



The Hampshire Genealogical Society Chairman's Report

This is my first full year's Report since I was voted in as your Chairman at last year's AGM and I hope to receive your continued support for the coming twelve months.

It has been quite an eventful fourteen months since I actually took over the Chairman's role in April of last year!

Firstly, in June and with a full set of Officers and Trustees, we agreed the format of an Organisation Chart which contains one name for each of the Roles and Responsibilities that needs to be covered for the Society to function safely and adequately. This is working well as a 'working document' and has so far avoided the problems that beset us during 2022 and early 2023 when too few people were carrying out too many jobs and which you were made aware of at the time.

We've also improved our IT skills, with most Trustees using Microsoft 365 / One Drive, which avoids the use of too many Volunteers using their own devices to store HGS databases they are working on.

We now have a fully functioning Sales Office, overseen by Sue Stannard, and she is separating it from her Office Manager's Role. Instead, three other Volunteers now form our Sales Team, dedicated to dealing with the steady flow of requests for CDs, PDFs, Booklets, Books and Maps that we sell.

We also re-examined the cost of Postage and Packaging to bring them in line with Royal Mail's current pricing structure.

We held a Christmas Open House for our Volunteers on December 13th, so that the Trustees could say a big 'thank you' for their invaluable help over the past year. This event was attended by 27 of our 35 regular Volunteers and, after the

Buffet Lunch, we received a great deal of feedback from them as to their views on how HGS could improve on what we do and how we do it.

We have finally completed our project to transcribe over 86,000 records - written on Index Cards by one person over many years – of Britons Dying Overseas, our 'BDO Project'.

That this Project was carried out at all was due in no small part to the excellent management skills and supreme effort of our Trustee, John Bowman, who, over several years, coordinated the Project with the help of over thirty dedicated Volunteers – from around the World! Those Volunteers are too numerous to name here but they have been thanked individually for all the effort they put in – entirely in their own time.

We still have work for those 30+ Volunteer transcribers to be getting on with and that work is now being managed and coordinated by Volunteers Steve Cull and Keith Williams. The volunteers are all members of HGS, bar one, and I am extremely grateful to Steve and Keith for willingly picking up the mantle from John.

We always welcome new members who would like to volunteer for various roles and tasks that need to be carried out. The transcribing work can easily be carried out from home, in your own time, working on documents sent to you electronically, so, please don't feel you have to come in to Winchester to do it. Just email me or phone the Winchester office, leave your details and someone will get back to you

Looking to the future, there are several areas where the Society needs to review its practices and procedures.

Our Vice-Chair, Kay Lovell, has already begun to update existing, or, to write new Safeguarding Policies / Health and Safety Policies / Risk Assessments under the general heading of 'Governance' and which we must have in place, even as a Charitable Organisation, to protect ourselves, our Volunteers and those visiting us in the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester.

Other matters coming up for Review are:

1. A full Review of our overall pricing structure is needed, so that the cost of the items we produce and sell is not more than the price we sell them for. Many of our prices have not been increased for several years.
2. A full Review of our Membership Subscription is needed; again, our Annual Subscription has not been increased for several years. We are very mindful of the current financial climate for everyone, but we shall keep any increase as low as possible.
3. A full Review of the Hampshire Genealogical Society's website is also needed, which has not been carried out for about five years. This review will necessarily involve you, the membership, being canvassed directly for your views and thoughts on how we can improve your experience when navigating our website.

Working Groups have already been set up to review these three matters and you will read more about those Reviews in the September issue of our Journal, "The Hampshire Historian".

Sadly, we are losing two stalwart Trustees this year: John Bowman, about whom I spoke earlier, is standing down as a Trustee after six years with us. John originally became a Trustee so that we could avail ourselves of his skills and knowledge in relation to GDPR – the General Data Protection Regulations. Considering how much personal information we hold on nearly two thousand people, we must be careful and professional on how we store that information and how we use it. John has ensured that we are acting legally and professionally but, upon his departure, our GDPR responsibilities have now been taken over by our Vice-Chair, Kay Lovell.

However, as I said earlier, John was also instrumental in setting up our BDO database which now appears on our website at last. For me personally, John was a source of advice and expertise on the running of a medium-sized Organisation, which HGS clearly is, and for that I shall always be grateful to him.

Margaret Bowman is also standing down as a Trustee. Margaret became a Trustee in 2017 and, for several years, she has been our Membership Secretary, looking after the details of nearly two thousand members, dealing with annual subscription renewals, those leaving for various reasons, plus presenting the Trustees with monthly Reports on membership.

Margaret was also a regular volunteer on the HGS Help Desk in the Hampshire Record Office Search Room, but she dedicated a great deal more of her time to being our Membership Secretary. She, too, will be sorely missed by the other Trustees and myself.

Fortunately for HGS, her Role has already been taken over most ably by Terry Gilmour, a longstanding member of HGS and who has been a Trustee for a little over a year.

Our brilliant Treasurer, Ann-Marie Shearer, gave us notice at last year's AGM that she would be standing down as our Treasurer with effect from tonight's AGM. Ann-Marie has been a Trustee since 2012 and has proved to be excellent in her role and kept the Society on a steady course so that, due largely to her efforts, we are in a very healthy financial position indeed. We may be losing her as our Treasurer but, thankfully, she is staying on as a Trustee to continue to advise and guide us.

This is especially fortuitous because, unfortunately, our search for a new Treasurer has hit a snag. Last June, we began searching for a replacement Treasurer and, towards the end of 2023, someone came forward to offer their services.

Things seemed to be going well until that person decided it wasn't for them after all.

Realistically, these things happen from time to time in any organisation so, for now, we are operating without an appointed Treasurer while we search again for a new one. Luckily, Ann-Marie will still be around to advise and guide us in the meantime.

Overall, during my first year, past issues have been properly addressed and resolved, present issues are being addressed and will be resolved, while certain future issues have been identified and will be fully addressed over the coming weeks and months.

Also, over the next few months, I shall be re-visiting local Group meetings and I'll be catching up with the one Group I missed last time!

For the immediate future, we have our “Golden Jubilee Event” over the weekend of July 6th / 7th to look forward to! During the first of those two days, in Hartley Wintney’s Jubilee Halls complex, you will be able to enjoy presentations by several nationally known Speakers, plus professional exhibitors from around the country as well as Exhibition Stands from neighbouring Family History Societies. The Sunday will be a more relaxing day with various workshops, a very amusing Speaker in the morning, and “Ask the Expert” sessions during the day. The weekend will be rounded off with our President, Nick Barratt, on stage in conversation with other professional historians as to the future of Family History. Plus – you can enjoy a full Buffet Lunch each day!

We are also planning to hold a ‘Presentation Afternoon’ event, probably in September, for very longstanding HGS members: so longstanding, in fact, that seven of them have a Membership Number below 50 and were all instrumental in setting up the Society in the first place in January 1974! You can read more about their enormous achievement in the current issue of our Journal.

Also, during September, we’ll be holding a series of online “Golden Jubilee Lectures” on various Family History-related themes. More information on these events will be posted on our website by the end of June.

In the meantime, please support your Hampshire Genealogical Society. You can do this in several ways: by attending local meetings where and when possible; by visiting our website regularly for news, event updates and searching through all our available records, and by visiting our Facebook and Twitter / X pages.

Finally, please think carefully and ask yourself if you can help our Society to continue to grow by volunteering in any area to help us to get things done. You can help in your own time and, even, in your own home.

That concludes my Chairman’s Report to the membership for this year, thank you.

Tony Sinclair, Chairman