

President's valedictory address 2023

This year has been the first full year where we have run a programme in conditions close to pre Covid. The decision to continue with hybrid meetings did cause some discussion among members at the start of the season. We decided to continue the Zoom facility wherever possible at meetings in order to cater for members of the Society who are unable to attend the face-to-face meetings for a number of reasons including ill health and irregular working arrangements. We purchased new audio equipment to facilitate this arrangement and after a bedding in period this seems to be working quite well. The balance between members attending in person and on zoom has fluctuated over the year, with a couple of sessions where the meeting in the hall rather small. My own personal view is that face to face meetings in the hall should be the default mode of attendance, wherever possible.

We have had a varied and successful range of speakers over the year, and I would like to thank John Ferretti for the hard work he puts in as programme secretary. It is becoming increasingly difficult to attract good speakers to attend face to face meetings and it may be that in the future we have more Speakers who wish to deliver their presentation by zoom to a gathering of members in this hall. We have had a couple of very successful events like this especially the one with Bill Ward.

Both the perspectives exhibition in the winter garden and the annual exhibition in the cathedral attracted a good number of high-quality entries. I would like to thank the organisers of both events for the hard work behind the scenes that resulted in such successful shows.

I would like to thank the members of council for their support and advice throughout the year. Members of council play an important part in the running of the Society, and I would encourage newer members, especially, to consider participating as ordinary members of the council. It is an excellent way of meeting other members of the society as well as understanding our history and the current issues that we face. During the coming year the council will be considering the nature and size of its membership to enable the effective and efficient running of its affairs. We will report back to the membership at the next AGM.

I would like to thank the many volunteers who have helped with setting up the exhibitions, stewarding, setting out the hall for meetings. Finally, thanks must go to those who heeded the call to be tea and coffee monitors and actually filled out the tea rota.

I would like to thank you the members for staying with us this year. We know that some societies have folded. Although our numbers are down on the peak that we had pre COVID we still have a respectable membership and have actually attracted some new members. I hope those new members have enjoyed their experience and will stay with us in the coming years.

I have enjoyed this year as President, and I hope you have too.

Mike McManus