

July 2021



# NEWSLETTER

## The Arts Society of West Suffolk



Summer is here! We wish all our members a warm and restful summer break. We hope that you have enjoyed this year's Zoom lectures and that you will renew your membership for 2021/22 ready for another full and varied programme of interesting talks, virtually if this is still necessary, but returning to the Blackbourne Community Centre for live lectures as soon as possible.

### WE NEED YOU!

Extra members are still needed on our committee. As well as general members, we particularly need people to take over the following key roles on the committee:

- ♦ **Honorary Secretary** to replace Tony Callender, our Chairman Elect. Please contact **Tony** on **01379 651259** for further information.
- ♦ **Young Arts Member** to replace Jacky Livens, who is standing down after ten years. Please contact **Jacky** on **01359 242425** for further information.

Our present Chairman, **Sue Barrett**, would also be pleased to answer any queries regarding committee membership that you may have. Please contact **Sue** on **01284 700296**.

### VISITS:

*Please note that our visit to **BLETCHLEY PARK** has now been postponed until **Tuesday 12th October 2021***

**Venice in the Sunshine:** As a delightful finale to this year's programme of talks, we were treated to a virtual live walking tour of Venice by Luisella Romeo, an experienced guide. Luisella's obligatory face mask reminded us poignantly that we are still enduring a global pandemic, but the Italian sunshine, beautiful city of Venice and Luisella's lively descriptions soon proved a perfect distraction. Starting near the Church of Santa Maria del Rosario, Luisella led us along the canals, streets and alleyways of Dorsoduro, one of the six districts of Venice, in the southern part of the city. Along the Grand Canal there are many palaces dating back as far as the 1200s where wealthy merchants housed silk, perfume and other luxury goods brought to Venice from around the world. Barges were used to convey goods on the canals, so originally the only bridge permitted was a wooden drawbridge; this was replaced by the Rialto Bridge in 1588. Present day amenities such as electricity and gas are conveyed from the mainland to the city through pipes on the underside of the railway bridge. Luisella's tour included the Gallerie dell' Accademia containing a vast collection of art, much of which was recovered from France having been looted by Napoleon; Squero di San Trovaso, a small shipyard building and repairing gondolas; the house where John Ruskin lived in 1877; the Fine Arts School (previously the Hospital for Incurables); the Salt Store; the Rowing Club; and the Church of Santa Maria Della Salute. The latter, with its iconic dome, is one of the churches built in gratitude for deliverance from the plague, which killed approximately one third of the lagoon's population during the early 1630s. Luisella explained that transport throughout the city is along the canals, pointing out water taxis, ambulances and police boats; no cars are allowed and only children may use bicycles. Some canals were converted to walkways in 19C with the idea of creating avenues and boulevards but this was later discontinued. There are 433 licensed gondoliers and 70% of Venetians own a flat-bottomed boat. However, the brackish water in the lagoon precludes bathing. Trees were also banned in the city in the past as their roots compromised the drainage system. Recently a limited number of plane and oleander trees have been planted in the public squares. There are 500 gardens in Venice, each surrounded by a wall and filled with imported earth. Constructed on numerous wooden piles driven into the bottom of the lagoon, Venice is prone to flooding and is gradually sinking at a rate of one and a half inches every hundred years. Although Venice thrives on tourism, it is in danger of being spoiled by an excess of tourists and no longer accepts large cruise ships in its port due to the damage they cause the waterways. Luisella's tour ended back at the Grand Canal opposite San Marco, Venice's superb basilica cathedral, leaving us with a truly memorable impression of this unique city. We look forward to a time when we are again able to visit such wonderful places in person.

