

Chairman's Annual Report for 2020

Unprecedented doesn't even come close to describing 2020 - drought, bushfires, floods, pandemic, ailing economy, unemployment, the Arts sector on its knees and the year that the bin went out more than I did! Our society has long been a well-oiled machine with an enthusiastic committee ensuring the delivery of eight superb lectures in morning and evening sessions during a typical year with Special Interest Days, tours and other delights as they occurred. Instead, we had one live lecture in March (and excellent it was, too) and the world stopped.

Since then, the Committee has recognised the importance of keeping all members in touch with the arts, particularly early in lockdown and then isolation when fear and uncertainty were rife. With grim and confronting news as a 24-hour constant, to be able to take refuge, even for an hour, in the appreciation of human achievement in the arts and the finer things in life is very comforting. Rest assured, we will continue to deliver that access digitally until we can return to face-to-face lectures.

We were amazed at how quickly our fabulous UK and Australian lecturers turned their skills to recording and disseminating their lectures to each society. While not exactly the programme we promised you all in our 2020 brochure, we have actually had more lectures on more topics than ever before, albeit delivered digitally. I, for one, have learnt much and marvelled at the knowledge, expertise and presentation skills of so many lecturers on their particular subjects.

With the inability to travel through the year, we took the opportunity for virtual travel, firstly to Cordoba and its Moorish architectural origins; to Japan and its unique gardens; to Croatia to learn of its troubled history and artistic highlights; to England for a mirror on society through Hogarth's Modern Moral Subject paintings; to Norway for insights into Munch's mind and his extraordinary artistic output; to the Silk Road and Eastern influences of gemstones and style on European jewellery; and finally, an understanding and appreciation of contemporary sculpture. We were also privy to a real treat with a lecture on Holbein's "The Ambassadors" live-streamed from the UK.

I know that we have all been yearning for the live version of our ADFAS days where we can enjoy a lecture with old friends, mingle with other members and interact with the lecturer. However, I have been touched to hear of little clusters of members who have been attempting to overcome this deficit by meeting together and enjoying the lectures on a home screen with a glass of wine to add to the conviviality. We all share a fundamental need for socialising which I hope we can resume with safety in 2021. The lectures up to June 2021 are listed on the last page of this bulletin.

All on the Committee wish each and every one good health and COVID-safe hugs for Christmas!

Best wishes,



Helen Meddings
Chairman, ADFAS Ku-ring-gai



ADFAS in the Community

ADFAS Societies aim to foster interest in the decorative and fine arts, cultivate their application and study, and encourage the preservation of our cultural and artistic heritage.

Church Recording

Like most activities in the pandemic our dedicated team of church recorders found they were prevented access to St Anne's, Ryde where they were deep into recording and photographing the historical contents, furnishings and memorials in the church. St Anne's is one of the oldest churches in Australia, dating from 1826. Despite the restrictions, some of the team have used their time constructively to review and edit their documentation and to prepare for resumption of their on-site recording when access to the church is again available.



The Villers-Bretonneux Memorial Cross

On an interior wall of the church is a large wooden Cross commemorating the Australian soldiers of the 51st Battalion, AIF who died in the battle which took place at the small town of Villers-Bretonneux in northern France on 25 April 1918. The 51st Battalion was raised in Egypt in March 1916, with almost half of its complement coming from the 11th Battalion who had survived the tragedy of the Gallipoli landing in 1915.



The original Cross was one of four Crosses brought back from the battlefields of the Somme in France and placed in various Sydney churches. The Villers-Bretonneux Cross was placed in St Anne's and dedicated on Armistice Day 1934.

It was subsequently realised that the majority of the 51st Battalion had been recruited from Western Australia. A request was made for the Cross to be transferred to Perth. This took some time but eventually, in 1956, the Cross was transferred to St George's Cathedral in Perth, with the mutual agreement of the parishioners and the 51st Battalion of the AIF Association. The Department of the Army arranged for an exact replica to be made by Mr Parker of Killara. This replica now hangs in St Anne's.

The Church Recording team leader is Christine McLennan, ably assisted by Alice Anne Bagster, Janet Buxton, Helen Fisher, Doreen King, Meg Stevenson and Michele Symonds.

Young Arts

For the third year we have sponsored the ADFAS Emerging Artist Award in conjunction with Eramboo, a leading independent arts organisation located right on the edge of the Ku-ring-gai National Park in Terrey Hills. The Committee thought it even more essential to provide this support in 2020 as the Arts community generally has suffered such a collapse in funding due to COVID-19.

This year the winning young artist is Madison Baird, aged 20, from Balgowlah. Madi has an impressive CV already and is just completing her studies at RMIT in Melbourne. Because of the lockdown in Victoria, Madi returned to Sydney and is thus available to take up her month-long residency at Eramboo in October where she will prepare for her first solo exhibition in December. We look forward to it. It is uplifting to witness the enthusiasm, talent, inspiration and dedication from young artists like Madi. It is especially pleasing to know that we at ADFAS Ku-ring-gai have contributed to her future success, despite the travails experienced during the pandemic.



Madison Baird in her studio surrounded by some of her works of art

Madi's art practice is deeply intertwined with the Australian landscape and during her Eramboo residency she plans en plein air sketching/painting in the bush surrounds which she will resolve into completed works back in the studio. This practice and immediacy enhances her work's freshness and liveliness. Madi is looking forward to interacting with and learning from her mentors and creative colleagues during her intensive month at Eramboo.



Support our ADFAS Emerging Artist by attending Madi's Exhibition.
See you at the Opening on Saturday, 12 December 2020
or any time until 20 December

Eramboo Artist Environment
304 McCarrs Creek Road
Terrey Hills

Boonah Creative Arts Centre

During this difficult year we felt it important to also continue our support of Boonah. As a creative arts centre for people with a disability, it is an inspiration to see the dedication of the teachers and aides and the pure joy that the artists get from giving free artistic expression on paper or canvas. A visit to somewhere like Boonah gives an insight to the importance of the Arts, particularly for those with no other voice (sometimes literally).

All of the Boonah artists look forward to their Christmas exhibition in December when their works are framed, displayed and available for sale. When sold, the artists get an even greater endorsement of their worth and self-esteem. Sadly, the exhibition cannot be held this year because of COVID-19 but we encourage you to visit during term time at The Philip Mall, Kendall Street in West Pymble. Thank you, Ku-ring-gai members, for your part in our continuing contribution to this worthy cause.



Martin Buzinska creating his artwork at Boonah Creative Arts Centre

Patricia Robertson Fund

We are also committed to supporting the Patricia Robertson Fund which directs funds towards scholarships each year to mid-career conservators who preserve our cultural and artistic heritage. Again, this is a particularly worthwhile undertaking for these young professionals during such a disrupted year.

In a later bulletin we will feature the 2020 scholarship recipients when they have been selected.

Our thanks go to Committee members, Sue Meares and Ros Markham, for their work in making sure our Young Arts donations were researched and carried out in 2020, even when not much else has been normal!



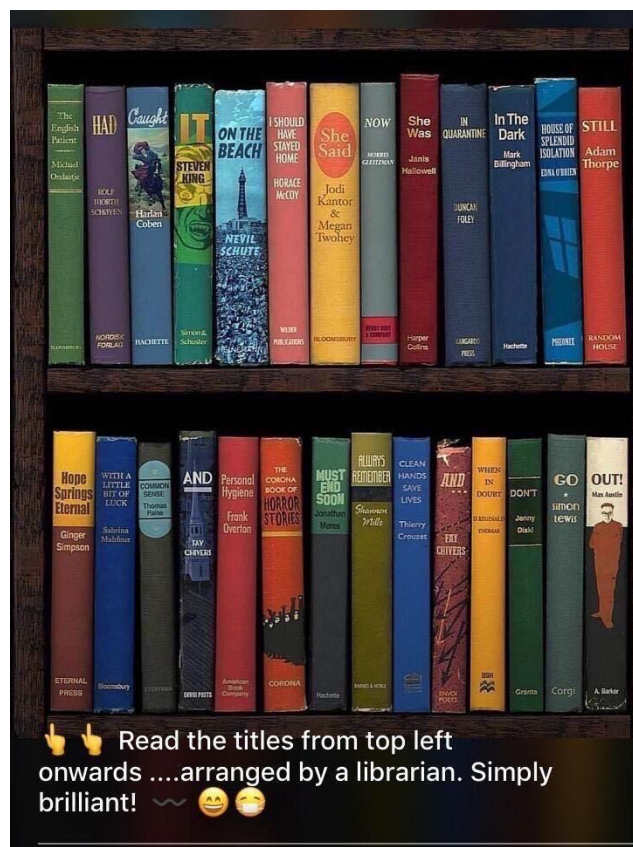
Creativity is a wild mind and disciplined eye Dorothy Parker

Powerhouse Museum

No doubt you will have caught up with the news that the NSW Government has announced the expansion of the Powerhouse Museum to include four sites including the retention and reimagining of the Ultimo site. As an Associate organisation of the Powerhouse we have expressed our strong preference for a focus on the decorative arts, fashion and design at Ultimo with appropriate world-class displays, within the heritage buildings for the many items seldom or never shown from the permanent collection.



Many members will be aware that, over the years, ADFAS Ku-ring-gai have made several valuable donations to the museum, particularly for important examples of works in glass, both historic and contemporary. It would be fitting that these and more were displayed for the public to admire at Ultimo. The proposed expansion of the Museums Discovery Centre in Castle Hill with a new state-of-the-art building will also greatly improve community access to the Collection.



The English Patient - Had - Caught - It - On the Beach - I Should Have Stayed Home - She Said - Now - She Was - In Quarantine - In the Dark - House of Splendid Isolation - Still - Hope Springs Eternal - With a Little Bit of Luck - Common Sense - And - Personal Hygiene - The Corona Book of Horror Stories - Must End Soon - Always Remember - Clean Hands Save Lives - And - When in Doubt - Don't - Go - Out!

Cultural Capers of the Committee during Covid-19



Back Row left to right: Alice Anne Bagster, Sue Meares, Gillian Napper, Ros Markham, Bruce Standen
Middle Row: Gillian Stegmann, Michele Symonds, Caroline Bray (now retired)
Front Row: Lawrence West, Lynette Davenport, Helen Meddings, Russell Lander, Gay Windeyer
Absent: Christine McLennan

Gillian Napper must surely take the prize for the most productive and creative use of her unexpected time in isolation - brava Gill! In her own words:



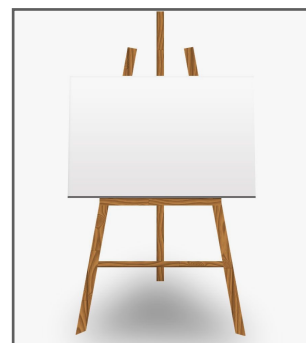
"When Hilary Kay, one of the stars of Antiques Roadshow, came to Australia for ADFAS, she promoted her Art Appreciation Course, of which she is the Curator and Presenter. I was interested – art history is a wonderful hobby – and when Covid hit, I decided to apply.

"The course is provided online for study at home at your own pace – with a limit of twelve months to complete. There are twelve modules and twelve assignments – none of them long – and the course content is wonderful. In this first six months, I have written assignments on the History of Western Art, on the Renaissance, on 17th, 18th and 19th Century art and on Impressionism. Each module has sent me back to my art books, to enjoy once again the exhibitions, museums and books that I have previously loved. Our tutors teach at places like the Royal College of Art, at the Courtauld Institute, the University of Glasgow, the National Gallery. Several are broadcasters, with art appreciation programs on the BBC and in America. The level of

scholarship presented is magnificent – and the generous criticism of my own assignment efforts has been rewarding and affirming.

"This has been one of the most delightful courses I have ever undertaken – and at the time of writing, there are four more months to go – with the topics becoming increasingly focused on modern art, architecture and sculpture. Perhaps I sound as though I am writing a promotional brochure – not at all. This has just been a wonderful educational and pleasurable experience for me, which has allowed me to ramble more confidently through the glories of art."

Nette Davenport has the tidiest pantry on the North Shore and, when not gardening, has discovered her inner artist but is a little shy to share her oeuvre with us. Solitary confinement has been relieved by walks with her son and looking even younger with half her face covered!



Ros Markham has missed her cancelled choir performances but managed a workaround: four of the choir sing from each corner of a room - facing inwards she assures your editor!

Alice Anne Bagster has been cooking up a storm for family, friends, Committee members, tradies, Uncle Tom Cobley and all. And reading voraciously.



Russell Lander had just downsized from a large property with matching garden when the lockdown hit. As soon as it was permitted, Russell began beating the boundaries of Wahroonga smugly sympathising with all the owners of large gardens as he passes.



Christine McLennan has read countless books and watched many art and history shows. She is now grappling with a 2,000-piece jigsaw whenever she can find a surface large enough to put it on!

Bruce Standen, another downsizer, has been busy fitting into a smaller space with all that that entails. Colonial cedar furniture anyone?



Gillian Stegmann has a myriad of cultural and other interests that have gradually come back on the radar after isolation has eased. Beyond these, she has even taken up bowls!

Sue Meares returned to the galleries as soon as she safely could and particularly enjoyed the World Press Photo Exhibition at the State Library and the Portia Geach Exhibition at the S H Ervin Gallery.

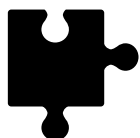
(Doppelgänger by Natasha Walsh)



Lawrence West has been decorating his Southern Highlands home to best display his collection of fine antiques and has also landscaped and planted his garden which has burst forth with Spring bounty.



Michele Symonds, still missing ballet and symphony performances, was back to the theatre as soon as possible.



Gay Windeyer wasted far too many hours completing a 2,000-piece jigsaw which she couldn't bear to break up so stuck the final result to a board for posterity!



Helen Meddings has been scrambling to learn sufficient technology to keep the ADFAS show on the road and with all that screen time has become positively Rubenesque!



Another Talented Member of ADFAS Ku-ring-gai !

Congratulations go to **Julianne Ross Allcorn** who has been awarded the prestigious Trustees' Watercolour Prize in the 2020 Wynne Competition at the Art Gallery of NSW for her triptych entitled *Mollitium 2*, inspired by the fires of last summer which lapped her home. Because the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes were delayed this year by COVID-19, you have until 10 January to view the works at the gallery. Julianne's description and inspiration for her work follows.

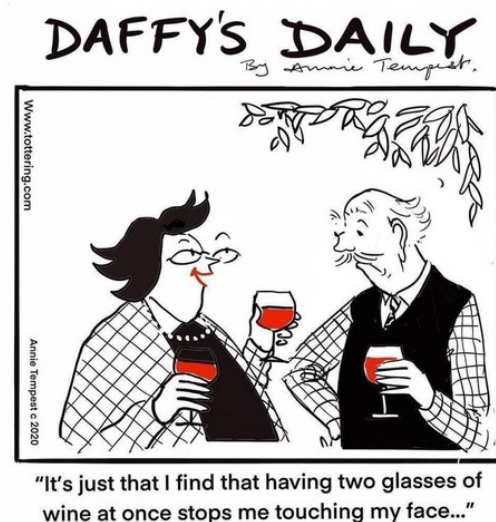
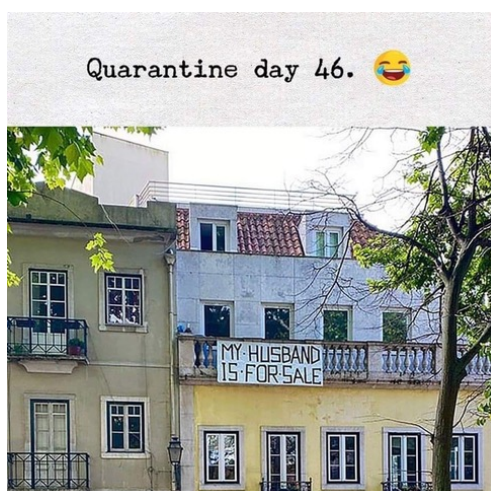


Julianne pictured in front of *Mollitium 2* (triptych: watercolour, pencil, charcoal on 21 birch wood panels - 185.5 x 329cm)

"Mollitium means 'resilience' in Latin. Resilience is the Australian bush; she embraces and forgives. My work travels from right to left – from the threat of fire, to escape and regrowth. I've drawn wattle, banksia, grevillea, waratah, gum nuts, gum blossoms, seeds and leaves from different native plants, the Gymea lily and the wildlife of the bush."

Last summer's fires were stopped 20 minutes from our family getaway at Burralong Valley, near Laguna in the lower Hunter Valley, NSW. I spend much of my time there, drawing from all that surrounds me. When I walk through the valley, the scents, sounds, textures and colours envelop me and I lose myself. When you're in nature, I encourage you to stop, stand still, close your eyes and listen, then open your eyes and try to find what you saw, smelt and heard."

Julianne Ross Allcorn



Do You Still Remember the First Crisis of 2020?



A kangaroo tries to escape the fierce bushfire near a burning house at Lake Conjola last New Year's Eve. This photo by Matthew Abbott won second prize in the 2020 Photo Contest and is featured in the World Press Photo Exhibition at the State Library.



Matthew Abbott is a documentary photographer based in Sydney, recognised for photographing social, cultural and political stories covering contemporary suburban and regional Australia. Proud Dad, Brian, is the proprietor of Abbott's Antiques in Turrumurra so Matthew is a Ku-ring-gai guy!

Matthew is interested in intimate storytelling, shining a light on quiet moments that usually go unseen. He believes that storytelling works best when it comes from a close connection to its subjects. He is a regular contributor to The New York Times. His work has been recognised through a number of prestigious awards, including winning the inaugural 2019 Rust Belt Biennale and the 2018 and 2019 Nikon-Walkley Journalism Award for Australian Daily life.

Matthew studied International Photojournalism at the Danish School of Journalism and completed a Masters of Arts at Sydney University. He is represented internationally by Panos Pictures, and is a current member of the Oculi collective, a co-operative of Australian visual storytellers.



Stay social but keep distant - a smile can travel 1.5 metres

Vale

We send our sincere condolences to our esteemed Patron of ADFAS and member of our society, Patricia Robertson OAM, on the loss of her beloved husband, **Rear Admiral Andrew Robertson, AO DSC RAN** who died in July, aged 95. Rear Admiral Robertson had a distinguished and outstanding life of duty and public service both in his 40-year naval career and later in many organisations including being the driving force behind the conception and creation of the Australian National Maritime Museum.



Rear Admiral Andrew Robertson and the Australian National Maritime Museum in Pyrmont



We are also sad to report the passing of several members of ADFAS Ku-ring-gai during the year. We send our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of **Jean McPhail OAM, Diana Dodds, Lois Williams** and **Raelene Bates**.



ADFAS Ku-ring-gai Committee

Don't forget that, as much as we all love the ADFAS programme and the friendships it fosters, it would not be possible without some kind souls volunteering to help make it all happen. Whatever your skill set, there will always be something you could bring to the happy mix of existing and future committees. Let us know of your interest by contacting us on kuringgai@adfasc.org.au or call on 0457 062 456.

Membership Renewal for 2021

After such a disrupted year resulting from the pandemic and with next to no face-to-face time, our expenses have dropped significantly, but not totally. The Committee has decided, therefore, to delay renewal of fees in 2021 until the middle of the year when we hope that we can better assess the situation with our lecturers in relation to international travel and internal borders within Australia.



We would ask, however, that you please complete the enclosed form and return it by mail to our Membership Secretary, Gillian Napper at PO Box 796, North Sydney 2059 or scan it to adfagillian@gmail.com. This will ensure that our records are updated and that you can continue to receive our communications by email, phone or regular mail. It will also serve to assist us in managing numbers at the Zenith for lectures and at Laurelbank for Special Interest Days, should we be able to return to live meetings.

We hope that the following 2021 lecture dates can all be held as live sessions: **May 26, June 23, July 28, August 25, September 22, November 3.** Mark the dates in your diary now.

Lectures in 2021

As we go to press, planning for our lecture programme in 2021 is inherently fluid, so what follows is a hope not a promise. We know, for certain, that the visits to Australia by the first two Arts Society lecturers have had to be cancelled, due to COVID-19. Both Jacqueline Cockburn and Jane Gardiner have recorded their lectures which we will view digitally. We have also programmed an extra digital lecture from Arts Society lecturer, Peter Medhurst, in February which we think you will enjoy very much.

We heard you! Thank you for the 190 responses to date to our survey. It is clear that 74% are willing to return to the Zenith and 23% maybe.

So we can now confirm that we will return to the Zenith Theatre for our 26 May meeting for the long-awaited lecture from Claudia Chan Shaw on Florence Broadhurst and also in June for Julian Bickersteth's postponed talk on his fascinating life in conservation. As you will understand, this all depends on restrictions and government guidelines for the venue at the time in relation to the pandemic. Watch out for updates on the email service.



Our proposed programme up to June 2021 is listed on the next page. We hope to have more clarity on the full year of lectures in our February Communiqué including more details of our speakers, their qualifications and their chosen topics.

PROPOSED LECTURE PROGRAMME TO JUNE 2021

February *Music in Art - the Baroque Era (1600-1750)* by **Peter Medhurst (Digital)**

With a musicologist's eye, Peter Medhurst takes us on a journey through a range of magnificent paintings from the Baroque era. Peter complements the paintings with music of the period which he plays on the harpsichord, the virginals and the organ.



March *Antoni Gaudi and Catalan Modernista Architecture (Digital)* by **Jacqueline Cockburn**

Besides Gaudi's famous public and private buildings which illustrate his genius and wit, we will also see other ravishing buildings by architects from Barcelona in the early 20th century.



April *Chinoiserie (Digital)* by **Jane Gardiner**

The opening of trade routes between Europe and the Far East in the early 17th century led to a craze for all things Oriental. See how European designers created goods and decoration with an Eastern theme throughout the following century.



May 26 *Florence Broadhurst: The Enigmatic Design Legend (Live)* by **Claudia Chan Shaw**

Hear how the now globally-respected Australian designer lived a life of reinvention abroad before returning to Australia and revolutionising the design industry of Sydney, only to have it all come to a terrible end.



June 23 *Frayed at the Edges (Live)* by **Julian Bickersteth**

Follow the ADFAS President's career in conservation from his work on the John Coburn tapestries in the Sydney Opera House to restoration of the Scott and Shackleton huts in Antarctica and more.

