

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Medievalist,

I do hope that you can join us at our AGM which will take place on 18th May in Bristol, as you can see from the formal announcement of the event. It will, as usual, be a business meeting but also a celebration of the continuing growth and success of our Society. It will also be a wonderful opportunity to hear Nigel Palmer, stalwart of our journal and recently retired from his professorship, give our Annual Lecture.

There is a lot for us to celebrate and some of it is outlined in the Annual Report. But it is worth taking stock of the changes over a period of four years: the membership of the Society has more than doubled, the number of monographs produced has increased substantially, SSMLL has become known as a generous provider of grants and bursaries, as well as being the organiser of several well-attended and highly stimulating conferences – and, at the same time, we have continued to produce one of the world's leading journals of medieval studies. At the same time, there is no opportunity to be complacent: over those same four years, the context – in terms of both the economy and public policy – has been unrelentingly harsh. The Society is doing what it can to support medieval studies in the difficult climate and to do that we must protect the Society's own financial position.

With that in mind, the Committee decided to review the membership rates, which have not been raised for over half a decade. The rates have always been modest, making sure that there is little surplus on individual membership and a substantial (but justifiable) loss on those taking up the graduate offer of two years membership for the price of one. In making its recommendation to the AGM, the Committee wanted to protect what is distinctive about our organisation while ensuring it can survive the continuing maelstrom. The proposal, then, is to keep the graduate offer and to have a relatively small increase in the membership rate, raising it *only for those who do not pay by Standing Order* and only by £3.50 / \$5.50.

Our intention is that this should be a one-off increase, and not the beginning of a series of rises. To ensure that is the case, however, we need to raise funds in other ways. One method which we have not used in the past is encouraging gift-giving to our charity. If you or those you know are in sympathy with the aims of our Society and keen to see us not just continue but actually grow our support for medieval studies, I urge you to think of making a regular donation, separate from your membership fee. If all of those in a position to provide a donation gave, say, £20 a year, it would transform our ability to provide grants and bursaries to meet the demand we are conscious exists. If you are able to help your Society in this way, please contact our Executive Officer, Dr David Rundle.

I would not want to end on a depressed note: your Society is doing well and has a series of new initiatives in hand. So, if we do not see you in Bristol on 18th May, I hope we can meet at one of our events in York or Cambridge or Oxford in the coming months, or that you will use our increasing on-line resources, as well as continuing to enjoy our monographs and journal.

With best wishes,

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