.

One society cancelled 'booking ahead' for visitors, and their numbers attending increased. A recommendation: Annelie Talent is an outstanding lecturer and lives locally. She brought artefacts to a Jane Austen lecture, which were much appreciated. Hart Church Recording Group is thriving.

Railway Anniversaries: 160 years ago, the Hampshire railway from Alton to Winchester was inaugurated. The Watercress Group are making a textile timeline to commemorate the occasion.

200 years ago, the railway arrived in Basingstoke.

6. Lunch

7. Presentation. Flavia Bateson, Chesil Theatre: www.chesiltheatre.org.uk

Flavia extolled the benefits of Amateur Dramatic Groups that range from villages, towns, or even their theatres and provide mixed art. These provide opportunities to socialise, learn new skills such as costumes and lighting and develop acting or directing skills. What makes this so unique is being able to play to an audience.

Winchester Dramatic Society was founded in 1863 and has continued to the present day, except during World Wars I and II. In 1966, they established their home in the Chesil Theatre, a 12th century former church in the heart of the City. performing a wide-ranging programme plus running two thriving youth theatre groups, drama workshops, training and social events. They are part of two umbrella organisations, NODA (National Opera and Dramatic Association) and the Little Theatre Guild of Great Britain.

The Chesil Theatre provides outreach into village halls and older people matinees. They are in the process of fundraising for an extension.

The Take Ten is the Chesil Theatre's New Writing Festival 2025-2026. It provides a major nationwide creative writing opportunity launched on March 1st. Please see the website for details.

8. AOB: Charles announced that our guest for the October meeting is Katherine Templar Lewis. She is a cognitive scientist and co-founder of Kinda Studios, a neuroaesthetic studio and laboratory that specialises in measuring how different environments impact our brainwaves and nervous system.

9. **Date of next meeting: October 6th, 2025**, at the Gurkha Museum (*please add to your diary*).