



ALS 2020 AGM

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It is with regret that we had to cancel this year's AGM weekend, to be hosted by the Walmsley Society in Robin Hood's Bay, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all the hard work they have put into the event. Unfortunately, the Coronavirus outbreak has meant the cancellation of all sorts of events around the country, and we can only look forward to the eventual lifting of restrictions.

Last October, the ALS was invited to a private tour of the London Library. It is a wonderful place, packed full of literary gems – and you can read a report of the visit in our Spring 2020 newsletter on the ALS website (under the Publications tab).

You will notice on the Voting/Comments form in this area of the website that there is an invitation to join the committee. I know that we do this at each AGM but this year, as part of our forward planning process, we really need to get someone to take over the role of Treasurer/Membership Secretary from the 2021 AGM as Julie will be standing down then. It is not an onerous task but is a vital one in the organization. We meet twice a year (plus the AGM), in Birmingham – in normal times, in the Community Hub on the 4th floor of John Lewis, above New Street Station.

This year, we are proposing that Robin Healey (who is already on the committee) take over the editorship of the journal ALS_o. He did serve as co-editor for the early editions.

Next year will be a year of change for the committee as, not only will Julie be standing down as Treasurer/Membership Secretary, but Marty and I will also be leaving our respective roles. It is hoped that, subject to voting outcomes, Marty will become the Chair and Mark Green the Secretary. Julie and I both plan to remain on the committee after relinquishing our current roles.

In these difficult times, we are all looking for ways to entertain ourselves – and we certainly have plenty of time for reading! There are loads of online bookshops out there and organizations are discovering new ways to engage with the community via the media. I have been enjoying Baroness Orsby, Conan Doyle and P G Wodehouse on LibriVox podcasts (all free, readings by volunteers) – along with some Sherlock Holmes short stories (written for radio) broadcast to the American troops in the late 1930s/early 1940s and available on Radio Ghost via YouTube. Some book, poetry and play-reading groups are diversifying into using Zoom to video conference (although the free version only gives you 40 minutes). There are also lots of interesting radio programmes. Not forgetting, of course, the Hay

Festival which used Crowdcast to broadcast their talks free of charge. Museums and art galleries are also offering virtual tours.

So, do keep safe and we hope to see you all again in London next year – Highgate with Betjeman and Hopkins – on 21 to 23 May 2021, the invitation to which is included in these AGM papers.

Linda J Curry
Chair