

We were very sorry to lose Paul Pinhorne as our HGS Chair in April 2023. Paul has been an HGS member since 1987 and has, during that time, held several roles in the Society including being Ringwood Group Leader for 15 years. He was a member of the Executive Committee for over 19 years, several as Vice-Chairman. Soon after becoming HGS Chair in June 2018, and during the Covid Pandemic, Paul led the relocation of HGS from its Cosham office to its new office in Hampshire Record Office.

During the last year Paul oversaw the consolidation of our working partnership with Hampshire Record Office. This has been very successful and we have recently renewed our contract with them for a further year. We hold regular Partnership Meetings with the heads of the Hampshire Record Office, Jane and Paula, and there is a mutual feeling that we work well together.

This year HGS has continued to receive a steady flow of visitors and enquirers to our Help Desk in the HRO search room. They have come, not only from the UK, but from Europe, Australia, and America. Research enquiries through our website from people unable to visit us in person continue to increase, as do orders for our sales of CDs, Village Booklets, and other books.

Our volunteer members have increased in number and have been working on various projects both in the office and remotely. Significant progress has been made digitising our last collection of records of Britons Dying Overseas; around 90,000 entries. Some of these are already on our website and we aim to have this project completed by 2024. It could be sooner if we are able to recruit more transcribers who can work remotely.

We have, after some years, been able to engage a dedicated Publicity Officer, who, along with other helpers, has begun work in Local Libraries. Working at present in Fareham, Lockwood, Stubbington and Gosport, HGS volunteers are helping people regularly with their queries.

We created a successful display in the foyer of HRO, put together by TS, JP and PB and SS, which ran from early January to late February. This professionally prepared display was very well received in the Record Office by staff and visitors alike.

For various genuine reasons we have lost several of our Principal Officers this year: our Chair and Secretary have already stood down. Our Vice-Chairman is also standing down this year. Next year we will lose our Treasurer and our Membership Secretary. For HGS to continue to be as successful as it is, we must engage continuously in succession planning to replace them, as a Charity cannot legally operate without its Principal Officers.

We therefore have an urgent and constant need for volunteers working in various roles. These include: Principal Officers, Trustees, Help Desk volunteers and others working behind the scenes in research, transcription, and office administration. Some of these roles can be carried out remotely, wholly or in part. Please bear in mind that our new King, Charles III, has introduced a new initiative called The Big Help Out, where he is encouraging volunteers to come forward. As part of this, along with other Family History societies nationally, HGS has signed up for this initiative. Please give some serious thought as to what help you can give, in any capacity, for as much or as little time as you can spare.

Next year is our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and among our celebrations to mark this milestone we are planning to hold a two-day special event in late June or early July 2024. We are looking into the possibility of holding a Gala Dinner and we will be inviting both exhibitors and renowned speakers to make this Conference and AGM a noteworthy occasion.