

Since our last AGM I am delighted to report that we have enrolled 14 new members; two previous members have rejoined.

However, I have to record with sadness the death of Stuart Wabe, a very longstanding member of the club who contributed greatly to its success both as a director and as the club's first webmaster. We were also sad to learn of the death of Yvonne Wallis who, likewise, had been a member for many years. Sad news has also been received of the deaths of a number of former members including Elizabeth Taylor, Reg Carlier and Joan Barwick.

I received notice of 5 resignations due to health problems or travel difficulty and we had to assume a further 6 resignations when membership was not renewed.

I have been notified that two members will be resigning – Judy Horton who has relocated to be near her family, and Ron Rutstein, our former webmaster, who has not enjoyed the best of health in recent times. We wish them both well for the future and will miss them both.

15 visitors are applying for membership which now stands at 203. At present there is no waiting list but that could soon change if we reach our maximum of 210.

And now to more personal matters:

After ten years in the role I am now stepping down as Secretary.

I regret that this has happened at a sensitive time for the club but my husband has been seriously ill over the past year and remains rather unwell, so I feel I need to make him my first priority.

What follows is my response to a kind invitation to produce a potted account of my time at the club. I applied to join the club in 2006 and was accepted after being 'played in' on three occasions with committee members which was a very daunting experience. Judging by some of my recent results I am surprised they accepted me!

The club was entirely different in those days. Boards had to be dealt by hand at the table and scoring was done with travellers. Calling the director took some courage and the same applied to any errors made with the travellers. I know, I was guilty of both!

I was invited to join the committee in 2013 which I considered a great honour and in 2015 I was elected Secretary.

Before Covid we held two big annual events - a Village Week charity lunch plus a Christmas party when duplicate bridge was abandoned and we played fun bridge. We self-catered for each occasion, hard work for the committee but I believe we managed to organise successful and enjoyable events. The most memorable club occasion for me was in 2019 when we celebrated our 50th Anniversary with a bridge tea. I was tasked with ordering a huge celebration cake and did so through a baker who was highly recommended. However, the weekend before the event I received an email very late

at night from the baker's wife to say her husband had injured his hand in the mixer and she was at the hospital A&E with him. I had to act quickly as time was short. After frantic googling well past midnight I managed to contact a firm who promised to supply the celebration cake which we required. Doing the artwork online for the cake decoration in the early hours of the morning was quite a challenge but all went well and a beautiful cake duly arrived 48 hours later.

I later learned that someone else had a very similar experience with the same company on a separate occasion. The baker must now have a very mangled hand!

I have served with four Chairmen - Coral Wabe who transformed the club into the friendly, welcoming association which we know today, Lawrence Penney and Neil Higgins who worked tirelessly to set up our online club during Covid, and now Jerry Broers who has worked to bring the club up to date with the latest technology.

I have been privileged to work with many splendid committee members who have been great team players and a wonderful support for me.

Now, I will be handing over quite a large part of my role to technology in the form of Pianola. It will assume the responsibility of safeguarding your personal data. However, I wish to say that I never considered that particular aspect of my duties to be a burden and trust that I have kept all details carefully and respectfully. And while the efficient and labour-saving features of technology can be beguiling, I would hope that the part it plays in managing our club will not detract from our hallmark ethos of maintaining friendly, helpful interaction through personal contact.

Now I know that pre-empts in bridge can be very risky, but I have full confidence that, when you elect the new committee, you will give unanimous approval to my nominated successor, Marilyn Clarke. I know she will be an excellent Secretary.

Last, but certainly not least, I must pay tribute to our members, especially those who showed great courage and support for the club in returning to play face to face after Covid in September 2021. That was a crucial point in our club's history, and we have subsequently gone from strength to strength.

Bookham Afternoon is a wonderful club and it has been a true privilege and honour to serve you. Thank you.

Kate Castree