

	Jack Andrews closing speech for ARTS 25 February 2025 Given after the Last Ever ARTS Lunch, at which Jack was Guest of Honour
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Thank you, Peter, and thank you for inviting me today to give the very last speech in praise of an Association which has given so much pleasure to its members, and an extra forty years of friendship for those of us who worked for ABC, Rediffusion, and Thames Television. I am honoured to have been asked and, frankly, amazed that I am still here to do so. Sadly, the majority of my friends and colleagues from those early days are no longer with us, which is why some of you here today might be thinking “who’s this old geezer reading the ARTS epilogue – where does he come from?” Well, let me explain.



I was very much a late-comer to Independent Television, and before joining ABCTV, I worked for Radio Luxembourg in London, alongside the lovely Philip Jones, producing the radio forerunners of ‘Double Your Money’, ‘Opportunity Knocks’ and ‘Take Your Pick’, all sponsored by Lucozade and Beecham’s Pills and Powders. I then spent a couple of years making TV commercials and a few for the cinema, followed by a year with Westward Television in Plymouth.

In 1965 I came back to London to join ABC Television - and to my great surprise, and pleasure, the head of Light Entertainment there turned out to be, once again, the lovely Philip Jones. It was a great reunion and a pleasure to be working alongside him once again. Subsequently both of us joined Thames Television. That was in 1968.

Sixteen years later, I took an early retirement from Thames. I had intended joining a new production company, but things didn’t quite work out that way and I found myself very much at a loose end with nothing to do but mow the lawn, read the papers or play yet another game of tennis. I suspect quite a few of us will have experienced the same feeling. I began phoning the office every single day to see how things were going. “How are things”, I would ask, “is there anything I can do to help?” And, to my surprise, they would answer “everything’s fine, thank you”. “Are you sure” I would ask. “Absolutely sure”, they would reply, “but nice of you to ask”.

Eventually I gave up phoning the office, and accepted the fact that I was retired, irrevocably retired, and after all those years spent working for ABC and Thames I was, at last, a free spirit with no more worries, no more responsibilities. So what’s wrong with that, I asked myself? Well, I missed being needed ... missed having something to do. And many here today might have had that very same feeling.

That's when the idea of a retirement club struck me - one that could be run by retired members and, with any luck, financially supported by the company. So, I wrote a letter to Ben Marr, and the rest is history. After deciding on a title, we appointed an organiser to run it, the inimitable, tenacious Joanna Walker, who then formed our very first committee. I agreed to be the Chairman and, for the next ten years I had a ball, working alongside previous workmates, organising outings, publishing a newsletter and creating special interest groups such as the highly popular walking group (the WARTS) and trips to the theatre (the TARTS). As far as I know, no-one set up a group for Football, Fashion or Fishing!! No doubt dreading being called the "silly old FARTS".

So here I am today, trying to find the words to finish what we began, forty wonderful years ago. Now how many of you here today were present at the Lensbury Club lunch celebrating our first 25 years? (*pause for show of hands*) On that occasion, the late, lamented Brian Tesler gave a scintillating speech, recalling the history of Teddington Studios and the early days of Thames. Unlike me he did it without any notes to prompt him. He listed every department, and almost every programme produced by the company. But the most important thing that Brian said that day was this, and it's worth repeating: "the success of Thames and its programmes on the network was entirely down to you and no one else. Whether creative, technical, or purely admin. We all played a part in that success." And the same, ladies and gentlemen, can be said of our Association. all of us can be really proud of what ARTS stood for. And that especially goes for those of who volunteered and kept it running for so long.

Alexander Bell, the inventor of the telephone, once said "when one door closes another opens". Brave words, but are they true? Well, in our case I think they are. We also hear the words "all good things must come to an end." But really there is no must about it and, as it happens, the outlook isn't all that bad either. The party's not quite over because even without ARTS there will be several other ways of keeping in touch with each other. For example, a new WhatsApp group has been set up for the benefit of active members who want to keep the ARTS friendship circle going. The group is called 'ARTSConnect', and we are fortunate indeed to have Lorna Fairbairn as its administrator. Lorna doesn't hand over her telephone number to just anybody but if you are interested in joining this new group you will find all the details on page 3 of the latest magazine. Lorna, did you realise that you have become a 'Page 3 Girl'?

And there's another place to go if you want to share memories and news of your happy days at Thames, and that's on Facebook. The account was created in 2014 by Terry Foster and Avril Saunders (both from the Teddington print room) and I believe it already has a membership approaching 300 people. You do need to have a Facebook account, of course, but for further details you should contact Avril Saunders. Her details can also be found in the latest AQ magazine.

They say everything comes in threes, and there's one more way of keeping in touch with Thames – or to be more precise, with Thames nostalgia. And that's through the excellent ARTS website. When putting this speech together I found the website extremely useful for checking dates and names – I can never remember names. Needless to say, I found myself

easily diverted to early editions of the ARTS Newsletters, especially the ones I remember best - the ones printed on foolscap paper, compiled by Betty Thomas who was our Editor & Secretary for the first seven years of ARTS. What an asset to the team Betty was – discreet, energetic and full of good humour. The really good news about the website is that Alan Cross will be using some of our residual funds to extend the ARTS website facility for another two years, up to the end of March 2027. Do bear that in mind when you are in the mood to reminisce. And remember to make a note of the web passwords which can be found – once again - in your bumper edition of the AQ magazine. Let's give a big hand to Alan for all his hard work over the years as ARTS webmaster. *(applause)*

And at this point I think it would be appropriate to acknowledge the hard work that Brian Croney put in to compile and edit that last and final edition of ARTS Quarterly. Thank you for that, Brian. *(applause)*.

And finally, may I ask everyone to put your hands together for our Chairman, Peter Horton and for all previous Chairmen of ARTS, for all the Treasurers, for Membership Secretaries, for Organisers and Honorary Members – in fact for everyone who, over the years, gave their heart and soul to the success and running of our much loved, never to be forgotten, Association of Reunited Thames Staff. *(applause)*

Now I have left to the very end one person for whom I have the utmost and sincere admiration. She and I worked together at Thames for many years, through thick and through thin. Sparing her blushes, she is the very soul of tact, efficiency and good humour and, without a doubt, Pat has given her absolute all to the Association of Reunited Thames Staff. Ladies & gentlemen, I give you Pat Cox.

(applause)

(Pat to give a toast to absent friends).