View from the Chair
by Connell McMenamin

As the incoming Chair, it falls to me to look back and reflect on the past year. Having been a member of the RGA for some time, and a Council member for a few years before stepping into this role, I thought I had a fairly good understanding of what the RGA does.

It turns out I really didn't.

So, what does the RGA do anyway? Not a lot, really…

We ran our 94th Annual Exhibition, once again working with our generous hosts, the Institute of Education at the University of Reading, to deliver a stunning show where the quality of work just gets better and better. We were also delighted to welcome the Mayor of Reading, Councillor Dr Alice Mpofu-Coles, to the Private View. Later in the year, building on a very successful first outing, we hosted another outstanding Small Works sale at St Luke's Parish Hall on Erleigh Road. In both cases, sales and visitor numbers were up, and we worked hard to minimise costs to members by reducing commissions wherever possible.

To make that happen, of course, one or two small things had to be done.

Dates were agreed. The University liaised with. Security briefed. Parking arranged and permits issued. Work collected, registered, curated, hung, labelled, taken down and returned. Refreshments organised. Halls hired. Licences drafted and signed. Insurance paid. Flyers and posters designed, printed and distributed. Social media posts written. Videos recorded. Browsers borrowed and returned. Hanging systems sourced. Walls filled (and repainted!). Payments calculated, sales proceeds distributed, expenses processed. Communications sent. Websites updated. Press releases written, edited and submitted. Banners and signs designed, printed, installed and removed afterwards (we'll aim for more this year!). Radio and television interviews given. Stewarding rotas compiled. Countless miscellaneous issues handled.

Alongside all that, we ran a series of workshops – organising venues, managing bookings, hiring tutors, and answering enquiries.

So yes, a couple of exhibitions… but is that it?

Not quite.

Beyond exhibitions, we continue to host regular creative sessions open to members and non-members alike: Summer Painting Days, RGA Fridays and Earley Painters. There's also our monthly Tea Time Social. After a somewhat nomadic existence across various venues in Reading and Caversham, this now has a permanent home on the third Tuesday of each month at the Back of Beyond in Reading, a relaxed space to talk all things art, meet new people, and welcome prospective members.

We're also working on an exciting opportunity with Honesty

Group to open up a new exhibition venue.
Behind the scenes, the work continues. Monthly newsletters were written, edited and distributed. Council meetings attended and minuted. Officer reports submitted. Memberships administered. Accounts compiled and audited. Charity Commission returns completed. Mentoring and critique sessions facilitated. Upgrading sessions organised and feedback provided. Archives updated and expanded.
A fantastic Christmas Social arranged. This year's Christmas Lecture, Alex Abbott from Dauphin on The Art of Displaying Art, was both informative and entertaining, with lively questions and a particularly competitive quiz! Finally, although I'm bound to have missed something, the AGM was organised, and with special thanks to Jane Somner and John Percy, this Annual Review was written, designed, edited, printed and posted to over 250 members.
Impressive, but surely you have a well established team and everything works like a well oiled machine at this point?
Well… yes and no.
We do have a strong team, and much runs smoothly. However, all of this has taken place during a year of significant change: a new Treasurer (Gareth Jones), Vice Chair (Liz Baldin), Membership Secretary (Tizzy Cottingham), Exhibitions Secretary (Cath Baldwin), Webmaster (Linda Saul), and, of course, a new Chair who claims he didn't entirely know what he was letting himself in for.
That everything above has been achieved during such a period of transition is, to my mind, remarkable. It speaks volumes about the commitment, knowledge and enthusiasm of our officers, councillors, and the many volunteers who give their time so generously.
Thank you to everyone who has helped in any way, however small. None of this happens without you.
So, what's next?
Planning is already underway for our 95th Annual Exhibition, which I'm delighted will once again take place at the University of Reading from 26 June to 12 July. St Luke's is booked for the next Small Works sale at the end of October/beginning of November. Earley Painters, RGA Fridays and Summer Painting Days are all in full swing.
Beyond that, our Centenary is fast approaching in 2030. We're beginning to think about how we mark this major milestone and how we celebrate 100 years of the RGA.
It's been an absolute joy to be a part of such an incredible organisation this year and I'd encourage anyone who feels like getting a little more involved, particularly on the Council, to let us know. We'd love to welcome you.

Reading Guild of Artists CIO Financial Statements 31 December 2025
Statement of Receipts & Payments

Receipts and Payments

Receipts	notes	2025	2024	Payments	notes	2025	2024
Memberships	1	5,711	6,625	Member Services	5	3,307	3,929
Annual Exhibition	2	9,520	5,099	Annual Exhibition	2	8,031	5,072
Small Works	3	4,340	3,056	Small Works	3	4,251	2,452
Workshops	4	1,254	1,299	Workshops	4	1,735	1,370
Other		-		Other	6	83	
Bank interest		338	412	Bank charges		60	60
		21,162	**16,491**			**17,467**	**12,882**

Assets and Liabilities

Reserves B/F	22,566	18,957	CAF Cash account	9,324	5,950
			CAF Gold account	16,937	16,615
Year surplus/(deficit)	3,695	3,609			
Reserves C/F	**26,261**	**22,566**	Total Assets	**26,261**	**22,566**

Narrative

The form of the Accounts prepared is that of 'Receipts and Payments' as in previous years. The receipts and payments made in 2025 are recorded as being in that year, even if they relate to a previous or future year. For example, in December 2025 the RGA received subscription payments that relate to membership for 2026, and some cash collected at Earley painters for 2024 workshops was not paid into the bank until 2025.

In summary the finances of the RGA are in a healthy state, the cash balance has increased by £3,695 in 2025.

1. Memberships

   The majority of membership subscriptions are now paid via Stripe on the Membership Mojo platform. We do pay a small transaction fee of c 3% for payments made this way but it has simplified our processes and allows the RGA to more accurately record and manage memberships. The transaction fee is deducted from the membership payment at source, and so the amount shown as Membership receipts is net of the transaction fee.

   Despite membership increasing since last year, the membership receipts in 2025 are lower than in 2024. The reason is that the Membership Mojo platform was first introduced at the end of 2024 and had the effect of encouraging members to renew early and so brought forward some of the 2025 subscriptions into 2024.

2. Annual Exhibition

The 94th annual exhibition held in June at the University was very successful with much increased visitor numbers (800 versus 475 in 2024). Sales of £5,296 were up 91% compared to 2024. Workshop receipts during the Exhibition at £3,216 was twice the prior year. The Exhibition in total made a surplus of £1,489 compared to breaking even in 2024.

3. Small Works

The Small Works Exhibition held during the last weekend of October at St Luke's Church Hall was also very successful. Sales were up by £664 compared to 2024. The RGA Council decided not to charge commission on the sales of books and cards, which reduced the RGA income by £150. Despite this change there was a still a small surplus at the Exhibition of £88.

4. Workshops

Earley Painters once again covered its costs and made a small surplus in 2025. The RGA Friday workshops continued this year and were well attended but still made a loss of £543. This loss or subsidy is in line with the Guild's charitable aims of art education.

5. Member Services

Member services cover the costs of printing and distributing the Annual Review, Insurance, Website maintenance and the costs of the Membership Mojo subscription. Council meetings and the AGM, plus the costs of a speaker at the Christmas social are also included in this total. Compared to last year the spend was £600 lower principally because less was spent on Speakers (£300), Insurance (£100) and in 2024 the RGA purchased a new card reader (£166).

Annual review	1,143	
AGM	114	
Council meetings	195	
Speakers	200	
Insurance	709	
Website & subscription svcs	795	
Other	150	
Total Membership services		3,307

6. Other

    £83 represents the much-delayed payment to one artist for sales made during Small Works exhibition in 2024.

During the year the role of Treasurer transitioned from Clare Buchta to Gareth Jones. Not without its challenges due to the unwieldy nature of the CAF banking platform, we got there in the end. I'd like to thank Clare for her hard work over the years as Treasurer, and for all her help in bringing me up to speed.

Gareth Jones, Treasurer

Independent review

I have examined the Reading Guild of Artists Annual Accounts for the Financial Year to 31st December 2025 including supporting bank statements and records of payments made and received. I have not examined the invoices and receipts relating to payments. The records appear to be well maintained. I have checked a sample of the calculations made in the accounts and agree with both the methodology employed and their accuracy. I am happy to confirm that no matters of concern, material or otherwise, have come to light.

Charles Gallagher, Treasurer

Wokingham Art Society

11th January 2026