

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
4th April 2023

Welcome to the AGM: which is an unusually important one, as it will deal with a revision of our Constitution, on which I shall say more in a moment.

This is our second year since the Covid emergency. I'm pleased to report that our membership has held up well, and remains close to 100. Thanks to the efforts of Simon Edkins, we have taken steps to improve communications with members by making more use of the internet. We also have a new and improved membership card.

We have sustained the number of talks at the old level – 11 since our last AGM. I hope you agree that at £10 for the whole set, this represents pretty good value for money. We will all remember our own favourites; speaking personally, I would highlight the Bosnia talk by our own David Leakey, and Ivan Smith's on the history of Arundell's in Salisbury Cathedral Close, which showed Edward Heath in a new light to me.

We have updated the website to carry more information. I would like to make a point here of recognising the extremely valuable contribution of our website manager, Steve Hoffman – an unsung but not unrecognised 'shadow member' of our team.

The financial position of your society remains strong: Derek Fisher will present the accounts shortly.

The one area of concern remains the summer visits. We have not been able to replace the huge contribution that Caroline Cook made to these, nor find a way to resume the programme. We shall have to make a bigger, and better, effort on this in the coming year. I once again extend an appeal to members to volunteer their services: ideally, with 3 or 4 volunteers sharing the job, it would involve only a little actual work.

I come now to the Constitution, and the Archive. The latter has been in peril since it lost its physical home as a result of the refurbishment of the United Reform Church. Thanks to Derek Fisher, who nobly volunteered for the task, it has remained safe and dry in his garage, pending a resolution of where its future home should be. Various possibilities were

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considered, including offering it to the County records office in Chippenham. But we wished to keep it in Mere.

The Committee has agreed, unanimously, that the best way to ensure this is to transfer the Archive to the Mere Museum, under certain conditions. These are first, that it should remain a distinct collection in the Museum, under the name of the Michael Tighe Archive. Secondly, it should be rationalised, and slimmed down to a manageable volume, under the joint care of the Museum and our own Archivist, Derek Fisher.

Because responsibility for the Archive was previously written into the Constitution, this measure to safeguard the Archive's future requires a revision to the Constitution, which can only be made by the membership as a whole at the AGM.

We have taken the opportunity also to revise the wording of the Constitution regarding gender-specific language (ChairMAN etc.); and to bring the provisions regarding authorisation of payments up to date.

With the transfer, if approved, of the Archive, I hope the Historical Society may move towards more joint work with the Mere Museum in the future.

Finally, I should like to thank you, the members, once again for your support in keeping our Society in good health and vigorous activity.

Peter Landymore