

Chairmans report AGM 15th May 2021.

Dear Members,

Hopefully we will continue to gradually come out of lockdown to have some open air events later in the year. The Trustees will be guided by the government advice. Providing the team leading the zoom meetings are prepared to do so, some presentations will continue in that format. It has the benefit of those living miles away joining with us, also those less mobile and those with no transport can participate. Initially the webinars were by donation and although they earned some much needed cash, it was felt it needed to be formalised and future screenings will have a charge of £5.00.

There are many people behind the scenes who are working away voluntarily to ensure the society continues to function and improve. We know we will never be perfect, we are human and hopefully some of you may wish to join in and help with that improvement.

Natural History, Archaeology and Historic Buildings committees have all contributed to the webinar programme over the past few months very successfully. These sessions take a lot of organising and team working. Dr Lizzie Induni has offered to train Associate Society members in the art of zoom if they are unsure.

Covid has totally thrown the Proceedings completion, there were a considerable number of papers that could not be finalised and the decision was taken to wait for them to be completed rather than have a copy with half the content. The printers themselves have experienced delays due to social distancing etc. By the time you receive this I hope we have managed to get the mailing out to those who have opted and paid for a printed copy. Rob Webley and David Dawson along with others have worked very hard to ensure that the digital version for the members only area is ready.

The members only section of the website has been developed by Dr Harriet Induni with support from other members. Harriet has had to update the Privacy Policy with a very short insert to ensure we are GDPR compliant. The Board needs to agree to the changes and a meeting is arranged to do so.

Harriet has contributed to the newsletter with details of where you should be able to access the website if you have no computer of your own.

Martin Salzer has put together this years newsletter with the many articles he has received from members, many contributing for the first time. He has put a considerable amount of work into this publication, very aware that this and the Proceedings are the only contact some may have with the society.

Sue Goodman wears many hats, membership secretary, Chair of the Library committee, part of the digital Proceedings group, produces the e-bulletin, and has been involved with Harriet in the development of the members area. She also proof reads any of my letters before they are sent! I hope the work load will soon reduce once the digital Proceedings and members area are finalised.

Despite advertising in different forms of media, we have not been successful in recruiting a new Treasurer, a post that has to be filled. David Victor, has put together a clear job description and also the time it takes for the different components. Most of this can be carried out at home but attendance at most Board meetings is required, usually six times a year.

We have had to slip in four extra meetings due to the amount of work in progress. Please contact the office, office@sanhs.org if you would like to discuss the role.

The extra meetings were to discuss the the loan of some of the SANHS collection for a period of five years by the Newt, part of the Hadspen Estate. Another was to discuss the recruitment of Holding Trustees and the relationship with the Board. We also held one meeting to purely discuss the finance situation of the society. In line with other investors our investment income is down, the sale of books has almost dried up, and we are unable to hold the number of events we usually would, all of which we rely on for income to run the society. Another meeting as held to tidy odd pieces of work that needed to be dealt with and to look at ways of focusing on fundraising.

We are now registered on the Easyfunding website which two of our trustees were registered to. There are around five thousand companies that contribute a percentage of any purchase that you make with them. There is no added cost to the purchaser. Please, if you are not already aware of this way of getting donations for the society, please do investigate.

We also would welcome more members to come forward as trustees. We are losing two from the board this year, one who has increased commitments elsewhere and David Victor our treasurer who also has other interests he wishes to follow. A good functioning Board will consist of a variety of people with differing skills, and the ability to work as a team. All board meetings are via zoom at present, most on Saturday mornings as we have one trustee who is working full time.

This will be my last chairmans report as I am standing down a year early. I will remain as a trustee as I enjoy a lot of what I am involved in for the society, especially seeing the Castle Gardens cleared of the tremendous amount of overgrowth that covered everything. We don't anticipate the gardening side of the project being complete until the end of this year, but as our volunteer numbers increase we may be pleasantly surprised.

The Norman Gardens have now become known as the Castle Gardens as Norman Gardens sounded very much like Northern Gardens. This is the area between the back of the museum and the Mill stream which the society also owns. The gardens have previously been known as the Castle Gardens, but also the Castle Keep Gardens.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continuing support to the Society as members, and especially to those who take on the voluntary tasks which keeps the Society functioning.

Chris Jessop.
Chairman.