

This has been a year like no other. I hope everyone has kept well and not too bored by the restrictions. On March 16th we cancelled all public meetings and workshops until August expecting to be able to return to normal in the Summer. However, with continuing lockdown, it was decided to transfer talks to on-line Zoom meetings. Although it has taken us a little time to get these to run smoothly they have been successful and have regularly had audiences of over 30. We have also started informal Zoom meetings on Monday mornings hoping to replace the discussions which always took place at Monday morning workshops. To set the discussions going we have had some short talks or presentations by a number of members which have been very varied and interesting. We may ask some of the presenters to enlarge on these to create a full length talk in the future. We decided to postpone the AGM until next Spring hoping to be able to hold a physical meeting but will have to hold it then on-line if we cannot meet physically.

The people who have attended the Zoom talks have enjoyed them and we realise that using this medium has some advantages, we can have speakers from farther afield, and it saves the audience having to come out in the unpleasant, cold, dark evenings in the winter. However, some of our members do not have access to the internet and cannot participate in these meetings so we will certainly return to meetings in the Town Hall and enjoy seeing each other again. We may consider the occasional Zoom meeting as well. We would like to know the feelings of our members about this (especially those of you we have not been able to communicate with over the internet).

Although we have not been able to use the Town Hall basement, research has been continuing at home. Phoebe has been reading through the Romsey Advertisers for the years of the Second World War and recording interesting extracts both for Romsey and the villages. The RAODS research group has also been using the Romsey Advertiser to make an index of all references to RAODS. Others have continued working on the Anglo-Saxon material, preparing to publish both a book on the lower Test valley in Domesday Book and a series of articles on our findings about the Saxon period itself. Various members also write articles for the Heritage page in the Romsey Advertiser. The Monday morning meetings have revealed an interest in the history of individual premises in Romsey with much useful personal information and anecdotes being contributed. This is research which we will continue.

There has been a review of the Romsey Conservation Area and the Society reminded the planners how important it is that the archaeological potential of every site in the centre of Romsey is considered when there is development and building works. If we are to discover more about the early development of the town this is crucial. Hilliers Gardens have now erected the notice boards we designed to point out the line of the Saxon boundary bank and ditch. The details of this are in the newsletter.

Queries continue to come in via the website and very often we can answer them. We are ensuring that the website has up to date information on our programme as plans have to change. New articles including ones on Members of RAODS in the 1930s, the Swing Riots in Michelmersh and Timsbury and No.16 Latimer Street will be on the website in the New Year.

Despite the sad death in November at the age of 91 years of our long term programme planner, Nancy Kelly, we have a programme in place for 2021. Our plans are to continue with on-line Zoom meetings until the end of March. Many members have now contacted us with their email addresses so that we can send regular updates and reminders. If you have access to the internet and have not already given us your email - please do. We have booked rooms in the Town Hall for all meetings from April 2021 and we will return to physical meetings if it is safe to do so. We will be using the Court Room on the ground floor for all meetings except the AGM. If restrictions still apply we will continue to use Zoom.

The Romsey Arts Festival is planned to go ahead in July 2021 and if so we will have a two day exhibition of work done on the history of Romsey over the last few years as well as running some guided walks around the historic centre of town.

Sadly, the Nursling and Rownhams group which focused their activities on visits have decided to close at least for the interim. However, Wellow History society are holding on-line Zoom meetings and are planning to continue this at least for the start of 2021. Other organisations like the Hampshire Field Club and the Friends of Winchester Cathedral have also transferred their talks on-line - details are on their websites.

Please watch our website for updates on the programme and new articles.

Best wishes and Happy Christmas,
Mary Harris.