

OVERSEAS

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE



TRANSPARENCY
In a uncertain world, who should we trust?



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ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE
ESTD 1910

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CHRISTOPH ESCHENBACH
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The Royal Over-Seas League is dedicated to championing international friendship and understanding through cultural and education activities around the Commonwealth and beyond. A not-for-profit private members' organisation, we've been bringing like-minded people together since 1910.

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“I look forward to meeting many of you in person in the coming months”



As I write this in July, the first full month of my tenure, the clubhouse is a hive of activity with builders, electricians, scaffolders and plumbers, all overseen by our Head of Estates Tomasz, working to ensure essential compliance works are completed on site before the August reopening. There will also be visible improvements to the club such as the newly resurfaced courtyard of the clubhouse, the first thing members will notice upon their return. When sitting in the garden, which is looking particularly lovely this time of year, members will notice the repainted windows all along the elegant exterior of Vernon and Rutland House. The Drawing Room will receive a makeover a few weeks later, with brand new furniture, specially chosen with an eye to the heritage of the room, one of the grandest in the clubhouse to my mind. The reopening itself is being meticulously planned by Resident Manager Warren, with input from the entire Senior Leadership Team, so that members and staff can feel secure in the knowledge that no stone is left unturned in ensuring the safest possible environment, whilst the welcome back will be reassuringly familiar. Government guidance allowing, Artistic Director Geoff Parkin is planning a splendid programme of musical and artistic activities, likewise for member-led events curated by the Evelyn Wrench Committee and its energetic Chair Eve Mitleton-Kelly, who I quickly learnt is one of ROSL's most active members. In any event, one silver lining of the last year is the benefit of online connectivity, particularly wonderful for keeping in touch with members not within easy striking distance of the club. At Zoom D-G's Drinks, I've been thrilled to see members from countries as far afield as India, Brazil, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia, Ghana and the US, as well as all across the UK. There's a lot more work to be done to bring together and to grow the ROSL community, and to implement and see through the Master Buildings Strategy, but I'm certainly looking forward to going on that journey together with all ROSL members. And I look forward to meeting many of you in person in the coming months as you return to the clubhouse.

Dr Annette Prandzioch
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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“ROSL ARTS has embraced technology and used a computer-generated model of Over-Seas House to present two new exhibitions online”



From the EDITOR

As we each raised a glass and cheered in a new decade back in January, how many of us would have thought the world would have changed so dramatically in just a few short months? And how many more would have thought that as COVID-19's spread gained speed around the world from February onwards, that we would still be living under its spectre in September?

Our clamour to find out more about COVID-19 has meant we have all come to rely on the advice of medical professionals, scientists and the government.

Underreporting of cases, claims of unproven treatments, and accusations of political motivations in the response to the virus, have led many to think twice about what information out there they can trust. That's why, in this *Overseas*, we have chosen the theme of 'transparency' to shed light on these issues and to help each of us get to the truth.

The medical trials currently under way to find a vaccine are a crucial part of returning the world to normality, but dangerous misunderstanding has spread during lockdown. On page 18, Natalie Healey finds out how life-saving science could be communicated more effectively.

Often spread online, this misinformation has also occasionally come from politicians and the papers. Mistrust in the government and media has grown during the pandemic, so how can these public institutions regain our trust, asks Ross Davies on page 22.

Throughout lockdown and ROSL's own closure, we have strived to keep you all abreast of everything we have been doing to prepare for your return. Now that the clubhouse is open once again, new Director-General Annette Prandzioch sets out her stall and shares her ambitions for the organisation on page 6. A key part of that is the continued renovations of Over-Seas House, which member Martyn Kingford explains in more depth on page 10.

Read all these features and more, plus news, events from the clubhouse and branches around the world in this issue. I hope you enjoy; your feedback is always welcome.

Mark Brierley
editor@rosl.org.uk

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Woman of the world

Despite the unprecedented circumstances in which ROSL's new Director-General takes up her position, Dr Annette Prandzioch's career in law, the charity sector and academia has uniquely prepared her for taking on the role. Mark Brierley finds out the route Annette took to Over-Seas House and what her plans are for the club post-lockdown

How does one go from working as a barrister, to heading an international members' club? Perhaps not the straightforward career trajectory you might expect, as Annette readily admits, but one that has led her to ROSL nonetheless, and combines her experience and her interests seamlessly.

"There's been one common thread through my career and my life; it started at university, I had a deep interest in international relations," she explains. "While studying and after graduating I had a lot of work experience in international organisations, both in Europe and in Washington DC, and worked with people from a variety of different nationalities and backgrounds."

That interest has been deepened by a passion for travel, often away from the tourist trail, taking in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Caucasus. "I love to travel, particularly off the beaten track. You meet people, enjoy their hospitality, learn about their culture, it's about friendship. So I've always had this interest, this passion for engagement in the world at large."

That international flavour is something ROSL is very proud of and was an obvious draw for Annette, so after 18 years as a practising barrister working in commercial and property law, she began to look for new opportunities, which really maximised her exposure to that world.

"I wanted to engage professionally with that world, so that led me to take up the role of Chief Operating Officer of the Royal Commonwealth Society. In my role, I built up collaborations, in particular with the High Commissioners and organisations with international outreach. It was the time of the Brexit referendum, and the enhanced interest in the Commonwealth was palpable."

From there, a role at the newly launched International School for Government at King's College London as Head of External Relations and Business Development further scratched that international itch.

"Because it's a brand new school within the university, there to skill up civil servants and policy makers from across the world, it has really meant that I've been able to contribute to the strategic direction of the school and establish some critical first relationships. In particular, I brought to bear my Commonwealth knowledge and connections, designing a Commonwealth civil service training programme and working with the Rwandan Government and High Commission in London to obtain the President of Rwanda's support for this programme. President Kagame announced at the School that the programme would be launched at CHOGLM in Kigali, unfortunately postponed due to the current COVID crisis."

Continuing that international outward-looking career with experience in the Commonwealth, in addition to a long-held passion for music and the arts in her next career move would be a tall order, but ROSL fit the bill perfectly.

"That's why I really relished taking on this role at ROSL. For me, this is a natural progression and my dream job! I love ROSL's ethos of international friendship and I really have practised that throughout my life and career," she confirms. "I look at the avenues through which ROSL fulfils that ethos;

the Commonwealth; music and the arts, the wide of reach of ROSL through its branches; and of course, the ROSL Trust and the educational work it does. These are all things that make ROSL unique and special."

Taking the reins

With much of her predecessor's time as Director-General spent addressing the structural challenges at ROSL, both physical and organisational, in terms of the Master Buildings Strategy and Governance Review approved at this year's AGM, Annette will look to continue the groundwork laid down by Diana, while developing those pathways which further develop ROSL's ethos, and also finding new avenues for growth. 📍

I love ROSL's ethos of international friendship and I have practised that throughout my life





Annette visiting Central Asia

Visiting the Horn of Africa

In Madagascar getting to know the locals

"I would like to pay tribute to Diana, she has put a lot of hard work into addressing those challenges. They will form part of her legacy. And now she has handed the baton on to me, I think it's important we build on them, particularly the Master Buildings Strategy. We need to see that through."

In fact, her career in law could once again prove invaluable to the stewardship of Over-Seas House going forward.

"In 2018, I was appointed a Governing Bencher of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, one of the four inns of court, the professional associations for barristers and judges."

Inner Temple is currently undergoing a major construction project at its site off Fleet Street in London. "As part of the governance of the Inn I voted to redevelop the listed Treasury Building, located at its heart, in order to create state of the art educational facilities. It's a major project, continuing over a number of years. It's given me a good insight into the Master Buildings Strategy we have in store at ROSL."

The future

There's more to her plans than picking up where Diana left off. The coronavirus pandemic has also created new opportunities for ROSL to grow its membership, both in terms of individual members and corporate members, through new partnerships and collaborations, which Annette is keen to develop.

"The last few months have been a challenging time for ROSL, as they have been for many organisations. My first priority, working with my amazing Senior Leadership Team, has been to reopen the club safely and build member confidence to return and use the club."

"I would then like to focus on increasing the membership, both in the UK, across the Commonwealth and beyond."

I would like a wider and more diverse membership, and that's not just individuals, I'm very keen on a range of collaborations with like-minded organisations. Those involved in the arts and music, the Commonwealth, other international organisations, and people-to-people organisations. I really want to build up those links."

That will be achieved through by supporting and nurturing our existing partnerships, reciprocals and importantly, the branch network, as well as welcoming new ones. "I look forward to getting out and about – whether physically or by zoom – to raise the profile of the Royal Over-Seas League."

With the clubhouse reopened and international travel beginning to unlock once again, Annette stands ready to welcome members and guests from all corner of the world, and strengthen those bonds of international friendship for which we all know and love ROSL.

Dr Annette Prandzioch

June 2020
Becomes ROSL Director-General

October 2018
Takes up post at International School for Government, King's

September 2018
Appointed Master of the Bench of the Inner Temple

September 2015
Becomes COO of the Royal Commonwealth Society

October 1997
Called to the bar

My ISM is
Essential



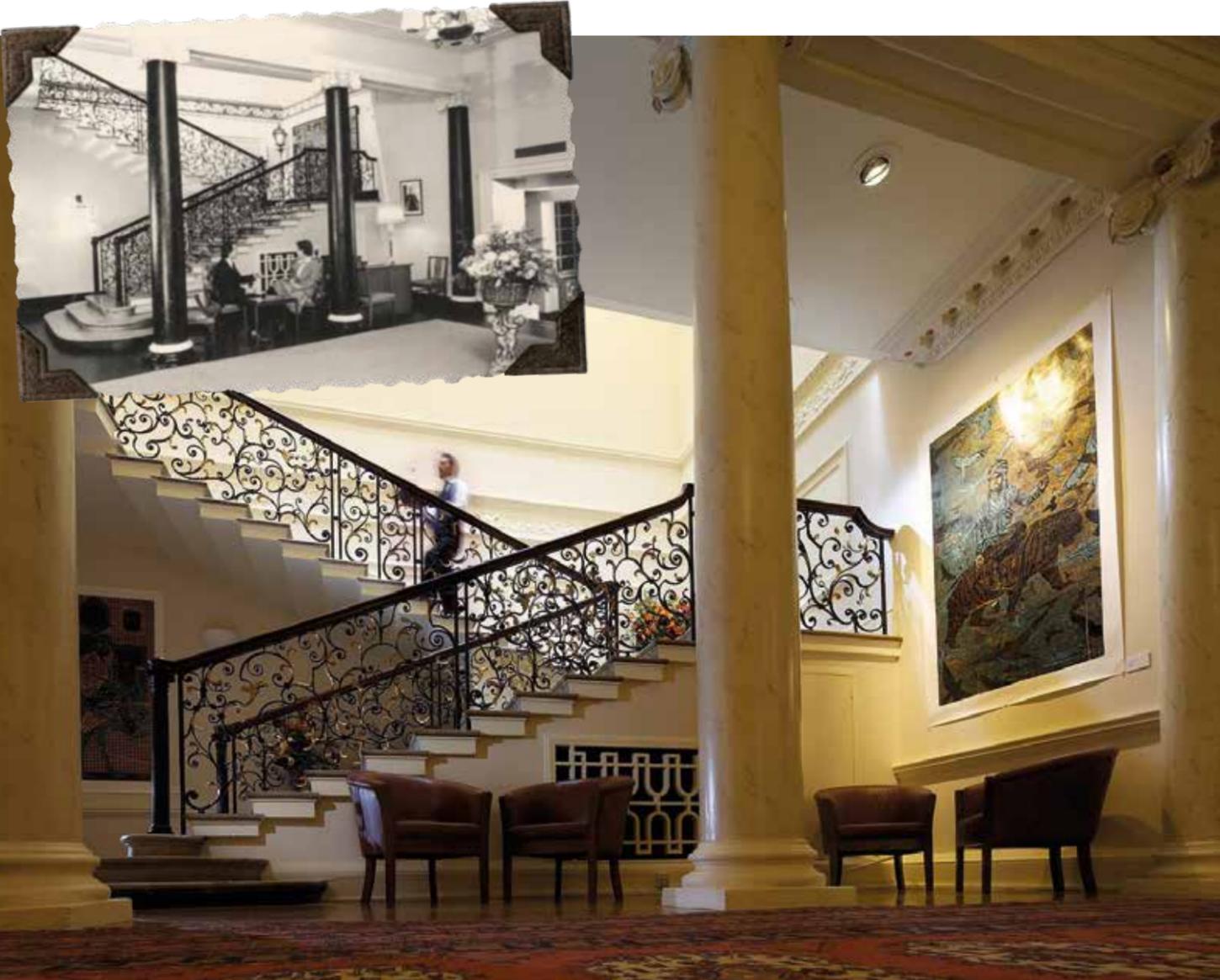
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Opposite: Two incarnations of the Gibb's Staircase and Central Lounge
 Clockwise from top left: The Duke of York Bar as it appears today, the Bar when it was a reading room before the fireplace was removed, a later guise after the fireplace has been removed and a bar installed, the back of the bar when still a private residence, and as it appears today
 Below L-R: The facade of Over-Seas House over the years. The age of the cars gives away the era

A HEAD FOR HERITAGE

Member Martyn Kingsford serves on ROSL's Buildings and Heritage Sub-Committee. He tells *Overseas* why he joined the club and wanted to give back

How did you first hear about ROSL and what made you become a member?
 I first came to ROSL to chair a conference on fire risk and prevention. I liked what I saw and the relaxed friendly atmosphere. I was at the time a member of a military club, which was rather stiff and formal.

I enjoy playing bridge at the Bridge Club with my wonderful Bridge partners (Omar Sharif played at ROSL). I am in the London Group and I enjoy attending lectures and the concerts.

to support our staff. I have experience in governance for over 40 years so it is natural for me to do this and particularly as a Chartered Surveyor with a long interest in historic buildings.

What do you enjoy most about spending time in the Clubrooms?
 Having a G&T in the bar or the lovely garden on a Summers evening! The garden and the view of Green Park are treasures.

What made you want to get more involved in Club Life and to join the Buildings and Heritage Sub-Committee in particular?
 I was invited to join the sub-committee and shortly afterwards became Chair. I have always been someone who contributes as a 'pay back' and in this case very much

What unique challenges do a building such as these present in terms of presentation and compliance?
 There are three buildings. Vernon House and Rutland House are Grade I listed buildings and the Westminster Wing is of special interest as a good example of 1930s





Top left: An earlier incarnation of the Willingdon Drawing Room. Top right: The Drawing Room as it appeared before lockdown. The renovation discussed on page 14 will see it transformed again. Above left: The Gibbs Staircase as it was when still a private residence. Above right: The staircase as it looks today

“art deco”. One of my sayings is that “like cats you never own a building – the building owns you”. This is especially so with Grade I-listed buildings. ROSL has a duty to the nation to care for these buildings and ensure any works or decorations (for example) comply to the Grade I-listing. In the same way the Senior Management Team and the Estates Team have, during lockdown, been working very hard to bring the buildings up to the stringent compliance rules such as fire safety; electrical services with catch-up repairs. We have not fully finished yet.

What are the next steps of the Master Buildings Strategy of the three buildings? The Master Buildings Strategy (MBS) is about vision. How does ROSL, over the next ten years or more, wish to use the buildings? The good news is that last year we appointed Architects Martin Ashley Associates (MAA) to work with us to develop the MBS. Martin Ashley MVO has had a long career working on some of the nation's most important buildings, such as Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace and the Naval College at Greenwich. MAA have produced

a Heritage Statement so that we all can understand the historic significance of these buildings as the foundation of our vision. However, as part of the MBS, we must first ensure that we carry out the catch up repair work, have systems in place to maintain the buildings and that ROSL complies to the law concerning building ownership and the listings.

How can members help? The buildings, as Grade I-listed, as I have said, are part of the national heritage and are, in themselves, works of art. So, I suggest we all take pride in them. This is also very true of the Princess Alexandra Hall and my favourite space - the Hall of India and Pakistan. Over the next six months, there will be a debate on how we are using the buildings and what our vision is for 2030. I would encourage members to engage in this debate and express their vision. Above all, we must take pride in our clubhouse as we do in ROSL.

To contribute to ongoing restoration of the clubhouse, please visit www.rosl.org.uk/supportus



MARTYN KINGSFORD

Martyn was born in Nottingham and started his career in 1963 at Nottingham Council. Following senior appointments at Thamesmead and Lambeth he was for 20 years Director of Housing at Kensington and Chelsea and then CEO of the Tenant Management Organisation leaving in 2001. He has chaired five housing Organisations and has been a chief executive of three.

In the 1980s he was the London Boroughs Association Adviser and for eight years co-chaired the all London Working Party on Homelessness. For 23 years, Martyn has been the Hon. Policy Adviser to the Tenants and Residents Organisations of England.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Housing and an Academician of the Academy of Urbanism. He is a Freeman of the City of London and a member of the Chartered Surveyors Livery Company.

Martyn served for 27 years in the Royal Engineers (Territorial Army) retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel and was awarded the Territorial Decoration (TD). He was appointed an OBE in 2014 for services to Housing, Tenants and Community Engagement.



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www.rosl.org.uk

The total number of joined proposed friends will be calculated annually from 14 April 2020. T&Cs apply.



BUILDING

a Better Club

While the clubhouse has been closed during the pandemic, our Estates Team, led by Tomasz Sikorski, has been busy working on the fabric of the building. Compliance and renovation works that would otherwise be hugely disruptive while open to members, have been completed

As part of a comprehensive architectural survey, more than 600 distinct electrical upgrades have been made, including the replacement of two 60-year-old distribution panels and hundreds of lights with LEDs for reduced energy costs and fire safety. The kitchen extraction equipment has also been renovated, asbestos has been removed from basement areas, the entire water system has been flushed and a new water main installed, as well as upgrades to Wi-Fi coverage.

More visibly, garden lighting, paving and decking upgrades have taken place,

the courtyard has been resurfaced and the Drawing Room has undergone an extensive refurbishment. Planned to open at the beginning of September, the new design has been the joint creation of Afra Affara of Afra Affara Design and Jane Barrett of LawtonCole Ltd.

Featuring new furniture, accessories and colours, Afra explains how they approached working on a Grade-I listed interior and how this heritage was balanced with its modern-day use:

“Jane Barrett and I have been involved in interior design for over 30 years. Our last

project together was a listed 18th-century building, used by the Dukes of Marlborough among other notable families, that was being converted from office space used by the council, into a grand five-star country house hotel and spa. We thoroughly enjoy working together, and when designing any space, especially any that are listed, the architecture and features of a room are our primary considerations when approaching the starting point for any scheme inspiration. This is followed by any pieces of furniture or decoration that the client wishes to keep and use in the decor.

“At the club, we were fortunate to have

a beautiful Edwardian, neo-classical room with imposing dimensions and elegant symmetry to work with. Thus, our job was simply to allow the features to “sing” for themselves, while sympathetically designing comfortable and practical seating solutions to provide a unique space that the members could feel is their home from home.

“The first design meeting with ROSL made it clear that the carpet would remain in the room. This constrained our colour palette to these particular shades of pink, green and cream, and also ruled out any heavy pattern in our scheme as it was already present in

When designing any space, especially those that are listed, the architecture and features of a room are our primary considerations for any scheme inspiration

large doses on the floor! Additionally, we had to couple the history of the room with modern, comfortable seating that still had an elegant, classic style. It was important to show the room off to its full splendour and make sure it sat naturally in its historical surroundings.

“The seating plan was changed to make it practical and allow a larger number of members to enjoy the full potential of the room. We had to consider all the various activities that would take place in the room. From sitting and enjoying the wonderful views of Green Park over afternoon tea, to using the club’s foldaway gaming tables, reading a book or newspaper, catching up on work with a laptop, or even having an unobtrusive afternoon nap! With this in mind, we tried to be practical and ergonomic at the same time, which is so important when designing for the hospitality sector.

“All the chairs and seating were designed by us and manufactured in the UK. We wanted to respect the grand tradition of the room by producing bespoke furniture made traditionally by true artisans in Britain. All seats were designed with raised arms to allow ease and comfort; bespoke gaming tables were designed that would remain



To do list

- Resurface courtyard ✓
- Renovate Drawing Room ✓
- New mains water supply ✓
- Flush water system ✓
- Repaint windows ✓
- Remove asbestos ✓
- Repair garden decking ✓
- Replace distribution boards ✓
- Electrical upgrades ✓
- Restore garden screens ✓
- Overhaul kitchen extraction ✓
- Upgrade Wi-Fi coverage ✓

While many of the works have been behind-the-scenes, we wanted to share with you some of these crucial projects that show the fabric of our beautiful clubhouse is being as closely cared for as the visible decorative elements of the building. More works will continue over the coming months and years as part of the Master Buildings Strategy

in situ without the need to fold them after a game of whist, bridge or backgammon; clusters of seating arrangements with sofas and armchairs were arranged to provide cosy intimate areas for members to enjoy in groups or alone; small practical laptop tables would allow guests to work from the comfort of a sofa or chair without the need to sit at a desk; and even singular wingback armchairs were introduced, to allow for those who want to enjoy the solace of their own company with a book or paper, in a quiet corner of the room.

“It was a true honour and a pleasure for us to be involved in this project. Thank you.”



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STAY AT ROSL

Join us overnight at the clubhouse before the end of 2020 and enjoy one of the following offers:

- For the individual member**
Bring your partner to stay. You can also bring family and friends along to try out the bedrooms, who will be able to book a room as your guest.
- For households with more than one member**
Enjoy 10% off your room rate, plus a free bottle of champagne at the bar.
- For families**
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Enjoy 15% off accommodation for stays of seven nights or more, and 20% off for stays of 14 days or more.
- For the weekender**
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Book online, by email reservations@rosl.org.uk or call +44(0)20 7408 0214

Following the science?

As the whole world puts its hope in a coronavirus vaccine, medical research has never felt so vital. But there's also been a wealth of dangerous misinformation during the pandemic. Natalie Healey explores how life-saving science could be communicated more effectively

Bad memories are more likely to stick than the good ones, which is unfortunate when it comes to medical research. Who could forget the UK's disastrous 'elephant man' clinical trial in 2006, which left six previously healthy men fighting for their lives in intensive care? The experimental therapy TGN1412 for autoimmune diseases triggered projectile vomiting, severe pain and head swelling. Within minutes of taking the drug, the participants described feeling like their brains were 'on fire' and their 'eyeballs were going to pop out'. It was a low note for public trust in clinical trials.

And perhaps it never recovered. A 2017 survey from the Academy of Medical Science found that just over a third (37%) of the public trust evidence from medical research, compared with approximately two thirds who trust the first-hand experiences of their friends and family.

But communicating the benefits of medical research to the public is as vital as drawing its attention to occasions where things go wrong. Without health research, we wouldn't have made countless medical breakthroughs. Many diseases that can now be managed with medication, such as HIV and type 1 diabetes, would still be seen as death sentences.

Science needs people to believe in it, because getting potentially life-saving medicines or vaccines to market depends on volunteers coming forward for trials. And above all, trust in scientific evidence helps people make more informed judgements about their own health. As the planet grapples with the spread of a new coronavirus that causes COVID-19, public faith in medical research is needed more than ever.

"During public health crises, trust in medicine becomes vital," says Cary Wu, Assistant Professor of Sociology at York University in Toronto, Canada. "When people trust in medical research, health officials and political leaders will be more able to transfer the research findings and knowledge into public practice."

Guidelines from the World Health Organization written 15 years before the coronavirus crisis state that when people trust in science, they will be more willing to comply with control measures that are key to slowing the spread of disease, such as lockdowns, mask-wearing and strict hygiene practices.

British science communicator Kat Arney believes the pandemic has emphasised the value of explaining

complex concepts accurately and engagingly. "Helping people to understand the world around them and their place in it is incredibly important," says the former Cancer Research UK communications manager and author of *Rebel Cell: Cancer, Evolution and the Science of Life*. She believes scientists, politicians and the media all have a responsibility to convey health information as truthfully and straightforwardly as possible.

"It is vital to have consistent messages from credible, trustworthy sources", agrees Science Communication Professor Nancy Longnecker from New Zealand's University of Otago. She points out that her country's prime minister Jacinda Ardern has been praised around the world for her response to the coronavirus crisis - and for using clear, consistent, empathetic communication throughout.

Mixed messages

But alongside sensible advice, there have been plenty of muddled messages from high-profile figures. In a press briefing in April for instance, US President Donald Trump pondered whether injecting disinfectant into the body could clear it of the virus. He later claimed it was a sarcastic quip but many people took his words at face value. Shortly afterwards, there was a spike in people ingesting deadly cleaning fluids.

There has also been much controversy surrounding hydroxychloroquine, a malaria drug most people hadn't heard of until Trump announced he was taking it to prevent

COVID-19. The president isn't the only one to blame for the confusion regarding this medication though. In May, a study in prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* suggested the use of hydroxychloroquine for treating the coronavirus increased the risk of heart problems and early death. But public health experts soon noticed problems with the data used, leading to the study being swiftly removed from the journal. But the damage was already done - several trials looking into the efficacy of hydroxychloroquine in COVID-19 had been halted after the publication of the now-dubious research.

It's not the first time *The Lancet* has been the subject of contention. In 1998, it published infamous research linking autism to the MMR vaccine.

The findings have now been thoroughly debunked, but media coverage of the possible connection had

When people trust in science, they will be more willing to comply with control measures that are key to slowing the spread of disease

lasting damage, leading to a continuous decline in vaccination rates. In August 2019, the UK lost its status as a country that had eliminated measles, due to increasing numbers of parents choosing to skip routine immunisations for their kids.

Vaccines are back in the news for a different reason. Researchers around the world are currently racing to develop one against COVID-19. It has been suggested that the pandemic could be the day of reckoning for people who usually shun immunisations - turning the tide on the so-called 'anti-vaxxer' movement. Arney isn't so sure though. "I'm quite pessimistic about this," she admits. According to a July YouGov survey, nearly one in six Britons will refuse a coronavirus vaccine if and when one becomes available.

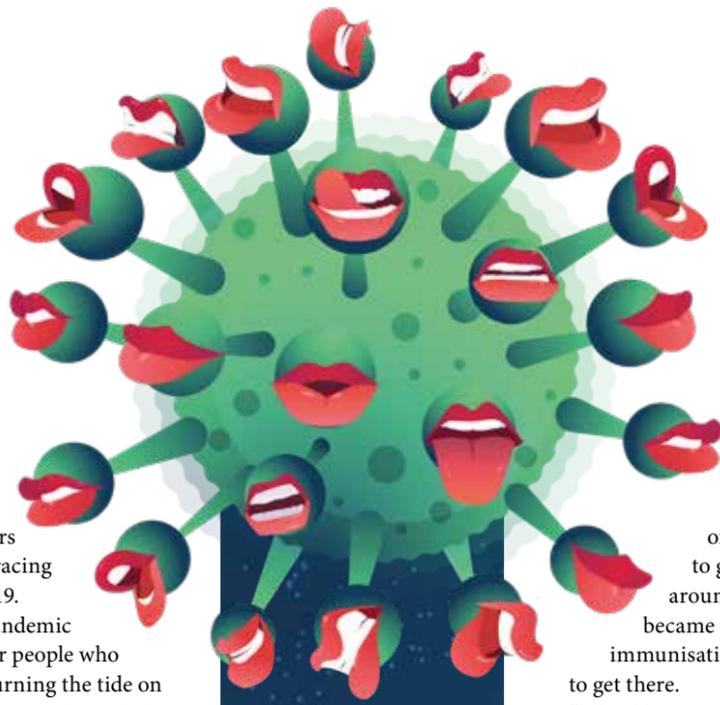
To a vocal minority, medics and the pharmaceutical industry have long been seen as the villains. Events like the TGN1412 trial certainly haven't helped. And at times of heightened anxiety, misinformation is even more likely to thrive, with social media its perfect vehicle. WHO's Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus announced in February that fake news "spreads faster and more easily than this virus", fostering distrust of genuine medical advice. Unsurprisingly, research from King's College London has found people who believe in conspiracy theories are less likely to follow lockdown rules. After all, if you don't believe the experts, why would you follow their guidance?

The problem with hope

Researchers must quash unhelpful rumours, but putting science on a pedestal is problematic too, says Arney. The UK Government justified its actions and guidance during the pandemic on the basis that it was being 'led by the science'. But this simple phrase has its limitations. While science is the best method we have for understanding the world, that doesn't mean researchers always have the answer - or that new evidence won't emerge and force guidance to change tack.

"This argument from authority that scientists are heroes is a terrible idea," Arney says. "Public trust will suffer when you're not confident to say 'we don't know the answers', or 'actually, we got this wrong'."

It's important to be realistic too. In March,



DEVELOPMENT OF A COVID-19 VACCINE

Clinical development of a vaccine is usually a three or four stage process.

PHASE I

The trial vaccine is given to small groups of people

PHASE II

The study expands to those with higher susceptibility to COVID-19

PHASE III

Vaccine tested for safety and efficacy amongst thousands of people

PHASE IV

Ongoing studies monitor the vaccine after it has been approved and manufactured

British newspapers ran headlines proclaiming that a coronavirus vaccine could be expected by September 2020. But, even in such urgent times, medical research rarely operates so fast. Ensuring the safety and efficacy of a treatment or vaccine takes a huge amount of work. The typical timeframe to get a new vaccine to market is around a decade. The Ebola vaccine became the fastest developed immunisation ever, but still took five years to get there.

"John Cleese says in the film *Clockwise*: 'It's not the despair; I can cope with the despair. It's the hope - that's what's killing me,'" says Arney. "Scientific research is going to get us through this. But misplaced hope is really unhelpful."

Rising to the occasion

Perhaps there is some cause for optimism though. COVID-19 has ensured that medical research is never far from the public consciousness. And, in many countries, high-ranking health experts have become as high profile as certain politicians.

"I think the pandemic has been and will be a great opportunity to improve public understanding of medicine," says Wu. "People all over the world have been reading more news and research about the coronavirus, watching more videos about medicine and science and listening to what doctors and researchers say."

In order to harness that opportunity, science needs to be communicated accurately and transparently by anyone with power and influence. And that means admitting that there are some things we just don't know yet. Arney believes the scientific community also has a duty to engage with people who distrust medical advice. Find out why they feel that way before you dismiss their views, she suggests. And always assume people are acting out of fear, rather than bad faith.

"We all have a story in our heads of how the world works. And when you come along and say someone is dumb, wrong or evil, that's not helping. You're attacking their fundamental story," she says.

"I think it's up to everyone in the community to act with integrity and that doesn't mean calling out and getting angry. Instead, we should all commit to doing better."



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IN _____, WE TRUST

According to opinion polls, the coronavirus pandemic has heightened our mistrust of the media and government in the UK. Amid the daily battle cries of 'fake news' and transparency issues, Ross Davies tries to make sense of what to believe in the post-truth age

A quick question. Who do you trust most in this world? I'd wager your husband, wife or partner might top the list. Family and close friends too. Those of us who have such people in our lives, on whom we can always depend, should count ourselves lucky.

Enduring relationships are often built on mutual trust. It is when we get to societal institutions that things get complicated. Whether that's the police, banks or big business – our trust levels tend to waver based on personal experience. And, as recent history testifies, optics around these establishments have not always been favourable.

As COVID-19 has cut its destructive dash across the world, so we've looked to two institutions in particular to help us navigate our way through the upheaval: government and the media. Like never before has there been so much at stake in placing our faith in these two pillars of democracy. Our health and well-being are only as good as the information we receive and act upon.

But have you believed everything you've read and seen?

Recent opinion polls suggest not. A YouGov survey conducted in April – shortly after the lockdown was enforced in the UK – suggested that roughly two thirds of the

British public did not trust television journalists, while three quarters said they did not trust newspaper journalists.

At face value, this would suggest a clear erosion of public faith in journalism. Some MPs and commentators claimed that sharp criticism of the government's response to the pandemic in some sections of the media was out of step with the mood of the nation. "They failed to adapt and behave appropriately in a crisis," tweeted health minister Nadine Dorries.

But while some might mistrust the news, never have they needed it more. According to the BBC, up to 94% of the population tuned into the public service broadcaster's

TRUST IN THE MEDIA IS SHAPED BY SOCIETY'S INCLINATION TOWARDS EMOTIONALLY-DRIVEN NEWS RATHER THAN SOBER REPORTAGE

coverage at the height of the pandemic. Similarly, *Channel 4 News's* viewing figures reached 14.7 million people in March – three times higher than the same period last year.

So what do we want from our media? To rally around the flag unequivocally in the nation's hour of need? Or do we need truth spoken to power at every corner?

On one hand, an unpopular press is indicative of a functioning democracy, in which we are free to question what we read. According to Charlie Beckett, Head of Polis,

a journalism thinktank at the London School of Economics, trust in the media is also shaped by today's society's inclination towards emotionally-driven news rather than sober reportage.

"There's this idea that journalists are completely accurate and relay solid facts and information," he says. "I think that's a bit of myth. There's always been something of a knee-jerk cynicism around the press in this country. What has changed is that we're much more driven by what we read according to our interests and our feelings. We like to read things that we agree with."

The rise of social media has helped create an echo chamber, whereby we are likely to only engage with those who share our own worldview. Twitter and Facebook have also led to the fragmentation of

the traditional media landscape, meaning we are able to personally curate how and where we consume every item of news, in contrast to the pre-digital age in which daily newspapers and linear television news bulletins held sway.

The world has also become drastically more polarised in recent years, with US President Donald Trump's favourite neologism 'fake news' a frequent rallying cry in response to journalism we don't like. There are no longer accepted facts—instead ●



LORD LUCAN FOUND WORKING AS ICE CREAM MAN

CHICKENS FOUND TO BE BETTER D

TESLA LAUNCHES SELF DRIVING STEAM TRAIN

GOOGLE BUYS ESTONIA

NEW ZEALAND BANS HOBBITS

BORIS JOHNSON THEME PARK OPENS

NASA FINDS EVIDENCE OF LIFE ON EARTH

Swiss Navy Runs Aground

US election decided by game of rock, paper, scissors

only interpretation.

Welcome to the post-truth age.

Where does all this mistrust stem from? In the UK, questioning the performance of the media and the government during the pandemic reflects a wider public disillusion with institutions that date back to the last decade with the MP's expenses scandal, phone hacking and Brexit.

"I'd say it actually goes back to post-war Britain," says Beckett, a former programme editor at ITN's *Channel 4 News*. "Since then, both society and the media has become less and less deferential about government. In some ways, that's a good thing as it's a sign of people being more questioning and better educated.

"But at the same time, it makes it much harder to have an accepted consensus. This has created a competitiveness in the news industry where the more subjective, aggressive and controversial an article, the more clicks you get."

Given that COVID-19 has stumped even the world's most respected scientists, it was inevitable that an information gap would emerge. Various unknowns around the transmission and treatment of the virus have been plugged by an infodemic that has spread as quickly as the pandemic itself, from 5G conspiracy theories to quack cures.

NewsGuard is a browser extension that rates the trustworthiness and reliability of news sources. Manned by a team of experienced journalists, it has allocated trust ratings – green for trustworthy, red for unreliable – on over 4,500 news websites. According to co-founder Steven Brill, up to 300 websites have been identified as peddling some form of COVID-19 misinformation in the last six months.

"We're all susceptible to fake news – even if it's for just a moment," says Brill, who launched the US start-up in 2018. "A shocking number of people come across and believe some form of misinformation because everybody can be a publisher on the internet today."

Fake news is not the same as rumour or lazy journalism. It is instead the deliberate staging of fiction as fact, often motivated by either financial return or political sway. It is this very insidiousness that poses such a threat to honest, fact-based journalism. Another big problem is the way news brands are displayed online – especially on social media – making it difficult to distinguish

between legitimate and fake.

"We red-rated a site about six months ago that was up as 'BBC.news.uk'," says Brill. "It had exactly the same colour and logo as the actually BBC site, but it was a fake. But if you're looking at your Facebook feed, you're likely to see the BBC logo, read the headline and carry on reading.

"One of the more subtle methods of misinformation that we've also seen in the US has been the proliferation of politically funded websites that have gone up claiming to be independent, local news sites. They tend to simply write positive stories about political candidates and negative stories against opponents. They're coming up every day."

The coronavirus pandemic has also exposed issues relating to government transparency. In June, a Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism survey revealed trust in the UK Government as a source of information about the virus had declined to 48%, compared with 67% in April.

The drop was attributed to the country's comparatively high death rate, a bungled test-and-trace system roll-out and revelations that

Dominic Cummings, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Chief Adviser, flouted lockdown rules at the height of the pandemic (in contrast, Johnson's hospitalisation in April, only a month earlier saw good will towards the PM and his cabinet at its highest).

Similarly, across the pond, President Trump's approval ratings currently stand at a lowly 39%, according to a recent Gallup poll. Trump has been accused by his critics of failing to take seriously a crisis that has so far cost over 137,000 Americans their lives – despite frequent claims that his administration has done "a great job".

This has made for mixed messaging. Although there is a perhaps case that Trump's impulsive tweeting of whatever happens to be on his mind at any given time makes him as transparent a modern leader as there has ever been.

Conversely, the politicians and governments that have had 'good pandemics' are those praised for effective leadership and strong crisis communications, such as New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. In the early days of the pandemic, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo also received plaudits for his informative, PowerPoint-heavy daily briefings.

"Trust and transparency play a vital role in getting people to comply with directives such as social distancing or staying at

home," says Mauro Guillén, professor of international management at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. "If people don't trust the government then it's much harder to get people to do what they need to do at times like this."

However, Guillén's recent research has thrown up some surprising revelations: statistically speaking, there appears to be little evidence to suggest that social democracies have fared any better than dictatorships (not commonly associated with transparency and openness) in their handling of COVID-19.

"I originally thought it would make a difference, but it is not backed up by the evidence," he says. "So, for an example, Taiwan, a democracy, has done really well, but so has Vietnam [a one-part Communist state]. Then you look at two European countries like Italy and Greece – both democracies but the latter has done amazingly, while the former is one of the worst cases.

"Statistically, that suggests that the biggest factor in all of this has been state capacity, rather than the nature of the political regime, but I suspect that we need to dig deeper. Who is in power can make a big difference, as has been the case in New Zealand."

According to a recent report by the Pew Research Center, 62% of adults in the US get

their news from social media. In the UK, the figure is closer to 50% say Ofcom. If the proliferation of fake news is at its worst on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, is there a danger of us being sucked into blackholes of misinformation?

"It is a threat," says Beckett. "COVID-19 aside, an old-fashioned organisation like the BBC is not the first port of call anymore. But rather than ignore it, it might be time for journalists to start using platforms like TikTok and Instagram to reach new audiences. It's an opportunity."

Beckett is optimistic that the cream of legitimate journalism can still rise to the top, ("we've seen some excellent reporting throughout the crisis, particularly data journalism"). As is Brill, although he is sceptical of Facebook, Google and Twitter's forays into fact-checking (In May, Twitter attached a disclaimer to a Donald Trump tweet regarding Black Lives Matter protests in Minneapolis). "They are still completely unaccountable and non-transparent," he says.

The enormous tumult that has taken place already this year – with the US presidential election still to come – mean 2020 will go down as a turning point in history. Public faith in the government and media has been tested in some instances. Institutions must strive to regain the public's trust – democracy depends on it.

PEOPLE COME ACROSS AND BELIEVE SOME MISINFORMATION BECAUSE EVERYBODY CAN BE A PUBLISHER ON THE INTERNET TODAY

A TANGLED WEB

Online dating has led many people to love, but it has also paved the way for catfishers and romance scams. How can you protect yourself from those with nefarious intentions?



Audrey Lindt had been divorced for three years when she decided to try online dating. A successful woman over 50, she was immersed in her work and hadn't given much thought to dating apps. However, with her husband of 30 years out the picture, and her children starting families of their own, she found herself hungry for new adventures.

"It was my daughter who set me up on my first dating website as a surprise and to see me find some happiness," she recalls. "The first one I joined was called Luxy – an exclusive dating app for people earning a certain amount of money. It was new and exciting, and it was lovely to receive messages from seemingly nice men. Enjoying the male attention and flattery was exhilarating."

Inundated with messages, Audrey was spoiled for choice. She got talking to a businessman, who seemed to share many of her dreams in life and appeared to genuinely care about her well-being. After three months of talking, they arranged to meet in person in London – a central meeting point, since both were away on business at the time. Unfortunately, it became apparent that all was not as it seemed.

"As I was due to fly, he called telling me he was stuck at the airport and he needed a significant sum of money in order to be released and to fly to London," says Audrey. "I refused to send him payment as he was demanding a lot of money. He turned nasty and shouted at me, saying I was the only one who could help him. It was then that I realised I'd been catfished."

Catfishing, for those who aren't up to speed with the lingo, is a method of social media deception and impersonation, in which somebody assumes a false identity. The term was first used in the 2010 documentary *Catfish*, in which an unsuspecting man is duped into a fake relationship on Facebook. (He thinks he's dating 'Megan', only to discover it's a fake account masterminded by a woman called Angela.)

At the end of the documentary, Angela's husband tells an unlikely sounding story about cod. As the story goes, when live cod were shipped from North America to Asia, the fish grew lazy, and the fisherman were left with

mushy flesh. It turned out you could keep the cod active by putting catfish into the tanks, hence ensuring the quality of the fish. Angela is implied to play a similar role in people's lives, keeping them alert and on their guard.

25% admit to sharing their full name on dating apps

Source: Kaspersky

When confronted with someone like Angela, or Audrey Lindt's 'businessman' suitor, it can be hard to understand their motivations. What could inspire someone to spend so much time and energy on constructing a new identity, still less using it to trick others? According to Jonny Pelter, a cybersecurity expert and founder of SimpleCyberLife.com, there are a number of reasons why someone might want to play catfish.

"Some want to build fake romantic relationships to mitigate insecurities and a lack of self-worth," he says.

"Others cyberstalk ex-partners, lovers, or people they're infatuated with. Others get a form of gratification from being a cyberbully."

At the most malign end of the spectrum, some paedophiles groom children online by pretending to be a child or teenager themselves. For this reason, it's crucial to educate your kids on the impacts of disclosing too much information on social media.

"Even seemingly obvious or basic personal information – e.g. school, home address, photos, etc. – can be used by catfishers to build rapport with unsuspecting victims," says Pelter. "Be suspicious if someone private messages you out of

the blue, and encourage your kids to only connect online with people they actually know and have met in real life."

In the context of dating websites, catfishing often occurs as part of a 'romance scam', in which the perpetrator gains the victim's trust with the eventual aim of defrauding them. Many of these scams are run on a mass scale by large criminal gangs, which work very much like call centres.

"Scammers have scripts that they use so the likelihood is, the conversational wording they're using is a copy and paste from a script that has been posted online before by other victims," says Pelter.

Unfortunately, romance scams are very common. In a recent survey by UK Finance, 27% of dating website users said they had been scammed by fake personas over the past year. A shocking 21% had either been asked for money, or had given money, to someone they met online, with the average sum being £321.

Overall, Brits lost £41m on romance scams in 2017, with 3,557 cases reported to the police. The figures in the US are even more galling – 18,000 victims lost \$362m in 2018, according to the FBI. While anyone can be a victim, criminals often prey on those who

Over 50% of couples will meet online by 2031

Source: Eharmony

10% of men and 19% of women admit to lying on their profile
Source: SurveyMonkey

12% of users enter a committed relationship or marriage
Source: Pew Research

are older and looking for companionship – especially those with the money to make the crime worthwhile.

“Lots of us are now looking for love online and this is no different for many older people,” says Caroline Abrahams, charity director at Age UK. “During lockdown and social distancing, it’s become even more important to seek companionship and make connections with others. Unfortunately, criminals can exploit those they see as more vulnerable, whether they are lonely, isolated, recently bereaved or separated.”

She adds that romance scams can have devastating consequences, with impacts on the victims’ health, well-being and other relationships. There have been some galling cases reported in the media, including that of a London man who was sentenced to three years in prison after defrauding two women out of almost £300,000.

In Audrey Lindt’s case, the catfishing businessman was far from a one-off. She continued on the Luxy dating app for a while longer, but each suitor turned out to be the same, almost to the point of following a script.

“They would get your attention and would build a relationship with you over the phone – lots of them had video issues!” she says. “Around the three-month mark they would ask for money in some guise or other. When you refused, they would try to make you feel guilty for having boundaries, or worse, get aggressive. As soon as I realised it was yet another scammer trying his luck, I would block them.”

There were several other commonalities. Some would-be suitors seemed ‘too good to be true’, and many had unusual jobs (“anyone digging for oil, mining for gold or military surgeons – just don’t go there,” she says wryly). For another thing, the guys always had a sob story to reel you in, and seemed unusually infatuated at an early stage.

“Their partners had died or left them, or they were lonely and ‘looking for someone just like you,’” she says. “One guy even told me he had had our initials

MOST POPULAR DATING APPS



Tinder



Badoo



OKCupid



happn



Bumble

ROSL Romances

A ROSL ROMANCE

You don't have to go online to find love at the clubhouse; many members have met their partners at the club, married and even joined their children as members years later. Did you meet at ROSL? Tell us your story. Email editor@rosl.org.uk

embossed into the seats of his Bentley – but in the next breath was asking me for money.”

After some time on Luxy, Audrey switched to Tinder, but her months of playing detective had left her cynical. Her first line of questioning was always ‘where do you live and what do you do’, which cut many of the chancers out the picture. If the conversation continued past that hurdle, she would ask to meet on video. If they had broken phones, and she pushed the issue, she never heard from them again.

Jonny Pelter says these kinds of experiences are typical. He says a good way to check someone’s identity is via a video chat service like FaceTime and Skype – if your suitor refuses, that’s an immediate red flag. You can also validate their backstory with a spot of judicious Googling (a complete lack of digital footprint should set off alarm bells), and do a reverse image search to check where their profile photos came from.

“It goes without saying not to give money to someone you haven’t met, but these criminals are experts in emotional manipulation,” he says. “They create scenarios designed to sweep us up in the moment, which can make us think irrationally and without perspective. If unsure, ask a friend or relative about the situation – they will be able to provide an objective view, removed from any emotional attachment.”

Audrey Lindt’s story, thankfully, has a happy ending. She was inspired to write a memoir, *Misadventures in Mature Dating*, which provides pointers for others navigating this terrain. And, just as she was about to give up on online dating, she received a message from a man called Adrian.

“He was a retired restaurant manager, a widower, 60 years old and in very good shape,” she says. “He seemed rather nice and normal. I liked him back and in minutes he asked if we could talk on FaceTime. We met that afternoon in a café for a few hours, then he called me every day and we got to know each other more.”

It was a stark contrast from the parade of military surgeons with broken phones and a pressing need for her credit card details.

“We are very much going with the flow and we have both agreed we are at the age that we shouldn’t do anything we don’t love,” says Audrey. “We agreed that the minute we don’t enjoy it anymore we will stop, and that was a year and half ago.”

SUPPORT US

At this difficult time, your donations are more important than ever. Continue to support your home from home in the heart of Mayfair by donating to ROSL via our charitable arm, the ROSL Trust. Your generosity will give young people around the world an education, it will give talented young musicians, artists and writers the chance of a career, and it will safeguard the future of your beautiful Grade I listed clubhouse.

To donate, visit www.rosl.org.uk/supportus or call +44 (0)20 7408 0214



The sky's the limit

ROSL has recently begun funding the Sreepur Village in Bangladesh, which educates young mothers and children from poor and isolated areas. Pat Kerr MBE, set up the project 30 years ago while working as a flight attendant for British Airways. She tells *Overseas* how the project has evolved since then

When did you first become interested in humanitarian work and helping women and children in particular?

I was brought up to consider others and believe 'in small acts of kindness' in your daily life than anything else. As BA crew we were spending a lot of time in Bangladesh and it was the monsoon and we had spare time and could easily visit/help out at a local, Canadian-run, orphanage. The involvement gradually grew and I took advantage of unpaid leave in the winter to spend longer there. In the 80s there were not so many of this type of volunteer project so we got lots of interest and eventually had enough funding to set up the existing project, which brings in mothers and children to 'keep families together'. It more grew around me than happened as a result of planning.

Why/how did you decide on the location in Bangladesh to set up Sreepur Village?

We needed a large site of high land - both to avoid flooding and to ensure we could manage sewage. We finally found the site we are on now which, at the time, was isolated with only a dirt road and no electricity.

How have you seen the village grow during your 30 years of involvement?

We were lucky that President Ershad came to the opening ceremony and offered us a road and electricity - which came in very quickly. The area has changed phenomenally over the last 30 years and from being completely isolated we now live at the end of a fairly busy commercial area. The garments

factories have spread out here and we have partnerships with many - who sell our products and train (and sometimes employ) our mothers. Now (COVID) things are different but garment factories offer much more reasonable salaries to trained people so this did help the mothers a lot.

Do you think conditions and opportunities for women and children have improved in Bangladesh during that time?

The biggest change has been the proliferation of mobile phones (land lines have never worked well), which means that people from isolated areas (often inaccessible without using a boat) can be in touch with the rest of the country. The second is the growth of the garment factories industry. More than any NGO or the government, the factories (with all their human rights issues) have given women

PAT KERR MBE

While working as a flight attendant for British Airways, Pat could see the dire need for support in some of the poorest parts of the world. This led her to move permanently to Bangladesh, raise the money to build Sreepur Village and give a future to the young mothers and children it supports, something she has been doing for the past 30 years.



Above: Taking the temperature of a mother at Sreepur Village as part of their COVID-19 precautions
Right: Mother and children washing their hands and legs



the opportunity to earn money which has substantially empowered them. You used to see women outside of their homes, before the pandemic you would see them flocking to their factory shifts in bright clothes and talking animatedly.

In the more isolated rural areas this has not happened and there are still lots of huge challenges such as the flooding we are seeing at the moment. We always prepare the mothers (agriculture training, numeracy, legal literacy, and especially health and hygiene) to go back to their villages but some have nowhere to go and find work in the factories. Others sometimes leave their villages temporarily if there are flooding, shortage of food etc, and earn money then go back.

How will the funding from the ROSL Trust be used?

We are very grateful for the ROSL funding. The world is changing around us but we are going to use it to educate the mothers and the children in a very practical way. At the moment we have the project in 'lockdown' as we have so many vulnerable

(diabetes, asthma etc) mothers here. We are also running on a low staff ratio and staff and new families who join us have to stay in our quarantine area. So things are in some flux but we are working on basic literacy and meeting mothers' varied needs. For instance, a 13-year-old girl with cognitive issues and her baby have just joined us and she has substantial

“
I was brought up to consider others and believe in small acts of kindness in your daily life

needs which the ROSL funds will help us address. We have a 'Talking Science' Programme where women learn about science from practical every-day tasks (what happens as you boil the water for your rice, for example), a sack gardening training programme and a number of different levels of literacy classes. The extra funds will enable us to buy colourful

materials and supplies and hopefully, once things settle to increase the variety of our programmes.

Do you have any unfulfilled ambitions for the project that you would still like to achieve?

We are hoping to develop an app and use a mobile phone network to spread our services to many more isolated areas. With our long-term programmes on site, we are unable to accommodate the number of families we would like to help. With COVID making it difficult for social workers or other staff to visit people in the community, we hope that a simple digital approach will work well. If it happens, it will have many training elements and a monitoring function. Mothers can be encouraged to share with other mothers so they can offer support within their communities. We are always trying to improve and liaise with women and elders in village communities to ensure we tailor our work to their needs.

Support Us

To allow ROSL to continue funding this and other education projects around the Commonwealth, please consider donating at www.rosl.org.uk/supportus

ROSL Trust supports COVID-19 appeals and new education projects

A kind and substantial donation to Education Projects has helped start two new projects in Africa and the ROSL Trust's support for COVID-19 appeals in Asia and Kenya. Margaret Adrian-Vallance reports

A lot has happened since the last edition of *Overseas* and many members will have read updates in the online monthly newsletter, which has played such a large part in keeping people informed of developments during the temporary closure of the clubhouse.

To recap some of the highlights during this time, the ROSL Trust Trustees agreed support for the British Asian Trust's COVID-19 Emergency Appeal at the suggestion of outgoing D-G Diana Owen, and ROSL looks forward to closer links with the British Asia Trust (BAT) in the future and hearing further news of their work.

At the Pestalozzi World Village at Dehradun in India, Cheme Palden, the Village Director keeps in touch with photos and updates. During the pandemic most of the children had to return to their villages so the Photography Club and other extramural activities that ROSL supports have only just restarted.

The ROSL Trust also agreed support for the Kenya Society's Girish Raval Fund to Counter COVID-19. This fund works with Rotary in Kenya to counter COVID-19 in the poorest areas and is named after a member of the Kenya Society who recently died.

Waithiogeni Kanguru-Esipisu, wife of High Commissioner Manoah Esipisu, has accepted the role of Patron of the Fund and the Kenya Society is well known to many ROSL members as it holds several of its events and meetings at the ROSL clubhouse.

The Trust also agreed support for a new ROSL Bursary recipient – a secondary scholar from Kahuho in the Gilgil area who

lives with his grandfather of 71, who is a subsistence farmer. Peter was top of his class during eight years at Primary School.

The Trust will cover four years at secondary school, and if satisfactory exam results are obtained, a later bursary for tertiary education. This support extends a positive relationship that ROSL had had over the years with the Langalanga Education Trust which provides careful in-country monitoring of ROSL bursary recipients. At the time of writing, schools in Kenya are due to reopen in September.

The second new Education Project is with Mondessa Youth Opportunities (MYO) in Namibia. MYO is an afternoon education project that offers free, intensive education for promising students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Swakopmund's townships and is well-known to ROSL through long standing ROSL-Namibia Project supporters Mike and Vera Leech and others. Funding for this project, which will concentrate on maths, English and reading, will be from the Dr Valentine legacy which is restricted to education projects in Namibia. Manager Neels Strijdom is also organising a teacher training event to include teachers from remote schools such as Katora in the Namib desert.

“
ROSL's supportive,
responsive and caring
approach to access to higher
education in Namibia
cannot go unrecognised



Learn more
about the ROSL Trust

The charitable arm of ROSL was set up in 1960 to further the club's founding principles. Find out more about their work at a webinar on 29 September. Visit www.rosl.org.uk/events to register.

At the University of Namibia where we support 38 students studying Education, Dr Rachel Ndinela Amaambo, Assistant Pro-Vice Chancellor says, 'Since, there are numerous students without funding due to the socio-economic status of the many families, ROSL support has been a relieving response to the vacuum in funding from the Namibia's Students' Financial Assistance Fund (NASFAF), which could only cater for a limited number of qualifying students.

'Therefore, ROSL's supportive, responsive and caring approach to the acceleration of access to higher education in Namibia cannot go unrecognised. This great contribution does not only enable students from the marginalised

Education projects around the Commonwealth, such as Mondessa Youth Opportunities in Namibia and Pestalozzi Asian Village in India (both pictured above) are just two of the projects supported by the ROSL Trust. Since 1994, your generous donations and legacies have helped children and young people across the world

communities to settle their fees, but also to retain their dignities and enhance academic performance'.

Aron H Mwaala says, 'I am at Khomasdal campus studying towards the bachelor of education upper primary in mathematics and Oshindonga. I really appreciate what you have done due to struggling to pay my fees. I will really work hard to make this support count and to make my dreams come true'.

Bachio Seibeb says, 'I'm really pleased and thankful that ROSL have made it possible to give a helping hand where there seemed to be no hand. I, for one, would like to be this kind too and help out the needy one day. This extends my greatest respect and admiration for ROSL.

Helvi Nehemia writes 'Dear ROSL, I am writing this letter on behalf of my family as an appreciation to you, who have been very supportive and helpful. Thank you again for your generous support and please continue what you are doing, for it is a benefit to many of us, especially those who are willing to learn but without loans or struggling to settle their school accounts'.

Elli SN Shigwedha says 'I would like to place on record my thankfulness for ROSL funding. It helped me to accomplish my goals of obtaining my degree. It gave me the ability to focus on my coursework with less concern about my finances. Thank you for your generous support, this makes me feel so special.'

Magdaleena N. Shaanika says, 'I am very honoured to be the recipient of this award. I completed my Bachelor of Education Honours Degree in upper primary last year (2019). I majored in mathematics and integrated natural science and I look forward to being able to give back to the community once I begin my career teaching.'



Visual arts at ROSL

Although the clubhouse has been closed for much of the year, that has not stopped us enjoying contemporary art in our historic architecture. ROSL ARTS has embraced technology and used a computer-generated model of Over-Seas House to present two new exhibitions that can be viewed and enjoyed online

As lockdown began in the UK, working with artists from the Royal Society of British Artists, ROSL presented 'As they were and will be again'; an exhibition that reflects on the theme of community and the outdoors, to act as a positive reminder of what we enjoy.

More recently, ROSL launched 'Women by Women' with Liberty Gallery, an exhibition that was originally planned for the clubhouse but was adapted to work online. This latest exhibition welcomes the work of Marcelina Amelia, Rosie Emerson, Delphine Lebourgeois and Maria Rivans to our virtual Over-Seas House. The theme of the exhibition was inspired by the foresight of ROSL to welcome women as equal members of the club from its inception, while also supporting the arts in all its forms. ROSL is once again working with Liberty Gallery, an organisation that champions early career artists.

September will welcome an exhibition on the theme of Colour by members of the UK Printmakers Council. A reaction to the light we have seen in recent dark times and the rainbows created and displayed across the country in support of the NHS, the exhibition promises variety. United by the theme, but differing in subject and technique, we are looking forward to adding a splash of colour to the walls of Over-Seas House. The exhibition will be available to view from 17 September.

December will bring our third edition

of our charity art exhibition and sale, Incognito. Read on to find out how you can get involved.

One positive lesson learned from lockdown is that creativity and culture can persist through anything, and that we are able to share art in new and exciting ways. We will continue to share and sell art online, as we have found members want to engage with ROSL wherever they are in the world.

Incognito returns

We are looking forward to the third edition of our charity art exhibition and sale, Incognito. Following the success of the 2016 and 2018 editions, which presented over 307 submissions and raised over £6,000, we have high hopes for this year's exhibition. For our previous Incognito exhibitions, the buying focused on the big event of the Private View but for this year we are going to take the sales online, and we will share more details about the art and how to purchase it at www.rosl.org.uk/incognito2020 closer to the opening on 15 December.

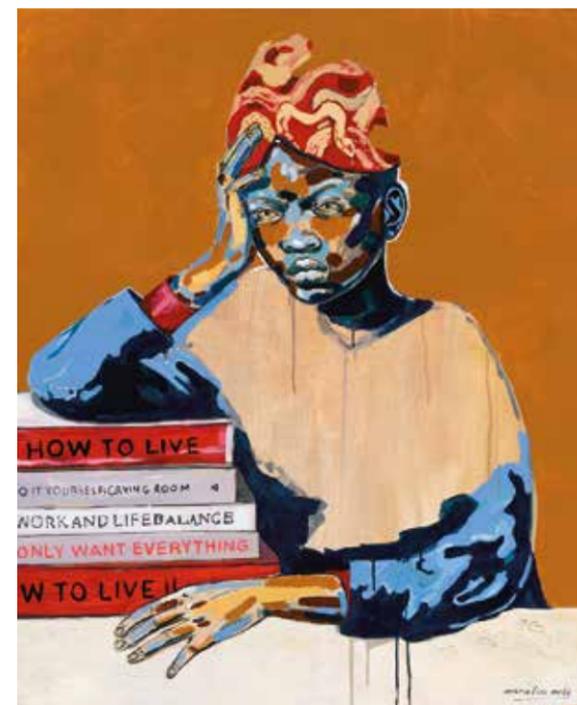


There is still time to get involved, we are inviting artists to create and donate artworks to be exhibited anonymously and sold on a first-come, first-served basis for £50 each. In the spirit of the exhibition, the artist's name is only revealed after the artwork is purchased and all the money raised from each sale will go to support the work of the ROSL Trust (Charity No.306095), focusing on our work encouraging and enabling arts education around the globe. If you know any artists or would like to create and donate yourself, the artwork requirements are listed below:

- Each artwork is to be on A6 card or paper (105 x 148mm, 4.1 x 5.8in).
- Please do not sign the front of the work, the sale is anonymous.
- On the reverse, please write your name and sign the work here, also include artwork title, media used and if you are able, please include any contact information (website, social media, email address) so the buyer may find out more about you.
- There is no limit to the number of artworks that can be submitted.

Please post submissions to ROSL ARTS, Royal Over-Seas League, Over-Seas House, Park Place, St James's Street, London, SW1A 1LR before November, ready for the December 2020 exhibition.

Exhibition launches on Tuesday 15 December and is open until March 2021. Find out more at www.rosl.org.uk/incognito2020





ROSL Composition Award reaches next stage

From more than 125 entries down to six. The next stage is for these composers to workshop their pieces with London Sinfonietta in November

Over 125 entries were received for our new ROSL Composition Award, from all around the globe. These works have now been judged by our first-round panel, made up of composers Cheryl Frances-Hoad and Gavin Higgins. The standard of entries was exceptionally high and that along with the number who applied shows the need to support this field of music creation. In the end, Cheryl and Gavin were able to select six young composers to progress to the next workshop stage: Lucy Callen, Xan Gill, Robert Nettleship, Michael Small, Emma Wilde, and Dominic Wills.

These composers will be invited to compose a 1-2 min work or sketch, to be workshopped with the London Sinfonietta on the 9th November. The full panel will

be in attendance for this event, following which one composer will be chosen to win the award, and a commission to expand their work into a longer piece, to be performed in a London Sinfonietta concert.

The composers have been invited to write for an instrumentation of flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, vibraphone, hand percussion (including such instruments as frog buzzer, wind tube and cow bell!) and conductor.

We hope to be able to invite ROSL members to attend the workshop on 9 November from 2pm in the Princess Alexandra Hall, but the six final works will be filmed and available to view on our YouTube channel after the event.

ROSL Composition AWARD

IN ASSOCIATION WITH LONDON SINFONIETTA

Nationality

We have had applications from eight different current and former countries of the Commonwealth: the UK, South Africa, Singapore, Ireland, Cyprus, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Instrumentation

The scores that have been submitted have so many different combinations of music. We asked for a chamber music composition for no more than six players; split as follows:

- Solo 5
- Duo 13
- Trio 12
- Quartet 28
- Quintet 16
- Sextet 23

Type of instruments written for:

- Voice - all of the usual ranges have been written for, Soprano to Bass, but have also had a few inclusions of spoken voice acting as narrators for their works as well as other effects.
- Woodwind - there are so many varied mixed combinations as well as the more common instruments such as saxophones, clarinets and oboes, as well as some more unusual instruments such as the Shakuhachi, a Japanese bamboo flute.
- Brass - again almost every western brass instrument is included from the French Horn to the Tuba.
- Strings - cello is a popular one in this batch of compositions, but everything from violin to Harp as well as some more unusual including Baroque Violin, Electric Guitar and the Koto, which is a 13 stringed instrument and is the national instrument of Japan.
- Electronic instruments as well as different electronic techniques are a feature in several of the submitted compositions.
- Percussion - traditional tuned percussion and non-tuned percussion feature prominently.
- Keyboard - the piano is another popular instrument to write for in these submissions, but the composers have also explored Jazz Piano, Accordians, Organs and Celestas.

Making the clubhouse COVID-safe

We are currently working to make sure our facilities are COVID-safe for your return and in line with government guidelines

To make sure your stay is as comfortable and safe as possible, you will have access to hand sanitiser and appropriate PPE throughout the clubhouse. Furniture will be arranged with social distancing in mind, and moving around the club, particularly in confined spaces such as lifts and corridors, will be signposted to ensure appropriate distancing is maintained.

All public areas will undergo more frequent cleaning, with bedrooms being deep cleaned after each visit and then left unused for three days before the next guest arrives, and all our staff are receiving COVID-relevant training.

Our estates team has taken the opportunity during the closure to carry out much of the compliance work



that would otherwise be disruptive while open, such as improvements to the electrical infrastructure, and plumbing and asbestos removal, among others. Ongoing developments to look forward to include Drawing Room redecoration and refurbishment, generously paid for by a legacy donation from Mrs Audrey Roberts, courtyard resurfacing, garden renovations, and more.



Events online

When the clubhouse closed in March, our events programme went with it. Luckily, it wasn't long before the team, as well as members, put together a fantastic selection of online events for everyone to enjoy, which has kept us all engaged and connected over the past few months.

From virtual D-G's Drinks, to art exhibitions, musical performances, book talks, webinars, games and more, there has been something for everyone.

Find out more about the heritage of the clubhouse and its ongoing conservation with architect Martin Ashley. Or hear from Annual Music

Competition alum Robert Plane about his career as a clarinettist. Or listen to Lord Berkeley discuss the future of the UK's rail industry. There's something to suit every taste.

Such has been the response, we plan to continue hosting events online for our members still not able to travel, due to international restrictions. As we begin to build up our clubhouse-based events programme again, we will make every effort to also share them online so no one misses out.

Find out more at youtube.com/c/RoyalOverSeasLeague1910

LIVE FROM

Over-Seas House

Given the huge response we have had to our online events programme during the closure of the clubhouse, we hope to combine both online and offline events regularly going forward

The state-of-the-art AV equipment installed into the Princess Alexandra Hall last year will allow us to livestream concerts, talks and more as they happen, so members around the world can join in. See what's coming up on page 42 or at www.rosl.org.uk/events.

This new equipment reignites ROSL's long-standing role in communications technology, one that can be traced all the way back to the grand opening of the Westminster Wing on 14 April 1937, then called the Empire Centre, when the first all-Empire radio/telephone ceremony took place at the club.

Opened by the Duke of Gloucester, the ceremony linked the audience in London with the Viceroy of India and the Governor-Generals of Canada from Ottawa; of Australia, from Melbourne; and of South Africa, from Pretoria. The link to the Governor-General of New Zealand failed. Sir Evelyn in his speech drew a parallel with the material benefits of the new telephone links and the idealistic good service and citizenship linked provided by ROSL to all members of the Empire.

Broadcasts of all kinds continued for several decades, even during the Second

World War. ROSL member Peggy Trott recalled her time working for the BBC during the war, in a 1995 edition of *Overseas*:

The heavy bombing of London by the German Luftwaffe caused the BBC to look for relatively 'safe' studios, i.e. buildings that were solid, sandbagged, and preferably with a basement. Broadcasting House (whose roof and top floor were destroyed by German bombers) has many underground studios, but these were fully booked during the war.

At the outbreak of war in 1939, I was a BBC Secretary working on the Overseas Messages to the Troops programmes and one of my jobs was to sort out the hundreds of letters the BBC received every week from the public, requesting to speak to their loved ones abroad. So began the BBC's famous broadcasts to the forces in every theatre of war. Having the use of Over-Seas House was particularly pleasant; we had plenty of space to move around and what could be more fitting than to broadcast overseas from the Over-Seas League? Over-Seas House was unrecognisable, sandbags fortified all entrances, the porch and

windows were strengthened and, at night, heavy black curtains were drawn so that not one chink of light escaped to guide the bombers. Unwelcoming? Not a bit. Inside, members were sure of a very warm reception.

A popular announcer did the lead-ins – blonde Joan Gilbert (later to be a success in post-war television) was in charge of broadcasts to Gibraltar. British wives, children, mothers and grandmothers all wanted to speak to their men stationed there. It wasn't possible to say much in the short time allotted to the programme and the messages were uniformly simple... 'I'll be baking a special cake for you when you come home, love'. I had to alter the messages slightly in case they contained a hidden code. Sometimes a child had been born after dad had left for overseas and I would hold his son or daughter up to the microphone to say 'hello daddy'. It was an emotional moment and hospitality was always given to the public, even if it was only a cup of tea and wartime cake (made with egg powder). Famous bands backed up the programmes and whole families were invited to choose the favourite tunes of their relative soldiers abroad.

More images online

Visit our  Facebook page and the ROSL website to see more photos of ROSL events. Get daily news updates on the ROSL website and by following us on  Twitter.

Welcoming you back

You can look forward to enjoying a delicious selection of sandwiches, paninis and salads, along with hot and cold drinks, pastries and cakes in the clubhouse and our beautiful garden.

To book your table, contact the Graysons Team on dining@rosl.org.uk or +44 (0)20 7408 0214.

To welcome you back, we have a number of offers for you to take advantage of between August and the end of 2020:

- **For the individual member:** Bring your partner to stay. You can also bring family and friends along to try out the bedrooms, who will be able to book a room as your guest.
- **For households with more than one member:** Enjoy 10% off your room rate, plus a free bottle of champagne at the bar.
- **For the families:** If a family books two rooms, the children get complimentary breakfast and dinner.
- **For the long stayer:** Enjoy 15% off accommodation for stays of seven nights or more, and 20% off for stays of 14 days or more.
- **For the weekender:** Book three consecutive nights including a Sunday and get 50% discount on Sunday night.

To book your stay, contact the Reservations Team on reservations@rosl.org.uk or +44 (0)20 7408 0214.

We ask that you please contact us to let us know when you are planning to visit – this is so that we can ensure there is enough space in the clubhouse to meet the social distancing measures. If you do just fancy popping in, that's fine but we cannot guarantee entrance if the building is at capacity, though we will do our best to accommodate you.



Christmas at the club

Celebrate at your home-away-from-home with our special festive packages!

Get into the festive spirit with mulled wine and mince pies at our Christmas Eve drinks reception, followed by a screening of a classic Christmas movie. Make sure to save some room, as on Christmas Day the celebrations start at midday with a sparkling drinks reception and a traditional three-course lunch, including half a bottle of wine, coffee, and mince pies. If you choose to stay with us for three nights, on Boxing Day your package includes a tailor-made winter walk around the area, led by one of our Blue Badge guides. Keep an eye out for how we plan to celebrate New Year's Eve at the clubhouse as well!

To book a two or three-night package at the clubhouse, contact reservations@rosl.org.uk or +44 (0)20 7408 0214 x217. Package elements can be booked separately, and are also open to members and their guests not staying at the clubhouse. For lunch bookings only, contact rosldining@graysonsrestaurants.com or +44 (0)20 7629 0406. For tickets to just our Boxing Day Walking Tour, visit www.rosl.org.uk/events

	DOUBLE/TWIN	SINGLE
Two nights	From £305pp	From £355pp
Three nights	From £380pp	From £465pp

ROSL around the world

Much branch activity is still on hiatus around the world, but the green shoots of activity are beginning to show. Contact your local branch representative to find out when things will be getting started again

NEW ZEALAND

NZ Director Lyn Milne is stepping down from her role in 2020 and everyone at ROSL, both at HQ and in New Zealand, would like to thank her for her unwavering support of members and tireless efforts to further ROSL's profile in the country. Below, she shares a message reflecting on her time with ROSL:

"My 43-year association with ROSL working at the London Clubhouse (1977-1982) and as NZ Director (1995-2020) have given me a huge insight into how closely we are all connected. Within the superb clubhouse facilities, I have enjoyed the opportunity to share, discuss and learn from the members. Meeting young classical musicians and contemporary artists through ROSL began a long and happy association for me, with many ascending into pivotal positions worldwide. The longer ROSL continues to encourage this talent the deeper and broader it becomes. It has been a great honour to have been part of the ROSL family and I know it will continue to enhance people's lives as it has mine."

From now on, each New Zealand branch can be contacted directly by using the contact information on

this page. For all members enquiries, both renewals and new members, please contact the Membership Team in London on +44(0)20 7408 0214 or membership@rosl.org.uk.

Christchurch

Morning Tea
Wednesday 9 September, 10am,
Holly Lea

Speaker Dr Alistair Stokes
"Sue's story from a Eastern German Heritage"
\$5

Morning Tea
Wednesday 14 October, 10am,
Holly Lea

Speaker John Pattinson,
a former conductor and
choirmaster in both the
UK and NZ.
\$5



Left: Western Australia outgoing Branch Chairman Nigel Rogers (L) hands over to Anthony Howes (R).
Below left: (L-R) Chris Holtby OBE and his wife Polly with Victorian Branch President Jason Ronald OAM

Morning Tea

Wednesday 11 November,
10am, Holly Lea
Speakers Lynda and Percy
Acton-Adams on "Cycling
through France and Germany"
\$5

AUSTRALIA

Victoria

Since 2016, the ROSL Victorian Branch has had the pleasure of the company of Consul-General/Head of UK office for Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, Chris Holtby OBE, and his wife Polly at many of the branch's events. Our members have very fond memories of a variety of events attended and hosted by Chris and Polly during his tenure. The annual Christmas Reception at Chris and Polly's beautiful residence in Melbourne was a "must-attend" in members diaries each year. Guests could always rely on Melbourne weather putting on a show whether it be stiflingly hot or the risk of a summer drenching, but all while enjoying the Christmas cheer, company and generous hospitality of Chris and Polly. Victorian Branch President Jason Ronald OAM along with the ROSL Victoria Branch

Council and members greatly valued and appreciated Chris and Polly's interest in the club and attendance at events. We wish Chris and Polly and family every success with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and in life for their futures. We also will look forward to welcoming Chris's successor Steph Lysaght later in the year.

Western Australia

The Western Australia Branch also saw a changing of the guard, with Nigel Rogers stepping down and Anthony (Tony) Howes taking over as Branch Chairman. We would like to thank Nigel for his many years of service to members in Western Australia, and ROSL as a whole, in making Western Australia one of the most vibrant branches globally.

Anthony brings with him a wealth of experience and connections from the arts world. He currently serves as, Director of Special Programmes (Arts & Information) for Capital Radio (Western Australia), Arts Columnist for the Messenger magazine (WA) and Artistic Director Emeritus of the Midnite Youth Theatre Company.

We wish Anthony every success in his new role at ROSL.

Event highlights

We were unable to complete the 2020 Annual Music Competition before the clubhouse closed in March, but now the clubhouse is open once again we have the opportunity finish off both the Section Finals and Gold Medal Final.

First up, **The Mixed Ensembles Section Final** will take place in the Princess Alexandra Hall on 6 October.

Always an exciting round, the **Mixed Ensembles** great variation in instrumentation and

repertoire is one definitely not to be missed.

Then on 17 November, the **Gold Medal Final** will see our four solo Section Final winners return to compete for the £15,000 first prize. Dominic Doutney piano, Eleanor Corr violin, Siân Dicker soprano, and Sirius Chau flute have each had much longer than usual to prepare for the final, carefully choosing their repertoire to best show off the talents and impress the judging panel.



Although social distancing is still in place, we hope to be able to welcome a small audience along for each evening.

Book your tickets online at www.rosl.org.uk/events

Member-led events

BOOK GROUP

The Book Group meets once a month at the club at 6.30pm or by Zoom at 6pm. We have a very large membership, so please register your place with Eve.
30 September - *East West Street* by Philippe Sands
28 October - *The Private Lives of Impressionists* by Sue Roe
25 November - *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell
16 December - *A Theatre of Dreamers* by Polly Samson

BRIDGE CLUB

The Bridge Club meets Mondays 2-4pm for social bridge either at the club or by Zoom. We have a wonderful tutor in Ingar Kofoed Hansen and we learn the time. When he is present, we contribute £10 per person.

We are planning an evening

session both for social bridge and a set of lessons if enough members indicate interest.

BACKGAMMON CLUB

We meet on Wednesdays 2-4pm either at the club or by Zoom. When at the club, we meet for lunch beforehand, or by Zoom for a chat. Please register in advance.

THEATRE & OPERA GROUP

We attend plays, opera, ballet or modern dance at least twice a month. While theatres are closed, we watch two performances and discuss them by Zoom.

Contact Eve at: E.Mitleton-Kelly@mitleton-kelly.org.uk



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Book online

Go online to get full details and book your next event at www.rosl.org.uk/events

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...



OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND
Saturday 18 & Sunday 19 September

9 SEPT
BOOK TALK: NICK TIMOTHY
Wednesday 9 September



3 SEPT
FILM CLUB: KOYAANISQATSI
Wednesday 16 September

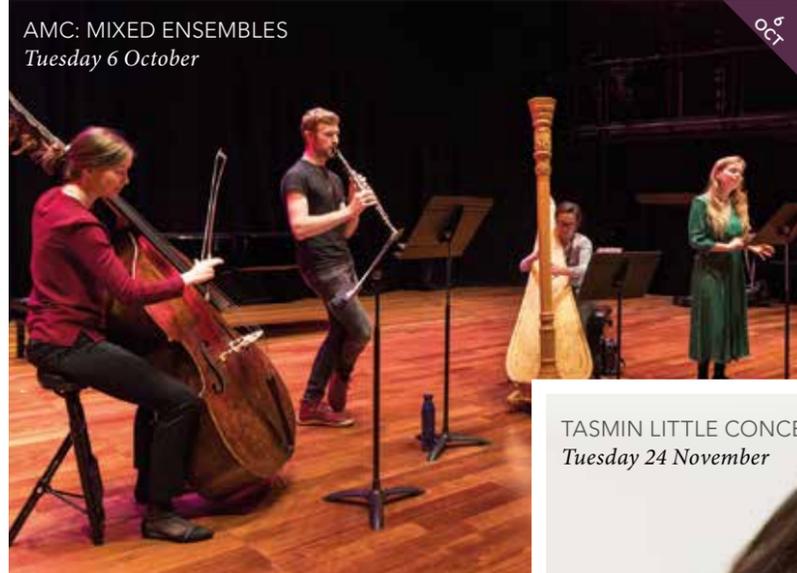
23 SEPT
CONCERT
Wednesday 23 September

24 SEPT
SUPPER CLUB: ABIR MUKHEJEE
Thursday 24 September

28 SEPT
FILM CLUB
Monday 28 September

29 SEPT
ROSL TRUST WEBINAR
Tuesday 29 September

26 SEPT
NEW MEMBER RECEPTION
Thursday 1 October



6 OCT
AMC: MIXED ENSEMBLES
Tuesday 6 October

13 OCT
AMC: OVERSEAS AWARD
Tuesday 13 October

27 OCT
MMSOL CONCERT
Tuesday 27 October

14 OCT
EVELYN WRENCH LECTURE
Wednesday 14 October

28 OCT
SUPPER CLUB: HELEN MARTIN GEE
Thursday 29 October

24 NOV
TASMIN LITTLE CONCERT
Tuesday 24 November

3 NOV
STILL LIFE DRAWING CLASS
Tuesday 3 November

4 NOV
CONCERT
Wednesday 4 November

9 NOV
COMPOSITION AWARD WORKSHOP
Monday 9 November

10 NOV
CHAIRMAN'S DINNER
Tuesday 10 November

12 NOV
FILM CLUB
Thursday 12 November

17 NOV
AMC: GOLD MEDAL FINAL
Tuesday 17 November

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EMMETT
L O N D O N
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