

September 2025

NEWSLETTER

The Arts Society of West Suffolk



Next Meeting: Tuesday 7th October 2025

Blackbourne Community Centre, Elmswell

Doors open 10 am, Welcoming Coffee/Tea

10.45 am The Value of Art ... Emma Watts

This lecture is all about the value of art - the different ways we consider its expansion: social, economic value, and of course monetary. It will ask why some things survive the test of time, and others do not. Also, arts as an interchangeable commodity from the black market to repatriation.



Dr. Emma Watts is an Art Historian with specialist interest in the economics of art, British art and material culture. Her career began in the fine art auction world, and she is passionate about access to the fine arts and its education. She has developed National, tertiary and adult education curricula and been active in policy, planning, education and advisory boards for Heritage, Arts and Museums and curatorial and collection management in Australia and the UK. She is currently enjoying the diversity of consultancy, through lecturing with the Open University, writing, and advising on fine art valuation, probate and sale.

VISITS

Friday 7th November 2025 West Stow Hall

A personal tour around West Stow Hall, built by the Master of the Horse to Mary Tudor and featuring Elizabethan wall paintings discovered during Victorian restoration. The tour is followed by tea.



Thursday 21st April 2026 Blickling Hall

A visit to Blickling Hall for a talk and tour around the Textile and Conservation Studio. This is the National Trust's only specialist in-house textile conservation facility. The afternoon offers a chance to wander round Blickling Hall and gardens. Cafes, shop and pub on site.



As you will read in this newsletter, a number of us had a most interesting and enjoyable introduction at our Charity Lecture 2025 to the developments at Gainsborough's House and its collections since our visit there in 2022, - a gem on our doorstep.

Now the start of our 2025-26 season is fast approaching and I look forward to seeing you all again at the first meeting on 7th October, as well as welcoming our new members and returning former members. Thank you for your promises of support, given when you filled in the online membership form; team leaders will shortly be contacting you to see how those promises can best be used. Our Society is run by members for members and your input is invaluable for the long-term survival of The Arts Society of West Suffolk.

When you sign in at the welcome desk at the October meeting, you will see the Rota Sheets for both the Signing-in desk and the Refreshments Serving. It would be marvellous if we can get all the slots for the 2025-26 season filled at the first meeting. Diana Hollins, Chairman

September's Charity Lecture: Emma Boyd gave us an informed picture of Gainsborough's House, its history, its future and its celebrated owner.

Thomas Gainsborough was born in Suffolk but spent many years in London and Bath establishing himself as an artist. By the time he moved back to Sudbury he had become one of the country's most respected portrait painters and, alongside Sir Joshua Reynolds a founder member of The Royal Academy. His first love, as a landscape artist, often showed itself in the backgrounds to many of his portraits.

After Gainsborough's death in 1788 the house suffered many vicissitudes and, by 1950 was in a poor state. Following national appeals and a gift from Babergh Council a full restoration of the house and garden took place as well as the addition of a new display area and a gallery to accommodate changing exhibitions. With its charming music room, reflecting Gainsborough's other passion, and a wide-ranging collection housed in a gallery appropriately lined with Sudbury silk, a visit to the house gives an unequalled view of the domestic life and work of one of Suffolk's most famous sons.

