

# Chairman's Editorial

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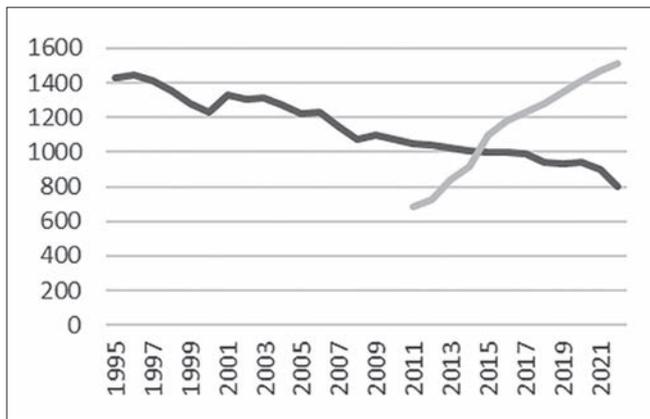
More than a year ago your committee started a review of how marketing was carried out for the Society; this, in part, stemmed from a long-standing concern about the steady loss of members over time. Alongside these discussions, there was a dialogue about how the world had changed since C&CI was formed over 50 years ago. As our understanding developed it became clear that we needed to take a more radical view of how we responded to these changes based on objective research, so that we were not overly led by our own opinions and prejudices. A marketing professional, Jon Jeffries, who had worked successfully for the Fleet Air Arm Museum, was contracted to undertake this research which included a series of interviews with committee members, Society members, lapsed members and non-members, exploring their views and, indeed, whether they had ever heard of us.

The way that people access and absorb information has undergone huge changes since the Society was formed – in just the last 15-20 years there has been the advent of the Internet, widespread availability of online communication, the growth of social media, and with all of this, an increasing reluctance by many to accept physical media as their only source of information.

As mentioned, the Society continues to see a slow decline of membership numbers each year – as this chart shows (the continuous line is overall membership numbers, and the other is Wind In The Wires subscriptions). It also shows the rapid take up of digital offerings – such as Wind in the Wires – when these are available. The average age of our membership is now over 60. Your Committee is unanimous in believing that this decline is not only unsustainable in the long term but is also contrary to our charitable mission of raising awareness of the Air War of WWI.

There is no doubt that we have to develop digitally based offerings if we want to appeal to the under 60 age group. Your Committee accordingly put the following to our recent AGM –

Keep unchanged what we do really well and is at the core of our work - the Journal - the Calendar - Wind in the Wires - and our reputation for quality, authentic research.



Add new digital offerings over time.

Ensure we have the requisite marketing capability to communicate the above to new audiences, while reassuring existing members that what they hold dear remains intact.

The latter point was raised by a number of members at the AGM. As part of our marketing strategy, we will be engaging directly with similar groups and organisations through Facebook and other social media. We will be commissioning a part-time marketing advisor to implement this work. However, research has made it

abundantly clear that our name is an impediment to achieving these aims. Cross & Cockade is not recognised nor understood by those not intimately involved with the Society. It is also little understood that this is not the registered name of the Society either. The Committee therefore put to the AGM the need to rationalise and resolve this situation as an essential first step in achieving our broader aims. The name put to the AGM was **The Great War Aviation Society** and this was passed by a significant majority of those attending. Benefits include:

The new name for the Society will appeal to our target group (40-60 year-olds) - and will be much more prominent in web searches, etc. However, will continue to use the title Cross & Cockade for the Journal, Monographs and Calendar to ensure continuity and recognition of these publications.

It gives clarity to the various offerings that currently 'float about' in the portfolio under an unwieldy Society name.

The rationalised structure under the new name makes room for new additions to the Society's portfolio in due course (e.g., Online talks/films)



The new name and logo are shown here – this retains significant elements of the previous logo for continuity.

Finally, a number of important and valuable issues were raised at the AGM, some of which we have already addressed. The Management Committee will be meeting shortly to discuss all of these points before moving forward with the necessary changes in conjunction with the Charity Commission.

## President's Statement

I have been a member the Society for 50 years and President since 1998. This has been the hardest decision that I have seen the Committee tackle. They have done so with an open mind and a willingness to explore every and all possibilities. They represent over 400 years collective membership (and include a Founder Member), but it is their judgement that the Society must change its name if it is to avoid fading away. We had a lively and impassioned AGM on 30 April at which the points for and against the change were discussed. I believe that many of the concerns raised were resolved. At the end of the meeting, however, the large majority of members present supported the Committee's proposals. I now ask for the support and understanding of the wider membership in enabling the Society and the Management Committee negotiate these difficult but necessary changes.

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