

The Black Country Society AGM 2021

Secretary's Report

When I was offered the role of Secretary to the Black Country Society last year, we were yet to enter lockdowns and experience the virtual shutdown of normal life. It seems a long time ago. It was soon obvious that to keep the Society functioning the decision-making processes of the Committee would need to continue away from face-to-face meetings. I think it is fair to say that the Zoom meeting software was new to most of us as it was to me. Nevertheless, it was decided to pursue Zoom for our meetings despite in the early days, before we purchased a licence, being limited to 40 minutes after our unlimited free trial ended. It was a learning curve for all of us. As we went on more and more Committee members came on board with laptops, iPads, and even mobile phones. I think it is fair to say that due to everyone's efforts the Zoom based Committee meetings have generally been a success.

Early on we decided to make the meetings monthly rather than bi-monthly. Zoom meetings are not perfect and do not suit some Committee members but the fact is there is no travelling involved or rooms to book. I would like to record my thanks to everyone who has supported this new, but necessary, way of working. I am extremely grateful for the help and support of the previous Secretary, Judith Watkin, both as a source of information and for making sure various Society contacts and memberships were transferred to myself.

Early successes included persuading Google to display a more appropriate 'panel' when the Society comes up in Google searches. We are also now listed as a regional society on the British Association for Local History (BALH) website. When we are able to resume face to face meetings for members, we will now be able to update the Dudley Community website with upcoming events.

It has been interesting for me to see the number and variety of questions we get asked through the website 'Enquiries' button. We cannot answer everything of course, but I am pleased to report we have helped some very satisfied people, who hopefully will have gone on to consider membership.

The Covid lockdowns seem to have encouraged people to have a clear out and offer the Society archive material. So much so that we had to mask the decision to accept only items relating to the history of the Society itself. We hope that someone will come forward to help catalogue and store this valuable and developing archive relating to the first 50 years of Black Country Society history. Here's to the next 50 years!

Andrew Homer

Secretary
Black Country Society