**Chairman’s report to the Ealing Branch AGM 13 December 2022**

As many of you know I combine the roles of chair of the Ealing Branch, with chair of the Branches and Membership Committee of the Association, so I am involved with the work of the Association more generally and sit of the Executive Committee and Council. So, I can report that during the last couple of years the Association has continued to add to its membership, although it is important to note that the new recruits tend to be school teachers, rather than general members. The main growth area recently has been primary school membership. One of the challenges that the HA faces is to link up the different strands that make up the membership and to look at the ways that, for example, that branches could work with primary school teachers who are often not history specialists.

The branch network has survived the Covid lockdowns and a spell of zoom meetings pretty well, and most branches are back up and running with a full programme this season. A couple of new branches are being formed or revived, which is very encouraging. Many still face the challenge of providing hybrid meetings, in order not to lose members gained in lockdown who find it difficult to get to meetings. Hybrid meetings, as many of you will have witnessed, are subject to technical hitches, and don’t always provide a perfect experience for everyone, even in a building as well equipped technologically as Ealing Green Church is.

Earlier this year the HA adopted it’s new three-year strategy, one of whose key objectives is to grow and support the network of branches across the country, and, if we can, to fill some of the geographical gaps in coverage, particularly in the north of England.

In its new strategy the HA has also amended its strapline **History for all** to read **History of all for all.** This change reflects the need to try and increase the diversity of the history that we study as well as the diversity of the audience we attract to meetings. We need to recruit people from different backgrounds, and younger people, to become members if we are to ensure the Association’s long term health and sustainability. Your thoughts, as members, as to how we might achieve that aim at a local level would be welcome. I have some copies of the latest HA News which has details of the Strategy and other news you may find interesting. Please take a copy.

One item in HA News is now out-of-date. Next year’s HA conference was due to take place in Liverpool, but the date clashed with the rearranged Eurovision Song contest, and this made it impossible to go ahead. I am pleased to say the conference will now take place in Harrogate on the same dates, Friday 12 and Saturday 13 May. If you haven’t been to an HA conference please think about whether you would like to go, as they can be good fun.

I am grateful for the support that I have received over the last year from my fellow officers and from the branch committee, and from you the loyal members. Branches of the HA which go under do so most often not for a lack of members at meetings, but for want of people to take on the officer roles. I must therefore record my thanks to Peter Crane, who is stepping down as Branch Treasurer, after many years of looking after our finances. We shall be electing his successor during the AGM.

This year has seen the sudden death of a long-serving and much-loved member of the branch in Elizabeth Sunley. Elizabeth had been a committee member for many years and arranged many of the branch’s outings. Elizabeth was always good fun, and I was very fond of her, and shall miss her lively presence at our committee meetings and in the audience for our talks. This of course leaves a vacancy on the committee, so if the role of organizing visits is one you feel you would enjoy taking on, please put yourself forward.

Peter Hounsell