

Hampshire Genealogical Society



Chairmans Annual Report

For the year 2021 / 2022

This is my fourth Chairman's Annual Report since I became Chairman of the Hampshire Genealogical Society (HGS) at the 2018 Annual General Meeting. After two AGMs held via Zoom it is a pleasure to get back to a face to face meeting.

Yet again we have had to manage interruptions to our way of working as a Society, but hopefully we can regain some form of normality now. Many of the local groups have returned to holding physical meeting. Several have experimented with hybrid meetings where many members have joined the physical meeting via Zoom. This will have to be managed carefully as we have seen a reduction in people attending venues when Zoom is included.

Our major achievement this year has been the relocation of the HGS Office and Research Centre from Cosham to the Hampshire Record Office at Winchester in August 2021. This was a major undertaking which involved plenty of man-hours to evaluate several premises for their suitability. Although, the Society has incurred dilapidation costs on the Cosham premises, these were a lot less than had been budgeted for. My thanks to Anne-Marie Shearer, Chris Pavey, John Bowman and Phil Brown for their massive involvement in this. Thanks also go to many others involved in the packing of our material and remedial work to the office.

Following this re-location, the Society has been able to reduce its financial liability. There has been an increase in the number of visitors we have to the Research Centre, and we and HRO can now offer a one-stop-shop at the heart of the county, developing a partnership where two parties can benefit from mutual interests.

Sales have continued to function and Research Enquiries continue to be dealt with both remotely and in the Office.

In the past year, the Society has continued to make great use of video-conferencing, using Zoom to run the AGM, Executive Committee, Development Forum and Group meetings. Most groups have embraced Zoom, and we have now set up both an International and a National Group.

The Society remains financially robust, and our membership continues to hold steady. The attendance of the Bookstall at Fairs often generated new members but with the lack of physical Fairs this source has been lost.

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.

We unfortunately had the passing of John Heighes earlier this year, who led the Christchurch and New Milton Group for many years, and Dennis Pierce who had many key roles within the Society. Since I compiled my report we have also lost Sheila Brine. Sheila spent years as Secretary, Bookstall Manager and Open Day Organiser. She will be sorely missed.

Executive Committee:

At last year's AGM Stuart Attrill stepped down for the Executive Committee. However, we co-opted both Lorraine Whale and Tony Sinclair to the Executive Committee during the last year. Elaine Boyes has had to step down due to her poor health. She will be a great loss.

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 further groups folding if young people do not come forward to take over. Last year, I referred to succession planning. Over the past few months it has become obvious that this is very important. Several Trustees have had instances where they have been unable to fulfil their roles due to illness. Fortunately, we have been able on this occasion to cover these roles.

As mentioned earlier, members of the Executive Committee had been involved in assessing new locations for the HGS Research Centre and Office. This has been an extremely taxing job, as we had to ensure what was decided was for the benefit of both the Society and the membership.

We have been reviewing our IT systems and purchased new laptops. We are looking to implement 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 fine 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 many years, Anne-Marie has kept a tight rein on expenditure. As you can imagine, running a Research Centre and thirteen 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 2022 our membership stood at 1,844 compared to 1,862 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.

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 some 'virtual' shows which has provided some new members, the selling of HGS material and dealing with research enquiries.

Elaine Boyes and Trevor Bumstead have managed the sales enquiries. Some HGS material can be sent by email which has reduced costs and dependency on the postal service. Elaine has had to step away from being the Bookstall Manager and I thank her for her enthusiasm over the last few years.

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:

Many Groups have used Zoom to hold their monthly meetings, but now we are to see more face to face meetings being held.

Fiona Ranger and Kay Lovell, both existing Group Organisers, continue to run the International Group, formed in January 2021 and the newly formed National Group formed in December 2021. Over 125 members are on the distribution list.

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.

Currently, no meetings are being held by the New Milton and Christchurch Group as no-one has come forward to replace John Heighes. Again it would be a shame if we have to close this group down.

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 located in Winchester since August last year. We have seen an increase in the numbers coming in for help. Currently open for two days a week, I am hopeful that in time this will increase when we have more volunteers, and also the HRO increase their opening times.

We have a regular group of volunteers who man the desk on Tuesday and Thursday between 10:00 and 16.00. I am very appreciative of these people who give up their time for the benefit of the Society and our members. Our volunteers are there to help our visitors or use the spare time to carry out transcribing.

Roy Montgomery continues to work from home to answer research enquiries.

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. We have agreed a Service Level Agreement with Wizbit that should reduce any problems with the Website's reliability.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pinhorne', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Pinhorne
Chairman