

RH7 History Group

Chairman's Report 2020

The last time the RH7 History Group met, on Monday March 9th, there seemed to be so much to look forward to for the remainder of the year. We had four more talks lined up and the Committee and other providers were well on the way to completing their work for our exhibition; "Who Do You Think They Were – Local Lives Remembered", due to open on Sunday, 24th May. Then Covid intervened with its subsequent lockdown and social distancing limitations. We have lost three talks, so far, and the exhibition has been postponed to the end of May 2021. Hopefully, we will be able to start getting back to normal with our talk in November.

On a sad note the group has lost two stalwarts during the year: Felicity Pool and Doris Jenner. Felicity had been Honorary Secretary since 2012 and was vital to the smooth running of the Group, particularly in reminding me as to what I had forgotten to do. Her cheerfulness and eagerness to help will be greatly missed. Doris was Doris, cheery and uncomplaining despite her age and forever coming up with nuggets of information on the area's past.

You will find attached a copy of the Accounts as prepared by Mike Ellis and inspected by Mark Clayton. At the end of the year we had 103 members, down from 117 in the previous year. The Accounts show a healthy surplus of £407 mainly because we received £200 in grants towards the exhibition that was postponed and savings on speakers' fees due to the talks being cancelled. The bank balance is now a healthy £2,690 and we see no need to increase the rate of the subscription. The Committee did consider offering members a discount on membership for next year but the difficulty of doing this was pointed out as it would mean cancelling more than 70 standing orders, raising new ones for the coming year and then new ones again for the following year. Instead we are planning to hold a members only evening for the opening of the exhibition, complete with drinks and canapes. This is Mike's last set of accounts as he is standing down after 21 years as the Honorary Treasurer, a role he has held since the inception of the Group. I am sure that you will want to join me in thanking him for his efforts and wise counsel over the years.

Normally at the AGM we elect the Group's Officers for the following year but, obviously, it is not possible to hold such elections this year. You may remember that at last year's AGM I disclosed that I had already exceeded the maximum tenure as Chairman per our Constitution but agreed to continue in the role as I had given an undertaking to lead us through the next exhibition. Given that the pandemic forced the postponement of the exhibition and made it difficult to sign up an acceptable successor, the Committee has approved my staying as Chairman for a further year. Alan Orbell temporarily undertook the role of Honorary Secretary over the last year following Felicity's illness and subsequent death. He has agreed to continue in this role for a further year after which I am willing to take over this role if the membership approves. As noted above Mike Ellis has retired as Honorary Treasury. We have yet to identify a successor due to lockdown restrictions, but I am hoping to get somebody on board next month. Sue Macdonald has agreed to continue as Talks Coordinator and Ian Jones and Margaret Ward have agreed to continue on the Committee.

I would now like to turn to the future of the Group. The membership has fallen over the last few years as has the number of members willing to serve on the Committee and as Officers of the Group. In the past the Lingfield Society and the Lingfield & District Amenity Society both closed because of the lack of volunteers to act as Officers or to be members of their Committees. I am sure that we all want to avoid the RH7 History Group suffering a similar fate. Therefore, I would like to ask members to encourage friends and acquaintances, particularly younger ones, to join the Group. I would also ask members to either volunteer to join the Committee and/or be Officers of the Group or encourage/recommend suitable individuals for these roles.

I thank you for your continued support and hope that next year we will be able to fulfil our complete programme of talks and hold our exhibition.

William Stevenson
Chairman
19th August 2020