

OVERSEAS

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE



A HELPING HAND
What does it mean to be a
part of your community?



“We want to build on the new ways in which we are now communicating”

This last year has been one of the most extraordinary and difficult in recent times for all of us, including ROSL. Since re-opening after lockdown, ROSL is faced with severe financial constraints due to reduced footfall and room occupancy as a result of government restrictions. Our CFO, Alexis Corzberg, together with all of the ROSL team, has been busy as never before firefighting the financial fallout. We therefore very much hope you will support us in the ‘ROSL for the Future’ campaign to assist our continued operations here at the clubhouse.

However, the ROSL team is looking forward to a hopefully more stable 2021, and is busy preparing for exciting musical and international affairs events for its members - both in person and virtually. With the world in and out of lockdown, we want to build on the new ways in which we are now communicating and continue to strengthen our ethos of pan-Commonwealth and international friendship.

We can also mark a new era of governance, formally ratified by the UK Privy Council on 14 October, which all members unanimously approved at the virtual EGM over the summer. We now have a modernised, streamlined relationship between the executive team, which I lead, and the governance oversight, led by our Chairman, the Hon. Alexander Downer AC. In addition to the continuity ensured by existing Council members, we have welcomed six new members from different backgrounds and competences, all of whom bring extensive international networks to ROSL, thereby helping to build our global community further.

Together with my Director of Membership, Jon Kudlick, we are working hard to broaden and diversify the membership of ROSL, bringing in new partner organisations, including university alumni organisations, chambers of commerce, and people to people organisations. In particular, one ambition is for ROSL to become a recognised Hub for Commonwealth activities, and the last few months have seen a steady stream of High Commissioners and CEOs of Commonwealth organisations come and visit.

Dr Annette Prandzioch
DIRECTOR-GENERAL



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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“Esports quickly moved to an online model, but it was the jump of many traditional sports to online events that has opened esports to a much wider audience”



From the EDITOR

In the 1990s, a recent American graduate named Christopher McCandless sold all his worldly possessions to fulfil his long-held ambition of travelling solo around North America, before deciding to settle in an abandoned bus in the frigid Alaskan wilderness, as depicted in the book and film *Into the Wild*. There, he planned to live ‘deliberately’ and without interruption from his fellow man. After weeks of battling the unforgiving conditions, without any of the help he had received on the other legs of his tour across the country, he slowly succumbed to starvation. His diary reveals his deathbed epiphany that life’s experience is not worth living unless it is shared.

Whether it is with partners, family, friends, colleagues, or complete strangers, we all find meaning in our shared experiences. That drives us to form communities, both real and virtual, which bring us together with likeminded people who share our heritage, interests, political and religious beliefs, and more. In this edition of *Overseas*, we take a look at just a few of those communities, starting with the most local of all, our neighbours.

The loss of community spirit has often been bemoaned as something broken in today’s society. Particularly in cities, knowing your neighbours seems to increasingly be a thing of the past, but has the enforced lockdown revitalised neighbourliness this year? On page 6, Abi Millar speaks to those helping and being helped by their local community.

This has largely been possible as many of us have made the shift to working from home. But while the benefits of homeworking have been widely extolled, it also poses challenges. How can remote workers ward against isolation and recapture the sense of camaraderie they might have experienced in the office? We find out on page 18.

While most major national and international sporting fixtures were postponed or cancelled for six months in 2020, many professional sportspeople and casual players turned to video games to keep in touch with their sporting community and still get their competitive fix. esports were already a growth industry before Covid but have seen exponential growth this year. Find out where video games fit into the sporting landscape on page 14.

Elsewhere, many of the freedoms the LGBTQ community enjoy today have been hard fought over decades of struggle, yet in some parts of the Commonwealth, the draconian laws imported during the colonial era that Britain itself has now moved on from, are still fervently applied. On page 10, Natalie Healey asks if progress is being made for the LGBTQ communities in these countries.

As always, I hope you enjoy the issue and please get in touch with your comments or feedback.

Mark Brierley
editor@rosl.org.uk

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LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

The loss of community spirit has often been bemoaned as something broken in today's society. Particularly in cities, knowing your neighbours seems to increasingly be a thing of the past, but has the enforced lockdown revitalised neighbourliness this year? **Abi Millar** finds out

Over the past few decades, a sad trend has emerged in our cities: neighbourliness is on the decline. In years gone by, a person might have known everyone on their street, at least to the extent of having someone to water their plants while they were on holiday. More recently, the image of a thriving neighbourhood – children playing in the streets and everyone coming together for a potluck dinner – has come to seem like a relic of a halcyon past.

In one UK-based study from 2018, 68% of participants described their neighbours as 'strangers'. Half said they did not feel part of a 'good neighbourly community' while only 7% of those polled said they regularly socialised with their neighbours. Data from the Office of National Statistics bears this out: in 2017-2018, 62% of respondents agreed they belonged to their local area, down from 69% in 2014-15.

A similar story holds true elsewhere. One in five Australians have never met their neighbours, despite the ideals propagated by the

schmaltzy soap of the same name. In Singapore, just 23% said they exchanged greetings with their neighbours more than three times a week, with the kampung (village) spirit reportedly in its death throes.

There are many reasons for this trend, each of which would probably merit a sociology thesis in its own right. But to name a few, people are living in cities rather than towns, renting rather than buying, and working long hours with a long commute. The decline in localism has seemed inescapable for some time.

That was the case, at any rate, until Covid-19. By April 2020, half the world's population had been forced into some form of lockdown. With travel bans in force, and teleworking replacing the office commute, people were asked to stay at home in all but essential circumstances. Meanwhile, we were hearing galling stories about the people around us – people who were vulnerable, people who were lonely, people who couldn't leave their homes to buy food.

The upshot was an entirely different approach to local life. According to a study called 'Apart but not Alone', published by researchers in Bristol, UK, community spirit experienced a resurgence during lockdown.

Study author Michele Biddle, of UWE Bristol, said: "Lockdown seemed to have provided that opportunity or nudge for people who don't usually get involved in their neighbourhood to get involved. It was great to read so many stories of how neighbours were coming together and supporting one another creatively. It was particularly heartening that older people

were offering support as well, despite being classed as vulnerable."

The support has taken the form of organised initiatives, as when the NHS Volunteer Responders' recruitment drive recruited 750,000 people in just three days, or Clap for Carers got us banging our pans every Thursday.

Australia saw a craze known as 'Spoonville', in which 'villages' of spoons, styled as people, popped up on patches of grass as a way of keeping children engaged with their communities.

Local charities and volunteer groups have helped any way they can. This might mean donating locally grown produce to poorer families; offering free cycling lessons; playing concerts outside people's doorsteps; teaching online classes to children, or sewing face masks for healthcare workers.

There have also been countless acts of solidarity and kindness on an individual scale. Local Facebook groups have been filled with posts detailing who needs help and how to provide it. Many people have cooked food for their neighbours, or picked up prescriptions. Unable to meet up with family and friends, some of us got to know the others in our apartment blocks for the first time.

Bloom & Wild, the flower

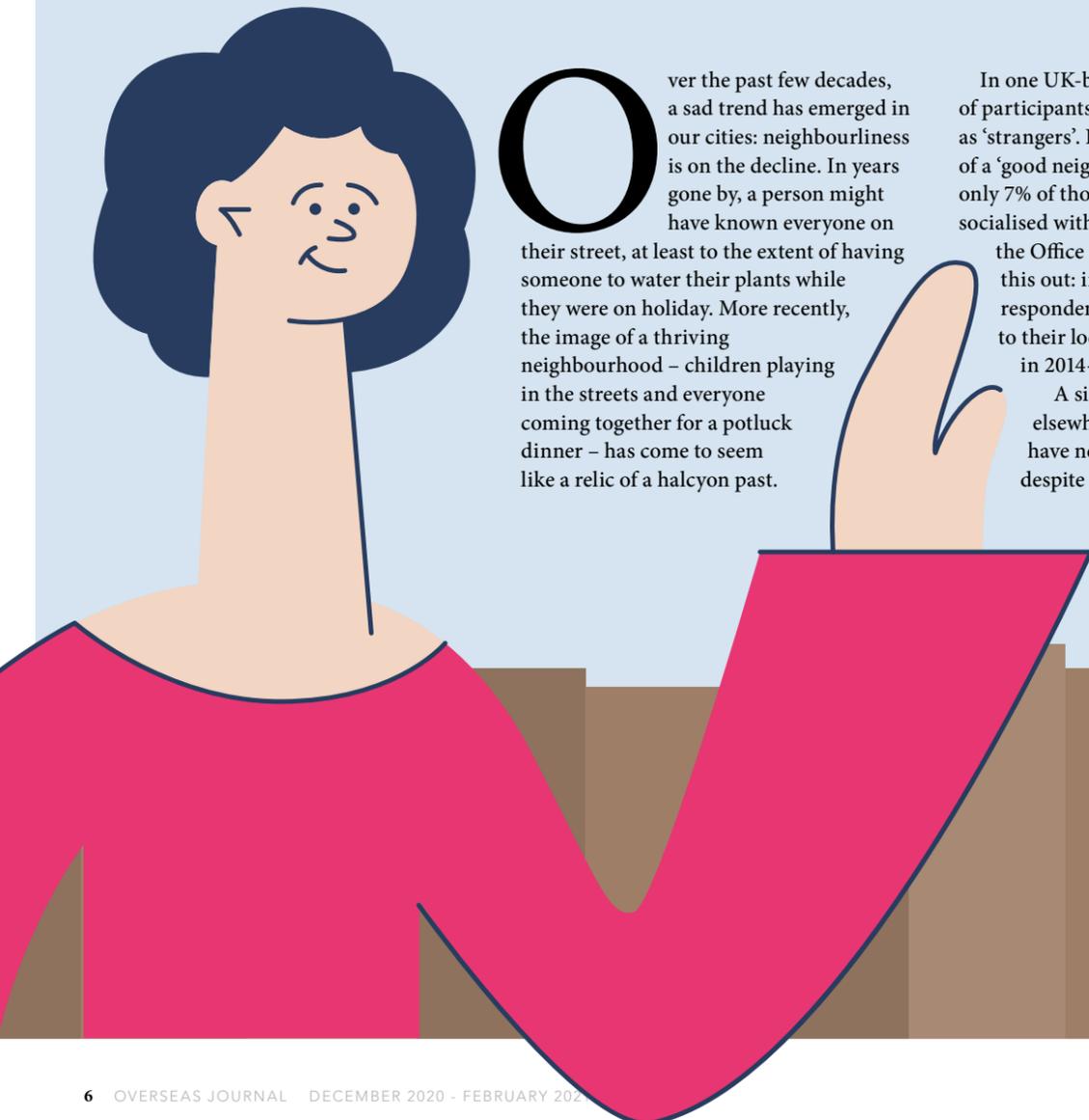
People are living in cities rather than towns, renting rather than buying, working long hours with a long commute. The decline in localism has seemed inescapable

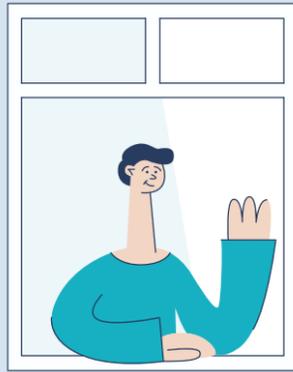
company, saw a clear increase in gift-giving during the pandemic, with many people sending flowers "just because".

It recently conducted research trying to find the most thoughtful places in the UK.

"The concept of community has arguably never been more important," says Bloom & Wild's head of brand, Marisa Thomas. "In the UK and around the world, people have shown unparalleled kindness in one of the most testing times of our generation. We were interested to find out which communities gave back the most, and could therefore be deemed the most thoughtful."

They looked at five different metrics (number of registered charities; number of volunteering opportunities; number of community gardening schemes; recycling

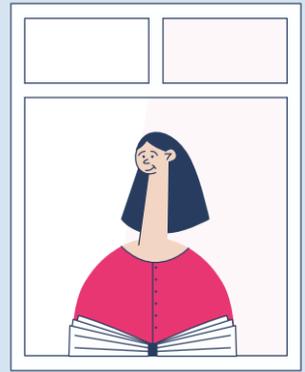




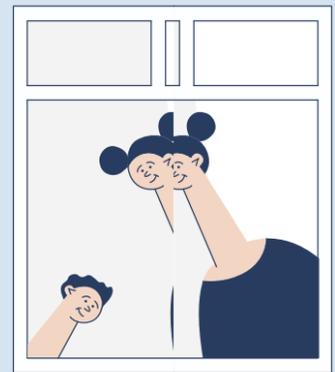
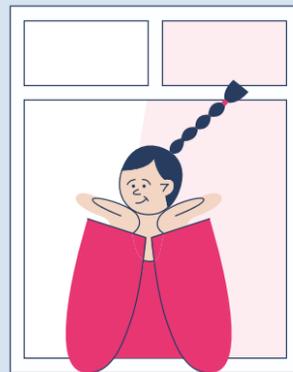
68%
of UK residents described their neighbours as strangers in a 2018 survey



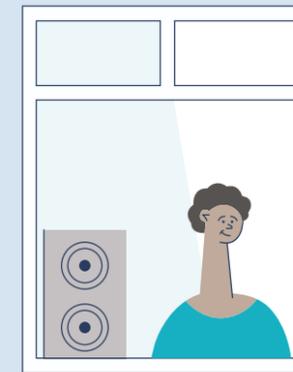
23%
of Singaporeans exchange greetings with their neighbours more than three times a week



7%
of UK survey respondents said they regularly socialised with their neighbours



7%
fewer UK residents felt they belonged to their local area over a three year period



rate; and electric car ownership) to give each city a ranking. While there were some clear front runners (Swindon, Bath, Oxford, and Milton Keynes), Thomas feels that community spirit has increased across the board.

“In particular, we’ve been super impressed by the number of local fundraisers that people have been organising,” she says. “For instance, we’ve noticed a huge amount of charity coffee mornings, and sponsored cycles and fun runs, in rural parts of the country, while in our cities, strangers have been quick to help those vulnerable individuals in any way they can.”

Dr Kellie Payne, Research and Policy Manager for the Campaign to End Loneliness, points out that many of the usual obstacles to neighbourliness did not apply.

“When we talk about barriers to getting to know people, often not having anything in common is a barrier,” she says. “With the

lockdown, it gave us all something in common. Facing this obstacle together brought people together in a unique way.”

Like many charities, The Campaign to End Loneliness has been extremely busy this year. Despite all the heartwarming stories in the press, it’s hardly surprising that loneliness increased over lockdown – and Covid restrictions have posed unique challenges for volunteers seeking to make a difference.

“UCL has collected data on loneliness during Covid, and they found that the people who felt loneliest prior to Covid had

When we talk about barriers to getting to know people, often not having anything in common is a barrier. With the lockdown, it gives us all something in common

even higher levels of loneliness,” says Payne. “A large part of that is older people – over-70s were told to shelter, so there were lots of grandparents who weren’t able to see their grandchildren. But another interesting finding is that there were a lot of young people who were lonely. Since March, being a student is a higher risk factor for loneliness than usual.”

It’s clear that the pressures of lockdown did not hit each person equally. Living alone, or (as per many younger people) in house shares, was a more isolating proposition than living in a family home. Young people are also more likely to be itinerant, more likely to be renters, and less likely to see their accommodation as a permanent base where they can forge community ties.

Younger people, however, did have the advantage of being digitally savvy, meaning they could compensate to some extent by using tools like Zoom. The older generation

was uniquely vulnerable in this regard.

“A big part of how people adapted was the ability to replace face-to-face contact with online contact,” says Payne. “A lot of people were able to do that really well, but there are many people aged 80 and over who don’t have access to the internet or don’t have a smartphone. So there was a digital divide that really showed itself in this situation.”

In the pre-Covid era, volunteers could simply visit an elderly person in their home, making them a cup of tea and chatting with them in their kitchen. During lockdown, befriending services have needed to take place over the phone, which is less than ideal – you can’t rely on visual cues to see how the person is doing, nor can you smile to lift the mood. Conversations also tended to take a very negative tone as lockdown wore on, putting volunteers at risk of burnout.

“Over the course of the lockdown we’ve

We’re the ones who can solve loneliness. It’s those small moments of connection and reaching out that can help people, and we all have the capacity to do that

been hosting some virtual meetings around Covid and the impacts on volunteer services,” says Payne. “It comes back to the challenge that everybody faced – how do you provide similar services when you’re not meeting face to face? In Kent and Surrey, there were a couple of county councils that bought iPads for older people who were at risk of not being connected, so they could see their care workers via tablet and contact their family and friends.”

Clearly, we shouldn’t place too rose-tinted a lens over the newfound localism of lockdown. As much as we might like to talk

about ‘blitz spirit’, many people have suffered greatly this year and will continue to do as the pandemic wears on.

What’s more, there is now a sense of real fatigue in the air, and some signs that the collective mindset of early lockdown is reverting to something more individualistic and suspicious. The UK Government has explicitly advised the public that they should snitch on their neighbours if they catch them breaking rules. It’s hard to think of anything less community spirited.

However, with the pandemic set to continue, and no end in sight to the restrictions, we all have the power to eschew that ‘every man for himself’ narrative and remember our interdependence.

“We’re the ones who can solve loneliness,” says Payne. “It’s those small moments of connection and reaching out that can help people, and we all have the capacity to do that.”

The rainbow connection

Around half of the countries that still criminalise gay sex are members of the Commonwealth. Natalie Healey explores the impact these laws have for LGBTQ communities, and what is needed to further progress on this issue



Laws are supposed to protect us but sometimes they lead to immense pain. In the 1980s at the height of the AIDS crisis, a children's story book called *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* inspired legislation that caused shame and confusion for many gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) people in the UK. Margaret Thatcher's notorious section 28 prohibited local authorities from 'promoting homosexuality'. Introduced in 1988, it left teachers unable to support pupils questioning their sexuality and to fear they'd be sacked if they challenged homophobic bullying. Activists tirelessly campaigned against the contentious legislation, but it was 15 years before it was repealed in England.

Section 28 may be gone - and the UK is now considered one of the most liberal places for LGBTQ rights - but Britain's homophobic past has a lasting legacy in other parts of the world. During the colonial period, the country enforced 'decency' and 'morality' laws across the Commonwealth, derived from the 1553 'Buggery Act' that first criminalised homosexuality under Henry VIII's reign. Consensual gay sex was finally legalised in 1967 in England and Wales. But in many former British colonies, it is still a criminal offence. In Jamaica, sexual intimacy between men is punishable by up to ten years in prison. In Kenya, it's up to 14 years. While Bangladesh, Barbados and Uganda have maximum sentences of life imprisonment. In parts of northern Nigeria, the death penalty is imposed. Out of the 72 countries which still criminalise gay sex, almost half of them (34) are members of the Commonwealth.

Colonialism isn't necessarily the full explanation for anti-LGBTQ legislation in the Commonwealth today though. Some former British colonies have strengthened the laws since independence, according to lawyer and researcher Lucas Ramón Mendos from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA). In places such as Sri Lanka and Uganda, the original legislation has been updated to criminalise sex between women as well as men. "Saying that these are remnants of the British occupation and that's the whole story can dismiss the fact that some countries have made explicit decisions to keep these laws on their books or expand their scope," Mendos says.

Above: Indians celebrate the court's decision that the ban on consensual homosexual sex is unconstitutional in 2018. Right: 2019 Bhubaneswar Pride march

Stigma and discrimination

Criminalising sexual orientation or gender identity causes harm in numerous ways. In countries where gay and trans rights are restricted, LGBTQ people are more likely to be harassed, exposed to violence and suffer poor mental health. This is even the case in countries that rarely enforce these rules. Yvee Oduor, an activist from the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK) says while there have been few convictions for homosexuality in their country, "laws which continue to criminalise same sex acts in Kenya have perpetuated the notion that queer people are 'illegal'".

"The deeper, more evil mischief of these laws is the constant underlying stigma, the discrimination they create, and the violence they enable," agrees Téa Braun from the Human Dignity Trust, a global organisation that challenges legislation that persecutes people for their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. She says LGBTQ people are often deterred from reporting hate-based crimes to the police for fear they will be 'outed' to the authorities and their local communities, leading to ostracisation, isolation, and further violence.

Many LGBTQ people in the Commonwealth are also unable to access vital support services, says Mendos. "They might deny medical assistance if they feel obliged to conceal that they engaged in same-sex relations." Or, the healthcare provided might not be specific to that person's needs. This is a particular problem for groups at greater risk of contracting HIV, such as men who have sex with men. In places that criminalise homosexuality, there is generally lower awareness of the virus, which means people are less likely to use condoms. And many health professionals feel unable to offer advice on the sexually transmitted disease, afraid they could be accused of abetting criminal activity. In Caribbean countries where homosexuality is against the law, one in four men who have sex with men have HIV. This figure goes down to one in 15 in

Caribbean nations where same-sex relations are legal, according to research from the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). "These laws push people underground," says Braun. "They're not going to seek healthcare information that reveals their sexual practices if those sexual practices are criminalised."

There is some room for optimism though. Many Commonwealth countries are beginning to acknowledge the harms anti-LGBTQ legislation can cause. "There's been a lot of progress and everything is moving in the right direction overall," says Braun. When the Human Dignity Trust formed ten years ago, 80 countries criminalised



THOUGH THERE HAS BEEN PROGRESS, OF THE 72 COUNTRIES WHICH STILL CRIMINALISE GAY SEX, 34 ARE MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

In Bangladesh, Barbados and Uganda, sexual intimacy between men is punishable by a maximum sentence of life imprisonment

While in parts of northern Nigeria the death sentence is imposed

In Sri Lanka and Uganda original legislation has been updated to criminalise sex between women as well as men

In 2016 Belize's supreme court declared the country's anti-sodomy law unconstitutional

In 2018 India overturned its 160-year-old law banning sex 'against the order of nature'

homosexuality, compared with the 72 today. A prominent example of positive change is India which overturned its 160-year-old law banning sex 'against the order of nature' in 2018. "That was absolutely huge," says Braun. "But it was a long struggle." Similarly in 2016, Belize's Supreme Court declared the country's anti-sodomy law unconstitutional. Belize held its first pride week in August 2017.

Other nations have furthered LGBTQ rights not by directly repealing their laws but by adding new ones that protect groups from discrimination. "It's a paradox, but it's an opening some organisations are exploring very effectively," says Mendos. It means some countries such as Kenya and Sri Lanka have laws that protect LGBTQ people at the same time as legislation that criminalises them. In Bangladesh, gains were made for trans people in 2013 when the government recognised hijras as a 'third gender', but gay sex remains illegal there.

It remains true that the majority of Commonwealth members criminalise same-sex intimacy, so there's no time for complacency, Braun warns. "The Commonwealth needs bold leadership to recognise that this is a Commonwealth problem and it's a Commonwealth problem that's not going away". She points out that some nations have even taken a backwards step in recent years and made it harder for LGTBQ organisations to help people in need. While Mendos fears the Covid-19 crisis could spell bad news for gay rights. "We're seeing religious groups attributing the pandemic to the progress that many countries were making."

Own up to the past

Homophobic attitudes must be challenged, but some well-intentioned approaches have fallen flat in recent years. In 2011, then UK Prime Minister David Cameron attempted to sway countries to reconsider anti-LGBTQ legislation by threatening to withhold aid from

governments that still have it in place. This may have inadvertently exacerbated the situation. "Attempts to exert pressure through cuts in international aid creates this narrative by which LGBTQ people are the ultimate culprits of the country not receiving the funds," says Mendos. A better course of action is rerouting that money and making sure it reaches local organisations that are actually helping LGBTQ people on the ground, suggests Oduor.

There is power in acknowledging the problem can be traced back to the colonial era. In April 2018, during her keynote speech at The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Theresa May, UK Prime Minister at the time, expressed 'deep regret' for the country's legacy of homophobic laws. "I am all too aware that these laws were often put in place by my country. They were wrong then, and they are wrong now," she said. She urged Commonwealth nations still subscribing to these codes to overhaul the legislation. "Progress starts with the taking of responsibility," says Oduor. "Then we can work together to make a change."

A compelling way to push for that change might be to highlight the positive difference LGBTQ rights can foster for everybody. More progressive legislation may be good for a nation's economy according to the US Agency for International Development. It found that each additional right a country grants its LGBTQ citizens equates to a \$320-per-capita increase in its GDP. And beyond economics, communities are more likely to thrive if people feel free to be themselves. "Awareness about these issues has helped societies realise that LGBTQ people are everywhere," says Mendos. "It's not that people are starting to be more gay, lesbian, or bisexual, but rather they are coming out, telling their story and being open about who they are and who they love. That adds up to a community where everyone is allowed to live the life they want."

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FOR THE MUSIC LOVER



FOR THE YOUNG



FOR THE FOODIE



GAME TIME

While most major national and international sporting fixtures were postponed or cancelled for six months in 2020, many professional sportspeople and casual players turned to video games to keep in touch with their sporting community and still get their competitive fix. Paul Brierley finds out where video games fit into the sporting landscape

Kim Byung-sun has just been knocked out of the fight, the rest of his team battles on, feeling the pressure. It is match point for their opponents, but the Shanghai Dragons are determined to pull off a reverse sweep. As Kim returns to the fray, he knows something special is required to take the win. A quick switch of character, and Kim pulls out a sniper rifle. With his beleaguered team dropping around him, he lines up his opposition. Four lightning-fast headshots later, the enemy is in retreat, and the Shanghai Dragons are able to stabilise and

win the round.

The commentators erupt at the skill required to turn the tables so fast, whipping the crowd into a frenzy, all be it a silent one. This is because the crowd is virtual, viewing an esports livestream, any display of emotion only coming from the excessive use of YouTube chat emotes. The game in question this time is *Overwatch*, an online first-person shooter where two six-person teams battle for map objectives.

This isn't the first time Kim, the Korean star player better known in game as 'Fleta', has stunned viewers with an amazing

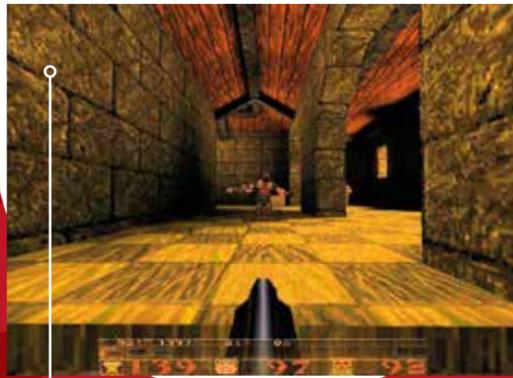
Left, above, right: *Overwatch's* All-Star event showcasing the best professional players from across the world in 2019
Below: Kim Byung-sun, or Fleta as he is known within the *Overwatch* community

display of accuracy. This particular performance allowed the Shanghai Dragons to win the 'May Melee' tournament, organised in response to the heavily disrupted regular season of competition by the global restrictions of Covid-19. ●



1972 SPACEWAR

The first example of a video game played competitively, on campus at Stanford University



1996 QUAKE

An early example of a multiplayer video game that made widespread use of local area networks and the internet to play



1998 STARCRAFT

Moving beyond accuracy and reaction time, *StarCraft* put strategy front and centre



2003 DEFENCE OF THE ANCIENTS

An evolution of the *StarCraft* formula, *DotA* started a new battle arena genre



2009 LEAGUE OF LEGENDS

Cited as the world's largest esports, which has peaked at a viewership of 44 million



2015 OVERWATCH

Franchised teams compete for their hometown in a global league, like many traditional sporting league models



Along with many other esports, *Overwatch* was able to transition from in-person matches to an online model, allowing it to thrive during a time when regular sports have been severely impacted.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Esports is any multiplayer video game played competitively for spectators, generally by professional gamers, and although the term doesn't enter the lexicon until 1999, the activity can be traced back to the 1970s. The competitive gaming scene started at Stanford University in 1972 with a game called *Spacewar*. By 1980, *Space Invaders* was at its prime and Atari held the first organised competition for 10,000 Americans. Growth throughout the 1980s saw national and global championships, held by the likes of Sega and Nintendo, televised on MTV to public fanfare. These tournaments only reflected the types of games available at the time, participants always tried to gain the highest score possible in a set amount of time; just them versus the game rather than each other.

This changed in 1996 with the arrival of *Quake*, part of a newer genre of games called first person shooters. These games saw players using a variety of guns and handheld weapons to take out hordes of hell-spawned creatures, but it was a new mode that really got people hooked. *Quake* gave players the opportunity to go head to head with other humans either across a local network or, more importantly, the nascent internet. This

Access to esports improved as broadcast moved away from traditional TV to streaming services like Twitch and YouTube

form of direct competition finally allowed players to show how skilfully they could command the battlefield.

Other games were quick to follow *Quake*. In South Korea, it was a game called *StarCraft* that showed the potential of this burgeoning industry. Most of East Asia was experiencing a financial crisis as the millennium approached, and the many unemployed South Koreans were looking for cheap entertainment options. The country's new high-speed internet network allowed a wave of new internet cafes to pop up and *StarCraft* soon gripped the nation. TV channels started to broadcast matches and professional players became national stars; the stage had been set for esports to prove there could be money made in competitive gaming.

A SERIOUS CONTENDER

While the rest of the world was slower to catch on to esports, by 2010, we see the release of arena battle titles like *Defence of the Ancients (DotA)* and *League of Legends (LoL)*, which used other gaming mechanics than just purely aiming skill. Players picked heroes with unique special abilities that could damage opponents, increase the performance of their allies or disrupt the enemies' actions. This allowed for intricate team strategies to be developed

and a more engaging narrative for the audience to play out.

Dota 2's release in 2013 saw a juggernaut enter the arena, viewers eagerly awaiting this sequel. Prize money for events was increasing rapidly; in 2009 the global esports prize money was estimated at US\$2m, compare that with the 2019 US\$34m prize pool for the *Dota 2* International competition alone. This meant some esports professionals have been able to amass career earnings of up to US\$6.9m according to Statista, many of whom are *Dota 2* players.

The industry also established some franchised leagues, like the *Overwatch League*, to provide viewers, and potential sponsors, with a more consistent product, echoing the development of real-life sports.

These changes over a short period meant some impressive market growth, PwC evaluated the global worth to have increased from US\$194m to US\$980m between 2014 and 2019. Pre-Covid-19 this was forecast to have grown to US\$1.9bn by 2023, though this will likely be revised up.

Access to esports also improved as broadcast moved away from traditional TV and cable channels to streaming services like Twitch, which launched in 2011, and YouTube. The broadcasts could be better tailored to gaming audiences rather than fit into the traditional sports model.

GLOBAL DISRUPTION

Here we arrive in 2020, like the crisis that fuelled esports' initial growth in the late

1990s, the world finds itself in the grips of another event that leaves many people wondering what to do with their time. Much of the sports coverage people were used to consuming was struggling to keep fixture dates. Established esports quickly moved from any in-person competition to an online model, but it was the following jump of many traditional sports made to online events that has opened esports to a much wider audience.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, general viewer numbers for both esports and gaming streams rose from 4.8 billion watched hours in Q1 to 7.6 billion in Q2. In countries like New Zealand, which have experienced shorter lockdown periods and a faster return of traditional sporting fixtures, these higher viewing numbers have not dropped off. Duane Mutu, Director of LetsPlay.Live an esports organiser and promoter, commented that lockdown would have normalised the practice of watching esports for many viewers, where "they might have previously watched just sports or other media, but now it is acceptable to enjoy gaming".

Some events were able to leverage their existing esports presence to replace cancelled dates. With all horse racing cancelled in the UK, the virtual Grand National went ahead regardless, with betting continuing as usual. Since 2017, the simulated race has been held alongside the regular Grand National, the finishing results being surprisingly similar. For those interested, it was a close finish this year with Potters Corner holding out against

a fast approaching Walk In The Mill.

Also opting for a virtual replacement of cancelled events was Formula 1. It held a Virtual Spanish Grand Prix on the same day the real F1 race was meant to take place. It featured some current F1 drivers, other racing drivers and esports stars, going through the qualify procedures and then completing a 33-lap race. In tennis circles, Kiki Bertens managed to defend her 2019 Madrid Open win with a victory at the Virtual Madrid Open. Andy Murray was also able to claim victory in the men's event, even though he had not played any tennis to that point in 2020 due to injury.

Sports stars also used their free time to pick up more traditional esports titles. The Australian NRL clubs, the Western Bulldogs and Wests Tigers, competed against one another in a *Fortnite* battle royale. Many of today's young sports stars are just as at home on the field as they are online. Esports Games Association Australia's Mat Jessep noted that promotions such as these would not solve the problems faced by long periods of cancelled sporting events, but they "could really form that incremental income, that come the next rainy day, there's a bit of savings set aside that a sport can fall back on."

Many of today's young sports stars are just as at home on the field as they are online

SUSTAINED MOMENTUM

Even before Covid-19, there had been a steady change in the attitudes towards esports by the regular sporting community, organisations were exploring how to better integrate. Rugby's legendary Eden Park in Auckland is currently developing a high-performance esports centre within the stadium. A place where esports teams from across New Zealand and Australia can train and hold events. Similar facilities can already be found at Twickenham and Sydney Cricket Grounds, where esports teams can leverage the training expertise, broadcast infrastructure and supports services that these world class stadiums offer. Both parties benefit from potentially attracting a new audience from cross pollination.

Time will tell whether esports will ever be considered just another regular sport, maybe one day we will see a top esports player holding Olympic Gold.

CAN THEY FOLLOW THROUGH?

After a season of constant changes, Fleta and Shanghai Dragons found themselves in the league grand finals in early October. For the first time during the year, the top teams from the North America travelled to South Korea, through isolation, to battle against the best of Asia.

Unfortunately for the Dragons, even with the best win-loss record this season, they were not able to beat last years' victors and win the championship. With interest only growing, there is always next year.

DO YOUR homework

Since the start of the pandemic, many of us have made the shift to working from home. But while the benefits of home-working have been widely extolled, it also poses challenges. How can remote workers ward against isolation and recapture the sense of camaraderie they might have experienced in the office? Abi Millar finds out

One of the furthest reaching changes that occurred this year was the shift towards working from home. Whereas in the past, home-working was a minority pursuit – the preserve of freelancers and those with very forward-thinking employers – it has now become something close to the norm.

For many white-collar workers, the commute to the office has been replaced with a trudge to the kitchen table. Work meetings have been replaced with Zoom calls – the camera artfully positioned to show off the participant's bookshelves – and smart-casual attire has given way to leggings and slippers.

In the UK, 49% of workers reported working from home at some point in the week ending 14 June, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). In Australia, 32% of workers predominantly worked from home during April and May, while the figure for New Zealand was around four in ten.

It's a dramatic change – last year, only 5% of the British labour market said they worked mostly from home – and like any change of this magnitude, it comes with its pros and its cons. For sure, there are many people who thrive on solitude, love their home comforts, and enjoy the extra hour in bed occasioned by cutting out their commute time. But there are just as many who have struggled, and very much miss aspects of their old life and identity.

“Working from home is a skill, particularly in relation to boundary setting,” points out Thom Dennis, CEO of the business management consultancy Serenity in Leadership. “Many organisations have experienced a spike in productivity from their people working from home, but this can be attributed mainly to the additional time released from travelling to the workplace and an inability to set clear boundaries of when and where work starts and stops in the home.”

He adds that it has not been an equalising experience across the board. In families, women have tended to bear the brunt of childcare and other domestic responsibilities, not to mention home-schooling. According to a report called Burnout Britain, 86% of women who were carrying out a standard working week alongside childcare experienced mental health problems in April.

There are class disparities too. Some people have the benefit of dedicated home offices, while others are crammed round a dining room table, or stuck working from their bedroom in a house-share. Then there are the basic differences in people's psychological makeup. As Dr Lynda Shaw, a Business Psychologist and neuroscientist, explains, these have become more apparent as the pandemic has worn on.

“Originally, it was a case of OK, we can do this – a honeymoon period almost,” she says “But we know that has worn thin as people have got used to working from home. It's been great for people who are more introverted, but the extroverts have hated it, and then you've got those in the middle who oscillate between the two. It's affected people very differently.”

Especially for the extroverts, one of the major challenges has been dealing with the loss of office community. Whatever your relationship with your co-workers, home working can mean eliminating a much-needed source of social contact.

“Not going to the workplace deprives the employee of access to socialising and chatting, which actually are very important and are not fulfilled in a limited online conversation,” says Dennis. “Many people cite reasons to go to work a the camaraderie, conversations, sharing of experiences, all of which contribute positively to the experience of the one third of one's life one spends at work.”

He adds that some companies, aware of what's being lost, are devising office routines in which people come to the workplace a couple of times a week in order to mix and network.

“But these are forced environments and experts are doubtful that the same advantages will accrue. The responsibility for work mental welfare that falls to companies is now in the spotlight,” he says.

What home-working takes away is the opportunity to make friendships organically, in that way that comes about naturally through hours of proximity. It can also limit your opportunities to forge business contacts in a non-forced way.

“Another issue I've seen is that companies are trying to be kind and compassionate and flexible, so that their staff can choose whether to go back in or not,” says Dr Shaw. “However we've got to be really mindful that it's not creating a 'them and us' mentality. They're more likely to get the promotion – they're not having to commute an hour each day. You're setting up a division and that to me is worrying.”

So, for those who are stuck working from home against their wishes, can digital forms of social contact ever be a substitute for the real deal? The answer is surely 'yes and no'. While digital connections have proven very successful in bringing people together – particularly in the context of work meetings – many of us would agree that something is being lost in the mix.

“Many salespeople will tell you there is a whole series of steps in a negotiation that have easily become lost without face to face meetings,” says Dennis. “Using digital meeting

Simple tips FOR WORKING FROM HOME

KEEP REGULAR HOURS

Without the commute, the temptation might be to work longer. Keeping to a timetable ensures you keep that division between work and home

GET OUT

If you are living and working from home, you might find yourself going out less, but making the effort to get outdoors feeds the soul and will keep your mood up

OFFICE SPACE

While not always possible, trying to set up separate office space, away from where you relax at home means you can still leave can shut the metaphorical door on your working day



"The important aspects of leadership for the future will not be characterised by command and control, but by compassion, collaboration, listening, and transparency"

tools can be efficient, but they tend to cut out an essential part of humanity. Studies show that the majority of HR functions have discarded any attempt at appraisals this year, and some of their challenge lies in hiring and firing. How do you fire someone with compassion and concern by Zoom?"

So-called 'Zoom fatigue' is very real. We have to work harder than we would in a normal conversation, since we miss out on a lot of non-verbal cues, and it can be exhausting to spend all day making eye contact via a screen. All that said, it's vital to keep in touch however you can. Dr Shaw extols the simple joy of picking up the phone.

"Camaraderie is still important even if we're calling people – what I've taken to is going for walks and ringing people I know are on their own," she says. "If you can find a window to lighten up and have some fun, you'll do yourself good, your loved ones good, and your business good."

She adds that thinking of others is a good way to mitigate our stress response. When we're in a stressful situation (such as being asked to work indefinitely from home in a pandemic), our cortisol levels rise, suppressing the feel-good neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin. Over time, this can be detrimental to our mental and physical health.

"One of the ways we can break that cycle is by being altruistic – if we stop focusing on ourselves even for a short while we can get some respite," she says. "My key advice is, don't bottle anything up. If you're a senior person in your company and there's nobody you can talk to, join some

kind of peer level networking group where you can talk things through virtually and realise that your problems are the same as many other people's problems."

Dennis believes the onus is on employers to harness whatever positives have come from the 'new normal', while doing what they can to get people back to the workplace as creatively and safely as possible. At the same time, they need to be proactively monitoring and supporting those who are still working from home.

"Businesses need to understand that the world they knew has gone and that to thrive they need to adapt to the new world, which is still in its nascence," he says. "The days of clocking in and out are just not appropriate anymore, and standing over someone to ensure they do the work has never been effective, and there's little excuse for it now."

For many of us, our working lives can no longer be clearly delineated from our home lives. There is some consensus among employers and academics that working from home – or at least, providing flexible working options – is here to stay. We will need to take a clear-eyed look at what this new work culture will entail, and what we, as social animals, need to thrive.

"The important aspects of leadership for the future will not be characterised by command and control, but by compassion, collaboration, listening, and transparency," says Dennis. "Now is the time for a steady heart and a thoughtful eye for the long term."

IMPORTANCE OF *Staying in touch*

As important as keeping in touch with friends and family, talking to your colleagues about things other than work will help to keep up team spirit, especially important when working from home

It will also mean you're less likely to dread the working day ahead, if you see your colleagues as friends as well as workmates



ROSL
ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE
ESTD 1910

Residential Piano Course

Wednesday 20 - Sunday 24 January 2021

Join us for the Royal Over-Seas League's first residential piano course, with ROSL Annual Music Competition alumni Florian Mitrea and Ashley Fripp, this course is aimed at pianists of all levels and abilities!

Enjoy five nights accommodation in a superior room, full board, course workshops and tuition.

Course Fees £1,200.

To book a place on the ROSL Residential Piano Course either email roslarts@rosl.org.uk or phone +44(0) 207 016 6917.



MY CITY

Perth

New Western Australian Branch Chair Tony Howes highlights what he loves about his hometown of Perth, and what visitors should look out for

Describe Perth in three words.
Creative, casual, and elegant.

The city has so many things to see, what are your highlights?

Right in Perth's heart, Kings Park, at over 4,000 hectares, is one of the world's largest and most beautiful inner city parks, rich in Aboriginal and European history, and is home to the spectacular Western Australian Botanic Garden, which displays over 3,000 species of the state's unique flora. Winding past the Park, another highlight, the Swan

River, links Perth Hills with yet another highlight, the historic port of Fremantle with its art galleries, maritime museum, 'haunted' colonial former prison and market stalls where just about anything is on sale.

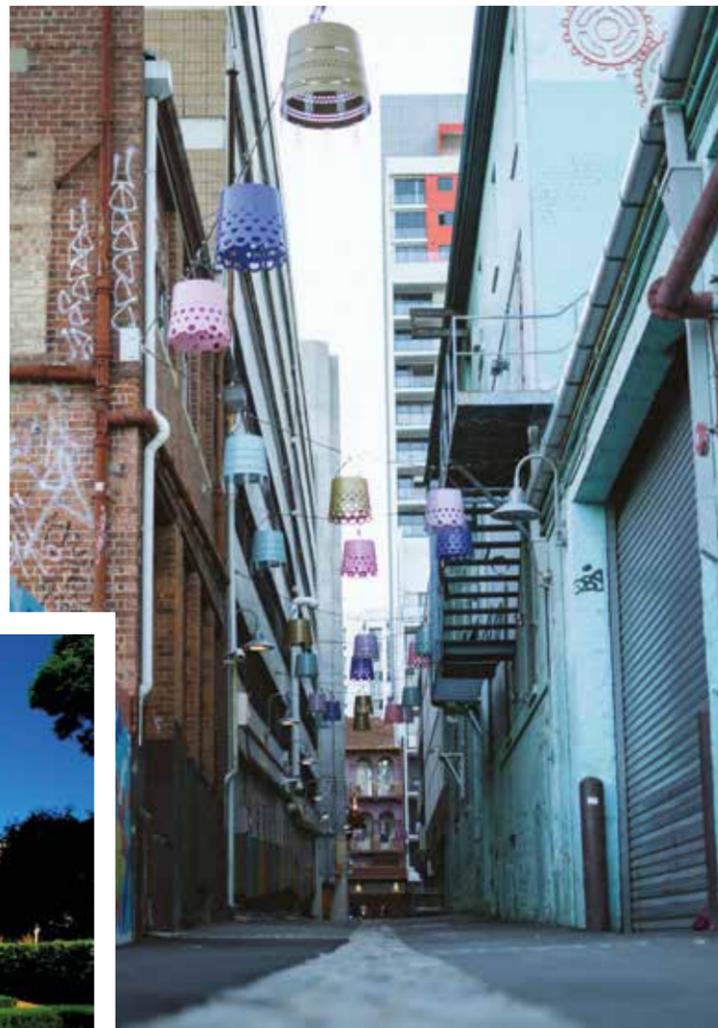
How long have you lived there? How has it changed over the years?

I was born in Perth, educated in Sydney, returned to Perth to begin my theatre and broadcasting career, which, in turn, took me to live for periods in the Eastern States, London and the UK – but, have ▶



TONY HOWES

Born in Perth, Tony became Branch Chair in July 2020. He also currently serves as Director of Special Programmes (Arts & Information) for Capital Radio (Western Australia, Arts Columnist for Messenger magazine (WA) and Artistic Director Emeritus of the Midnite Youth Theatre Company



Top left: Rottneest Island, Geordie Bay.
Left: Government House, Perth
Above: Perth city centre

always 'come home'. The changes I have seen are in size and population; the character, mercifully, has remained – a friendly, energetic, and very clean city.

How are residents handling coronavirus restrictions?

We have been very lucky in Western Australia with few restrictions beyond closed State and National Borders, together with hand washing, etc., and social distancing, being responsible for stable control of the virus for some time now. Limited concerts, churches open, and gatherings have enabled a certain sense that a healthy quality of life is attainable.

When we are all able to travel again, what advice would you give to first-time visitors? Are there any must sees?

In planning a visit to Perth, never overlook the fact that the state itself is a large one! Give thought to including a visit north to (say) the Kimberley region – there are exciting small boat cruises, with helicopters on board so as to visit inland to gorges and spectacular rock

The changes I have seen are in size and population; the character has remained - a friendly, energetic and very clean city

formations; or south to Albany and its surrounds, with the giant Karri forests and wine tours en route. In the city, you should visit the spectacular new Museum, heritage buildings such as His Majesty's Theatre, St George's Cathedral and Government House; and more wine in the nearby Swan Valley.

When is the best time of year to visit?

There is something happening all year round, but highlights occurring in spring (September, October) include the displays of spectacular wild flowers, while in summer (February, March) the Festival of Perth and the Fringe Festival give you music of all styles, theatre, and exhibitions galore. The cooler months give way to various events including the Avon River Descent where 'boaties' with craft of all dimensions race the rapids from Perth Hills into the city, via the Swan River. Trips to our local holiday isle of Rottneest, clearly visible from our city's sandy beaches are great at any time, and there, the only place in the world where you may snap a selfie with the cuddly quokka in its own home.



Make the most of your
STAY AT ROSL

Join us overnight at the clubhouse before the end of February 2021 and enjoy one of the following offers:

For everyone
30% off all room rates across the board.

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 a free bottle of champagne at the bar.

For families
If a family books two rooms, the children get complimentary breakfast and dinner.

For the weekender
Book three consecutive nights including a Sunday and get 50% discount on Sunday night.



Find more event-specific offers at www.rosl.org.uk/accommodation-offers
Book online, by email reservations@rosl.org.uk or call +44(0)20 7408 0214

What do you think is the most interesting thing about South Africa that most other citizens of the Commonwealth wouldn't know?

I think that people don't realise until they get to South Africa how incredibly friendly and sometimes annoyingly helpful we can be. You could be driving along the highway and you don't know where you're going, you roll down the window, scream at the person in the next lane 'I'm lost, I'm trying to get to so-and-so', and they'll just shout back 'follow me!'. They'll take you wherever you want to go. I think that the majority of people elsewhere in the Commonwealth may not know that the majority of South Africans have excellent pitch and can sing in harmony. We are a country of choirs, from the South to the North.

When did you first hear about the Royal Over-Seas League, and would you like to see it used more by South Africans living in and visiting the UK?

I knew about ROSL from my first diplomatic posting in Hong Kong back in 2008. The Branch Chair was Paul Surtees. We would do a lot of stuff together for the Royal Over-Seas League, we became very good friends. Eventually I left Hong Kong, but by then I was already a member of the club in London, and I maintained my membership over the years since then.

I don't think enough South Africans know about the club. You're a hidden gem, it's an incredibly romantic place. I think by targeting the young professionals who want to start to explore these kinds of places you can grow, and that's what I'm here for, to assist with that kind of thing.

You're very involved in promoting women in society through things like the South African Women's Chamber of Commerce, something ROSL has also been involved in since its founding in 1910. As a woman in a position of power, do you feel a responsibility to help the next generation of female leaders?

Yes, there is a sense of responsibility, but more than that, there's an incredible desire and excitement to be a part of watching young women develop in a way that is so completely different to the way that I grew up and the things that drove me. Now when you look at women in their late 20s, and early 30s, and what their visions are, and the way they expect to be perceived, it's absolutely fascinating. These women, they take no prisoners!

Watching the US Vice-Presidential debate between Kamala Harris and Mike Pence, the commentary afterwards was saying that people felt she didn't go at him

Nomatemba Tambo

Overseas sits down with South African High Commissioner to the UK Nomatemba Tambo, daughter of famed anti-apartheid politician Oliver Tambo, to discuss her life in public service, connection with ROSL, and relationship between our two countries

hard enough, she let him get away with an awful lot. The reason that was given was she didn't want to be seen as this abrasive dictatorial type women. I thought, what a shame, we haven't really moved on that far. A woman who is assertive, who is committed to her course of action, who won't allow someone to get away with bullying them, is still able to do so without receiving a backlash. So yes, there's still work to be done.

How would you like to see the UK and South Africa's relationship grow post-Brexit, and what is your role in that process as High Commissioner?

There's so many different areas that historically have been shared between our two countries; culture, arts, education, trade, investment, infrastructure, everything. There's so many and it's such a broad basket of projects, I think that my job is to make sure that in a post-Brexit world, our relationships don't wither. Luckily, we have signed a trade agreement with the UK, which is wonderful news.

That's going to help create a cushion for the way in which we go forward, which will hopefully benefit South Africa and the UK. We want to develop a greater presence in the UK than we've been afforded the opportunity so far. Historically, a lot of British companies have gone to South Africa to invest, but it has been difficult for South African companies to get into the UK. The odds haven't been stacked in our favour, so I would like to see that situation loosening up, to make it easier for our business community to engage and succeed here, rather than to try and to fail.

Your family history has been one of long-standing public service. What drives you to serve your fellow countrymen and women?

It would be very difficult growing up in the family in which I grew up, and seeing the enormous sacrifices that were made on behalf of me, and my brothers and sisters, and generations upon generations of South Africans, and not to want to try to do something to give back. I'm not in government, you need another kind of mind, another kind of courage, to work in government, particularly of a new country like ours, a country that comes from such a toxic past. So, to me, I just felt that if I could do something to represent, I should. I want people to understand why I'm so proud of South Africa.





SINGING THEIR PRAISES

West End neighbours, advocates for art and culture, and now also partners, ROSL and the ENO have joined forces. Mark Tousey, ROSL member and Chair of the American Friends of the ENO, discusses how members of both organisations stand to benefit

Clockwise from left: Drive & Live *La bohème* at Alexandra Palace; *Miss Saigon*; Benson Wilson, winner of the Overseas Award in last year's AMC appearing in *La bohème*, *The Mikado*



The long months of lockdown in 2020 have made us all think carefully about what we take for granted in life. With so many freedoms curtailed for much of the year, we all began to realise what really matters to us. For Mark Tousey, it was the cultural vacuum created by Covid-19 that he felt most keenly, having spent years attending operas on an almost-weekly basis.

"It all began very early on. I wanted to be a professional opera singer, but I sold my soul to Wall Street. To make up for it, I took my signing bonus in New York, back in the days when you were being chased by multiple investment banks, and bought two season tickets at the Met," he explains. "When I moved to London, it was only natural that I would continue going to the opera."

That opera being the ENO at the Coliseum

on Trafalgar Square. Having spent more than ten years on the American Friends board, he has been front row for many of the company's finest productions. "I absolutely love it. I attend every ENO production first night, sometimes when I'm on an extended trip in the spring for three months, I will fly back from Hong Kong for opening night. That's when we do the contemporary operas which I help fund. I'm a big opera groupie!"

But how did he first become a member at ROSL as well? "I'm walking by the club regularly when I'm around Green Park and I thought this is excellent, so I joined as a member. That was the impetus. It's wonderful because the garden is just spectacular. Of course, the natural connection is music. I've been following the ROSL music programme for years and years. I've been attending during lockdown many

of the events, particularly the book talks."

That connection between the Annual Music Competition and the ENO is currently bearing fruit, with Benson Wilson and William Thomas, respective winners of the Overseas Prize and Singers Prize in last year's AMC, both currently appearing in the ENO's Drive & Live *La bohème*.

ROSL's ability to identify young talent through the AMC, which can then be picked up and nurtured through organisations like the ENO is becoming increasingly important as arts funding is cut as a result of the pandemic.

"The combination of the competition at ROSL and then the young artist programme at ENO, has got to be a gold-plated start to any opera singer's career," agrees Mark. "It's a very competitive world out there. You need a leg up to be able to differentiate yourself.

The competition does two things; first of all, it gives the exposure to the audience and the public, and second of all, it gives the singer that experience because there's nothing like preparing for a competition. Then, these young artist programmes, one of which is at ENO, are absolutely crucial, because not everyone is ready to make that jump from a conservatoire to the main stage. The pastoral element, as well as the practical, is pivotal in helping young singers launch their career."

All of which means a partnership between ROSL and the ENO makes sense, both for young musicians and for members. After all, they have already been working in concert for years to support these young singers, as well as sharing a Patron in HRH Princess Alexandra, and only being a short walk between them. So, what's in it for ROSL members?

ENO will bring recitals to the Princess Alexandra Hall for members to enjoy at the clubhouse. Being so close, ROSL is also perfectly situated for pre-show dinner before heading to the Coliseum for an evening of fabulous opera. Some behind-the-scenes opportunities are also in the works for members, something Mark particularly enjoys.

"One of the things I do in my role at the American Friends of ENO is to organise evenings for friends, for organisations, for people I'm connected with.

We arrive at the Coliseum an hour and a half before the performance, then we have a tour of the house and of the stage, so we will actually be walking on the set an hour before the curtain goes up. Sometimes we'll have a stage director taking us around and talking to us about the production concept. Sometimes we go into the wardrobe department, sometimes we go into the technical department, or up in the wings, it's very exciting. After that we go down into the American Bar, funded by the American Friends of the ENO, and we have a supper. We have three courses, the first two served before the performance begins, then I will invite one of the management team to come and say hello. Then we go up for the first half of

the opera, at the interval we come back down and dessert and coffee is waiting for us. Then we go back for the last half of the opera. It's a wonderful evening and it's one of the great joys of my position to organise these. It's a great way to integrate ROSL with the ENO."

But don't worry if you're not based in London, the American Friends of ENO also hope to resume their New York recital series next year, so NY-based ROSL members can join in the fun as well. "We

put on performances and organise events regularly in the States, in New York typically, so ROSL will have an opportunity to come along. We typically host events at the Residence of the British Consul-General, who's a big ENO supporter," explains Mark.

It's an exciting time for this partnership, which is all the more important given the cultural vacuum created by Covid-19. "These times have highlighted how important art and culture are in our lives. Being able to enjoy it on Zoom, or in the case of *La bohème*, at Ally Pally (Alexandra Palace) in our cars, this is so important. I'm speaking selfishly as a recipient. It's equally important for those performers because art is not a job to an artist, it's their life. It's everything."

The combination of the competition at ROSL and the young artist programme at ENO has got to be a gold-plated start for any singer's career

LONDON & UK highlights

With so many of the usual seasonal activities unavailable this year, Overseas digs a little deeper for ways you can still enjoy the festive season and New Year safely



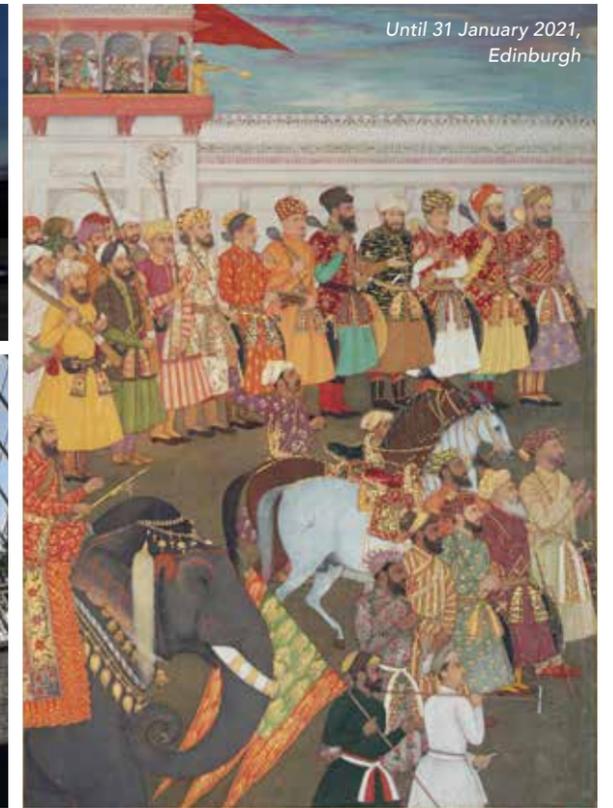
Until 3 January 2021, London



Until 10 January, Longleat



Locations across the City of London, until Spring 2021



Until 31 January 2021, Edinburgh



LONDON

RA SUMMER WINTER EXHIBITION

Royal Academy of Arts, until 3 January 2021

The lockdown hasn't stopped the RA from hosting its annual exhibition, aptly renamed the Winter Exhibition this year! Available to view online or in person, this stable of the British cultural season is more diverse than ever.

£20-22. royalacademy.org.uk

WILTSHIRE

LAND OF LIGHT AT LONGLEAT

Longleat, until 10 January
One of several festive light trails taking place throughout the UK, Longleat features spectacular light and sound shows throughout the grounds. You can make a day of it, visiting the safari park during the day and staying for the light show during the evening.

From £20.95. longleat.co.uk

LONDON

SCULPTURE IN THE CITY

Locations across the City of London, until spring 2021
The ninth edition of Sculpture in the City sees works by international artists appear across the financial centre of London, often in incongruous situations. Extended until spring 2021, wrap up warm and take an open air tour of these fabulous works.

Free. www.sculptureinthecity.org.uk

CORNWALL

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Minack Theatre, 19-22 December
A one-man telling of Charles Dickens's famous tale of Ebenezer Scrooge, the open-air Minack Theatre may not be your first thought for December viewing but the dramatic cliff top with crashing waves beneath location only makes the production more dramatic.

From £16. www.minack.com

LONDON

THE NUTCRACKER

The Royal Opera House, until 3 January 2021
A Covid-safe production of Peter Wright's two-act retelling of the classic Christmas tale. Featuring students from the Royal Ballet School as well as the full company, this production has been reworked to make it safe for the performers, but still features the highlights of the story, plus newly choreographed scenes.

Price TBA. roh.org.uk

EDINBURGH

EASTERN ENCOUNTERS

The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, until 31 January 2021
Tracing more than 400 years of literary and artistic output, the exhibition offers new insights into the shared history of the British Monarchy and the Indian Subcontinent through exquisite illuminated manuscripts, dazzling depictions of the Mughal court, royal portraits, Hindu epics, and modern works.

£7.80. www.rct.uk

EDINBURGH

RAY HARRYHAUSEN: TITAN OF CINEMA

Scottish National gallery of Modern Art, until 5 September 2021
Pioneer of stop-motion animation in cinema from the 1950s onwards, this exhibition from Ray Harryhausen's collection covers his works including Jason and the Argonauts and the Sinbad film series.

From £12. nationalgalleries.org

Until 5 September 2021, Edinburgh



19-22 December, Cornwall

ROSL FOR THE FUTURE

We've been a part of members' lives for generations. We've been there for first meetings, first dates, weddings, reunions and more. Children and children's children have called ROSL their home from home. Please help us to continue this tradition for generations to come, to foster international friendship, and promote young people in the arts and education.

Due to the coronavirus, and the associated restrictions, we are facing unprecedented financial challenges. As a not-for-profit organisation, we currently need help with our operational costs and are therefore asking members to support our 'ROSL for the Future' campaign. Your generous support will help to keep ROSL thriving in these trying times.

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



NEWS & EVENTS

The latest from our clubhouse; branches; and art, music, and education projects

ROSL Trust's new link with Uganda

Margaret Adrian-Vallance reports on how the Trust is supporting Bridge of Hope's work in Kampala

In September, the ROSL Trust agreed to support a funding application from Bridge of Hope, a UK-registered charity that sponsors the education of children and young adults in developing countries around the world.

The Patron is Professor Sir Magdi Yacoub and the Chairman of Trustees is Robert Newell, former ROSL Director-General who retired in 2011.

"Education keeps our world moving and quite literally changes lives," says Sir Magdi.

In Uganda, the charity focuses on sponsoring children who are suffering from disability, which can be an added burden for very poor families.

ROSL Trust will therefore be helping a young girl with Down syndrome living in Kampala to a single-parent family. Her mother cannot afford to send her

to school and they live in a shanty town on the outskirts of the capital.

ROSL will fund her attending the Hungry Caterpillar School in Kampala. The school fees per term are £144 (700,000 Ugandan Shillings) which comes to £432 a year, according to the current exchange rate.

The second child is a post heart-operation patient through the medical charity Chain of Hope and his family cannot afford to pay for his medical follow up as well as his school fees.

He is a bright child and will be going to Kibuli Secondary School

with ROSL support.

The progress and well-being of both will be monitored by Bridge of Hope representatives in Kampala with feedback to the Bridge of Hope in London and ROSL.

ROSL's commitment is for four years with a reassessment after two.

"We have not engaged with Uganda before in connection with Education Projects and are very pleased to be doing so now," said ROSL Trust Chairman Clive Carpenter.

In other news, it was great to have a video from ROSL's University Bursary recipient Antony Wareru in Kenya via his mobile. This was included in the five-minute video shown during the ROSL Trust Webinar on 29 September which can be seen via the ROSL website and YouTube.

“
Education keeps our world moving and quite literally changes lives



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.

Reopening with a bang

To celebrate the reopening of the clubhouse on 3 August, a small group of members gathered in the garden to learn the art of sabrage from member Vic Laws. It wasn't long before Director-General Annette Prandzioch had the champagne flowing!



Younger members together again

YM Committee's Robert Gray reports on the inter club garden party

The inter club gathered after a six-month hiatus for a garden party in mid-September at ROSL and we were blessed with exceptionally good early autumnal weather. It was good to see a number of familiar friends and meet new faces in what was a very convivial atmosphere in the garden enjoying prosecco, Pimms and mezze platters. Furthermore, a sense of normality after a unique period of lockdown was the underlying theme throughout the afternoon and everyone was delighted to be able to enjoy ROSL's garden and the excellent hospitality put on by the club. Thank you to all of the club staff and team for their efforts.

To find out more about upcoming Younger Member events, join their Facebook group.



The AMC returns

Despite the delay, the Annual Music Competition will continue to support young musicians from around the Commonwealth

After a break of seven months, we were pleased to be able to complete the section finals of the ROSL Annual Music Competition at the start of October. Like so many industries, the arts have suffered during the Covid period and we felt strongly that we should try to finish this year's competition and launch our 2021 competition in order to continue our aim of supporting young professional musicians at the start of their careers.

The mixed ensembles final on the 6 October included a tango group, a trombone quartet, a saxophone, violin and piano trio, and a wind quintet and all performances were exceptional. In the end, trombone quartet *Slide Action* took both the main award as well as the Philip Jones Memorial Prize for an Outstanding Brass Ensemble. In

a unique twist, the group performed in matching boilersuits, telling the audience they had decided to adopt the new uniform in case they needed to retrain! Given the level of musicianship and technique of these exceptional young musicians, we hope not, and ROSL looks forward to supporting them further in the future.

On the following Tuesday, we held the final of our Overseas Awards, again in the Princess Alexandra Hall with a small socially distanced audience. Our first ever Annual Music Competition in 1952 was won by Australian pianist Geoffrey Parsons, and our musical Commonwealth links have remained strong ever since. This final showcased the talents of three performers, Australian soprano Alexandra Flood, New Zealand violist Julie Park and

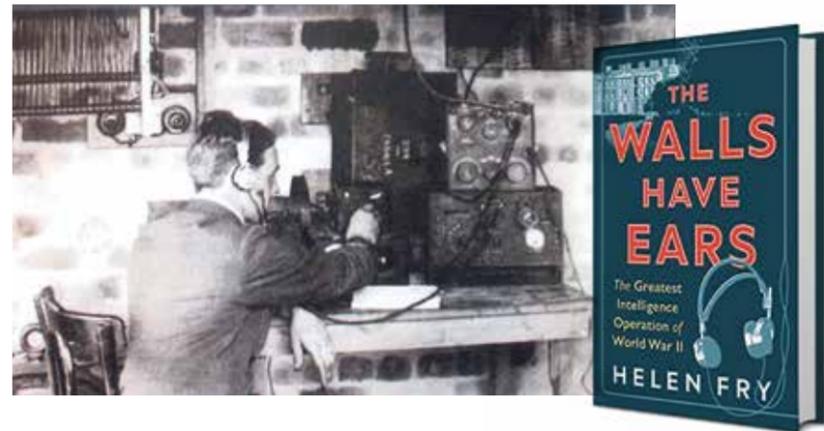
Australian mezzo-soprano Lotte Betts-Dean. We were pleased to be able to offer awards to all three performers, with Lotte Betts-Dean winning the main Overseas Award, with an eclectic programme of 20th-century song. Two of the three pianists on the evening were also Australian, and also former ROSL winners, Chad Vindin and Joseph Havlat – so it was a true showcase of the talent ROSL identifies and supports!

At the time of writing, the Gold Medal Final had not yet taken place. Look out for a full interview with the winner in the next issue.

We now look forward to our 69th Annual Music Competition, which will start in February 2021, and are grateful to the ROSL Trust and continued donations from members who help to make our vital support for these exceptional young musicians possible.

It's good to talk

Historical writing dominated our online book talks over the last few months as we hosted some wonderful historians and authors. With some lively discussion from our members who attended the webinars, these insights into recent history gave us some more food for thought on some events that truly changed the course of history



In June, Dr Helen Fry discussed her book *The Walls have Ears: The Greatest Intelligence Operation of WWII*. Capturing the imaginations of her audience immediately, Dr Helen Fry guided us through the story of the secret listeners, which played out something like a Bond novel, only to be assured repeatedly that due to now declassified files, all the audacious and bold acts that occurred were in fact very much true.



of whom were key figures of the 20th century.

Alexander Larman gave us some new insights into the abdication in a discussion of his latest book *The Crown in Crisis*. Phrasing the course of events that led to Edward VII's abdication as a literal race against time, it was more than a love affair between two people, it was a situation of a true national and international breach.

In September, Allen Packwood, Director of the Churchill Archives Centre, gave a wonderfully insightful talk and introduction to his book *How Churchill Waged War: The Most Challenging Decisions of the Second World War*. Remembered as an iconic wartime leader and in recent times a divisive figure, Packwood touched on the contemporary

opinions of Churchill but pointed out that they did not necessarily focus on the nuances of History. Allen Packwood wanted to press the point that Churchill did not win the war alone, that he led a coalition of cross-party government and military, with significant financial support from countries of the British Empire and other international allies.

Watch all the talks in full and buy a copy of each book from the ROSL YouTube channel youtube.com/c/RoyalOverSeasLeague1910



In August, Andrew Lownie spoke to us about his book, *The Mountbattens: Their Lives and Loves*. Lord Mountbatten was of course first President and then Grand President of ROSL from 1942 to 1979. Lownie gave a nuanced portrayal of two very unusual people, a very rich and filmic story with multiple characters, many

STAFF GRATUITIES FUND

In the run-up to Christmas, many members visiting the clubhouse leave gratuities for the staff in a box which is arranged for that purpose. Members have always been most generous in giving to the staff at Christmas, and the staff are immensely grateful that their hard work and efforts have been recognised by members. If members do not plan to visit the clubhouse at the end of the year but wish to contribute to the staff fund, they can also do so by:

Sending a cheque payable to "ROSL" and addressed to the Director General's Office, referencing the ROSL Staff Gratuities Fund
or

Making a bank transfer to "The Royal Over-Seas League", Account number 04478339, Sort Code: 180002, referencing "SGF - member name". For International Transfers, ROSL's IBAN number is GB95COUT18000204478339

This is entirely at the discretion of members and you should not feel under any obligation to contribute. Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Visiting an old friend

Reunited with his portrait of ROSL Patron HM The Queen 25 years later, artist Christian Furr visits Over-Seas House



Artist Christian Furr visited the clubhouse in October and posed with the portrait of HM The Queen he was commissioned by ROSL to paint in 1995. At the time, Christian was the youngest ever artist the Queen had sat for, at 28 years old. Chosen personally by Her Majesty from four artists put forward by ROSL, who had appeared in that year's annual exhibition at Over-Seas House. Painted in two sittings, lasting 90 minutes each, Christian then worked nine-hour days for four weeks to complete the portrait.

Dinner with Abir Mukherjee

Member Eve Mitleton-Kelly reports on a wonderful evening of good food, plenty of wine and an excellent speaker. On 24 September, ROSL hosted an Evelyn Wrench Supper with Abir Mukherjee, the crime writer

The ROSL Book Group was introduced to the work of Abir Mukherjee when reading *Smoke and Ashes*. We had a very lively discussion and loved it. Abir's series of crime novels, which centre on the character of Sam Wyndham, are set in Raj-era India. What distinguishes them from other crime novels is the history of India woven very skilfully into the plot.

Although many from the ROSL Book Group were present, the evening was open to all ROSL members and their guests. Abir talked about his life and how he became a writer. He was born in England, but his family moved to Western Scotland when he was four years old. He subsequently moved to Glasgow. He is therefore a Bengali, brought up in Scotland with a soft Glaswegian accent. He was highly entertaining, but also touched on serious matters of race relations; an example of that light hearted touch on serious issues was *"The West of Scotland was – and still is – a very odd place, where your skin colour is of less importance than the sect of Christianity your family nominally follows, where*

marrying a Muslim raises fewer eyebrows than marrying a Celtic supporter."

The supper was for 30 and every single person turned up! We sat at seven tables, carefully measured out to distance both individual diners and whole tables. During the Q&A, speakers had to stand at least one metre away from their table to voice their question. Everyone was so pleased to be doing something close to 'normal' that we had a simply wonderful time. The superb speaker with the excellent food and plentiful wine did help!



This is one of several Evelyn Wrench Suppers and Lectures to have taken place since the reopening of the clubhouse in August. Turn to page 42, to see what other events the committee has coming up



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 |

Propose a friend

In these difficult times, we need your help more than ever - propose a friend today and share all the wonderful benefits ROSL Membership has to offer:

- Your beautiful Grade I-listed clubhouse
- A varied events programme of concerts, talks, dinners and more
- Access to more than 100 reciprocal clubs worldwide
- Quarterly *Overseas* journal
- Curated discounts from ROSL's partners
- Support for education projects, young artists, and musicians throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

We would love for you to propose a friend. If your friend goes on to join, you can earn rewards, just like Martin Stott (pictured), who has just received his Davy's Wine Hamper as a thank you.



PROPOSE AND EARN

- Propose a friend and you'll be entered into a quarterly prize draw to win a Davy's hamper
- Propose five friends and earn a free bottle of champagne at the clubhouse or delivered to your door plus a mention in the *Overseas* Magazine
- Propose ten friends and earn one year's ROSL honorary membership
- Propose 15 friends and earn a weekend stay for two at the clubhouse

Head to www.rosl.org.uk/proposeafriend to find out more



The winners of the ROSL WA Award for Young Singers alongside branch members

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

Christchurch

A Christmas Musical Afternoon

Wednesday 9 December, 2pm, Holly Lea Retirement Village
Enjoy four soloists from different genres, followed by a festive afternoon tea. \$10

AGM

Wednesday 10 February, 10am, Holly Lea Retirement Village
Morning tea with speaker TBA. \$5

UNITED KINGDOM

London Group

The London Group committee sends greetings to all ROSL members, and especially LG members. We hope everyone is keeping safe and well.

Sadly we had to suspend our programme of talks and visits from the end of March, and, with times continuing to be uncertain, will not plan a full programme until spring 2021, when we trust better times will return. We may however arrange ad hoc talks over

the winter, so please keep checking the ROSL Events calendar on the website.

Looking back over 2019 and early 2020, we had the usual eclectic array of talks on subjects including Espionage and the Cold War, Victorian London, the Irish border, the Soul of Japan, Coventry Cathedral, the Fire of London and our final talk just before lockdown: a major engineering project that is the construction of London's Super Sewer. There is nowhere the London Group will not go in search of knowledge!

Our visits programme included: Backstage National Theatre, RIBArchitects HQ, Fishmongers' Hall, Marlborough House, Canada House, Stationers' Hall, and Apsley House.

Our 2019 Christmas lunch was extremely well attended with ROSL Chairman Alexander Downer as our honoured guest.

Our plans for 2020 had included talks on Urban Beekeeping (including a taste of honey) and Florence Nightingale. We hope to

rearrange dates for these talks in 2021. Visits we hope to rearrange include: Charterhouse, Vintners' Hall, a walk on 'The Great Fire of London', tour of the Foreign and Commonwealth, Foundling Museum and Apothecaries' Hall.

We look forward to seeing our members back in the clubhouse in 2021, and in the meantime send best wishes to you all.

Wessex

Coffee mornings

Every Thursday, 10.30am, Mayfair Hotel Bournemouth

The regular branch meet-ups continue, although now a maximum of 15 people can attend to comply with social distancing. Please contact Gordon Irving if you wish to attend.

AUSTRALIA

Western Australia

The ROSL WA Award for Young Singers was held on Sunday 9 August 2020, hosted by the Royal Schools Music Club at the University of Western Australia

(UWA) in the Callaway Music Auditorium. Winners were First Prize, Devon Graeme Lake, baritone; Second Prize, Ruth Burke, mezzo-soprano; Third Prize, Kyle Garces, bass-baritone; and Honorary encouragement award of A\$200 to alto Ryan Buckeridge.

Victoria

Keir Watt, Branch Secretary, Victoria

I had hoped to be reporting on at least one or two highlights of events which we had planned this year for our Victorian Branch Members. These included a winery tour to Portarlington on the beautiful Bellarine Peninsula, and a cinema event for the latest James Bond release among them. Alas, like branches across the Commonwealth our events remain 'on hold'. So, what has life been like over the last several months in Melbourne, Victoria? The branch has remained open, enabled by today's technologies to allow work from home, as the impact of the pandemic overtook our normal daily lives. While all of Australia (and the world) has



continued from page 39

endured prolonged lockdown measures, here in the state of Victoria, the 'lockdown' has been particularly extensive and severe. Melbourne faced a lengthy period of lockdown, (reportedly the longest in the world) and included overnight curfews, travel limits of 5km and limited outdoors outings. Retail and hospitality outlets, gyms and swimming pools remained closed, supermarkets and pharmacists excepted. Winter has come and gone and we are now looking forward to the warmer weather.

Social gathering restrictions of any kind have prevented local events from the AFL Grand Final to the world-famous Melbourne Cup from taking place in the format as we remember them. The restrictions have seen walking in the beautiful Melbourne parks become an almost compulsory form of exercise. A great sight. We have adapted very well in so many ways. Like many people, some of our council members have taken on additional duties at home, which include home schooling for youngsters prevented from attending their normal school classes.

The Victorian Branch Council look forward to the continued easing of restrictions throughout November and December and are forever hopeful to see members at a ROSL event in the not too distant future. COVID safe of course.

We thank our branch members for their continued support during these times. Wishing all a very Merry Christmas, and a safe and healthy 2021.

Event highlights

Beethoven 250th birthday concert

Rescheduled from earlier in the year, we are delighted to be celebrating the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth in our own way with some of our exceptional Annual Music Competition alumni.

Arguably one of the greatest symphonists of all time, we will be celebrating not one but two of Beethoven's symphonies as South African pianists Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman will perform both Symphony No. 1 and Symphony No. 7, uniquely arranged for four hands.

Violinist Michael Foyle, 2013 ROSL AMC Strings Section prize winner, will be performing Beethoven's final violin sonata, no. 10 in G major.

We will also be livestreaming this concert, which you will be able to watch from the comfort of your own home if you are unable to join in London on 15 December, 7pm. Special thanks must go to Ian and Susan Pettman for their support of this concert.



Hermes Experiment concert

Our 2019 Mixed Ensembles Prize winners, and contemporary quartet, The Hermes Experiment, will be returning to ROSL for recital on 8 December. Made up of harp, clarinet, soprano and double bass, they capitalise on their deliberately idiosyncratic combination of instruments to take the opportunity to regularly commission new works and create their own innovative arrangements. Their programme will feature works written for them by Freya Waley-Cohen, Errollyn Wallen, Graham Ross and Jeremy Thurlow, as well as new arrangements of Clara Schumann and Lili Boulanger songs.

We will also be livestreaming this concert, which you will be able to watch from the comfort of your own home if you are unable to join in London on 8 December, 6pm.



Incognito!

This is the third rendition of ROSL's charity postcard exhibition for which artists all over the world are invited to submit work. Our 2016 and 2018 editions presented over 307 submissions and raised over £6,000. In previous editions we have celebrated the launch of the sale with a packed private view, but for 2020 we need to adapt, and this year we are looking forward to launching the sale online. The work will be available to purchase from our ROSL online shop from 5pm on 15 December. The artworks are exhibited anonymously, and

each will be sold for just £50, with the artist name only revealed after the artwork is purchased. All the money raised from each sale will go to support the work of the ROSL Trust (Charity No.306095), focusing on encouraging and enabling arts education around the globe.

The shop can be found at the top of the page www.rosl.org.uk. If you have any questions or would like any help purchasing an artwork, please call +44 (0)20 7408 0214 x 213 or email rosarlarts@rosl.org.uk.

Member-led events

ROSL BOOK GROUP

The Book Group meets once a month at 6 to 7.30pm to discuss modern and classic novels. We meet in person when allowed or on Zoom when necessary.

The next book to be discussed will be Polly Samson's *A Threave of Dreamers* on 16 December. Please contact Eve if you wish to participate.

ROSL BRIDGE CLUB

The Bridge Club is continuing online with our tutor Ingar Kofoed on Mondays 2-4pm, starting with a social chat at 1.30pm. We play ACOL.

We contribute £10 to our tutor, per person. Please note that you will need two devices. One for Zoom to see and talk to each other and another to play. If you wish to join, please contact Eve.

ROSL BACKGAMMON CLUB

The Backgammon Club meets on



Wednesdays 2-4pm either at the Club in person or on Zoom. If you wish to join please contact Eve.

SOCIAL EVENTS

We also meet for drinks on Sundays at 6pm. We have a laugh, share anecdotes, but also discuss serious issues and share interesting links to plays, opera, choirs, art classes, etc. We also chat daily on WhatsApp, and exchange photographs and videos. Do join us.

Contact Eve at: e.mitleton-kelly@mitleton-kelly.org.uk

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ROSL calendar

ROSL NEWS

Book online

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

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

TALK: JAMES BARR, LORDS OF THE DESERT
Tuesday 1 December

HERMES EXPERIMENT CONCERT
Tuesday 8 December



BEETHOVEN'S 250TH BIRTHDAY CONCERT
Tuesday 15 December

CHRISTMAS AT THE CLUB
Thursday 24 December

EW LECTURE: INSPIRATIONAL BLACK WOMEN IN PUBLISHING, MUSIC, AND FASHION
Date tbc

AMC WIND AND BRASS FINAL
Tuesday 9 February

AMC STRINGS FINAL
Tuesday 23 February



BOXING DAY WALKING TOUR
Saturday 26 December



AMC PIANO FINAL
Tuesday 16 February

AMC VOCAL FINAL
Tuesday 2 March

AMC ENSEMBLES A FINAL
Tuesday 9 March

AMC ENSEMBLES B FINAL
Tuesday 16 March

EW SUPPER: LUKE HARDING ON RUSSIA
Thursday 18 March

AMC OVERSEAS FINAL
Tuesday 23 March

ROSL
PHOTOGRAPHY
COMPETITION

Camera category winner 2020:
Holding Hands
by Isabella Agbaje

SHOWCASE THE CONTEMPORARY CULTURE OF THE COMMONWEALTH

The Royal Over-Seas League is pleased to announce the 2021 theme of the ROSL Photography Competition as 'International Friendship'

Prizes of up to £2,000 available

The competition has two categories: **Camera** and **Mobile Phone**

Enter now: www.rosl.org.uk/photography

The deadline for entries is 5pm GMT on Monday 6 September 2021



“If I am to play my best, there is no way but Steinway.”

LANG LANG
STEINWAY ARTIST



STEINWAY & SONS

Steinway Hall London. For more information or to arrange a private appointment at our London showrooms, please call: **0207 487 3391** or email info@steinway.co.uk