

## **Trustees' Report 2020-2021**

**by John Young Vice Chair**

We have maintained our normal activities, despite the pandemic, although in a radically different way. All meetings have been conducted online, using Zoom software, making them available to all members, wherever they live. Up to four talks or workshops have been offered each month and have been attended by a far greater number of members and guests than we have ever seen at live meetings. A highlight was a Workshop, which attracted a large number of non-members. All members, now have the opportunity, not only to enjoy our talks, but to converse with each other across the world. Approximately half our members live out of county, with a significant number overseas, from Australia to North America. Even local members, for reasons of health and/or lack of transport, have been able to join in. The online arrangements have led to lots of positive feedback and does enable individuals to have every opportunity to be fully involved in the Society at large.

We are determined that all future member meetings will be available online. We have begun to experiment with hybrid meetings, where the Zoom session is projected at our regular venues. This enables groups of members to come together to participate in the meetings. So far, personal attendance has been limited and we are still to resolve some technical issues. We will continue to experiment in the hope that we can provide the greatest possible choice for our members.

Alongside our successful online meetings, the Society has taken part in several online Family History Fairs. The first, organised by the Family History Federation, resulted in the recruitment of twice the number we would have expected at an equivalent live event. We then exhibited at RootsTech 2021, a major international event organised by Family Search in Utah, USA. We gained many more members during that show. Recently, a presentation on the upcoming RootsTech 2022, used our 2021 booth as "a great example" of good practice. We would like to thank all 23 volunteers who helped to run our booth, without a break, for 84 hours over three days.

A recruitment campaign, led by an article in a widely circulated third party online newsletter, and interviews on both national and local radio, contributed to an increase in our membership of 25%.

Other activities have continued, as normal, including our support for the Victoria County History publications and our Student Award. For the first time we made a donation to the War Memorial Trust to help support their work preserving war memorials which are an important source of information for family historians.

Our website has been upgraded, with new content.

The only setback during the year was the decision of members in the North-West Essex area to cease to operate as a Branch. Sincere thanks are sent to past and

present members who carried out valuable transcription work for the benefit of the whole Society.

All in all, it has been a very successful year for the Society despite the difficulties imposed by the pandemic. Reduced expenditure on premises for meetings, and increased income from new members, has resulted in a healthy surplus. We are examining ways of spending this surplus to enable digitisation of records to make them more widely available.

Finally, we thank our Treasurer Ron Knights who is standing down after serving for fifteen years. He will continue to support our new Treasurer Tanya Sewell to ensure a smooth handover. Thanks also goes to Angela Hillier, Ray Poole and David Cooper for their contributions to the Executive Committee and who have all decided to step down. Lastly thanks goes to our retiring Chair David Eniffer as he completed his second stint in the roll and who is handing the reins over to Elizabeth Cox.