

OVERSEAS

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE

IDENTITY

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and others is so much more



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

Front Cover *Holding Hands* Isabella Agbaje

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WELCOME

“ROSL is an oasis for
civilised and rational
discourse in a
seemingly frenetic and
fractured global society”



As we develop our governance review and our longer-term strategy for ROSL and for the ROSL Golden Jubilee Trust, the question of our identity, of who we are and what we stand for arises often. Our founding principles set out in our 1922 Royal Charter talk about ‘the bond of comradeship’ and our mission to ‘render individual service’ and ‘to help one another’ whilst upholding the best traditions of the past. Our Charter referred to the Empire and of course now we think about the Commonwealth family of 53 countries.

The chaos of Brexit has brought into sharp focus the need for these qualities of friendship, respect and service to ‘humanity at large’ to be supported and reinforced at every opportunity to enable all to prosper in the future. Political upheaval, climate change, and more, call for global collaboration and understanding rather than narrow sectarian decision-making. We all have a role to play and ROSL is an oasis for civilised and rational discourse in a seemingly frenetic and fractured global society.

Digital technology is a powerful tool which will be critical to addressing many of the issues facing the world, and here at ROSL it will be key to enabling all members voices to be heard and for members to be in touch with each other and with everything that is happening through our new members’ information platform. However, we can only make the best of these opportunities if you are part of them too and for that we need your email address. We can still only contact about half of our members regularly; so please, if we don’t have it, let us have your email address. If you would like help in setting one up, please let us know.

At this time of year, many members wish to thank staff by contributing towards the Staff Gratuities Fund. You are under no obligation to do so, but if you would like to thank the many people, both front of house and behind the scenes, who are working everyday to make your membership worthwhile, then please do so either at the clubhouse or by contacting the Membership team. The staff are immensely grateful that their hard work and efforts are recognised by members.

Diana Owen OBE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

From the EDITOR

When you are asked to describe someone, what attributes do you choose? Their name, their age, their height, skin colour, eye colour, or hair colour perhaps? Maybe it's what they do for a living, or their political or religious beliefs? Whatever it is, these identifiers only scratch the surface of one's identity. In this issue of *Overseas*, we delve a little deeper to find out the ways, some old and some new, that people are defining themselves and others today.

But, does the race to identify ourselves, by whatever means, result in our empathy ebbing away for those we see as 'different'? On page 6, Abi Millar asks if the drive for greater acceptance among marginalised groups is actually hardening opinions among many people.

As we grow, so our opinions and understanding of the world around us change. But the long memory of social media means a misguided comment from the past can be dredged up within seconds. On page 10, Ross Davies asks if we have sacrificed the ability to reinvent ourselves.

The added risk of us sharing the minutiae of our lives on social media, means we are leaving ourselves at risk of identity theft. A little more self-awareness could make all the difference, as conman-turned-security consultant Frank Abagnale, famously depicted by Leonardo DiCaprio in *Catch Me If You Can*, tells us on page 22.

The most obscure of pastimes can now find a home on the internet and a community with which to share it. Has our collective identity changed now people are free to indulge their passions? On page 14, we find out if the old signifiers such as class, nationality, or wealth are becoming increasingly obsolete.

Plus, in this issue, you can enjoy all your regular news from the clubhouse and branches around the world, event highlights, more features, and the results of our inaugural ROSL Photography Competition on page 26. The cover image this issue is the 'Camera' category winner, *Holding Hands*, by Nigerian photographer Isabella Agbaje.

Enjoy the read and please get in touch with your feedback.

Mark Brierley
editor@rosl.org.uk

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AS PEOPLE INCREASINGLY DEFINE THEMSELVES BY THEIR GENDER, FAITH, SEXUALITY OR RACE, OUR EMPATHY IS EBBING AWAY, ACCORDING TO THE UK'S EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. ABI MILLAR ASKS IF THE DRIVE FOR GREATER ACCEPTANCE AMONG MARGINALISED GROUPS IS ACTUALLY HARDENING OPINIONS AMONG MANY PEOPLE

In May, David Isaac, chair of the UK's equality watchdog, made a damning case against identity politics. Speaking to the *Observer*, he said the tendency for people to define themselves by a particular subgroup (gender, sexuality, faith, race, etc) was undermining empathy among Britons.

"The key issue is 'how do we move beyond the 'I' to the 'we'?', how do we think of ourselves as citizens in a country or in the world who are not just focused on what works for me and my narrow group," he said. "How do we ensure that we think about people who are different to us?"

His comments were driven in part by an ongoing row in Birmingham, where a group of Muslim parents were protesting against LGBT education in schools. It was a stark example of the ways one identity (a faith group) could clash with another (LGBT), and seemed to rest on the assumption that protecting one's interests was a zero sum game.

The challenge, suggested Isaac, was to ensure "we don't end up in the siloed world where everybody is hypersensitive about their own individual interests and less empathetic about how other people are treated."

Of course, this was far from the first time identity politics as a concept had come under fire. Francis Fukuyuma's recent book *Identity* pegs identity politics as a threat to liberal democracies. Amy Chua's *Political Tribes* suggests that ethnic and tribal affinities are becoming a source of fragmentation and ultimately conflict.

In Australia, a recent parliamentary enquiry has labelled identity politics a 'source of intolerance' alongside right-wing nationalism. And an academic journal, the *Journal of Controversial Ideas*, has been set up to combat the creep of identity politics into academia.

In fact, so prevalent are critiques of identity politics, it's sometimes hard to determine what's being criticised – is it a clearly defined concept or a bogeyman that changes its meaning according to the critic? Dr Timothy Oliver,



a lecturer in British Politics and Public Policy at the University of Manchester, feels the term has become shorthand for 'something we don't like'.

"The central argument appears to be that identity politics is a barrier to compromise, it's a barrier to community, it's a barrier to togetherness," he says. "But everyone practises identity politics, in that all politics includes an element of identity at all times. Often, the people who shout the loudest about how terrible it is, are people who have got quite attached to a certain identity."

The classic case here might be a white working-class Trump voter, who sees the Democratic Party as placing minorities' interests above their own. Or, a Brexit supporter laying into the 'metropolitan elite' – a supposed ruling class who are out of touch with more authentically British concerns.

More toxic are the likes of 'white pride' and 'men's rights activist' movements – privileged groups that have clearly adopted the language of identity politics, despite professing to stand against it.

As Oliver points out, many politicians speak as though they're somehow exempt from having an identity. He cites the former Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron, who once described identity politics as a 'poison': 'insidious, irrational, and lead[ing] to decisions that threaten our liberty'. The irony isn't hard to spot.

"Tim Farron had a lot to say about the importance of religion as an element of his identity – when he resigned, he said he found it impossible to reconcile his faith with being the leader of the Liberal Democrats," says Oliver. "Well, that's a question of identity – am I a Christian first or am I a liberal first? Apparently these things are now in contention, and that's a question of identity politics."

Professor Dennis Altman, a fellow in human security at La Trobe University, Melbourne, agrees that identity politics are fundamentally impossible to escape.

"I think everybody, to some extent, reflects their identity in their political positions and the problem arises when that's the only thing that's talked about," he says. "The current obsession by the right to attack identity politics is silly, when they themselves do so in the name of a different identity. The term is being misused."

While a history of identity politics is beyond the scope of this piece, a good place to start might be the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 70s. These movements were fuelled by the desire for equality for all. In his 1971 book *A Theory of Justice*, the philosopher John Rawls imagined a society structured without reference to 'race, gender, religious affiliation, [or] wealth'.

However, by the 1980s and 90s, the 'I have a dream' mentality was coming to seem utopian. Many conservatives were using the language of equality – claiming they 'didn't see colour', for instance – as a means

IDENTITY POLITICS IS A BARRIER TO COMPROMISE, TO COMMUNITY, TO TOGETHERNESS

of opposing progressive policies and entrenching the same old hierarchies. The left responded with a new movement – one that centred the rights of the group.

Although these two strands of thought (“I want recognition as a human being” versus “I want recognition as a black lesbian American”) have co-existed ever since, today’s discussion is dominated by the latter. For many people on the left, a focus on group identities means foregrounding inequalities and combating oppression.

As Altman has argued, the problems begin once a person’s group identity becomes more important than what they say. He gives the example of running into a conservative acquaintance at a Greens fundraiser during the last Australian election.

“He said, ‘but the Greens have a gay candidate and I’ll support any gay candidate,’” he recalls. “Now I think that’s just silly – someone’s sexuality when they’re running for office is less important than the positions they hold.”

The discussion on the left can also contain an uncomfortable element of essentialism, in which identity is understood as something inflexible and rigid (and therefore prone to splintering into ever-smaller subgroups). Altman, who has been a gay rights activist since the 1960s, is not a fan of all the labels on what is now called the LGBTQIA+ spectrum.

“It actually undermines the idea that sexuality and gender are fluid,” he says. “I don’t like talking about political correctness, because that’s such a bogey of the right, but people can feel morally superior by positioning one identity against another.”

For many of today’s critics of identity politics, what they’re really seeking is a return to a more universalist kind of discourse. To return to David Isaac’s comments in the *Observer*, his point was that we should identify as ‘citizens in a country or in the world’, as opposed to members of a subgroup.

This impulse makes sense in Brexit-torn Britain, which (like many other countries) is deeply fractured. However, as Oliver points out, if you want people to cohere around a national identity, you’ve got to work out what

it is that you can sell to them.

“One of the problems with these common identities – Britishness for example – is that a person might say, well, that doesn’t speak to my identity or it represents something

antithetical to my identity,” he says. “You might be a person of Indian descent who associates Britishness with colonialism. So yes, a national identity can be a unifier, but you’ve got to think about how you represent and manufacture that identity.”

He adds that there are many factors in play today that make it easier to put the ‘I’ before the ‘we’.

“The way we consume media and culture and consumer goods lends itself to a more atomistic understanding of society,” he says. “Quite simply, it’s easier to go out and find something that’s close to what you want now than it’s ever been before in human history. So there are broader social and economic forces at work here.”

These issues are nothing if not complex. Unfortunately, it isn’t a complexity that translates well to our current political climate, which seems to be characterised by people talking at cross-purposes.

In Altman’s most recent book, *Unrequited Love*, he talks about how identity politics might play out in the forthcoming US presidential election.

“My hunch is whoever is the Democratic nominee, it won’t be an old white man,” he says. “There are some very formidable women candidates for the nomination, two African American candidates, one or two Hispanic candidates, an openly gay man... I think this is a reflection of a much greater acceptance of diversity. But Trump appeals to the sense that American white men are somehow under threat, and if he survives long enough to fight for re-election that will be a major factor in the way his campaign unravels.”

Whatever your opinions on identity politics, we can all agree that there’s a lot at stake here. These issues are not going away any time soon, and the onus will be on all of us to try to make sense of them.

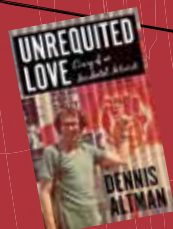
FURTHER READING



IDENTITY
Francis Fukuyama
Identity politics are
a threat to liberal
democracies



POLITICAL TRIBES
Amy Chua
Ethnic and tribal
affinities are
becoming a source
of fragmentation



UNREQUITED LOVE
Dennis Altman
The 2020 election will
largely play out along
identity political lines

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SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

As we grow, so our opinions and understanding of the world around us change. But the long memory of social media means a misguided comment from the past can be dredged up within seconds. Have we sacrificed the ability to reinvent ourselves? Ross Davies reports

“I change during the course of a day. I wake and I’m one person, and when I go to sleep I know for certain I’m somebody else.” So claimed Bob Dylan in an interview with *Newsweek* in 1997. True enough, the longevity of the singer-songwriter’s career can be attributed to mutability, from the cherubic troubadour image of his early career to the gaunt, flame-haired rock star filling out stadia only a few years later.

But reinvention is not the sole preserve of the artist – not least when it comes to our convictions and beliefs of the world

around us. Political stripes, in particular, often change over time, as does our understanding of societal mores – for better or worse.

The hardest part of all for many of us is the recall of opinions we’ve aired out in the open, only to regret them further down the line. It could be a politician whose leadership you backed, or an off-the-cuff remark meant to be humorous but that was deeply offensive to someone.

Before the advent of social media, it was considerably easier to change one’s mind about something without being held to account. But digital technology has a longer

memory than any of us could ever have imagined.

Whether it be Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, we are seduced by the dopamine hit of self-validation; putting out a statement that defines our integrity and belief system – in other words, our identity.

But the world of social media can be a noisy, angry place with little time for nuance and balance, resulting in polarisation and mass tribalisation. As Silicon Valley pioneer Jaron Lanier summarised, “social media platforms make more money when people are irritated, obsessed, divided and angry”.

The prevalence of pile-ons and recriminations on Twitter is an ugly business. Speaking at a live event with the *New Yorker* in 2017, Author Zadie Smith rationalised her avoidance of social media as a means of allowing her “the right to be wrong”.

According to David Marshall, a Professor in new media, communication and cultural studies at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, the trend also has to do with the increasingly blurred line between the private and the public, which he has labelled “privlic”.

“What we are experiencing is a blending of public, private, personal and the intimate into online culture,” he says. “It’s really destabilising. We still want to present ethical versions of ourselves, even though we cross lines at different moments. And when we do, it can really haunt us.”

Despite the doubling of permitted character length from 140 to 280, Twitter’s brevity can be a double-edged sword for users. While

allowing us to dash off a pithy *bon mot* or slant in a matter of seconds, it can often come at the expense of context and tone.

“Different registers can be completely lost on social media,” says Marshall. “You might mean something in a humorous way, like a meme, but people might not realise you’re joking.”

However, when I suggest to Ulrike Schultze that all of this has had a damaging impact on self-development and personal reinvention, she isn’t so sure. For Schultze, Associate Professor in IT and operations management at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, social media can actually allow us to self-curate the narratives of our lives.

“What is required to reinvent oneself is narrative,” she explains. “It’s the ability to spin new yarns and narrativize.

That’s one of the theories about identity that’s been commonly accepted for a long time. It also forces us to reconcile events that we

aren’t particularly proud of with who we believe we are, and who we want to be.”

In his book *The People vs Tech* the British writer Jamie Bartlett describes the “panopticon effect” of social media, in which, instead of one central watchman monitoring us, “we are all being watched by everyone”. This means everyone is fair game for criticism, whether they are famous or not.

Predictably, celebrities and politicians generate the biggest Twitterstorms when they are outed for perceived past misdemeanours online. Sometimes, the dredging is impressively thorough. Earlier this year, Comedian Kevin Hart was forced to apologise after a series of homophobic tweets from 2010 resurfaced.

While the original media predates the age of social media, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has also found himself embroiled in controversy after photos were unearthed of him wearing blackface when he was teacher. In the case of a politician such as Trudeau, is it right that he be held accountable for past actions in the name of public interest?

“Elections have huge consequences, so getting a sense of a candidate is really important,” says Schultze. ▶

“Before the advent of social media, it was considerably easier to change one’s mind. But digital technology has a longer memory than any of us could have imagined

"What I did was hurtful to people who live with intolerance and discrimination every day... I know that I let a lot of people down with that choice, and I am deeply sorry for my huge mistake. I feel terrible."

JUSTIN TRUDEAU
@justinrudeau

Earlier this year, several images surfaced of the Canadian Prime Minister wearing blackface. Despite the initial negative public reaction, he was still able to win a second term in office.

"We live in a world of hyper-transparency. Nevertheless, some politicians are better than others of overcoming these types of scandal, by narrativizing it in a way that is convincing and allows people to forgive them."

As revealed in Jon Ronson's *So You've Been Publicly Shamed*, the road to redemption following online scandal can be a long one. In recent years, this has seen the rise in Silicon Valley of virtual footprint managers and reputational consultants, who – for a little short of a king's ransom – can push negative news stories down into the backpages of Google.

However, where the elision of social media and identity can be especially problematic is when young people are involved. For many, adolescence can be a confusing time, in which identity is often not fully formed – or stifled by the constraints of peer pressure. In the name of exploration, teenagers do and say things that will most likely produce a shudder of shame and embarrassment when remembered as adults.

This has prompted some to call for the option of digital erasure, through which people can opt to wipe anything posted online before the age of 18.

"I don't know how that could be accomplished, realistically, and whether the tech companies would get behind it," says Schultze. "There might also be people who don't want their past to be wiped out."

"Where the problem comes in for adolescents, is when they are being hired, because hiring firms – often through their legal departments – look at their social

media accounts and decide whether a candidate is a liability or not."

For those of a certain age, it's a wonder to recall the internet's early days – before the arrival of advertisers – as a type of safe space, in which users, in the words of Media Historian Kate Eichhorn could "adopt an alternative gender, don wings or have sex with mythical creatures".

Cyberspace represented an outpost of geekdom, allowing a previously repressed identity to flourish. In a chatroom or forum, one could transform from an acne-ridden, tongue-tied adolescent into the avatar of their own making.

The dark web aside, most of us accept that to get the full benefits of social media we have to pay the price of relinquishing our anonymity. That said, says Marshall, users are becoming savvier around what they put

out about themselves in the public domain.

"We are beginning to pull back," he says. "We are starting to edit and curate ourselves to the point that we are eliminating a lot of information. This is partly down to a fear of surveillance."

"We are also starting to ask more questions, like, at what point does technology actually become a version of our voice? At what point do we say that it is a public version of our identity, or the private version?"

As for the future, is withdrawal from social media platforms the only way we can ensure our missteps and faux pas aren't calcified for digital eternity? Plenty of recent op-eds can be found advocating the deletion of our social media accounts, but for many this would represent a fear of missing out (commonly abbreviated as FOMO).

However, in Schultze's eyes, the concept of selfsameness – the idea that we are the same person as we were yesterday – is not the case for everybody, and never has been. Instead, identity is something altogether more complex and multifaceted.

"As we become more familiar with these technologies, I see identity becoming more fluid," she says. "So, similar to the same way we have redefined marriage, so we will redefine identity, so as to essentially accommodate the kind of reality that we live in."

"The definition of identity based on self-sameness and which ignores these other dimensions will fade away in favour of other forms of identity where we really are talking about multiple selves existing in different spaces."

"My behaviour was inappropriate & I apologise unreservedly to everyone I've let down. I was stupid & there's no fool like an old fool"

SIMON DANCZUK
@SimonDanczuk

Labour MP for Rochdale Simon Danczuk sent explicit messages to an 17-year-old girl, causing him to be suspended from the party and a public apology on Twitter soon followed.

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The most obscure of pastimes can now find a home on the internet and a community with which to share it. Has our collective identity changed now that people are free to indulge their passions? Abi Millar asks whether the old signifiers such as class, nationality, or wealth are becoming increasingly obsolete

As a teenager growing up in Weymouth in the 1990s, Sean Adams had two great passions: music and the burgeoning World Wide Web. “I was birthed in the blood and fire of the early web,” he recalls. “The more I read about the Dark Web-like bulletin boards of the 70s and 80s, the more I understand about the 90s internet I stumbled into via my AOL dial-up connection. It felt logical to my 16-year-old brain to create my own outpost.” That outpost became *Drowned in Sound*, an ‘online fanzine’ – and for a while, one of the world’s most successful music sites – that celebrates its 20th anniversary next year. What gave it its energy was not just its content, but also the sense of community that sprang up around its discussion boards. “The social board became like the best pub next door to your favourite music venue,” says Adams. “Conversations were unmoderated and in many ways self-moderating, although a fair bit of it was young men experimenting with the boundaries of edginess, trying to find themselves among the froth of banter.” For those of us the right age to remember, the internet of the early 2000s was an aesthetically challenged and faintly anarchic place that nonetheless held a deep sense of possibility. Rather than going to the library, you could source whatever information you needed by Asking Jeeves. And, rather than finding others nearby who shared your interests, you could talk stamp collecting or cha-cha dancing with enthusiasts on the other side of the world.

As we near the end of the decade, Facebook has 2.41 billion monthly users and Instagram and WeChat both have over a billion. Online dating is one of the most common ways to meet your partner, and Reddit (‘a network of communities based on people’s interests’) is the third most visited website in the US. It’s easy to take our online connections for granted. Ten years ago, however, the very concept was a novelty. For many people on the early social sites, there was another source of excitement: the scope for converting online friendships into ‘real’ ones. “There are so many examples at *Drowned in Sound*,” says Adams. “I know of at least one marriage between two regular users, who were also behind an A-Z club night where each month they only played music by acts starting with a particular letter. There are regular meet

ups and pub crawls all over the UK. I’ve met people at conferences in Canada who moved there after falling in love with bands through the site and chatting to locals. I’ve probably forgotten a hundred other great examples of people coming together.” As early as 1959, the Sociologist Erving Goffman described the possibility of a community that wasn’t constrained by physical space. His book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, described community as a mindset of belonging – if you felt yourself to be part of a community, then you were, no matter where you were situated. Today, the concept of virtual communities is well established. As well as staying in touch with friends and relatives, the internet has enabled us to forge bonds with those who would have otherwise remained strangers. As the zoologist Desmond Morris has put it: “although people are often criticising computers and saying they’re isolating us... in fact technology is actually helping us to strengthen [our] old tribal ties.” Professor Daniel Miller, a Digital Anthropologist at University College London, thinks we should be careful about the terminology here. While we may talk colloquially about ‘finding our tribe’, anthropologically speaking a ‘tribe’ refers only to your kinship bonds.

“Wide extended family are the only group who could actually be called a tribe,” he says. “True, one of the things that happened really early on the internet, is that people who had a minority interest realised this was a facility where they could contact people with similar interests in other parts of the world. But I don’t think

The internet of the early 2000s was an aesthetically challenged and faintly anarchic place that nonetheless held a deep sense of possibility



that would have made much difference to the degree they identified themselves with the activity, and I don't think an awful lot is gained by calling those people a tribe."

He points out that, as individuals, we have many different identities and ways of presenting ourselves. To frame this as an issue of online versus offline is a major oversimplification.

"Online does create a new set of possibilities about how we think of ourselves, but I think we can easily overhype this and make it into something more dramatic than it is," he says. "There have always been multiple offline selves and there are also multiple online selves. We shouldn't necessarily expect we're going to be the same person on Snapchat or Facebook or a website, any more than we're the same person at work or as a mother or whatever else."

In short, our digital identities don't so much supplant old notions of identity as add to them. It can be tempting to think of the internet as a vast, democratising place where you can be whatever you want to be, rendering old signifiers of identity (class, wealth, nationality, etc.) redundant. In practice, however, we are unlikely to see such a dramatic breach between the online and offline spaces.

"If you reflect on your own experience with your phone and social media would you feel these things represented you well by talking about it in terms of your identity and tribe?" says Miller. "I doubt it. It doesn't ring true on a common sense basis."

This said, there are those for whom the online realm really has become all-consuming, maybe at the expense of 'IRL' forms of social connection and self-worth. Adams takes a dim view of what digital spaces are doing to our sense of self, noting that he sees more sadness and desperation online than ever before.

"Being able to express who you are in a world of infinitely scrollable

platforms, where people want to fit in and stand out at the same time... having a few grains of your identity that you can cling to and other people can grasp is key," he says. "That sensation of being just another line of content in a spreadsheet is an often unsaid existential crisis that drives people to join in with the herds."

At their most malign, online communities can become places where toxic ideologies can fester. For a certain type of lonely, disenchanted individual, what begins as a source of belonging can warp into a distorted echo chamber (we only need click on an 'incel' forum or a site like 4chan to see this mechanism at play).

At their best, though, online communities can prove intensely healing. Once upon a time, if you were going through something difficult, you might have been the only person you knew in that position. Today, you can marshal the support you need online.

Fabian Bolin, a tech CEO from Sweden, founded WarOnCancer following his own leukemia diagnosis, aged 28, in 2015. (He is now in remission following 900 days of chemotherapy.)

"WarOnCancer is a tech company on a mission to radically improve the mental health of people affected by cancer," he says. "We are a social network, and a

storytelling platform that allows users to share their experiences. We help them forge connections by exchanging stories, or alternatively by searching for and connecting with people going through similar cancer journeys."

The idea came about from his hospital bed, when he uploaded a post to Facebook that went viral. He realised the impact that storytelling had on his own mental health and subsequently how much a digital platform could help people.

"Sharing my experience with others gave me a greater sense of purpose and meaning than I have ever felt before, and helped me to overcome feelings of isolation," he says. "Having conducted interviews with many patients and loved ones since founding WarOnCancer, it's become clear that my experience was not unique. I struggled with loss of self-worth after being diagnosed, and many people affected also report losing their sense of identity and purpose – as well as struggling with the inevitable pity received from those around them."

He adds that having a community of people who understand these feelings is invaluable for those affected by cancer. It's a prime example of the way online communities can foster a sense of togetherness – creating a safe space where conversations can be had and friendships forged around a common purpose.

It seems clear, then, that the ability to build 'digital tribes' is neither a good thing nor a bad thing in itself. Charlie Brooker, creator of the techno-dystopia *Black Mirror*, has described technology as a 'neutral' – if it leads to nightmarish scenarios along the way, that's down to how it's being used.

Online communities can be helpful or harmful to their members, just as offline communities can. And beyond that, they give us a tool to create identities that might otherwise never have been realised.

Our digital identities don't so much supplant old notions of identity as add to them



Paul A Young and his team work daily to make all their creations completely by hand. ROSL members receive 15% discount in store.

143 Wardour Street, Soho, London, W1F 8WA
www.paulayoung.co.uk

“

Famed for his imaginative creations (...) The most daring of the young guns.

– The Times

“

He shuffles ingredients like a croupier with a deck of cards

– Time Out

“

The sea salted chocolate is an inspiration.

– Nigella Lawson

NOT-SO-AVERAGE ROSL MEMBER

Trying to define the identity of the 'average member' is a fruitless task. The breadth and variety of people who call ROSL their home from home, the reasons why they become members, and how they use the club, is hugely varied

Delving into the results of the recent members' survey, conducted earlier this year, it soon becomes clear that what you all like about the Royal Over-Seas League depends hugely on a number of factors. With membership spread across the world in 103 countries, a 50/50 split between men and women, from teenagers to nonagenarians, the breadth of interests

and reasons for joining is staggering.

You might live in London and pop into the clubhouse to entertain friends and colleagues, or attend the events programme. You may live further afield and stay at the clubhouse less frequently, but use it as a base when visiting London or the UK. You may live on the other side of the world, but become a member to support young musicians and artists, and education

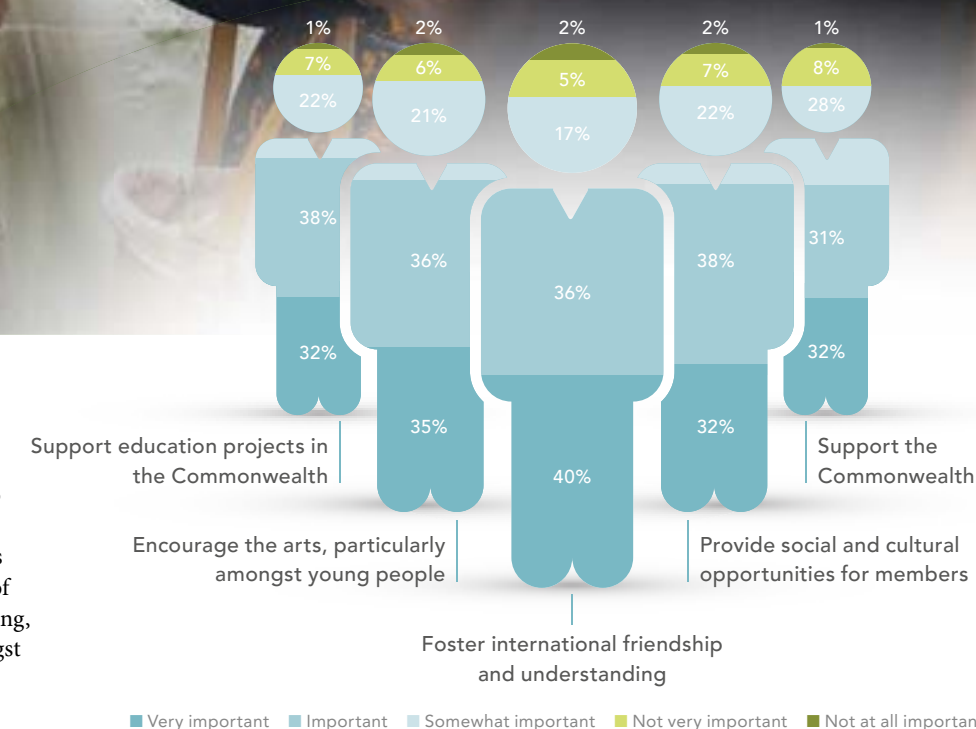
projects around the world. You might enjoy the events held by your local branch and only come into contact with HQ through this journal every quarter. Despite these differences, there are still common threads that bind everyone together.

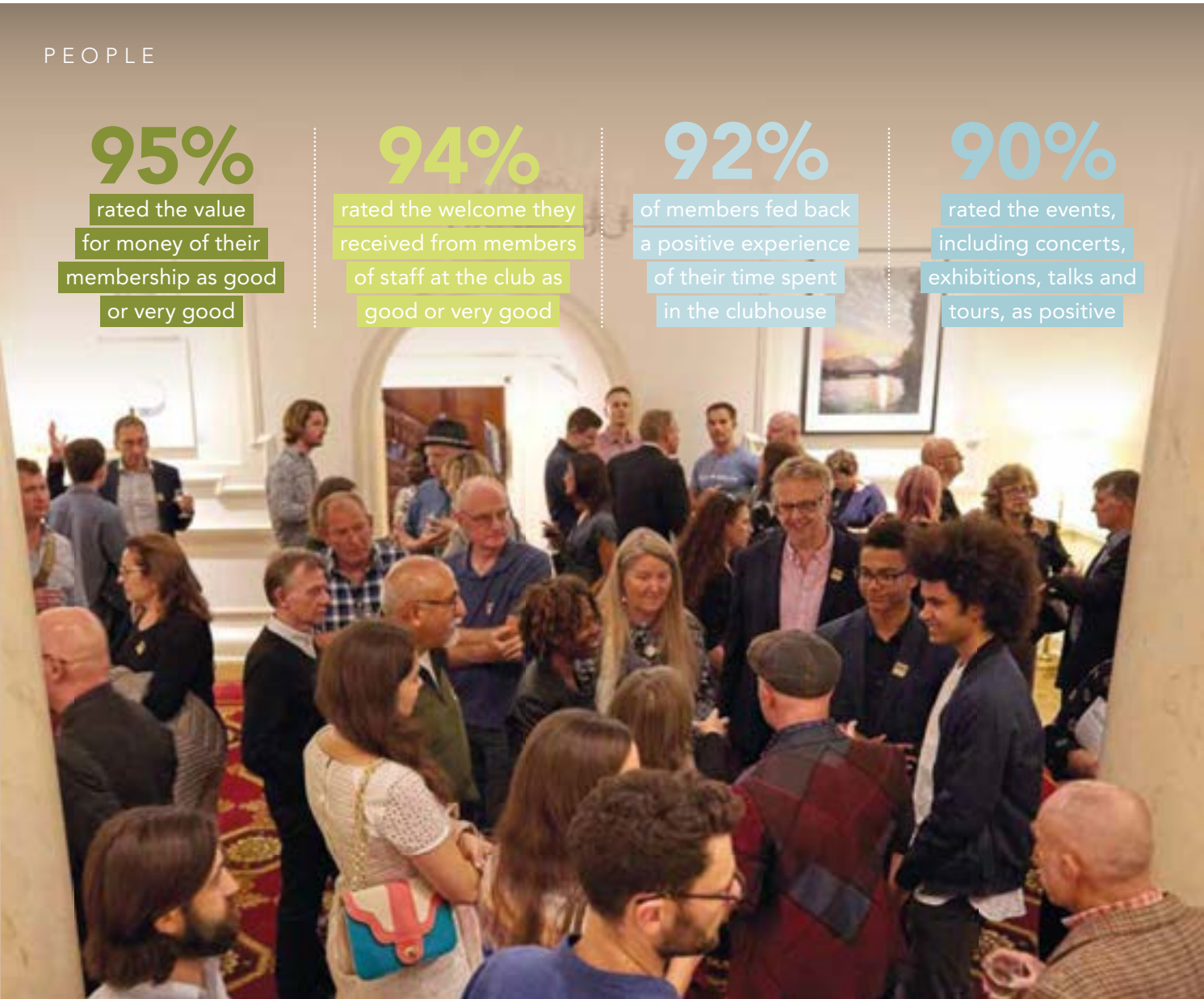
According to the membership survey conducted earlier this year by the Audience Agency, the most commonly cited motivation for becoming a member was

access to the clubhouse facilities in London, with 87% giving this as one of their reasons for joining. This was also the main motivation towards membership for almost half of respondents (46%).

Overall, members felt that all of ROSL's values are important, with the fostering of international friendship and understanding, and the encouragement of the arts amongst young people being the top two values. ➔

THE IMPORTANCE OF ROSL'S AIMS





95%

rated the value
for money of their
membership as good
or very good

94%

rated the welcome they
received from members
of staff at the club as
good or very good

92%

of members fed back
a positive experience
of their time spent
in the clubhouse

90%

rated the events,
including concerts,
exhibitions, talks and
tours, as positive

A home from home and more

It's clear the clubhouse is important to a lot of people, but what facilities are most sought after? According to the survey, the largest number of members have at some point used the garden (with 82% of respondents having used the garden at some point during their membership), followed by the Duke of York Bar (81%), the bedroom accommodation (79%) and the restaurant (79%).

Beyond the clubhouse, almost all survey members were aware that ROSL has an arts programme (97%), and most (62%) had attended an element of it – most commonly art exhibitions (38% of respondents), concerts (36%), and talks (23%).

The events members are most likely to attend in the future are art exhibitions and music concerts. The most important factor in attending an event is intellectual stimulation. 46% of overseas members would

“

ROSL is a warm and welcoming club in a great, central London position, with a comfortable drawing room and an attractive garden overlooking Green Park

also watch recorded ROSL events, which bodes well for the new AV equipment being installed in the Princess Alexandra Hall.

Becoming a member, staying a member

Overall, members gave a positive account of their experience of the various aspects of their ROSL membership. The most highly rated elements were the value for money of the membership (95% good or very good); the welcoming staff (94%); the clubhouse (92%); and tours, trips or talks (90%).

Some of the common words in many responses were:

“A very nice location in London for overseas visitors”

“ROSL is a warm and welcoming club in a great, central London position, with a comfortable drawing room and an attractive garden overlooking Green Park”

“A unique, comfortable and friendly place to stay in London with good amenities and location”

What is also worth noting, that for all the positive experiences that members fed back in the survey, many also offered suggestions for areas we could improve. We take your feedback very seriously and are working to put your suggestions for the way we operate and what we offer into action.

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SCAM ME IF YOU CAN

With more and more of us sharing the minutiae of our lives on social media, we are leaving ourselves at risk of identity theft. A little more self-awareness could make all the difference, as conman-turned-security-consultant **Frank Abagnale** tells Ross Davies

“Anyone can have their identity stolen from them – even me,” says Frank Abagnale. He should know. For much of the 1960s, Abagnale was one of America’s most notorious impostors, assuming no fewer than eight identities, including airline pilot, physician and lawyer. His story was immortalised in the 2002 Steven Spielberg film *Catch Me If You Can*.

Yet, since being released from prison in 1974, Abagnale has sublimated his eye for a scam for the good, establishing himself as a highly respected authority on fraud, forgery and cybersecurity.

In between consulting and lecturing at the FBI Academy, Abagnale has found time to write a new book. Entitled *Scam Me If You Can*, it is an expansive compendium of self-protection tips for consumers to protect themselves from scammers. It weighs in on everything from tax fraud and real estate ruses to charity rackets and the oldest con of all – identity theft.

It’s a problem that is getting worse. In the UK alone, almost 500 people a day fall victim to identity theft, claims Cifas, the fraud prevention body. In the US in 2018, close to 16 million people suffered the same fate – losing roughly \$17 billion in the process.

For Abagnale, there is a direct correlation between the epidemic and society’s willingness to flaunt personal data online – particularly social media platforms.

“People give away so much information about themselves and then they complain that someone stole their identity,” he says, speaking over the phone from his office in Washington DC.

“I’m not on any social media whatsoever. If you told me where you were born and your date of birth on your Facebook page, that would be enough for me to go and steal your identity.”

It is much easier for scammers to assume another’s identity than it was when Abagnale was on the lam. The demographic of victims is also much vaster than one might think. Abagnale was commissioned to write his new book by the American Association of Retired People (AARP), with the aim of helping senior citizens better safeguard themselves. However, he soon discovered in his research that younger people are more open to risk.

“I was amazed to find out that millennials are scammed more often than seniors – they are really naïve,” he says. “Although seniors tend to lose more money from scams

because they have more cash to begin with.”

In the opening chapter of *Scam Me If You Can*, Abagnale tells the cautionary tale of Helen Andrews, a 64-year-old retiree, who has her identity entirely subsumed by a scammer thanks to stolen paperwork and credit card details from her home.

For Andrews, the months-long ordeal – which saw her account drained and credit rating totalled – left her feeling like “a non-human being”. This sense of violation is common amongst victims, and in some cases carries the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

So, what lessons can be learned from Andrews’ case? First and foremost, says Abagnale, is that we do not yet live in a paperless society (despite what the insistence of futurists). Many of us still receive bank statements and gas bills in the post, including account details and other personal information – all grist for the mill for scammers.

Rule number one, says Abagnale: “Invest in a good shredder. Because we’re still more likely to see the paperless toilet than we are a paperless society.”

As highlighted by the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal last year – in which it was discovered that the social media giant had sold on the data of tens of millions of users to the British consulting firm – we also need to be aware of the potential for our data to be used without our permission. As alluded by Abagnale above, it might be in one’s interest to come off social media.

Unfortunately, the advent of the internet means it is harder to track down online scammers than the analogue confidence men of yore, who, like Abagnale in his former life, relied predominantly on charm and good patter. These days your identity is more likely to be stolen by “a guy in his bedroom in Russia with a laptop”.

“These guys will never see their victim, so there is no compassion or emotion on their part,” says Abagnale.

“They’ll take you for every penny – technology has made it easy for them.”

As Abagnale says, anyone at any time can find themselves at the unwanted end of a scam. It is often cause for embarrassment, but shouldn’t be. Victims would instead do well to share their experiences in the name of education and societal vigilance.

That said, prudence should always start at home. “You can’t rely on the police, the banks or the government to protect you,” says Abagnale. “It’s down to you to be smarter.”



“People give away so much information about themselves and then they complain that someone stole their identity... It's down to you to be smarter



Commonwealth creativity

The winners of the 2019 Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition have been announced.

The Junior Category winner, 13-year-old Veronica Shen from Singapore, was chosen by a panel chaired by ROSL Director-General Diana Owen

[Read Veronica's winning entry, *Lost*, right](#)

Veronica's poem *Lost* follows the story of a girl growing up in China as it explores a complicated relationship with the country's past. She entered the competition as a student of Raffles Girls' School. Veronica chose to write on the topic 'My Cultural Connections' because she "wished to express my own feelings...and present an issue while developing the art of writing." When informed of her success in the competition, Veronica felt 'Surprise, elation'.

Memorials for the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 (Hong Kong)

LOST

Veronica Shen, 13, Singapore

At four she watches round-eyed
A marriage, delight dressed in snow

Though brooks softly smile and sigh
A laugh extravagant, as tea flows
Fire in her hands, carmine
Plum blossoms in cold wind dance
Dyed in fortune, in romance ¹

Four years come and go
In her hand a bamboo flute
Her sister, the bride of years ago
Austerly directs a prelude
Weighting every breath and blow
The precision of tradition
Upheld in her education

Four years more
In the orchestra she plays
Amongst others, students all
As *dizi* ² sings, she sways
A lark in the music hall
She was there, in sepia photograph
A part of them, caught mid-laugh

Time flows by, four years
Revolution comes, days pass
The Loyalty dance ³, a dance of fears
Tranquillity shatters like glass
Across the country fire sears
Winter's plum was rosy in the snow
It darkens to blood red, a river's flow

She is sixteen, in her heart flame rises
As smoke curls from temples
And books burn with crackling cries
Traditions extinguished like candles
Sister quietly recites, under night skies
Ju bei yao mingyue, dui ying cheng sanren ⁴
She speaks the words of ancients

Tongue flutters and fingers fly
Living in the sound. Faster faster faster
Flute's tremolo, unparalleled joy
Dead bamboo's song, living girl's laughter
Proud, uninhibited, pure, high
Red scarf flutters, a lark's wings
Dark head shining as it sings

Decades go, caught in the madness
She remembers a wedding
The blooms have lost their lightness
In frost's bite and sting
Red no longer means success
And gunshots sound in *Tian-an-men* ⁵
The city square, old gate to heaven

That was then, now is today
She sits and tells a tale
To a child, and her head is grey
Speaking as winter winds wail
This child here, she may not stay
But she is here and she will hear
The story of past years

Little girl, you wish to write
You wish to write? But, my child
You have not seen the sight
You know not of the wild
Only of this city's cold bright night
Ashen, washed out by the rain
The culture you speak of has waned

Yes, grandmother. I will write
I wish to write, as your grandchild
Bold was this country's former might
Though I know not of the wild
Only of this city's cold bright night
This after all is the land of my birth
I will write. I'll write for all I am worth

¹ This is 1950s NE China, when brides started to wear white. Red is associated with fortune.
² Chinese woodwind, usually made of bamboo.
³ Students danced to pledge loyalty to Mao Zedong.
⁴ A line from a poem by Li Bai. Classical literature was one of the banned "Four Olds".
⁵ The Tian-an-men (literally, heaven-peace-gate) Square protests took place in Beijing, 1989.

ROSL

PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

With over 250 photographs from 21 countries, the ROSL Photography Competition has been a huge success. We received images from all around the world, presenting many different interpretations of the theme of style. Visual Arts Curator Eilidh McCormick introduces the winners

As well as a huge geographical spread, there was also a range in the age of applicants with the oldest being 67, the youngest only 18 and the average 33, showing that the open format was very inclusive. The conditions of entry asked that photographs were taken within the last 12 months and had a link to a current or former Commonwealth country, ensuring the range of images captured the contemporary Commonwealth of today.

All the images were judged by our panel of industry experts: Rakesh Mohindra, Co-Founder of *pic.london*; Renée Mussai, Senior Curator and Head of Curatorial, Archive and Research, *Autograph Gallery*; Germaine Walker, Director, Agent and Producer; Bryan Angelo Lim, Director, Singapore / *qu'est-ce que c'est design*; and Farah Mahbub, Photographer and Professor of the Photography Programme of the *Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture* in Pakistan. Our overseas judges, Bryan Angelo Lim and Farah Mahbub, received information packs about the photographers and judged remotely, while the London judges met at ROSL to discuss the images in person.

CAMERA CATEGORY WINNER

Holding Hands

Isabella Agbaje

The winning image in the Camera category, chosen by the panel, is *Holding Hands* by Isabella Agbaje. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, Isabella 'izzyella' Agbaje is a 25-year-old self-taught conceptual photographer. Influenced by her experiences living and studying in London, Dublin, San Francisco and Boston, she is currently based in Lagos.

She uses photography to tell stories and showcase unique experiences of love and happiness in a society that's hellbent on discord, anger and confusion.

For Isabella, *Holding Hands* engages a community's hope of oneness and mutual support with common interests through fashion and friendship. She believes that style is the manner in which

we do things, predominantly judged by appearance, but as a photographer and stylist she is interested in form, function and symmetry in her image, "I chose to interpret the theme of this year's ROSL Photography Competition reflecting style as appearance but also symmetry and continuity and unity." Shot on the streets of Lagos, Nigeria, it captures an

encounter at Ikate bus-stop with Saliu and Emmanuel who were on their way from evening Mass, dressed most fashionably in their Sunday best and discussing the ways in which "lagos dey hot, pesin no rest" - meaning the frustrations of Lagos are many and trying to advance in this society is a tireless task. The men are dressed in

Aso-Ebi, (or "family cloth" in English) a West African traditional style that depicts individuality and solidarity as two sides of the same coin. Aso-Ebi is a style of dressing that ensures continuity in relation and identification. The tradition revolves around culture and the dynamic nature of style and fashion to reflect identity, individuality

“Style is the manner in which we do things, predominantly judged by appearance, but as a photographer and stylist, she is interested in form, function and symmetry



and also shared interests. This style of fashion resonates in the Commonwealth values of international cooperation and advancement. Commonwealth member nations have distinct cultural personalities, yet all share essential moral values and goals in economic and socio-cultural sectors. For Isabella’s photograph, Saliu and Emmanuel arranged themselves in synchronicity under the leaves of a plant with the green edges framing their faces and eyes, their expressions showing a hint of joy.

Isabella has great plans for her £2,000 prize money; “With the generous prize from the ROSL, I will take to the innermost parts of Lagos to capture more experiences and authenticity

like *Holding Hands*. It’s quite difficult to shoot street photography in Lagos, especially so as a woman. In broad daylight, there are numerous security issues and transportation mishaps that happen daily. Areas like Oshodi, Ojuelegba, etc. are known for their amazing visual stories, but not as many documentary journalists and photographers are successful in capturing these mostly due to the harassment that ensues. However, the prize money will allow me to adequately prepare a very small team of locals that can bridge the gap, and enable me to capture the visually compelling sides and stories of this exciting, engaging, effervescent environment.”



MOBILE CATEGORY WINNER

Pastel Dogs
Zoral Khurram

The panel chose the image *Pastel Dogs* by Zoral Khurram Naik as the Mobile category winner. Zoral Khurram Naik is an award-winning Pakistan-based photojournalist and documentary photographer. He graduated with a Bachelors in design from the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture where he majored in graphic design and completed minor in photography; his forte, and now primary medium of expression. His work, driven by his curiosity, investigates the stereotypes that surround many social injustices. Through his work, Zoral aims to create empathy and encourage discussion around his chosen topics. In his winning image, he does not explore fashion but architecture and lifestyle with two stray dogs at rest on the front porch of a house in Steel Town, Karachi.



YOUNG PHOTOGRAPHER OF PROMISE WINNER

Joy of Childhood
Amdad Hossain

The final winner was chosen solely by judge Farah Mahbub in memory of her friend and colleague, and ROSL alum, Madiha Aijaz. Amdad Hossain won ‘The Madiha Aijaz Prize for a young Photographer of Promise’ for his work *Joy of Childhood*. Amdad Hossain is from Bangladesh, is 20 years old and photographs as a hobby. In his third year studying for political science, Amdad has been interested in photography from a young age, inspired by the work of

Bangladeshi photographers that he saw while growing up. He has been taking photographs for four years and heard about the competition online. The theme encouraged him to go out with his camera and capture the style in a rural village. His winning picture, *Joy of Childhood*, was taken in a village near Shylet City in Bangladesh. Having won £500, he plans to buy a new camera body, and we look forward to seeing more images from this young photographer in our future competitions.

“Zoral aims to create empathy and encourage discussion. In his winning image he does not explore fashion but architecture and lifestyle with two stray dogs at rest on the front porch

THE COMMENDED TOP IMAGES SELECTED BY THE JUDGES ARE BY:

- Aimee Birnbaum
- Ana Caroline de Lima
- Amitava Chandra
- Saad Choudhry
- Suditpto Das
- Nwando Ebeledike
- Nomsa Fakude
- Aravindan Ganesan
- Rukhsana Iqbal
- Iman Jahangir
- Juliet Kamanga
- Ioana Marinca
- Amos Miller
- Zainab Nasir
- Soumyabrata Roy
- Mohammad Sohaib
- and Wandile Xaba

These images and those of our winners will appear in an exhibition at Over-Seas House and featured on our website. (see page 50 for more information)

Chiang mai

MY CITY

**Former ROSL Hong Kong
Branch Chairman Paul
Surtees gives us his reasons
for choosing Thailand,
specifically Chiang Mai, as
his home in retirement**

Where is it?

Called "The Rose of the North", Chiang Mai is located in the far North of Thailand, some 700km from Bangkok. The picturesque old city (downtown) is still surrounded by a moat and, like York in Northern England, still has extensive remnants of the old city walls and gates. A good way to travel there is to take a private compartment on the overnight train from Bangkok. It was once the capital of a local Lanna Kingdom. Surrounding the town are forested hillsides and farms (Chiang Mai-grown coffee is famous) and mountainsides.

What inspired you to retire to Thailand?

As a young British man, living in London, I often visited one of my uncles, who retired to a beautiful spot facing Lake Lemman in Switzerland, where his neighbours included David Niven and Charlie Chaplin. That gave

me the idea to retire overseas, when the time came. The wonderful book, *The Story of San Michele* by the Swedish doctor Axel Munthe recounts his adventures working in the cities of Paris and Rome (where I often used to work, as well), leading up to his retirement home at Anacapri in Southern Italy, also inspired me – all the more so after I had visited his lovely villa there. There are many attractions to foreigners settling here in Thailand, but to my mind the most important is the charm of the local people; Thai people are generally very gracious.

Why Chiang Mai?

My work, in the fields of tourism, journalism and education has taken me to many cities, including most of the European capitals, many parts of the Middle East and here in the Far East I have worked in Mongolia, Tibet, Peking, Shanghai, Macau and (for 20 years) in Hong Kong.

Bangkok, with a population exceeding eight million, is an exciting city to visit, but too similar (in terms of being very busy) to Hong Kong for me to want to retire to the Thai capital. Instead, the comparatively "green", laid-back and quieter Chiang Mai, ☺



with a population of under a million, became my choice. It has many of the facilities of a big city, whilst retaining something of the relaxed atmosphere of a country town.

How long have you known Thailand?

Travelling from my then-workplace of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, I first toured Thailand – including Chiang Mai – back in 1994. I immediately fell in love with this "Land of Smiles", and dreamed to live here one day. I later revisited different parts of Thailand many times, including working in Bangkok, until I at long last found a house here in Chiang Mai and moved in five years ago.

What can visitors do in Chiang Mai?

Younger visitors often enjoy adventure sports here. Near the town are opportunities for trekking, ziplining, whitewater rafting, go-karting, paint-balling, zorbing, bungy-jumping, shooting, mountain biking, mountain-climbing, safaris, and more. You can also visit a nearby elephant camp, snake farm, tiger camp or a crocodile camp, to get close-up pictures with each of these animals; a big attraction to families with young children. Older visitors often tour the many fine old Buddhist temples located all around the town. There are several interesting museums too; plus a small selection of art galleries and antique shops here. Chiang Mai boasts a wide range of good restaurants serving the cuisines of many lands, including Northern Thai specialities, such as my favourite – the spicy Chiang Mai sausages. I once tried here the rather exotic crocodile steak! You can also take drinks or dinner while floating in a boat going down the river. The nearby hill tribe villages are also well worth a visit, displaying their own special cultures and hand-made attire, from their



origins in nearby countries, including from the highlands of neighbouring China, Burma and Tibet. Thailand grows a vast array of delicious exotic fruits, some of which would be unfamiliar to most foreign visitors; these can be found in our outdoor markets and in specialist fruit shops. I recently attended a lavish government reception here, where the sumptuous and tasty flower-decorated buffet included several varieties of exotic local fruit: all exquisitely hand-carved to resemble flowers. Another category making up the visitor numbers is that of medical tourism. Chiang Mai has many world-class hospitals and many foreign people come to Thailand for medical or dental treatment – which is generally much cheaper here than it would be in their own homelands. And then very many foreigners, including me, choose to retire to Chiang Mai!

“
There are many attractions here in Thailand, but to my mind the most important is the charm of the local people; Thai people are generally very gracious



Far left: The British Ambassador and Paul Surtees at a coffee morning for the expatriate community, hosted by Surtees.

What has changed there, over the years?

Not so many decades ago, Chiang Mai was something of a quiet backwater, which was one of its charms at that time. However, this town has, over recent decades, expanded well beyond the small original area enclosed by the moat. My own area of residence, Nimmerhaemin Road, was mostly farms when I first visited it. Now it is fully built up and has become the Soho of Chiang Mai, filled with guesthouses, hotels, bars, youth hostels, tourist shops, apartment buildings, coffee shops and restaurants. There are also several new and stylish shopping malls located around the city, these days. The provision of more international flights directly into the city has greatly increased visitor numbers over the last few years. If staying downtown, a visitor can walk to many places of interest, as the central city areas are of limited size.

When is the best time to visit?

Our peak tourist season runs from November to February. At that pleasant season, we have cooler mornings, blue skies, white clouds and bright sunshine, but it is then not too hot and with not much rain or humidity. There are many cultural festivals celebrated here, including the Western, Chinese and the Thai new years, and the lovely Flower Festival held here each February.



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LONDON

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Prices vary.
edinburghshogmanay.com

BIRMINGHAM

SWAN LAKE

18-29 February 2020, Birmingham Hippodrome Another Tchaikovsky classic, this time performed by the Birmingham Royal Ballet, is brought to life in a lavish production at the Hippodrome, featuring live orchestration and exquisite dancing.

From £23. www.birminghamhippodrome.com

MANCHESTER

UTOPIAS

From 31 January, Whitworth Gallery The ideal utopia has long been a subject for thinkers, architects, artists, and more. This exhibition will bring together historic and contemporary depictions of utopia to see how these imagined places have changed and continue to evolve. Free. www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk



30 December,
venues across Edinburgh

11 December 2019
– 5 January 2020,
London Coliseum



15-23 February,
venues across York

NATIONAL PARKS

DARK SKIES FESTIVAL

7-23 February, South Downs; 14 February – 1 March, North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales Discover the night sky in parts of the country that benefit from little light pollution this winter. Whether it's enjoy outdoor activities under a beautiful night sky, or stargazing and learning about constellations, there's something for everyone.

Prices vary. www.darkskiesnationalparks.org.uk

GLASGOW

GLASGOW FILM FESTIVAL

26 February – 8 March, venues across the city With its ethos of 'programming without prejudice', the Glasgow Film Festival offers a huge

selection of genre-bending films, giving something for every film lover, from the latest UK premieres to free showings of classic movies from the golden age of Hollywood.

Prices vary.
glasgowfilm.org/festival

YORK

JORVIK VIKING FESTIVAL

15-23 February, venues across the city The largest festival of its kind in Europe, there are events for all ages, ranging from a Viking encampment and swordmanship lessons, to walking tours exploring York's Viking past and archaeological insights into Viking cooking. Prices vary.
jorvikvikingfestival.co.uk

LET THE LEAGUE BE YOUR LEGACY

Continue to support your home from home in the heart of Mayfair by bequeathing a gift to ROSL in your will. Your generosity will give young people around the world an education, it will give talented young musicians, artists and writers the chance of a career, and it will safeguard the future of your beautiful Grade I listed clubhouse.

To discuss email legacy@rosl.org.uk
or call +44 (0)20 7408 0214

Tania Dolvers Photography London



ROSL
ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE
ESTD 1910

NEWS & EVENTS

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

Small but perfectly formed

The Commonwealth is a big place and ROSL's Education projects touch communities in some of them – Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, India, Pakistan and the Solomon Islands – due to the generous spirit of members and assisting organisations. Margaret Adrian-Vallance reports

What links these projects is a desire to support marginalised young people and lively minds, however challenging their circumstances.

It is sometimes thought that ROSL has too many of these projects and should instead concentrate on one big project. Others feel that 'small can be beautiful' to use the phrase of a long-standing donor. Small, well monitored projects can ensure that funds get down the line and are properly used.

It was therefore with much gratitude that the ROSL Trust recently received a donation from 4 Pillars Network 'to be used for ROSL's humanitarian projects in Africa' and shortly afterwards a most generous unrestricted legacy from the estate of Mrs Gita Furber de la Fuente (pictured right) who died in Malta in February 2017.

Gita showed her generous nature in many ways, helping charities and greatly cherished friendship and socialising.

A friend said, "She was never happier, even in her last years, than when she was hosting one of her parties in her handsome home in Balzan." Her wonderful legacy will enable ROSL to do many things.

Due to such generosity, ROSL's education projects continue to touch lives. In Botswana, a group of disadvantaged youngsters have already completed their five-day residential environmental awareness course at the Mokolodi Education Trust. ROSL members living in Botswana have been on hand to help with communication and monitoring.

In Australia, Christine Chamberlain,

Co-ordinator of the Australia Branches-ROSL Trust funded computer lab in the Solomon Islands, is collecting reports on the usefulness of the lab at Selwyn College, and reports that former headmaster Dr David Vunagi has been appointed Governor General.

In Namibia, ROSL is able to continue supporting the 34 ROSL bursary recipients studying Education at University in Windhoek due to the most generous legacy of Dr Donald Valentine. Dr Valentine and his wife Vera were long standing supporters of education projects.

In Kenya, at the Simon Ward Memorial Music Centre at St Andrew's Tarabete Secondary School, there is a new headmaster and opportunities to develop the facility. In Nairobi, ROSL's bursary recipient at the Technical University of Kenya is doing well and is taking the exams for a Certificate of Public Accountancy concurrently with his degree. "Jambo!", he writes, "I am doing great here. I will be doing my final semester next

year from January to April. From there I will go for industrial attachment and then await graduation in December. I also joined our class football team and am playing in a friendly match. Thank you ROSL so very much for your continued support."

The trustees would also like to welcome Clive Carpenter as the new Chairman of the ROSL Trust, and thank outgoing Chairman Sir Anthony for his support over the past nine years. Find out more in the next edition.

“What links these projects is a desire to support marginalised young people and lively minds, however challenging their circumstances”

Gita de la Fuenté 1917-2017

Born in London in 1917, Gita de la Fuenté was a long-time supporter of the Royal Over-Seas League, spending several weeks at the clubhouse each summer after she had made the move to Malta in the 1980s.

Educated in Marseilles, London, Paris and Milan, her career as an opera singer took in several roles with the Carl Rosa Opera Company, including the title role in *Madam Butterfly*, as well as a brief spell at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden and work on screen for the BBC.

After relocating to the Maltese town of Balzan, she became known as a society hostess, whose musical soirees were the must-attend event of the social calendar.

ROSL is hugely thankful for her kind bequest. Gita de la Fuenté, opera singer and hostess, was born on 4 September 1917. She died on 23 February 2017, aged 99.





Visual arts scholars visit the UK

In September, ROSL welcomed Cole Ndelu and Dimple Shah to the UK for our ROSL International Residency with The Art House in Wakefield

Cole is a South African photographer who has spent her time in the UK photographing and developing work across different media. Dimple is a performance artist and printmaker from India and has spent her time in the print studio and thoroughly researching Wakefield and its histories, particularly linked to the stories and applications of the local fauna.

Both artists presented work at Manchester Contemporary in October and their exhibition at The Art House in Wakefield was celebrated with a ROSL event, artist conversation and drinks reception. The exhibition in Wakefield is open to all and will end on 21 December.



Cole (top) and Dimple (above) at the Manchester Contemporary, together with ROSL Visual Arts Curator Eilidh McCormick (left)



Your new Member Portal

As mentioned in the previous issue, ROSL has been investing heavily in its IT systems in 2019, most notably with the implementation of a new CRM system. As part of the upgrade, members now have access to a brand-new Member Portal, which has vastly improved functionality over its predecessor.

By logging in from the ROSL homepage (www.rosl.org.uk), members can update their details, check the availability and prices of clubhouse accommodation, as well as make bookings, order letters of introduction to our network of more than 100 reciprocal clubs around the world, buy items from the shop, and even participate in online communities for member-led events, younger members, and more.

Those members for whom we already hold email addresses should by now have received information on how to access the new portal. Unlike the old system, your login will now use your email address and NOT your membership number.

For those who haven't sent us their email contact information, please get in touch with the Membership team on membership@rosl.org.uk to take advantage of this new functionality at your fingertips.



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](#).



Younger Member identity

In keeping with the theme of identity this issue, Younger Members have got in touch to tell Overseas what identity means to them. Asked "How do you define yourself?", Younger Members gave the following answers, showing the reflection we see in the mirror is more than just our appearance; our sense of self comes from so much more

Fiona Harshaw

I come from Northern Ireland, a place where national identity is a highly sensitive subject embedded in politics and religion. My identity feels fluid and I feel privileged to identify as Irish, British and particularly as Northern Irish, a rather undefinable identity itself. I have genuine pride to be from such a strange and beautiful place and feel that it gives me many opportunities and horizons.

Alex Lamley

I have been a member of ROSL for several years, joining in my mid-20s as a trainee lawyer in Edinburgh. With a very European sense of identity and with friends and clients all over the world, ROSL has been fantastic for supporting my travel, and for meeting new and like minded individuals.

Caroline Roddis

As I get older, I find more things that I can define myself as not being, but starting my own business, MedCert, with two colleagues this summer has made me learn a lot about who I really am. I'd like to be someone less full of trepidation and self doubt, but I'm proud of also

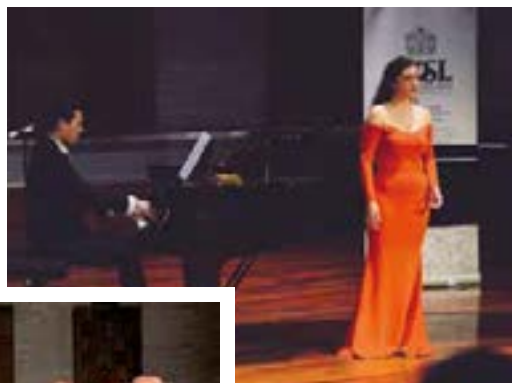
being someone who will work hard for what she believes in.

Anjola Adeniyi

Identity can be both interesting and confusing as we expect it to be unchanging. It broadens as we experience diverse places, languages, cultures, and peoples. My identity grew from a young boy who grew up in Lagos, and has evolved into a man with experiences and connections across continents. These experiences have made my self-awareness deeper, and helped in navigating difficult situations.

Phil Smith

I would define myself in a number of ways, nationality for example (English/British), but also by my character traits and my faith. With my love of travel, interest in current affairs and half of my relatives in Australia, ROSL's Commonwealth outlook is especially important to me. I'm also proud of our support for women since ROSL's inception, and have enjoyed the many International Women's Day panel discussions that the YM Committee has hosted over the last few years.



Prizes for Bach, Improvisation, Early Keyboard, Art Song, Composition, and Chamber Music were handed out thanks to WA branch support, as well as WAAPA entrance scholarships

Global support for the arts

The ROSL Western Australia (WA) Branch has long supported the aims of the organisation by taking a keen interest in the musical education of young people

Through their fundraising efforts and donations from very generous members, the branch has donated some \$32,000 in prizes and scholarships to the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts this year. In addition, over the last five years, the WA Branch, again through the huge generosity of a few members, has donated \$197,000 to the University of Western Australia's Conservatorium of Music for prizes and a Visiting Artists in Residence Programme. The WA Branch also sponsors

an Annual Singing Competition for The Perth Royal School of Music Club. The three prizes total \$4,000.

These funds provide much-needed income for young musicians to allow them to continue their training. The branch also supplies them with performance opportunities, so that they can continue to hone their craft. Most recently, the winners of the 2019 ROSL WA Music Prizes at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) performed a special gala concert.

ROSL Australia announces new Patron

His Excellent General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of Australia, has graciously agreed to become Patron of the Royal Over-Seas League in Australia. He will act as a figurehead for our 3,500 members in the country.

Having served for 42 years in the Australian military, rising to the rank of Chief of the Defence Force, he retired in 2014 and became Governor of New South Wales. On 1 July 2019, he rose to become Governor-General. The position acts as HM The Queen's representative in Australia, so it is fitting he has become Patron of ROSL in the country, while the Queen continues to serve as Patron to ROSL as a whole, with HRH Princess Alexandra as Vice Patron.

We thank the Governor-General for agreeing to take on this position and look forward to his participation in ROSL life.



ROSL WA COMPETITION WINNERS

BACH PRIZE

Miranda Murray-Yong (cello) performing Prelude from Cello Suite No.2, Johann Sebastian Bach.

IMPROVISATION PRIZE

Oliver Vonlanthen (guitar) and Owen Measday (voice) performing 'in the moment'

EARLY KEYBOARD PRIZE

Jordan Proctor (fortepiano) performed ii. Adagio ma non troppo from Sonata in D major, Op.3, Cipriani Potter and James Huntingford (fortepiano) performed Fantasia No.2 in C major, Wq. 59/6, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach.

ART SONG PRIZE

Alessia Pintabona (soprano) and George Unkovich (piano) Waldesgesprach, Robert Schumann, Sole e amore, Giacomo Puccini, Hier, Francis Poulenc.

COMPOSITION PRIZE

Callum O'Reilly for his entry III Pieces for Chamber Orchestra and Solo Violin Movement II performed by Daniel Price (violin) and James Huntingford (piano).

ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIPS

Jazz, Daniel Drieberg and Julia Wallace; Classical, Milly McAuliffe and Talitha Sambell.

CHAMBER MUSIC PRIZE

The Kachny Trio: Daniel Price (violin), Erica Ketterer (viola), Jude Iddison (violin) performed Terzetto in C, Antonin Dvorak i. Introduzione. Allegro ma non troppo and YAAM String Quartet: Yasmin Omran (violin), Adrian Biemmi (violin), Ariel Postmus (viola), Miranda Murray-Yong (cello) performed String Quartet No.8 Dmitri Shostakovich, i. Largo, ii. Allegro molto.

Corporate membership

COULD YOUR ORGANISATION BENEFIT FROM MEMBERSHIP?

Contact membership@rosl.org.uk or +44 (0)20 7408 0214 x214/216 for details and an application pack

ROSL supports the Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra

In early July, ROSL Artistic Director Geoff Parkin travelled to Antigua alongside ROSL alumni, clarinettist Jordan Black and violinist William Newell, to work with the Antigua and Barbuda Youth Symphony Orchestra (ABYSO). Alongside the ROSL delegation were ten students from the Purcell School for Young Musicians, a student from Wells Cathedral School, all headed by Alison Cox OBE, head of composition at The Purcell School and founder of The Commonwealth Resounds, of which Geoff Parkin is a patron

The ABYSO in its current form is just over a year old, and in that time has already achieved exceptional progress. Chaired with great vitality and determination by Her Excellency Karen-Mae Hill, the Antigua and Barbudan High Commissioner to the UK, the orchestra has a vision to train instrumental musicians to the highest levels and to be the youth music hub in the Caribbean.

The delegation joined the ABYSO on their summer orchestral course at the Sir Viv Richards Cricket Stadium, which culminated in a concert at the end of the trip at the Dean William Lake Centre, to celebrate 70 years of the Commonwealth.

Each instrument of the orchestra was represented by the visitors, and so days consisted of sectional rehearsals in smaller groups, full strings and wind



Clockwise from top: The Antigua Youth Orchestra practising onstage, ROSL Artistic Director Geoff Parkin working with the orchestra, ROSL scholars (L-R) Kaylin Joseph, David Isaac and Sa'kiyah Ladeatte



sections led by William and Jordan, and full orchestral rehearsals, led by Geoff Parkin, who also mentored the two resident ABYSO conductors, Clarita Thomas and Vinema Jarvis.

ROSL hopes for this to be the start of multi-year support for the orchestra as the programme grows and as part of the commitment to the orchestra, two scholarships were awarded, to pay for a year of instrumental lessons for members of the orchestra. These recipients were selected by Geoff Parkin in consultation with our ROSL musicians. In the end three young musicians were selected, with one scholarship being split between two people. They are 25-year-old oboist David Isaac (full scholarship) and violinists Kaylin Joseph and Sa'kiyah Ladeatte, both 11.

The week also included a reception at

Government House with Sir Rodney and Lady Williams, Governor General to Antigua and Barbuda and appearances on television and radio. The final concert was broadcast on Antiguan television and live streamed on Facebook.

ROSL members can play a part in supporting this wonderful project by donating, in order that we continue this important work, which is so in line with our values, and in a part of the Commonwealth we have worked in less than others. Your donation will support both scholarships for young Antiguan musicians, as well as ROSL prizewinners travelling to Antigua to train both the tutors and young musicians on the island. For more information or to donate please contact Geoff Parkin on gparkin@rosl.org.uk



Clubhouse renovations continue apace

The ongoing maintenance and renovation of ROSL's London clubhouse has borne considerable fruit over the past few months, as several projects have made big steps forward in unison

Much of the programme of works so far in 2019 has been behind the scenes, such as work on the plumbing, heating, and electrical systems, but these latest works in the Princess Alexandra Hall and Restaurant will be visible for all to see.

In the Princess Alexandra Hall, work is nearing completion on a new AV system, which has seen the installation of a new projector, sound recording equipment and cameras, allowing us to record and live stream events to members around the world. This harks back to ROSL's early forays into broadcasting with the BBC during the war.

In addition to the new AV equipment, new concert seating has also been delivered, giving members and guests a much more comfortable

experience when enjoying a concert, talk, or dinner.

Meanwhile, down in the Restaurant, new period-appropriate carpet has been installed, to refresh the look of the room, while also maintaining its glamorous 1930s art deco aesthetic. The long-serving chairs have also been relacquered, resprung, and reupholstered. Rather than replace them, we decided to renovate the chairs to keep as much of the original furniture as possible.

Other upcoming renovation works include the replacement of the flagpoles along the balcony of the Westminster Wing, plus more behind-the-scenes maintenance and compliance work.

“
Much of the programme of works so far in 2019 has been behind the scenes, but these works in the Princess Alexandra Hall and Restaurant are visible for all to see

STAFF CHANGES

We have some new friendly faces for members to meet next time you visit the clubhouse. In August, we welcomed Niki Roussi to the Reception team. Leon Rusu also joined us in September as the new Night Duty Manager. They will be on hand at Reception whatever time of day or night you visit. Two existing team members have also been promoted; Aoife

O'Rourke has been made Senior Membership Executive, while Mark Brierley has become the Head of Communications. Congratulations to them both. Sadly, we have also said goodbye to Reception Shift Leader Zylfie Hyuseinova and Housekeeper Lada Laleva. Thank you both for your contributions to club life.



ROSL Rush Hour roundup

Our second ROSL Rush Hour season went down very well. The magnificent Clare Teal kicked off the season with a concert just accompanied by piano, a far cry from her mini big band series, but the ROSL Steinway was more than up to the task and she, armed with her amazing vocals and her warm and witty story telling, ensured an excellent evening was had by all.

The season continued with past AMC winners; Ferio Saxophone Quartet, Consone Quartet, Ashley Fripp, Dominic Degavino, Joseph Havlat and the Mithras Trio all made a triumphant return to where their relationship with ROSL began, the Princess Alexandra Hall. The first half of the season was designed to give you a whistle-stop tour of Western Classical Music, starting with Baroque and going through Classical, Romantic and 20th-century eras of classical music. Musicologist Dr Katy Hamilton was also on hand to guide us through these pillars of classical music with a successful series of pre-concert talks.

The season was brought to a close with an hour of cinematic treasures celebrating Charlie Chaplin's set of masterpieces known as the Mutual Comedies, which explored the fascinating relationship between music and film in the hands of one of the 20th century's greatest cultural icons.

Portrait restoration under way

Specialist equipment is being used to repair damage to ROSL's portrait of Earl Mountbatten, former Grand President of the organisation. Further donations are needed to continue this work

Following an appeal in Overseas, donations were received to begin the restoration of ROSL's collection of portraiture. First to receive the makeover treatment was Lord Mountbatten, whose portrait was removed in August for the process to begin.

At the time, the restorer said: "There is a significant area of unstable paint, the adhesion between the paint and ground layers and the support is compromised across the lower half of the painting. There are large blisters of raised and vulnerable paint layers in the lower left corner. There also appears to be a history of such flaking as in ultra violet examination there are large 'brushily' applied areas of dark over-paint present in the sitter's black coat.

"There is a significant scratch to the sitter's left cuff and smaller minor

scratches at the lower edge. There is a slightly fluorescing varnish layer present and a noticeable layer of surface dirt and fly spotting."

With work now well under way, the restorer has sent photos of the progress being made on rectifying these areas of concern. Using specialist equipment, the most damaged areas of paint at the bottom of the portrait are the first to receive attention, with the finer detail work taking place once a solid foundation is in place.

Anybody wishing to sponsor further artwork restorations can do so by contacting Visual Arts Curator Eilidh McCormick on emccormick@rosl.org.uk. The next artwork to undergo this process will be the portrait of Lady Des Voeux, wife of ROSL founder Sir Evelyn Wrench.



Update from Archiving Intern Natalia Sedunova

With such a rich history, ROSL is lucky to have an abundance of archival material dating back to its founding, but much of it has lain unsorted for decades. Step in Natalia Sedunova

When I applied for an internship in the archives of ROSL via the UCL Career service, I did not know much about this organisation beyond what a quick web-search can provide. Now, after spending almost two months here, observing the day-to-day functioning of the organisation in the Marketing department, I know that the Royal Over-Seas League is not the simplest entity to grasp, but it is worth an attempt to do so.

As an archivist, I was in a perfect position to explore the various activities of ROSL through the objects of historical significance, such as the diaries of its founder, Sir Evelyn Wrench, or the correspondence from its members through the decades. It was my responsibility to arrange them all into a coherent system, both physical and electronic, to make the archive more accessible and provide

means for its future preservation. So far, we have catalogued 485 items, stored them into 29 boxes and started to develop a dedicated room to accommodate ROSL's heritage, although it is certainly only the beginning of a long journey.

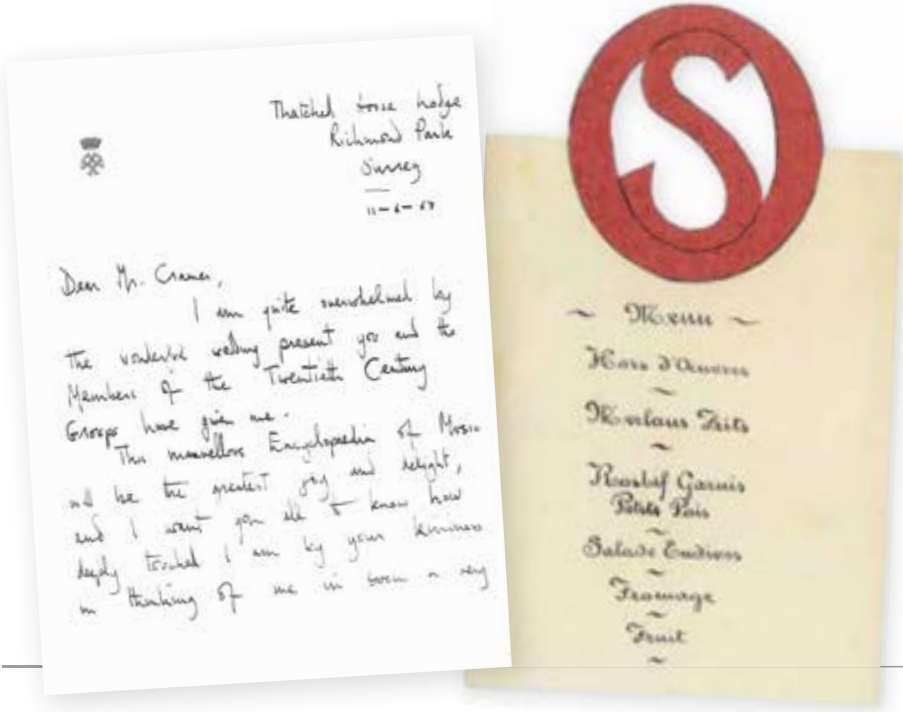
Learning from practical experience of what it takes to organise and sustain such an extensive archive, I have also had a chance to satisfy my endeavours as a historian, as I was tasked with preparing a short history of the Hall of India & Pakistan at Over-Seas House. This was the experience I am sure I will be thankful for when writing my dissertation next year, as it significantly helped me to upgrade my skills in researching primary sources. I have learnt to exercise meticulousness

and be critical about the objects I am working with, instead of letting other scholars do the thinking for me, which can sometimes be tempting with my university assignments.

Among some of my favourite discoveries in the archive were the architectural drawings by James Gibbs, who designed the house at 16 Arlington Street, now part of the clubhouse. I was also quite impressed, if not bewildered, to discover a granite block excavated from the grave of Cecil Rhodes, which was presumably gifted to the organisation by a member. Yet, nothing was so eye-catching as looking through piles of old photographs with people smiling, chatting, celebrating, or attending an enjoyable evening – all dressed up, having the time of their lives.

There is no better way to learn the history of the Commonwealth than examining its development through the eyes of the workers and members of ROSL throughout the 20th Century. It is fascinating how just one organisation can make such a contribution to maintaining cross-continental links between people, and I believe that the core of Sir Evelyn's vision of a global world is still relevant to this day. It was a privilege for me to take part in making this legacy more accessible to the public, to say nothing of the degree of professional development the experience has brought me.

Clockwise from top: French members meeting Evelyn Wrench, Lord Mountbatten speaking in the Hall of India, the menu at the meeting of French members, a thank you letter from Vice-Patron HRH Princess Alexandra



ORDER BY MIDDAY 18TH DECEMBER FOR A GUARANTEED CHRISTMAS DELIVERY



Davy's Wine Merchants have a proud history of working exclusively with the Royal Over-Seas League and we are honoured to offer an exceptional range of Christmas gifts to its members.

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*The last date for Christmas deliveries is midday, 18th December. For full terms and conditions please visit www.davywine.co.uk Please contact 020 8858 9147 if you require any further information.

Where you are

ROSL NEWS

ROSL AROUND THE WORLD

Our branches provide an opportunity for members in all parts of the world and across the UK to enjoy a range of social events close to home. To find out more about getting involved, simply contact your local representative

AUSTRALIA

Victoria

Christmas reception

Thursday 12 December, 6pm,
The Residence, 31 Montalto
Avenue, Toorak

A delicious selection of hot and cold canapés will be served with sparkling and still wine (or non-alcoholic beverages) at the Residence of the British Consul-General, Melbourne, Mr Chris Holtby OBE and Mrs Polly Holtby. **\$75.**

Summer musical: Chicago

Thursday 23 January,
State Theatre, Melbourne
This delightful and excitingly sassy, razzle-dazzle musical stars some of Australia's most talented and beloved performers – Jason Donovan, Alinta Chidzey, Natalie Bassingthwaighe, and powerhouse vocalist, the fabulous Casey Donovan.

\$115. Initial enquiries by email to rosi@alphalink.com.au or 03 9654 8338

Recital and reception

Sunday 2 February, 6.30pm,
25 Balmerino Ave, Toorak
A private recital with two ROSL Annual Music Competition Gold Medallists, Emily Sun violin and

Jonathan Radford saxophone, followed by a reception with wine and canapés.

Price tba.

Tasmania

Christmas lunch

Thursday 5 December, 12pm,
Derwent Sailing Squadron
Enjoy traditional Christmas fare with your fellow members and guests.

Price tba

CANADA

British Columbia

We will be continuing our Members Casual Gatherings in March/April. Members interested in joining in, please send your email address to evmurray@telus.net to be notified of plans.

NEW ZEALAND

Southland

Christmas lunch

Wednesday 4 December, 12pm,
Club Southland
A festive luncheon with members of the Southland branch and friends.

\$21.



1. Victoria and Tasmania members enjoy a musical reception at Government House;
2. Calgary Branch meet for lunch attended by the Lieutenant Governor; 3. ROSL Australia Chairman Jason Ronald and HE Governor

Prof Kate Warner; 4. Taunton members hear from a charity supporting homeless veterans in the area; 5. British Columbia Branch casual gatherings continue; 6. BC Branch visit an exhibition of Giacometti's work.

Lunch talk

Wednesday 5 February,
Bridgwater & Taunton College
A talk on 50 Somerset gems with Andrew Powell-Thomas, local Author and Historian. Plus a two-course lunch, followed by coffee. **£18.**

Wessex

Coffee mornings

Every Thursday, 10.30am-12pm,
Mayfair Hotel, Bournemouth
Regular coffee mornings continue.
Price tba. Includes coffee and biscuits.

Raffle lunch

Wednesday 22 January,
Mayfair Hotel, Bournemouth
A lunch and raffle with Wessex branch and ESU Salisbury branch members and friends.
Price tba.

LONDON GROUP

Christmas lunch

Wednesday 4 December, 12.30pm, Over-Seas House

Get into the festive spirit with the London Group's Christmas lunch. Including a drinks reception, three-course festive lunch with wine, coffee, musical entertainment and a free prize draw. This year it will be held in the Restaurant. **£50 London Group members. £55 guests.**



Visit: Stationers' Hall

Monday 13 January 2020, 2.30pm, Stationers' Hall,
Ave Maria Lane, London EC4M 7DD

The Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers was formed in 1403 and received its Royal Charter in 1557. As one of the livery companies of the City of London, it regulated and defined proper conduct within the publishing industry. This guided tour of the Grade I-listed building incorporates the Court Room, dominated by an 18th-century mantelpiece and the Livery Hall, with its high

ceilings and stained-glass windows. Our tour will commence at the church of St Martin-within-Ludgate on Ludgate Hill and will include the Hall, the garden, the archives (with papers dating back to the time of Shakespeare) and



the church.
Refreshments will be provided in the church at the end of the tour. The visit will last approx. 75 minutes. Nearest Underground: St Paul's (Central line) and Blackfriars (District and Circle lines). £14 London Group members. £16 guests.

LONDON GROUP BOOKING INFORMATION

London Group events are for London Group members, their guests, and ROSL members staying at Over-Seas House. To join, speak to the Membership Team on +44 (0)20 7408 0214 x214/216 or email membership@rosl.org.uk. **No booking is required for talks.** To book outside visits, send a cheque payable to 'ROSL' and a stamped, addressed envelope to Maureen Howley, London Group, Over-Seas House, Park Place, St James's Street, London, SW1A 1LR. The London Group is a voluntary organisation and cannot take bookings by email or telephone. Confirmation is sent approximately ten days in advance. Cancellations and refund requests must be made at least two weeks before the event. **Contact howleymaureen@hotmail.com.**

Where you are

ROSL NEWS

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Event Highlights

ROSL NEWS

Annual Music Competition 2020

Here we go again! Entries for the 2020 ROSL Annual Music Competition are open and preparations are well under way. Currently, candidates from all over the Commonwealth are preparing their video submissions for the first round of judging, which will happen in January so we can whittle the candidates down to invite them to the live semi-final and section final rounds in February and March at ROSL HQ.

We're now a long way from the days when the first round of the competition was live, video has taken its place and has enabled more musicians from across the Commonwealth to gain access to the competition. We do not expect fancy videography or the use of expensive equipment, many can and do just submit recordings via their smartphones which also gives them the chance to get as many takes of their performance as they like and then they submit the best one.

Like every competition, we do have rules surrounding the video round, each film must be shot live, with a single camera angle and for pianists, their hands must be visible on the recording.

What follows is some painstaking hours by our panel sat in front of a

computer screen, scrutinising the performances. On the look out for exceptional technique and control of either instrument or voice, and consistency of that technique throughout the performances. In the singers' category, they are also expected to show a mastery of the different languages they choose to perform in.

Those that do well in this competition are the ones that have something special to say, they are able to communicate this within their performances to the audience as well as the judges and it is that engaging quality of their performance that sets them apart as the winners of the competition.

As per tradition, our live section final evenings will take place in the Princess



Alexandra Hall in February and March. There are four solo categories and two chamber music ones, as well as the Overseas Final, a special evening for non-UK Commonwealth musicians. We promise a series of concerts with exceptional talent, and a chance to socialise with other members, many of whom have been coming for years. Members discounts are available; we urge you to come along if you haven't been before and look forward to welcoming our regulars back for another year of supporting amazing young musical talent.

Closing date for entries:
8 January 2020

Competition evenings Princess
Alexandra Hall, ROSL HQ

ROSL Solo Wind and Brass Prize
11 February 7pm

ROSL Singers Prize
18 February 7pm

ROSL Solo Strings Prize
25 February 7pm

ROSL Solo Keyboard Prize
3 March 7pm

ROSL Strings Ensembles Prize
10 March 7pm

ROSL Mixed Ensemble Prize
17 March 7pm

ROSL Over-Seas Awards
19 March 7pm

Gold Medal Final. Queen
Elizabeth Hall, Southbank
1 June 7pm



Event Highlights

ROSL NEWS

Photography Exhibition

The ROSL Photography Exhibition presents the top images from the inaugural ROSL Photography Competition. Opening with an exhibition launch from 6 to 8pm on Tuesday 10 December, the show includes the work of the category winners and will run until February 2020. (see page 26 for more information about the competition).

Exhibition launch, free event, RSVP required via website or call 020 7408 0214 x213. Exhibition is open daily, 11am–6pm, staffed Monday to Friday.



MEMBER-LED EVENTS

GET INVOLVED IN OUR GROUP ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY CHOIR

The ROSL Community Come and Sing Choir sing a variety of songs from opera to Christmas carols and we are preparing for a concert of carols around the ROSL Christmas tree. Our professional Musical Director is Joanna Arnold. The contribution will be £10 per person, per session, to cover Joanna's fee.

ROSL BOOK GROUP

The ROSL Book Group meets once a month on Wednesdays, to discuss both classic and modern novels from 6.30 to 8pm. We meet beforehand in the Bar and afterwards for dinner, to continue the discussion.

ROSL BACKGAMMON GROUP

Do join us for a game and for lunch at 1pm in the Brabourne Room or drinks afterwards in the Bar. We also offer monthly tutorials with our tutor Chris Bray. He is highly thought of in his field and plays at a high level. He visits once a month for continuing tuition. The cost is £20 per person, payable on the day. A four-week beginner's course will begin on 23 October for four weeks (excluding 6 November), 12-2pm, at £80 per person.

ROSL BRIDGE GROUP

The ROSL Bridge Group is open to all members for Social Bridge at all levels, every Monday (except on Bank Holidays) from 2 to 4pm in the Mountbatten Room. We play ACOL. Monthly tutorials with our tutor Ingar Kofoed Hansen, a professional Bridge player and Bridge Teacher, are also available. The tutorials are held once a month and cost £20 per person payable on the day. When Ingar is present for supervised practice, the cost is £10 per person;

at all other times it is free. A Beginners' Course, running for six consecutive weeks, will take on Mondays at 4.15 to 6.15pm, at £150, payable in advance and starting on 9 September.

HOW TO JOIN IN

Each group is free and open to all ROSL members. Please contact the group's coordinator Eve Mitleton-Kelly at E.Mitleton-Kelly@mitleton-kelly.org.uk if you would like to get involved.



ROSL calendar

EVENTS

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

Get full details in your new Events Guide or online at www.ros.org.uk/events

3 DEC
RUSKIN AND MUSIC
Tuesday 3 December

4 DEC
LONDON GROUP:
CHRISTMAS LUNCH
Wednesday 4 December

5 DEC
YOUNGER MEMBERS:
CHRISTMAS PARTY
Thursday 5 December

10 DEC
ROSL
PHOTOGRAPHY
COMPETITION
EXHIBITION OPENING
Tuesday 10 December



12 DEC
CLUBHOUSE CAROLS
AROUND THE TREE
Thursday 12 December

18 DEC
MEMBERS'
FESTIVE DINNER
Wednesday 18 December

26 DEC
BOXING DAY
WALKING TOUR
Thursday 26 December



11 FEB
AMC WIND & BRASS
SECTION FINAL
Tuesday 11 February



18 FEB
AMC VOICE SECTION FINAL
Tuesday 18 February



25 FEB
AMC STRINGS SECTION FINAL
Tuesday 25 February



3 MAR
AMC PIANO
SECTION FINAL
Tuesday 3 March

5 MAR
ART SOCIETY
EXHIBITION
OPENING
Thursday 5 March

9 MAR
COMMONWEALTH
DAY RECEPTION
Monday 9 March

10 MAR
AMC STRING
ENSEMBLES
SECTION FINAL
Tuesday 10 March

17 MAR
AMC MIXED
ENSEMBLES
SECTION FINAL
Tuesday 17 March

19 MAR
AMC OVERSEAS
AWARD
Thursday 19 March

KIRKER MUSIC CRUISES

FOR DISCERNING TRAVELLERS



Kirker Holidays offers an extensive range of independent and escorted music holidays, including leading festivals in Europe such as the Puccini Opera Festival in Torre del Lago and Grafenegg, as well as Glyndebourne, Buxton and opera weekends in Vienna, Milan, Venice and New York.

We also arrange short breaks with opera, ballet or concert tickets, to all the great classical cities in Europe, and host a series of exclusive music festivals and music cruises.

Join one of our 2020 Music Cruises and enjoy a series of exclusive chamber music concerts on board Fred Olsen's Black Watch, as well as private drinks parties, talks and a range of optional shore excursions.

ART & MUSIC OF THE LOW COUNTRIES

A SEVEN NIGHT MUSIC CRUISE | 17 MARCH 2020

Southampton – North Sea Canal – Amsterdam – Rotterdam (for The Hague and Delft) – Ghent – Antwerp – Southampton

with The Aquinas Piano Trio and art historian Ger van den Munckhof

Combine the finest art galleries of Belgium & the Netherlands with a series of private concerts on board Fred. Olsen's Black Watch. We will journey along the North Sea Canal to Amsterdam where Black Watch will remain overnight, before continuing to Rotterdam where we have opportunities to visit both Delft and The Hague. Next comes Ghent, which in 2020 which will be celebrating the near-complete restoration of 'The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb', before reaching our last port of call, Antwerp.

Prices range from £1,470 per person for an inside cabin to £3,145 per person for a Premier Suite including full-board, private drinks parties, all concerts, plus exclusive talks and interviews.

Ask about our optional shore excursions in the company of art expert Ger van den Munckhof.



THE NORWEGIAN FJORDS IN SPRING

AN ELEVEN NIGHT MUSIC CRUISE | 12 MAY 2020

Liverpool – Kristiansand – Oslo – Stavanger – Bergen – Shetland Islands – Liverpool

with the Marmen Quartet, Danish Clarinet Trio, Trio Ondine and pianist Tim Horton.

On board Fred Olsen's Black Watch, we will sail around the tip of Scotland and directly to the south of Norway. Our first port of call will be Kristiansand, Norway's fifth largest city, before sailing along the coast and up the Oslofjord. We stay for one night in the capital itself, awaking on Norwegian National Day when the Norwegians celebrate the country's independence gained in 1814. Upon reaching Stavanger there will be an optional excursion to Utstein, Norway's best-preserved medieval monastery, dating from the 13th century. We then call at Bergen, birthplace of Edvard Grieg, before our final port, Lerwick in the Shetland Islands.

Prices range from £2,845 per person for an inside cabin to £5,795 per person for a Marquee Suite including full-board, private drinks parties, all concerts, plus exclusive talks and interviews.

Ask about our programme of music-themed optional shore excursions.



Speak to an expert or request a brochure:

020 7593 2284 quote code GRO

www.kirkerholidays.com





HAYLLAR MUSIC TOURS IN 2020

THE 30TH & FINAL HUNTINGTON ESTATE MUSIC FESTIVAL 19–24 NOVEMBER 2019 WITH GENEVIEVE LANG

MOZART: HIS LIFE & MUSIC - SALZBURG, VIENNA, PRAGUE & MUNICH 27 JAN–9 FEB 2020 WITH STEPHEN CLEOBURY CBE

WAGNER'S *RING CYCLE* IN CHICAGO 19–26 APRIL 2020 WITH SPEIGHT JENKINS

OPERA, MUSIC & ART IN PORTUGAL & SPAIN 5–18 JUNE 2020 WITH TARYN FIEBIG & JUD ARTHUR

OPERA IN THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE 6–19 JUNE 2020 WITH ELIZABETH HAYLLAR

OPERA & ART IN NORTHERN ITALY 10–23 JUNE 2020 WITH FIONA CAMPBELL

OPERA, MUSIC & ART IN SCANDINAVIA & ST PETERSBURG 7–19 JULY 2020 WITH ELIZABETH HAYLLAR

OPERA & MUSIC FESTIVALS IN SALZBURG, MUNICH, BREGENZ & VERONA 21 JULY–2 AUGUST 2020 WITH ANNA GOLDSWORTHY

HAYLLAR WILDERNESS MUSIC FESTIVAL 8–13 SEPTEMBER 2020

OPERA, MUSIC & ART IN CENTRAL EUROPE 9–21 SEPTEMBER 2020 WITH GRAHAM ABBOTT

AUTUMN IN NEW YORK - MUSIC, THEATRE & ART 28 OCTOBER–7 NOVEMBER 2020 WITH TARYN FIEBIG & JUD ARTHUR

WAGNER'S *RING CYCLE* IN PARIS 22–29 NOVEMBER 2020 WITH PROFESSOR HEATH LEES

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