

Chairman's Annual Report for 2011

(at 2011 AGM – 14th May 2011)

My first year as Chairman has been very interesting and I am pleased with the improvements made and with those in progress.

The saddest periods of the year were the losses of our Immediate Past Chairman, Ted Newton, and Council member Tony Pike who was also our South West representative. I got to know Ted well since joining the Society and I enjoyed his company during many events and social occasions. He was a very dedicated person and believed very strongly in the aims of our Society. His experience is greatly missed and so is his support. Becoming a Vice President shortly before he sadly passed away honoured his hard work and dedication. Tony Pike was an enthusiastic member. Apart from being a branch Chairman and representative he was also our official photographer, supplying the Trafalgar event photos used in the December issue of our journal. He was full of laughter and always willing to help. It makes my job function as Chairman even harder with the loss of two devoted Council members and with the experience and dedication they both had.

The Royal Wedding was most enjoyable. It brought much happiness to the whole Country. The coverage by the television companies, as expected, was tremendous. On behalf of our Society we sent the Royal Couple our best wishes for good health and happiness for their future. We also displayed a message on our website offering them our congratulations.

This year has seen the redevelopment of our journal, changing the name to 'St George for England.' The response has been very favourable. Changing publishers, negotiating costs and experimenting with the quality of paper for the cover, has made it a hectic period for our editor!

The website is continually being updated, becoming a full time occupation for our Webmaster. For the first time this year we saw many worldwide events associated with St George's Day appear on the home page with a separate link.

The link showing the petition for a National Holiday for St George's Day has been well received.

Regarding both our journal and website we have now exchanged links and advertisements with other associations. This is in the hope of attracting more members to join us and make others aware of our aims. We are reaching out for new members in all directions such as Twitter and Facebook. I feel that these areas are very important if we are to attract new members for our Society to grow. We must keep moving forward and a membership drive by branches would be appreciated. Our membership has been declining owing to many different factors. I am pleased to write that the Westminster Branch have recently agreed to make all their members full members. We have received a list from them showing 290 names.

This year has seen the introduction of new job functions onto our Council covering International Branches, UK Operations, Traditions, Fundraising, St George's Day Coordinator, Membership Affiliations, Editorials Coordinator, Memorabilia and Ladies within our Society. Two others positions are in the process of being formed, Financial Support for the purchase of our own head quarters and Yachting Club Membership. All your representatives' names covering the above job functions and existing positions can be seen in our journal and on our website.

This past year has seen the formation of new Branches in Seaford, East Sussex and overseas in Delaware USA and the Sultanate of Oman.

Events

The Battle of Britain luncheon was held at the Royal Air Force Club celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Battle. The function, as always, was well attended. We all enjoyed a splendid meal followed by speeches from several VIP's. Squadron Leader Ken Wilkinson, 'One of the Few', was present giving us a special

sense of the occasion.

Sir Keith Park. The unveiling of his statue in honour of his achievements during World War 2. A truly emotional ceremony followed by a flypast of wartime aircraft.

Trafalgar Day Dinner was held in the Undercroft of St Mary Redcliffe Church. The event was well organized by the City and County of Bristol Branch, was well attended and very enjoyable. The following day we were treated to a tour of St Mary Redcliffe Church followed by a boat trip on the 'Matthew of Bristol', a replica of the famous ship that sailed with John Cabot in 1499 to the Newfoundland.

The Cenotaph this year was a huge success with over 350 cadets present. The occasion was very emotional especially when the Reverent Paul Train gave the prayer. For next year I have asked our Webmaster to film the ceremony for entry onto our website. I believe that showing the cadets in full dress at such a prestigious occasion attracts more members and visitors and helps to show what our Society represents.

Trafalgar Square celebrations of St George's Day. The Mayor of London allowed us a marquee within the Square to promote the occasion and our Society. A large number of cadets helped us during the afternoon while thousands of people enjoyed a wide selection of entertainers covering the rhythm of London, the best of busking and musical theatre. Our thanks to the GLA for their generosity.

The All Party Parliamentary Group at the House of Commons held a lunchtime reception to celebrate St Georges Day. Our Council members were privileged to be invited with their partners and enjoyed a memorable afternoon.

Gloucester Cathedral St George's Event. The Gloucestershire Branch extended an invitation to my wife and myself to attend this event which was a truly amazing and moving evening. The Cathedral was full with Society members and Gloucestershire dignitaries. After the service a splendid buffet with wine was served and enjoyed by all. My gratitude to the Branch members who contributed to a memorable St Georges Day event.

Events were held by many of our branches throughout the year, not only for St George's day but for a number of other occasions. Some of these can be seen within our journal and website. A big thank you to all those who helped to organize, support and attend the events.

With regard to our finances our Treasurer is doing a brilliant job but we need to increase our membership to safeguard our future. By reviewing the expenditure and changing publishers we have saved thousands. By reducing the Executive meetings to one per annum and changing the venue for Council meetings has also saved considerable revenue. All areas of expenditure within our Society are being reviewed.

Our lease on the Administration Centre comes up for renewal in October and, as our ladies at Folkestone will be retiring at the end of September, it seemed practical to move the offices nearer to my residence on a short-term basis. This will allow us time to raise funds to purchase our own property or lease another property in a suitable location. It will be a difficult time not only relocating but missing the experience, knowledge and dedication from Jean, Eileen and Freda also our Archivist Dorothy. Our sincere thanks and gratitude go out to them all. Unfortunately there are also Council members who have mentioned retirement but I am hoping we can encourage them to stay.

In taking our Society forward your Council does appreciate that decisions made are not always unanimous. Any suggestions are always considered and in some cases acted upon. I am pleased to say that we have received a large amount of encouragement and can assure you that your Council is supporting our Society whenever possible. As you are aware we are all volunteers. Most of the Council travel long distances to attend meetings at their own expense, showing how dedicated they are.

To mark the 60 years Diamond Jubilee of our Queen's reign next year, please let us know if you will be organizing events for the celebration so that they can be viewed by all on our website. A special limited souvenir is currently being viewed for sale. We always receive an acknowledgement from Her Majesty's office thanking us for copies of our journals and the red roses we send for her birthday.

If you would like to help in anyway please view the job functions that Council members are responsible for and suggest where you could be of assistance, or your suggested input. Help is always appreciated; as I know there are many new areas we could venture into.

My sincere thanks to all those who have supported me in my first year as Chairman, it has been a privilege and an honour. I will endeavour to carry out my job to the best of my ability and hope to receive your continued support.

On behalf of our President, Council members and myself we thank you all sincerely for your enthusiastic support. I also take this opportunity to thank all our Council members for their time, dedication and support all of which is very much appreciated.

As Winston Churchill once said 'LET US GO FORWARD TOGETHER'.

Cliff Trowse
Chairman of Council