

Chairman's report 2020

This has certainly been an eventful year. At the Committee Meeting that followed the April 2019 AGM, I was invited by the Committee to take over as Chairman to succeed Peter Lewis, who had retired after his accident. I would like to thank all of them for their support and encouragement as we re-grouped. Thanks are also due to all the members who help us in different ways through the year. Even visitors often automatically help us prepare the Hall while they are waiting. All that help makes life so much easier and is appreciated.

The talks programme and summer outings for most of the membership year went well and The Society ended the year in a similar position to the year before, with a membership of over 130, and the accounts showing a healthy balance sheet. All our members will have been delighted to see Peter back attending meetings in the latter part of 2019 and clearly recovering.

But 2020 has been dominated so far by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. By early March, when we were making preparations for this year's AGM, it was evident that we could have a problem. We had no idea how serious it might be, although we did recognise that we were at the mercy of forces beyond our control. Things moved quickly, and the seriousness of the situation soon made it clear that we had no choice but to cancel the AGM, as far as I am aware for the first time in the nearly 50 years of our history, and also the April meeting due to follow it. It now seems that the larger part of our programme for this year will probably be lost, including the planned summer outings. Unfortunately, this means that much of the work done by Hamish, by Caroline and by David will have little immediate result, although we hope some of their work may be used next year. We are keeping in contact with those speakers we have been forced to cancel, in the hope that most of them can step in soon after we resume. We are also hoping to re-schedule the cancelled outings programme for next year, although we still have no idea when group meetings and coach trips might again be possible. Meanwhile, we have extended all of the current year's membership subscriptions by one year, to March 31st 2022. That will incidentally coincide with the Society's 50th Anniversary. By then, perhaps, we will look back and wonder what all the fuss was about.

Gerry Cook 24/5/20