



British Association for Victorian Studies Annual Report

October 2025 to September 2026

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Committee Members

Role	Name	Term of Office (for positions with a fixed term)
EXECUTIVE		
President	Martin Hewitt	2025–2028
Past President	Patricia Pulham (outgoing)	2025–2026
Membership Secretary	Claudia Capancioni	2018–2027
Secretary	Claire Wood (outgoing)	2023–2026
	Clare Horrocks (incoming)	2026–2029
Treasurer	Briony Wickes (outgoing)	2023–2026
	Fariha Shaikh (incoming)	2026–2029
2026 Conference Organiser	Clare Horrocks (outgoing)	2025–2026
COMMITTEE		
Book Prize Coordinator	Vicky Mills (outgoing)	2024–2026
Careers and C19 Matters Representative	Sarah Parker (outgoing)	–2026
	Sam Saunders (incoming)	2026–2029
Curator and Archive Liaisons	Alexandra Foulds (outgoing)	2022–2026
	Rebecca Mellor (outgoing)	2022–2026
	Kate Simpson (incoming)	2026–2029
	Chloe Ward (incoming)	2026–2029
EDI Officer	Louise Creechan (renewed term)	2026–2029
Funding Officer	Francesca Arnavas	2024–2027
Newsletter Editor	Amy Waterson	2024–2027
Newsletter Assistant Editor	Ruth-Anne Walbank	2024–2027
Postdoctoral/Early Career Representatives	Emily Vincent (re-elected)	2026–2029
	Lauren Cullen	2025–2028
Postgraduate Representatives	Marijke Valk	2025–2027
	Lilyemma Whalley	2025–2027
	Haya Ali Genawi	2026–2028
Ordinary Elected Members	Charlotte Boyce (outgoing)	–2026
	Melissa Gustin	–2027
	Heidi Liedke	–2028
	Oindrila Ghosh	2026–2029
Digital and Social Media Officer	Danielle Dove	2024–2026
	Claire Wood (interim)	–2026
	Charlotte Bookham	2026–2029
Co-opted Members	Rohan McWilliam (outgoing)	–2026
	Rieko Suzuki	–2027
	Adrian Wisnicki	–2028
IN ATTENDANCE (not specified by the Constitution)		
BARS Liaison	Matthew Sangster	2024–2027
COVE Liaison	Beverley Park Rlett	2025–2028
International Representatives Australasian Representative European Representative North American Representative	Alexandra Lewis Daný van Dam Adrian S. Wisnicki	

Preamble

This report provides a record of the activities of the British Association for Victorian Studies (BAVS) and its Committee between October 2025 and September 2026.

As well as thanking the membership for their engagement over the past year and committee members for their work across various roles, we would like to extend our warmest appreciation to Clare Horrocks and members of the conference organising team at Liverpool John Moores University, University of Liverpool, Liverpool Hope University, and National Museums Liverpool for welcoming BAVS members to the city and for arranging such a rich and wide-ranging event.

The conference was a great success, welcoming over 200 delegates, with presenters from across Europe, America, Canada, Japan, China, Taiwan, and India. It inaugurated a Public Engagement panel and extended the professionalisation morning to include sessions targeted towards mid-career scholars. BAVS 2026 also celebrated its host city through partnerships with Meet England and City Convention Bureaus to coordinate accommodation; a drinks reception at the Walker Art Gallery; and a conference dinner at Oh Me, Oh My Restaurant, including the ever-popular BAVS Quiz! 45 PGRs competed for the Rosemary Mitchell Prize for Best PhD Student Paper and we also announced the winner of the Rosemary Mitchell Book Prize at a special panel – you can find out more about the winners below!

President's Overview

Submitted by Martin Hewitt

This has been a busy and productive year for BAVS. We've been able to take forward several developments started by my predecessor, Patricia Pulham, and also launch several new initiatives, and undertake reviews of some key parts of the Association's work. Perhaps the most significant work involved completing the review of the BAVS Constitution, and drawing up the revised Constitution which was approved at the EGM held in March. Revising the Constitution has allowed us to bring the membership and operation of the Committee into line with actual practice as it had evolved over the past few years, with a few adjustments designed to streamline membership and operations where appropriate. We also took advantage of the revision to make some minor adjustment to how we describe categories of membership, how we organise elections, and also to include reference to the place of the smaller Executive Committee which we established this year to help ensure that the Association was able to respond in timely manner to internal and external developments.

In addition to the Executive Committee, we established several working groups to consider ways of improving aspects of the Association's activities. Details of the outcomes of the Website and Communications Group are provided in the reports below. The Conferences Working Group worked alongside Clare Horrocks as BAVS 2026 organiser, and also agreed on several longer-term initiatives, the most important of which has been the move towards establishing a three-year rolling schedule of future conferences. Although we are not quite in a position to confirm identities at this point, as a result of this we have identified potential conference host for 2027, 2028 and 2029, which will greatly facilitate forward planning. Look for a further announcement later in the Autumn.

During the year we held very productive conversations with the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals about future joint ventures. The outcome of these has been an agreement to work towards a small number of joint events. The possibility of a joint BAVS-RSVP conference remains on the table for future consideration. We have also been in conversation with the board of the *Journal of Victorian Culture* about forging closer links. The first outcomes of this are the agreement that *JVC* will produce a special BAVS Conference issue in 2027, with a view to this being a regular annual feature of the *JVC*'s output. In the coming months we also hope to launch a BAVS-JVC mentorship scheme which will give unpublished PGRs/ECRs the chance to work close with a member of the *JVC* editorial board developing a piece of work to the point of submission to a journal. In the current climate for Humanities in Higher Education, these kinds of collaborations are becoming increasingly important, and we intend to explore further opportunities for joint activities in the upcoming year.

At the start of the year as incoming President I thought it would be helpful to offer the Committee a few thoughts about possible strategic priorities for my Presidentship. In addition to those already covered I proposed three other themes: a renewed focus on interdisciplinarity, fundraising, and increasing the participation of mid- and late-career scholars in the Association. Conversations and initiatives have begun for all three of these areas, but the intention is that they will become a greater focus of the Association's activities over the coming year. It has also become clear that we will need to give some time to moving to registration of BAVS with the Charity Commissioners. This will involve some further adjustments to the Association's Constitution, which we will present to the full membership for their approval at the appropriate time.

Membership of the Executive Committee

The composition of the Association's Committee is as listed above. There are several outgoing officers and representatives and these vacancies were advertised over the summer. Following the membership's approval of amendments to the BAVS Constitution in March this year, the roles of Secretary, Treasurer, Postgraduate Representative, Early Career Representative, and Ordinary Elected Member are subject to election, with this process taking place in September. The Digital and Social Media Officer, Professionalisation and Careers Officer, and GLAM Liaison roles are appointed by the Committee, following an open call for expressions of interest. The new officers and representatives start their terms officially at the September AGM.

The committee would like to thank all officers and members completing their terms this year: Patricia Pulham, Claire Wood, Briony Wickes, Clare Horrocks, Vicky Mills, Sarah Parker, Alexandra Foulds, Rebecca Mellor, Emily Vincent, Danielle Dove, Charlotte Boyce, and Rohan McWilliam. Collectively, they have made an enormous contribution to the development of BAVS over the past few years, and we are indebted to them for all the work they have put in on behalf of the membership.

Operations

The Association's operations have encompassed the following:

Treasurer's Report

Submitted by Briony Wickes

We will submit the accounts for October 2025–September 2026 to our accountant in the coming months. For this Annual Report, I will therefore primarily report on the financial year October 2024–September 2025. Our accountant is currently finalising these accounts, and the completed accounts will be circulated to members separately following the AGM.

Income Overview

Our primary source of income continues to be membership fees, which remain healthy. We have continued to work to improve members' experience, including through improvements to our membership renewal system and ongoing work to better integrate and streamline our bank accounts.

The annual conference is another source of income. BAVS received a profit of £3,127.18 from the 2024 conference, organised jointly with NAVSA and AVSA. The 2025 conference at Oxford did not generate significant profit, reflecting the highly subsidised nature of the event as part of the special budget allocated for BAVS's twenty-fifth anniversary year.

Expenditure Analysis

During 2024–25, we continued to invest in supporting our members and the wider Victorian Studies community. This included individual research funding; financial support and additional travel and dinner bursaries for the annual conference; the Rosemary Mitchell prizes; the Sally Ledger Memorial Bursary; the Nineteenth-Century Matters Fellowship; our events strand; and our public engagement and outreach funding strand, which supports activities involving the public and organisations across the galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) sector.

One notable change in expenditure in recent years has been the Travel and Subsistence costs under Committee Expenses. As the Executive Committee has grown, and the costs of conference registration and accommodation have increased, covering committee attendance at the annual conference has become more expensive.

To manage conference expenditure, we introduced an 'opt-in' bursary system in 2024 for committee members attending the conference, with a budget of approximately £4,000, and asked committee members where possible to use other sources of funding before applying to BAVS. This resulted in expenditure of £1,198 for the online EVENT conference in 2024; £3,915.37 for the in-person conference in Oxford in 2025; and approximately £2,306.35 for the in-person conference in Liverpool in 2026.

Committee members undertake their work for BAVS on a voluntary basis, and supporting their attendance at the annual conference and conference committee meeting is an important way of recognising this contribution and ensuring that participation in the Committee does not carry a financial cost. These figures suggest that the opt-in system is working effectively to keep expenditure at a sustainable level, while continuing to support committee members without other access to funding.

Looking Ahead

We continue to provide a variety of funding opportunities, including research, event, and public engagement grants, as well as a book prize, the Nineteenth-Century Matters Fellowship, and a

series of careers talks and events. Additionally, all members continue have access to the COVE online project.

This will be my final year as Treasurer and as a member of the BAVS Committee. I'd therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the rest of the Executive Committee, past and present, and all BAVS members for making my time on the committee so rewarding and special.

Membership Secretary's Report

Submitted by Claudia Capancioni

The renewal of the website provided an opportunity to improve our members' access to their membership login and to the Membership Directory, with the new website providing a separate link to a member's account dashboard for easier, direct access. Through the account dashboard members can now have direct access to their subscription and payment method, and can actively change their details to ensure they receive the newsletter, announcements and information on events, prizes and funding opportunities. The accuracy of their details is also important to make sure that their annual renewal happens automatically. A new function was also added to the BAVS Stripe account so that our members can now pay their BAVS memberships by choosing the currency they want to use.

On 21 August 2026, there are **1,242** BAVS members. The majority of them pay their membership via Stripe, which activates automatic annual renewals. BAVS annual membership renews automatically every year until cancelled. If you want to cancel your membership, you can do so at any time through your account dashboard, or by contacting the Membership Secretary.

BAVS membership offers annually many activities, prizes, and funding opportunities, which are divided into three strands: Events, Research, and Public Engagement and Outreach funding. There are regular BAVS newsletters and the Writing Retreats. There is the BAVS Rosemary Mitchell Prize that celebrates second monographs in Victorian Studies and BAVS Rosemary Mitchell Prize for Best PhD Student's Paper Presentation, which runs at our annual conference. If you are a postgraduate student planning to attend NAVSA's annual meeting, you can also be considered for the Sally Ledger Memorial Travel Bursary too. In addition, members have access to COVE (Collaborative Organization for Virtual Education) and the BAVS/BARS Nineteenth-Century Matters Fellowship.

On BAVS website you find can resources as well as details for the above initiatives and opportunities.

Careers and C19 Matters Fellowship Representative's Report

Submitted by Sarah Parker

The PGR/ECR/mid-career professionalisation events at LJMU were a success and received excellent feedback from participants. Thank you to the LJMU, Liverpool and Liverpool Hope University teams for organising and running these events.

We have appointed the BARS/BAVS Nineteenth-Century Matters Fellow for 2026–27. Dr Charlotte Wilson (formerly of University of Oxford) will be based at LJMU and will focus on

ideas about how home caregiving were shaped in the medical and cultural imagination. Charlotte will take up the position in October 2026. Thank you to Clare Horrocks and James Whitehead of LJMU for offering to host the fellow this year.

We received 17 applications for the scheme (5 more than the previous year), so it continues to be popular and competitive. The 2027–28 fellowship is likely to be hosted by University of Bristol (Joan Passey, plus one other mentor), but this has not been confirmed yet.

Cleo O’Callaghan Yeoman (of BARS) and I will be stepping down from our roles after summer 2026, so two new individuals will be running the Nineteenth-Century Matters Fellowship scheme.

COVE Liaison’s Report

Submitted by Beverley Park Rilett

COVE (the Collaborative Organization for Virtual Education) is a scholar-driven, open-access digital platform with two linked sites: **COVE Studio**, for reading, annotating, and building anthologies from primary texts and images, and **COVE Editions**, which hosts peer-reviewed critical editions and includes tools for building timelines, maps, and image galleries, including for classroom projects. The BAVS, NAVSA, and NASSR organizations contribute approximately \$2,000 each per year so that all members receive free access to both sites. Please make use of them in your research and teaching.

1. NEH Funding Update. Please see Adrian Wisnicki’s report, below, for the latest information on COVE’s reinstatement.

2. Institutional Subscriptions. NAVSA, BAVS, NASSR, and subscribing universities support COVE, with universities paying yearly dues scaled to their full-time-equivalent student enrollment (subscriber list here: <https://editions.covecollective.org/institutional-subscribers>). At 30 institutional subscribers, COVE would generate about \$100,000 per year and become fully self-sufficient. This year’s spring renewals held steady except for the departure of Penn State. Kennesaw State, Kansas State University, and James Madison University joined this year, continuing COVE’s slow, steady growth.

3. Growing Image Library. Last year COVE added Princeton University’s entire digital collection—114,470 objects—to its IIF image library, joining holdings from the Art Institute of Chicago, Baylor, the Getty, the Huntington, the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian. A tutorial video on using the image library is on the COVE website; live training is also available through Dino Felluga’s workshops (see item 4).

4. Workshops. Project Director Dino Felluga continues to offer free Zoom sessions on accessing COVE’s image collections, building galleries, and creating critical editions with COVE’s timeline-, map-, gallery-, and annotation-tools. COVE is also developing course-adoptable, peer-reviewed editions for COVE Studio, with critical annotations appearing as a read-only layer alongside student annotations. For session dates, contact Dino Felluga at felluga@purdue.edu.

5. DHSI Seminar. Kate Faber Oestreich, Professor of English at Coastal Carolina University, taught a week-long Digital Humanities Summer Institute seminar on COVE in Montreal, June 15-19, 2026.

6. BAVS Research Assistantship

BAVS has committed approximately £2,000 to fund a postgraduate research assistant who will work directly with the COVE team, gaining training in digital editing, image curation, and online pedagogy while assisting with text encoding, data entry, and the mounting of critical editions. The position (an estimated 100 hours, paid at about £16.66/hour) will be advertised to BAVS postgraduate and postdoctoral members, with applicants submitting a CV and brief supporting statement. Questions may be directed to Dino Felluga at felluga@purdue.edu.

Funding Officer's Report

Submitted by Francesca Arnavas

BAVS continues to offer funding for members through its three main strands: Events Funding, Research Funding, and Public Engagement.

In the Autumn funding round, we received a total number of 8 applications. 5 applications were selected as funding recipients. These selected applications included 3 applications for individual research, 1 application for public engagement, and 1 for events. This equals a total amount of £3,050. All the selected applicants accepted the funding.

In the Spring funding round, we received a total number of 6 applications, and we were able to fund all of them. The applications included 3 applications for public engagement and 3 applications for research. The total amount of money awarded is £2,648. All the applicants accepted the funding.

The deadlines for the two funding rounds have been now moved a month earlier than before: i.e. on 31 October for the Autumn round, and 30 April for the Spring round.

All funding recipients are required to produce a short report on their activity, which is featured in the BAVS Newsletter. We are also still working to make past funded projects and events feature more prominently on the BAVS website in order to better publicise and profile members' funded research activities.

We remain committed to supporting all BAVS members, especially PGR students and early career academics. The Research Funding Award supports postgraduates and early career scholars with limited access to other forms of funding. BAVS also awards bursaries each year to PGRs/ECRs who require financial support to attend our annual conference. BAVS also supports several conferences, symposia, and workshops under the Events scheme and such funding is often used to facilitate reduced or full bursaries for postgraduate delegates.

Members can find out more about our funding schemes here: <https://bavs.ac.uk/funding>

Curator and Archives Liaison Report

Submitted by Rebecca Mellor and Alexandra Foulds

There are no significant updates to report for this period.

As we come to the end of our time in this role, we would like to thank everyone who has supported and worked alongside us. We have valued the opportunity to contribute, collaborate, and learn from this experience.

We wish those taking on the role every success and look forward to seeing how BAVS continues to strengthen its relationships within the GLAM sector and support our members working across galleries, libraries, archives, and museums.

Newsletter and Communications Team's Report

Submitted by Amy Waterson, Editor, and Ruth-Anne Walbank, Assistant Editor

The *BAVS Newsletter* appears three times a year. Since the last AGM, issues were published in November 2025, March 2026, and August 2026. These contained a total of twenty-one book reviews (including a double review), an exhibition review, seven BAVS funding reports, and three GLAM Reports, including our first digital collections review. Our spring 2026 issue revealed our new look formatting.

The next BAVS Newsletter is due to come out in late November 2026. Reports, notices, and CFPs for inclusion in the winter issue should be sent to bavsnews@gmail.com by **1 November**.

We continue to build our pool of reviewers. Members (at any career stage) who would like to join our book reviewer pool and/or would like to review a specific recent or 'foundational' publication, are encouraged to get in touch. Authors of recent work on any aspect of Victorian Studies who would like their book to be featured in the 'Recent Publications' section, and potentially reviewed, should also get in touch.

We are open to pitches for reviews of all sorts of things that might be of interest to members, from digital collections to exhibitions to theatre productions, and are keen to continue expanding the newsletter in this direction.

Postgraduate Representatives' Report

Submitted by Lilyemma Whalley and Marijke Valk

The Victorianist (<https://victorianist.wordpress.com>) is run by the Postgraduate Representatives of the Committee with the aim of sharing information, event details, call for papers, links, and updates relevant to the membership of BAVS. Since our last AGM, we have uploaded a hundred posts to the blog, and our subscriber count has slightly increased. In our working groups, we decided that *The Victorianist* should no longer be exclusively aimed at PGRs and instead make it open and accessible to everyone. As always, please contact Lilyemma Whalley (lilyemma.whalley@qmul.ac.uk) and Marijke Valk (mxv426@student.bham.ac.uk) with calls for papers, events, and opportunities if you wish for them to be advertised through our online channels.

As academics are slowly moving away from Twitter/X, we have decided to also post on BlueSky (@bavs-uk.bsky.social) alongside our Twitter/X account (@Bavs_PGs) this year. We will

monitor the engagement with each platform, and also explore potentially moving BAVS' presence to LinkedIn as well.

This is our first year where we have hosted a BAVS PGR Pre-Conference online event designed for postgraduate researchers attending the BAVS 2026 Conference in Liverpool on 13 July. In response to a form we shared via *The Victorianist*, this day included co-working sessions, networking opportunities, and a talk on how to deliver an effective conference paper by Emily Vincent and Lauren Cullen. While only a handful of people attended (averaging around ten per session, with slightly higher attendance for Emily and Lauren's talk), we received positive responses both online and at the conference. Attendees reported finding the sessions very useful and appreciated the opportunity to connect with fellow PGRs in the field. As such, we are looking to host a similar pre-conference session ahead of BAVS 2027.

Postdoctoral/Early Career Representatives' Report

Submitted by Emily Vincent and Lauren Cullen

The BAVS Early Career Representatives continue to develop initiatives tailored to supporting the ECR community, with a focus on professionalisation in both academic and alt-academic spaces. We do so through offering networking and professionalisation activities, including supporting the ECR 'Professionalisation Day' at the annual BAVS conference; sharing relevant events and opportunities; managing the ECR mailing list; facilitating monthly 'Tea Time' socials; and bolstering ties between BAVS and other important associations and organisations.

Community Building

- BAVS Tea Time: Throughout the year, we led the 'BAVS Tea Time' series of informal Zoom discussions with a mix of regular and new attendees each month discussing 1) applying to PhD and postdoctoral positions (including how to structure and focus a research proposal), 2) responding to feedback from readers/reviewers, 3) submitting a book proposal to a press (including how to select a press and decide what materials to send to best reflect your project and ambitions), and 4) how to present at an academic conference.
- Glasgow University's Victorian Research Cluster (3 June): We co-created resources for the cluster's (re)launch event, which aimed 'to bring together Victorianists from different career stages, disciplines and institutions across Glasgow and Scotland'. We introduced BAVS, outlined a range of opportunities available to early career researchers, funding streams, and ECR and PGR opportunities (i.e. social and professionalisation activities, regular initiatives, and our upcoming annual conference).

Conference Activities

- BAVS PGR Pre-Conference Online Workshop (13 July): Emily and Lauren delivered a session about crafting an effective conference paper for PGRs attending the BAVS conference.
- BAVS Conference ECR Professionalisation Morning (27 July): ECRs attended the University of Liverpool presents *Working in the GLAM sector* and *Working in the Third Space sector* events at the BAVS Annual Conference.

Future Initiatives

- **Future Workshops:** Future workshops continuing momentum from the BAVS conference are in discussion about 1) the differences and similarities between international academic job applications, 2) ‘out-of-the-box’ career opportunities, and 3) the REF.

Digital and Social Media Officer

Submitted by Claire Wood (interim web officer)

Over the past year, Danielle Dove worked with web designer Hywel Jones to coordinate a major redevelopment of the BAVS website. This involved streamlining and restructuring web content and adopting a fresh colour palette, which works better in terms of accessibility.

The refresh has also sought to clarify the focus of the BAVS website (<http://bavs.ac.uk/>) and *The Victorianist* (<https://victorianist.wordpress.com/>), rather than duplicating information across the two; the former focuses on BAVS-sponsored opportunities, events, and the membership directory, whereas *The Victorianist* publicises a wider range of CFPs, events, and opportunities of interest to the Victorian Studies community.

Prizes

Rosemary Mitchell Prize for the Best PhD Student’s Paper Presentation

Submitted by Claudia Capancioni, prize coordinator

This prize, made possible by the bequest of Professor/Reverend Rosemary Mitchell, ran for the second time in 2026 at the annual conference.

Working with the Conference Organising Team at Liverpool John Moores University, the BAVS Executive Committee was able to coordinate conference panel chairs and volunteers who acted as judges. Asking delegates to confirm they were PhD students and whether they wanted to be considered for the Prize when they registered for the conference worked effectively, meaning that we could identify entrants and allocate appraisers to relevant conference panels more smoothly. We invited relevant panel chairs to be assessors, and this also worked well. This was an approach we were keen to try out, and I am pleased to report that, as we hoped, it made a difference. There were 26 assessors and 19 of them were panel chairs. When approached, the chairs who were not committee members accepted the invitation and contributed with enthusiasm. They were interested in knowing more about the prize and shared positive feedback on their contribution to running it.

The programme for BAVS 2026 included 46 postgraduate delegates. The winner was Kirara Akashi (University of Roehampton) whose conference paper was entitled, ‘Into Edward Gorey’s archives: Dark humour in neo-Victorian picturebooks, puppet entertainments, and printed ephemera’. The Runner-Up was Henriette Marsden (University of Cambridge) and her conference paper was entitled, ‘Wielding Needles as Swords: Lady Mary Hamlyn Williams, the Rebecca Riots, and the Politics of Collaborative Embroidery in Wales, 1830-1850’.

I would like to thank Clare Horrocks and Sam Saunders for collaborating with me to experiment with a largely Chair-based method of judging, ensuring that this year's assessors were identified and given guidelines in advance. One thing on which we reflected is linked to timing the announcement of the prize. This happens at the end of the conference and having PhD students presenting on the last parallel session of the conference is a challenge in terms of ensuring we do not only receive all of the evaluation sheets promptly but also check the results for accuracy. This year, there were six doctoral students presenting during the final parallel session. I am not sure if this can be avoided in the future but, keeping in mind that, if there is no gap between the final parallel session and the announcements of both BAVS Rosemary Mitchell prizes, the assessors of the final panels need to make their decisions quickly might be helpful. This is something that we might want to highlight to them next year.

Two actions in view of next year's annual conference:

- Clarifying the terms of the competition going forwards, by adding a note to the BAVS website that states that, as for other BAVS prizes and funding opportunities, doctoral students who would like to be considered for the BAVS Rosemary Mitchell Prize for Best PhD Student's Paper Presentation need to be a PhD student and a BAVS member.
- To keep in mind, when finalising the conference programme, how many of the presenters are PhD students taking part in the BAVS Rosemary Mitchell prize, allowing, if possible, time between presentations that need to be assessed and the announcement of the prize winner.

BAVS Rosemary Mitchell Book Prize

Submitted by Vicky Mills (Chair), on behalf of the prize panel

Annually, BAVS awards the Rosemary Mitchell Book Prize to the best second monograph published that year in Victorian Studies. The prize is judged by a panel of BAVS scholars.

Unlike other book prizes, this is specifically intended to honour the work of mid-career Victorianists in all disciplines who have published a monograph over the past year. The Prize will draw the attention of the Victorian Studies community to important new work in the field. The Prize also represents a celebration of the monograph as a form.

The 2026 Rosemary Mitchell Book Prize for a Second Monograph in Victorian Studies was awarded to Stephanie O'Rourke for [*Picturing Landscape in an Age of Extraction*](#) (Chicago UP, 2025); Stephanie presented highlights from her work at the annual conference.

Honourable Mentions went to:

- Nathan Hensley, [*Action Without Hope: Victorian Literature after Climate Collapse*](#) (Chicago UP, 2025).
- Keren Hammerschlag, [*The Chosen Race: Troubling Whiteness in Victorian Painting*](#) (University of California Press, 2026).

In 2026 submissions to the prize more than doubled and the panel noted an increase in submissions from art historians and that the prize is attracting more international scholars.

2026 Sally Ledger Memorial Bursary

The Sally Ledger Memorial Travel Bursary is named in honour of the distinguished Victorianist and supporter of BAVS, Professor Sally Ledger, who died in 2009.

The bursary is for £500 and supports a UK postgraduate to travel to the NAVSA annual meeting. In 2026, the bursary was awarded to Olivia Wrafter (University of Cambridge) for her paper “‘I wish George Eliot was alive. I would like so to ask her to let me kiss her’: British/South African aesthetic exchange in the novels of Olive Schreiner”.

International Representatives’ Reports

Australasian Representative

Submitted by Alexandra Lewis

The 2026 AVSA conference, ‘Victorian Soundings’, was a great success: held at Auckland University of Technology, Aotearoa / New Zealand, 25–26 June. Articles on this theme from both conference participants and other scholars are welcome for a special issue of *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* (closing date Friday 12 February 2027).

European Representative

Submitted by Dany van Dam

As European representative I’ve continued liaising with our Victorian Studies partner organisations on the European mainland. This has led to a small-scale event last Spring organised with QAQV (representing Eastern Europe) and continued or expanded interaction with SFEVE (France) and DACH (German-speaking countries) as well as other European Victorianists (Italy, Spain, Netherlands, etc.). I also continue to be available for members looking for help or guidance when crossing between UK academia and universities elsewhere in Europe and encourage people to reach out if this might be helpful. I am still working closely with NAVSA representative Adrian Wisnicki on wider international cooperation between Victorian Studies researchers.

North American Representative

Submitted by Adrian S. Wisnicki

COVE, the NEH, and a New Lawsuit

In my prior annual report, I described the issues created by the US National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) when it abruptly canceled the grant (2022–2025; \$350,000) for COVE that I held with Dino Felluga. This was one of about 1,400+ grants canceled at the time due to the efforts of cost-cutting efforts of the new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). BAVS, of course, is a contributor to COVE and all members have access. Reporting on the suit revealed that all grant terminations were the result of work by two DOGE employees using a

simple ChatGPT prompt: “Does the following relate at all to D.E.I.? Respond factually in less than 120 characters. Begin with ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’”

In this context, it is no surprise that the COVE grant was terminated as one of our explicit goals was described in our grant application as follows: ‘A notable feature of this new content will be the inclusion of a large number of nineteenth-and early twentieth-century Anglophone and global literary works, thus increasing the visibility and accessibility of authors of color from these eras for COVE users.’

Luckily, a new lawsuit brought by the Modern Language Association, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the American Historical Association [has been successful](#) in reversing the cancellation of both our grant and the many other NEH grants. All terminated grants will need to be reinstated. Through my university, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I have now started the process of reinitiating the grant and am awaiting the next steps from my university/the NEH. I will keep BAVS updated as things progress.

Building BAVS-NAVSA-SFEVE Links

During the last year, I held some preliminary discussions with Rachel Ablow, the new President of NAVSA, about extending links between the two associations, as well as with SFEVE. Through these discussions it became clear that NAVSA would be happy to help publicise any BAVS events we bring to their attention, and there is an open possibility for bringing forward proposals (of however an informal nature) for future BAVS-NAVSA-SFEVE collaboration. If anyone is interested in pursuing such a venture, they are encouraged to contact me. As part of this overall initiative, we were also fortunately joined at last year’s annual conference in Oxford by the president of SFEVE (Laurence Roussillon-Constanty) and the former president of NAVSA (Dino Felluga).

Conclusion

The Higher Education sector, in the UK and elsewhere, continues to face unprecedented challenges. Nonetheless, BAVS remains in a strong position in terms of its robust membership and financial position, enabling us to provide a space for community, the promotion of excellent scholarship, and support for members at all career stages through various funding schemes, initiatives, and prizes.

As always, we welcome your feedback in shaping the future of the organisation. You can share your suggestions at the AGM or by getting in touch with the Secretary or President directly.

On a personal note, as I draw towards the end of my term, I would like to thank the many colleagues that I have had the pleasure to work with during my tenure and the members that I have been able to serve. I have been part of the committee for many years now, starting as a postgraduate representative and working with Alison Wood to establish *The Victorianist*; collaborating with Will Abberley on the BAVS logo and sepia-toned website rebrand (which I promise looked much fresher back in 2015!); and subsequently working as a Public Engagement Officer, before becoming Secretary in 2022. Over this time, I’ve seen the organisation go from strength to strength under successive Presidents. It has been an honour and a privilege to be part of the BAVS story.

Prepared by Claire Wood (Secretary) on behalf of the Executive Committee, September 2026