

Report of the Membership Secretary to the AGM June 2021

At the outset, I would place on record my thanks to the school staff Lucy Pembroke, Simon Marsh (who went onto pastures new in December 2020) for all their efforts over the past 12 months and for “keeping the show on the road” in such imaginative ways. A warm welcome to Gavin Stone (Director of External Relations) and Katie Gould in the Alumni Relations Office.

In addition, my colleagues on the GC deserve recognition – under the proactive leadership of Andy Redwood, Nick Gill, Aimee Frankham and Stephen Traynor we have continued to work closely with the school to ensure things haven’t just stood still. I am very well supported in my role by all these people.

I am happy to answer members’ questions during the AGM or via email after the meeting. mlucas@royalhospitalschool.org.

The Membership Secretary is responsible for:

1. Developing and implementing a membership strategy.

All former pupils automatically become Life Members of the RHSA when they leave the school, irrelevant of their year of leaving. Their basic data is transferred during the summer, undertaken by the Alumni Relations Office.

Exceptionally someone writes to state they do not want to be contacted. If this happens then their data would remain on the InTouch database but the person would have not contact from the RHSA or the Alumni Office (InTouch is the database that we use for keeping membership records). (See page 5). If a member wants to be removed from the database, then all information apart from name and years are deleted and a note made on the record, so they are not ‘found’ again.

2. Keeping the membership records up to date.

This is undertaken on a regular basis, when information comes to light. I frequently receive emails addressed to “memsec”; or via the RHSA page on the School website www.royalhospitalschool.org; the GC team share updates between us; I get details passed on by word and mouth. The Alumni Office also regularly updates records. On-line bookings for events also helps records to be updated. The Gidge” also helps to keep young and old alike informed and in touch with the RHSA and School. You can get your online copy at: <https://www.royalhospitalschool.org/alumni/alumni-news> .

Recent demises are recorded in the accompanying document. There have been 31 RHSA Alumni who have died since my last report in November 2020 (see also my extended note of this item at the end of my report)

Continued action for the future:

This is an ongoing job and so one of my priorities is to continue to use family history websites such as Ancestry, My Heritage and other sources to try and trace and record data of former students. (See Pages 6 & 7)

Finding members who we have lost contact with.

As well as researching older records there has been a continued push to encourage participation via dedicated FB groups. There is no doubt that this can bring old friends together and enable memories, photos and posts to be shared. These groups always complement the official RHSA FB groups

A new dedicated Facebook group is RHSA- CanUSA for those living in Canada, Mexico and the USA – currently with 19 members

The official RHSA FB page attracts frequent queries and comments. I am grateful to Aimee Frankham for following up on the many posts we receive. It is a useful resource for keeping in touch.

We continue to keep in touch with our very senior members by working with the student body and House staff sending birthday cards for those reaching their 80th, 90th and 100th birthdays. (see page 8)

There are still many missing addresses for those born in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s but we are doing our best to reach out to our older members.

Action for the future:

1. Removal of duplicates from the InTouch database. Updating inaccurate data entry
2. Continue to promote the RHS digital archive <http://rhsarchives.daisy.websds.net/>

3. Conducting correspondence with regards to membership with Members and the School.

This is covered by No 2 above 3.

Action for the future:

RHSA GC and School to develop formal process of how to respond to former students who do not wish to be contacted. To develop a "GDPR Data Processing Agreement" that aligns the RHSA with the School.

4. Liaising with Branch General Secretaries regarding their members.

- a. This is now a reduced part of my role and the work of the RHSA in general. Improved communications including email & social media – in particular, Facebook and LinkedIn mean that members can keep in touch more easily and network.
- b. Pre-Covid there had been a regular programme of Networking events. Whilst not possible during the Covid-19 pandemic it is hoped that these will resume when regulations permit.
- c. The intake of more recent members is now much more geographically dispersed so "branches" in the traditional sense tend not to operate. However, the Portsmouth Branch still retains a greater concentration of older former students and continues to operate. The Plymouth Branch is not very active – as long serving committee members retire – it has proved difficult to find younger people to attend and/or organise meetings and functions. The London/South East & East Anglian branches are thriving and utilise FB for helping to organise events and disseminate information

5. Recruiting school leavers and former pupils who are not currently Members.

All former pupils of the RHS are automatically members of the RHSA. However some occasionally slip through the net and don't appear on the database.

Some Insights

Greenwich records

This is part of our development work using the Admission Books (which can be found online in the RHS Digital Archive <http://rhsarchives.cook.websds.net/>)

I must place on record my thanks to Brian Gatward, Howard Redwood and Claire Waugh who have been meticulous in transcribing the handwritten ledgers into electronic form. This is a long term project which has historical importance for the RHSA and School. Eventually the typed records will be able to be viewed in the Digital Archive.

I thought a summary from Brian, Claire and Howard would give some insight into their important work.

"Brian, Claire and Howard started the project by collecting two books (4 and 5) from Lucy Pembroke, at RHS, on November 24th, 2020. Entries being made into a spreadsheet set up on Google Drive. To date we have captured about 5500 boys onto the spreadsheet. We expect this to go up to about 10,000.

Key challenges encountered were faded and smudged entries as addresses were in pencil and the bottoms of pages being very smudged. The style of writing used then was different with capital letters formed differently and often confusingly, changing with each writer. Being 100 years old many entries could only be properly read using a magnifying glass with built in LED lights, a great strain on eyes and back. Also, the time of day and sunlight affects the way you interpret the writing. To verify addresses was interesting requiring the use of google to access almanacs, census blogs, newspapers, government reports, old Victorian maps and the like. The number of screenshots that have passed between our two parties to try to decipher addresses or names is countless.

Also gained was an insight into the reason why our RHS has such a big infirmary. In book four alone, 4 boys died in the Greenwich Infirmary and one drowned on mid-summer break and another suspiciously at home, but the number of 'children', (because that was what they were), that were found to be unfit for school or the Navy, some as young as 14, but most at 15, is incredulous. When the children were released as unfit, some, sadly, had to return to the orphanage from whence they came. This work has certainly focused us on the fact that the names of the boys that we were recording are no longer with us. Large numbers of boys came from the coast guard service. All boys who completed the schooling were required to enter the Royal Navy, the Royal Navy Reserve or the Merchant Service. Many were discharged from Greenwich to go through training at Ganges, Vivid, Impregnable and the various dockyards and Engineering training bases, also to the Royal Marines Light Infantry or Artillery in between 1907 - 1913 - straight into a theatre of war! We all left RHS, in Howards generation, some housemates went straight into the Falklands Conflict. He counts himself as extremely fortunate indeed! Working with these books is very sobering"

Geolocation Map

This is an ongoing project which I started in December 2020. I am very grateful to my friend Trent Holmes (Hawke 1967 – 74) for his work in this area.

The Geolocation map is an opportunity to have your details (contact details & biographical information) “pinned” onto a map of the world. The amount of information you want to share is down to the individual concerned and could be just an email address.

The RHSA map is gradually widening across the globe with the number of Alumni mapped approaching 200. This was originally offered to a small group of Alumni but now Trent and I are hoping to extend this resource to all members of the RHSA.

The intention is that the project will be of interest for helping to see where we all are but also to enable you, if wanted, to communicate directly with anyone on the map. This may be helpful if you are travelling in an area of the country or abroad and want to meet up with someone.

It would be a great achievement if we can make this Geolocator a success by getting as many as possible to sign up. I am hoping you will like the idea and want to provide details for your pin. If so, please drop me an email to receive a copy of the Pro-forma Word Document.

A security statement has been drafted by Trent and this can be found in the Word document. Please be assured that it is not possible to “track” your movements! I was asked that question.

If I can put you in touch with old friends or assist with other membership matters please let me know.

If you copy this address into your browser you should be able to see how we have made a start. <https://www.easymapmaker.com/map/4d10c4aff5a042cdcf38145a09930a20>.

Please contact me for the password.

Gifford Sherman Reade - a message from Julian Ticehurst (Anson 1973 – 80)

“I'm researching Gifford Sherman Reade! I put a post about it on RHS Arms. I've also posted in the Holbrook Past and Present group. It's proving a fascinating journey already. John Wood is helping with what he has found. I am looking for copies of these documents. 1) Biography of Mr. G. S. Reade by Mrs A. Kaye-Wilson. 2) RHS founding charter 3) Bernard De Neumann's notes beyond the published academia.edu document "The Philanthropy of Gifford Sherman Reade" I'd be delighted to know anything known and I'm very interested in primary documents”

If you can offer any assistance to Julian then please contact him at julianticehurst@gmail.com

Tracing Old Friends

Many requests come to me each year asking after old friends. This is usually straightforward but I never know what reaction I may receive and I always need to be mindful of GDPR rules. Diplomacy is important because members may not have had any contact for years with contemporary friends or the School. Some Alumni wish to have no contact at all and in these circumstances are marked up as "Exclusions" on the database.

If we have a record for that person I will contact them first and seek permission to share their contact details. This is essential under GDPR requirements. If a person is not located on the RHSA database then I will do my very best to find them via Family History sites, 192.com, LinkedIn and Facebook. It may take some time but I can usually find someone!

Here are couple of scenarios which may give an insight into one aspect of my work.

The easy scenario

I get an enquiry looking for John Doe. First I will check on the database. Next, if full contact details exist, I will contact John Doe and ask if he is happy for me to share his details with the person making the enquiry. If consent is not given then I can go no further – I cannot share the individual's data without consent. If consent is given then I will share the information with the enquirer – and hopefully old friends are reunited!

The slightly tougher scenario

I get an enquiry looking for Jane Doe. Again, I will first check on InTouch. This time there may be minimum data available. This will usually include full name, date of birth, House, and usually start and leaving years but no contact details (postal address, phone numbers or email). In these circumstances I will need to dig deeper. Initially I will see if there may be another sibling – this may help later.

My first line of enquiry will be family history. I will look to see if the person was born in the UK – this will give mother's maiden name and place of birth; with a maiden name I can see if there are any siblings; I may look to see if any marriage records exist and note the name (s) of spouses; I may also look for the birth record of children. In addition, I will search Family Trees that are listed to see if the person crops up.

From here it is possible to use social media e.g. Facebook; and resources such as LinkedIn; and the Electoral Roll on 192.com.

Sometimes the task is completed quickly (for example I recently had an enquiry from KM looking for BCDR – an old Drake friend. I was able to locate spouse and both daughters on Facebook and exchanged messages all within a couple of hours).

Sometimes the task can be more prolonged - I may need to write or contact neighbours.

I also have to be mindful that not everyone is happy to be "discovered" and if this is the case to be sensitive and react appropriately.

I am in regular contact with Lucy Pembroke whose advice is always appreciated. Uploading contact details, once found, must comply with GDPR rules. By and large the process is straightforward but I can get prickly responses and I have nearly had to go and get the "stick and book" for my misdemeanors once or twice!

Historical Researches and Death Records

A great deal of research has gone into "closing the record" of alumni by recording confirmed death information.

We now have confirmed death records for 3393.

When I commenced this work in 2016 there were 250 on the database; I gleaned 101 from the Gazette.

The remainder have come from:

- Recent demises. Notifications to the School or myself from relatives or friends of the deceased. There are always a few reported year by year.
- Historical demises. Undertaken by research on Ancestry & My Heritage and other family history sites which use Registration data and the Electoral Roll. As the table on page 6 shows the vast majority are from those old boys I have researched from 1918-1950

These are gradually being uploaded to database. Needless to say this work is ongoing – deaths records are uploaded by myself and the Alumni Office.

How it's done

I will initially use InTouch.

Many records only have a limited amount of data; and there are no sibling links

- Name
- Date of birth
- House
- Year started
- Year left

I have been gradually working my way through each birth year using only those records where there are no contact details available. This is on the basis that if we have address details they will receive a copy of the Gidge and so if a person has died we may well be notified.

I will use the full name and date of birth to research on family history sites.

If I get a match I will record the death record on the database.

If a Family Tree exists for an individual I will leave a message for the site owner to indicate the person was a student of the Royal Hospital School. This may also include condolences on behalf of the RHSA

Sometimes a site owner may ask if I have any further details. In this situation I will check the RHSA archives and search for any mention of the person and report back.

Birth year	Deaths recorded
1900	1
1901	1
1902	1
1903	7
1905	2
1906	2
1907	1
1908	1
1909	2
1910	1
1911	1
1912	1
1914	1
1916	1
1917	2
1918	36
1919	190
1920	182
1921	217
1922	240
1923	234
1924	221
1925	195
1926	180
1927	162
1928	146
1929	136
1930	121
1931	120
1932	72
1933	70
1934	74
1935	69
1936	57
1937	56
1938	44
1939	56
1940	50
1941	34
1942	46
1943	25
1944	15
1945	14
1946	19
1947	14
1948	13
1949	12

Birth year	Deaths recorded
1950	21
1951	16
1952	14
1953	13
1954	13
1955	15
1956	15
1957	11
1958	9
1959	8
1960	11
1961	5
1962	1
1963	4
1964	5
1965	7
1966	3
1967	4
1968	3
1969	1
1970	1
1971	6
1972	3
1973	2
1974	3
1975	2
1977	2
1978	3
1979	2
1980	2
1982	2
1985	1
1986	1
1989	1
1990	2
1992	1
1996	1
2000	1
Not available	34
Grand Total	3393

Alumni Support Fund

We have supported a lot of our members this year in many ways trying to keep up contacts, find old friends, assist those who have been struggling or finding themselves in difficult circumstances.

Our thanks to all those who contributed so generously this year.

We know that times are hard for everyone at the moment but we would love to be able to help more of our RHSA family where we can.

If you are able to donate any amount no matter how small to this Fund we will ensure that the money raised is allocated and used to help our most vulnerable members.

If anyone would like to make a single BACS payment or regular contribution to our Support Fund please contact Aimee Frankham RHSA Media and Event Secretary afrankham@royalhospitalschool.org