

Good Afternoon Everybody, to all those seated here in the Galleywood Heritage Centre and to those who may be watching the proceedings from home.

First, I should remind you that the Full Accounts, including Notes will be available for you to see on the Society website from Monday 18th November 2021.

I now begin the Treasurer's Report for the year ending 31st March 2021 – a year which began just eight days after a UK national lockdown was imposed. Our March meeting which was to be held here in this Hall was cancelled and although we did not know it then, we were not to resume meeting here again until today, 18 months later.

We must have been quite optimistic then – (or perhaps I mean naïve?) – as I recall us cancelling the Meetings planned for April, May and June from our Programme calendar but leaving all later months still in place whilst, at the same time keeping our fingers crossed. We all know how that ended - (or has it?)!

So much for the background to this financial report –

During the period in question the Society Income suffered a drop of around £3,000 pounds, mainly owing to our inability to hold any of the usual 40 or so meetings across the County, importantly, however, income from Subscriptions held up, being only £500 pounds lower than that of the previous year.

Fortunately, at the same time, Expenditure experienced a much greater drop, falling more than £5,500 pounds – and for much the same reason – our inability to hold meetings.

With only two exceptions, viz Family Historian costs and PayPal charges, expenditure on every other class of Cost fell, when compared with the previous year.

But even those two Costs were increased for the best of reasons.

The Historian, published in August of that year, was considerably bigger and heavier, than ever before and was the Editor's contribution towards filling the void that many experienced during the lockdown: and the increase, in PayPal costs, occurred in response to an unprecedented number of new members joining the Society in January and February 2021 when more than 380 subscriptions were recorded in just a few days for reasons which will be explained later.

The net result was a gain to Society funds of £8,200 pounds, resulting from, what I used to call, 'our normal' activities.

In addition, and against all expectation, the value of our 'Investment' stood some £10,500 pounds higher than at the beginning of the period. The Final result being a Net Surplus for the Year of £18,745 pounds.

Among proposals being considered, by the Executive in order to use this surplus usefully, and "in pursuit of the Society's objectives", are such as involving schools in Family History projects; possibly offering a 'restricted' donation to the ERO for the purpose of speeding up the digitising of those parish records which are still to be done and, lastly, making further awards to other educational institutes offering degrees in Local History.

Now, the promised explanation referred to above for the sudden influx of new members eager to join the Society... After the initial period of lockdown, when there was a growing realisation that COVID, and the

consequential restrictions, were going to be around for the foreseeable future, and that a 'new normal' was needed, some members on the Executive Committee began to experiment with using Zoom, as a means to resume, if not 'face-to-face' contact, then 'screen-to-screen'.

So it was that on 9th June 2020, the first 'virtual' Executive Committee Meeting was held, and on the 15th June the first Zoom Talk was given by Helen Matten. Both events being so successful, the practice continues to this day and has, indeed, become a part of the 'new normal', allowing our talks to be both seen and heard by our members the world over.

In January 2021, two members of the Executive were interviewed by BBC Essex, where they were given the opportunity to promote our Society, this, and a generous write-up which appeared in the Lost Cousins newsletter in the same month resulted in **272** new members joining the Society.

In February 2021, the Society took part in what must be the largest Family History event ever held, organized jointly by FamilySearch and Roots Tech. This world-wide, virtual, event was held over a three-day period, and being world-wide, required that our virtual 'stall' be continuously 'staffed', by 'real' people, for an unbroken period of some 80 or so hours, both day and night, and so it was, - by dedicated members of the Executive working on a roster basis during that time and with the help of two volunteers in North America and another in Australia. That event gained the Society more than 50 new members from outside of the UK and possibly a similar number within the UK.

I tell you all this, so that you are aware of the Energy, the Time, the Thought, the Hard Work and Determination that members of the Executive have displayed during the past 18 months, so to ensure that the Society not only survives - but thrives.

To my mind they have been truly successful in that endeavour and I thank them all.

With the financial assurance that these Accounts indicate and an Executive team such as ours, we may be certain of a bright and productive future for the Society.

And there ends this Treasurer's Report - and the last that he will make.

Now, on a personal note – at the conclusion of this AGM my term in office comes to an end - I realise that I am fast approaching my 'Best before Date' and I wish to hand over the books (XL spreadsheets, these days) in a clean and tidy manner and then have time available to assist my successor in any way I can.

The Society has been very lucky to have found a volunteer at the first time of asking; luckier still, to learn that she has done accounts work for many years, and still does, - and finally, that she is **decades** younger than me.

I should like now to introduce her to you all, albeit en masse

“Mrs Tania Sewell please meet the Executive and Members of the Society”