**Secretary’s report to the A.G.M 2021 {to be held on the 25th January 2022}.**

On a personal note, I should like to thank those that have supported me during this last year, given that I had to be hospitalised for a very serious, long and intricate operation. While away, Peter, Pierre and Philip made sure that every speaker was lined up and confirmed for the coming season.

The local Membership numbered 56 fully paid up local members at 29th July 2021, compared to the previous year {August 2020} with local fully paid up members of 42 strong. For interest’s sake only, National Members in July 2021 that the Branch had was 81 and 69 in the previous year-2020. I mention the phrase ‘for interest’s sake only’ because the HA head office counts the National Members centrally, and is therefore cognisant of the National numbers per branch anyhow. The membership secretary is hopeful that as things normalise, those members that have not renewed so far, will rejoin. Some members who do have email did not attend in this on-line period and maybe a sign that on-line just does not suit them.

The season ending May 2021 was obviously challenging given the Pandemic, with much of the season dedicated to Zoom communications for obvious reasons. Many thanks to Philip and Peter for managing this for the Branch.

Interesting Speakers to name a few were as follows. Professor Adam Smith on ‘The Battle of Gettysburg : why it mattered’ was an outstanding Speaker, and spoke without hesitation and fluently as well throughout.

A lecture from Prof. Charles Giry-Deloison from France for Twyford School in October 2020, ‘England and the Continent in the 16th Century’ was also most interesting, and part of a ‘test run’ for Zoom meetings from Speakers residing abroad.

Dr Helen Paul also gave a good explanation of ‘The South Sea Bubble’, even describing how Walpole was saved by his own personal business agent from investing more, and getting out {almost} entirely, before the bubble burst.

Dr Sean Cunningham also gave a vivid explanation of Henry V111’s foreign policy.

 Perhaps a heavy weight talk on Chamberlain, Hitler and the path to war could have been improved, and most probably my error in deciding to invite that particular Speaker.

Whilst it is customary for the Secretary to report on matters that are now past, in this current season 2021/22, the branch will attempt a ‘blended’ in person/ on-line approach, and as the ups and downs of living with the virus dictate.

The chair informed the Committee in August 2021 that national membership of the HA had grown substantially to 10,000 members- from 8,000 the year before.

In 2022 we have five further lectures spanning the governance of medieval cities, Joan of Arc, Walpole, Key dates in Postwar British History, and pre-colonial West Africa.

Work has already begun on contacting Speakers for next season: 2022 to 2023. If there are any suggestions for talks please bring them forward although we will also need a recommended speaker.