

Chair's report

This year has been quite eventful from the committee's point of view. Our new secretary, Dorothy Morgan, really put her back into her new role, organising documentation, trying to recruit new members, writing huge numbers of emails and signing up the Society for the Federation of Family History Societies, which means that we are able to benefit from the many online meetings that they have and we are now insured for extra events.

As you know, the secretarial role became much too onerous for one person, which is why we have now decided to divide up the role into at least two parts for two people; membership and general duties.

We have also enjoyed having two new committee members, Jane Rimmington and Gillian McCorry. Jane sadly realised that she is unable to attend meetings, so has decided to step down again but both members have contributed greatly to online discussion and I would like to thank Jane, Dorothy and all our committee for all the time and effort that they have put in.

In my job as a professional musician, I have, over the years, given many concerts in the USA, presented by organisations with enormous committees of, say, 30 members. The idea is that each member has one small job to do, so that nothing is too onerous and everyone has time to fulfil their role. At the end of the year they have a big party – a dinner in a restaurant say – and this is the reward for all those people. They seem to love the system which works really well. I would like something similar for our Society, on a smaller scale of course.

While having an immediate need for at least two people to fill the secretarial roles, I would like to introduce another role for members. They will come under the category of 'Helpers'. These are people who help in some way but who do not sit on the committee. We already have Peter, who agreed to be our auditor and Amanda's son Adam, who built our website. Jane kindly agreed to write the Minutes for the AGM, so she will also be a temporary 'helper'. We would love to invite more of you to join the committee but if you don't want to attend meetings (online), you can also sign up as a helper, so that we know we can turn to you if necessary.

Last year I mentioned the need for recruitment of new members. Dorothy made a huge effort with this, designing a poster which other members of the committee put up in their libraries and other centres. Sadly these did not produce the result we had hoped, although we have a few new members. I believe that we need to have a more specific campaign, looking for Easts and asking them personally. This would be an excellent task for helpers and could take as little or as much time as you wish.

I am also looking at ways to make membership of this Society more attractive by increasing the number of events. Of course, events have to be attended and it isn't always easy to find times that people can manage. Angela Waterfall has initiated a lovely idea of holding 'Rambles', which look at East-related things in a specific area, walking round and finishing up with a pub lunch.

I have found a professional genealogist who is willing to give talks to the Society online, helping members to proceed with their research when their own efforts appear to have reached a dead end. These are planned to start in February. There will be an initial talk and if successful (meaning a reasonable number of people attend), more will be planned.

It is generally felt that members are more likely to be able to attend online meetings but there will be those who prefer the social aspect of face to face meetings. Please do let us know if you have views on the subject by writing to us – hopefully a new secretary but otherwise to myself.