

Hampshire Genealogical Society

Annual General Meeting – 11.00 am – Saturday 12th June 2021

Chairman's Report

This is my third Chairman's Annual Report since I became Chairman of the Hampshire Genealogical Society (HGS) at the 2018 Annual General Meeting.

This has been a testing year for the Society during a year where 'lockdowns' due to the Covid-19 pandemic have been implemented for long periods and there has not been any physical Group or Governance meetings. The Research Centre and Office has been closed to visitors since March 2020 and volunteers have had limited opportunities to return.

The Bookshop and Sales have continued to function and Research Enquiries continue to be dealt with remotely.

The Society has made great use of video-conferencing, using Zoom to run the AGM, Executive Committee, Development Forum and Group meetings.

The Society remains financially robust, and our membership continues to hold steady. For the first time in four years, we had a membership exceeding 1900.

Our 2020 AGM was rescheduled for October and was undertaken by making use of Zoom. Because of uncertainty of any 'lockdown' or restrictions that might continue in June 2021, the Executive Committee decided that this year's AGM will also be held by Zoom.

This past year, the Bookstall has not been able to attend any Family History Shows, but 'virtual' shows have been held and the Society has been present. Family History Shows have been an excellent opportunity in the past to gain many new members, but the 'virtual' shows have not had the same outcome this year.

Physical Group meetings closed since March 2020 have yet to resume though there is hope some groups will undertake some form of physical meetings during 2021.

The HGS continues with a seat on the Family History Federation Executive Committee which provides added exposure for the Society. Gwen Newland is a member of this Committee.

In my report last year I commented on the excellent people that have come forward as Trustees of the Society or have taken up roles whether as Group Leaders or other just as important roles. This has continued for which I remain eternally grateful. I am confident that the HGS will continue to help and educate people in their pursuit of family history research and continue to grow over the coming years.

Clive Colpus our Director of Fieldwork has stepped down after taking on the role at the inauguration of the Society in 1974. His dedication has enabled 99% of all Hampshire cemeteries to have the MIs recorded.

Executive Committee:

For the first time in many years, the Society has a full complement of Trustees, with Fiona Ranger, Phil Brown and Stuart Attrill filling vacant seats. They bring a vast amount of experience to the Executive Committee.

It is imperative we have a dynamic Executive Committee to oversee the governance of the HGS. Fortunately we have an excellent group of Trustees. It is evident across many societies that the people that normally run their societies and the volunteers tend to be from a particular demographic age group. Unless this is addressed, we may see a number of societies folding if young people do not come forward to take over. It is my intention that we will have in place both succession planning and a 5 years strategy plan to ensure continuity within the Society.

Some members of the Executive Committee have been involved in assessing a new location for the HGS Research Centre and Office. The lease on the Cosham premises expires in August 2021. Like all organisations the Covid-19 pandemic has caused the Society to address many aspects. We are looking at reducing our financial liability for a Research Centre and Office and anticipating the development of a partnership where two parties can benefit from mutual interests. This has also allowed the Society to review its IT systems. We are looking at a solution that will allow volunteers to carry out the transcribing of records remotely, something members have asked about.

I would like to thank our Secretary Gwen Newland for the excellent job she carries out on behalf of the Society. This is one of the most important roles within the Society which involves arranging hall bookings, dealing with inquiries to the office, preparing Agendas and taking Minutes, and also organising the AGM and Conference which are extremely time consuming in their own right.

Anne-Marie Shearer has responsibility for managing the Society's finances. As HGS Treasurer for ten years, Anne-Marie has kept a tight rein on expenditure. As you can imagine, running a Research Centre and fourteen groups creates an expenditure that requires close monitoring. The Executive Committee is extremely grateful for the diligent work she performs.

Membership:

Margaret Bowman, our Membership Secretary continues to do an excellent job dealing with all membership issues and enquiries through the HGS Website.

At the end of April 2021 our membership stood at 1,862 compared to 1,814 the previous year. We always see a large drop in numbers at the end March as the majority of members still

have a membership commencing in April. This past year we have exceeded 1,900 members for the first time in several years. Long may it continue!

To ensure you do not inadvertently lapse your membership, you may wish to consider a Direct Debit payment in future. This will also reduce the numbers of cheques that Margaret handles and has to bank.

HGS Bookstall and Sales:

Attendance at physical Shows has not been possible. However, the Society has taken part in 'virtual' shows which has provided some new members, the selling of HGS material and dealing with research enquiries.

Elaine Boyes and Trevor Bumstead have maintained sales enquiries during the pandemic operating from home and managing the uncertainty of the postal services worldwide. Sales levels have been remarkably high which suggests members have been taking advantage of the 'lockdowns' to do some additional research. Some HGS material can be sent by email now which has reduced costs and dependency on the postal service.

Publicity:

Although we do not have a Publicity Officer, the Society now has an excellent Facebook page. Romsey Group Organiser and Trustee Kay Lovell has taken on the role and ensures that new material is posted every day. The number of followers continues to grow and the promotion of the Society increases.

HGS Membership Surname Interests:

The HGS Membership Surname Interests database, managed by Keith Turner has been updated and members are now able to update their own records on the Website. We have also increased the number of entries members can hold there.

Data Protection Officer:

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) implemented in May 2018 is a legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information from individuals. The Society has this statutory requirement to ensure it only holds the member's information that is necessary and to ensure it is not used for any unauthorised purpose. John Bowman has taken on this role and has ensured the consent to hold the member's information has been obtained in every case.

HGS Groups:

Since March 2020 physical meetings were not possible. However, many of the Groups have used Zoom to hold their monthly meetings. This has seen members from other groups or further afield joining monthly meetings.

Following interest from overseas members, Fiona Ranger and Kay Lovell, both existing Group Organisers, have been instrumental in forming the International Group. The first meeting took

place by Zoom in February at 10:00 in the morning to catch members in the Australasia region. Members from Canada, USA and Belgium also joined in. All Trustees and our President Dr Nick Barratt joined the meeting as well so our oversea members can meet the Executive Committee.

I would like to thank all those volunteers, especially the Group Leaders that help to run the groups. I know that, without the selfless dedication of these people, we would not be able to sustain the number of groups we have. I would ask all group members to consider where they can help to keep our groups running.

HGS Journal:

Stephen Pomeroy continues as our Journal Editor. To ensure we continue this excellent journal, it is important that Stephen is provided with lots of interesting articles to fill the pages. A role that is always required is proof readers. This can be done wherever you live, so if you are interested please contact the editor.

HGS Research/Administrative Centre:

The Centre has been closed for most of the year, though for a short period volunteers were able to visit to carry out transcribing.

Roy Montgomery has worked from home to answer research enquiries. This highlighted how research can be carried out remotely.

Just by giving a few hours a week, we can ensure that the Society goes from strength to strength.

HGS Website:

We continue to monitor the Website and look for ways it can be improved and provide an even better experience for our members.

Richard Backhouse continues as Web-Coordinator looking after the Website day to day. Jane Painter updates the Group Pages and Kay Lovell adds 'Hints and Tips'.

Conclusion:

As always I wish to take time to remember and acknowledge the contribution made by all those nameless volunteers who serve the Society; taking the minutes, running the groups, creating their annual programmes, transcribing in the Research Centre, providing fresh ideas, and carrying out all those other jobs that are required to make the Society successful.

Without all our volunteers, our membership would not remain buoyant. I sincerely hope it continues for many years to come.

Paul Pinhorne
Chairman