

The Hon Sec ...by the Hon Sec

My dictionary defines a Secretary as "a person employed by another to assist him in correspondence, literary work, getting information and other confidential matters". In other words "do all the letters, don't make silly spelling mistakes, find out the problems for yourself and for heaven's sake don't tell anyone when I make a mistake"!

When I was Chairman I knew that the entire survival of the League rested in my hands alone. Without me steering the great ship forward, braving storms and high winds and generally being tireless in the pursuit of excellence I knew the League would sink and I would be to blame. It was without doubt an awesome responsibility.

Now that I am no longer Chairman I confess that I am not so sure. In fact now that I am the Hon Sec I am absolutely sure that what I thought I knew as Chairman is (of course) complete drivel. I have also now come to understand the somewhat pitying look that Alan often used to give me when I said I thought I had done something worthwhile.

So where does the truth lie. Is the Hon Sec just a letter-writer with the Chairman making all the running or is the Hon Sec the all-powerful but behind-the-scenes presence navigating relentlessly in the right direction and avoiding the rocks and sandbars with the Chairman just a passenger.

In fact as you probably guess, as in so many walks

of life, the truth is a compromise. Neither Chairman nor Secretary has any real power. Both are subject to committees made up of independently minded people with their own (sometimes blunt) views. Indeed the Executive and the General Committee, under the Chairman, should come up with ideas as well as oversee the basic course being steered. The Hon Sec tries to translate that into practice - in other words writes the letters, avoid spelling mistakes, finds out stuff and takes the blame when the wheels fall off!

On a more serious note the actual activities of the Secretary of the League are far too numerous and probably very boring to the average member. However to the few who many still be reading this article and wondering just what the Secretary does do, then here goes.

Attend the Executive Committee monthly: go through and deal with all correspondence on a daily basis ranging from legacies, potential volunteers, details such as Flag Day permits, the Charity Commission, the accountants and of course the Shop and members; attend the General Committee every three months and prepare a report of the activities of the Executive over the preceding three months; attend the AGM; prepare reports and generally collate all information necessary. That's the exciting bit. The less exciting activities range from booking meeting rooms, making sure all the right papers are in the right place at right time, chasing up deadlines with printers and making sure the refreshments turn up.

Thankfully I (and Alan before more) am blessed with the totally efficient and unflappable Julie Hyde as assistant, without whom I, for one (and I suspect

Alan as well) would be mere shadows of our true selves. Julie does a great deal (actually all) of the detail stuff and much more efficiently than I would ever manage. Also I have managed to hive off the other major task of the Secretary which is the taking and subsequent printing of the minutes of the various meetings. Chantal Ashwell has undertaken this considerable task involving 16 meetings every year, with the minutes being expected within a few days without appearing even to notice. Thank you both. So what, I hear you ask, do you do?

I would like the answer to be that I oversee the strategic direction and purpose whilst applying managerial and legal expertise to the dynamics of the core activities. The true answer is mostly what I am told! However, I feel sure that I will grow into the job! There is actually quite a deal of correspondence of one sort or another which occupies my time together with some of the other matters mentioned and of course at the moment the *Herald Express* Heart Appeal donations take up quite a bit of each day, being collated and the details of the individual donors being sent to the *Herald* with the cheques going to the Treasurer. Probably the most important job the Secretary fulfils is to be the bridge between the Hospital, the League and the public. We have historically enjoyed a successful and enjoyable relationship with the Trust personnel which I certainly will want to see flourish for both our sakes. This League of Friends does a good job in the community and I shall always try to make sure that it continues to work for the benefit of everyone concerned with the Hospital.

Philip White

The League of Friends - Profiles

The Treasurer ...by the Treasurer

In 1982 my mother was in a barrier room at the Hospital in Turner Ward with Aplastic Anaemia. She was not allowed newspapers, books or anything brought from outside to prevent the risk of infection. However, in that barrier room was a television provided by the League of Friends. As she was there for a month it was her lifeline for which she was extremely grateful. Sadly her condition could not be rectified and a month after she was discharged she died at the young age of 71. Three years later Joan Williams, our President and the then Chairman John Pearson, called at the bank where I worked and asked the Manager if he could take on the Treasurership of the League. He was far too committed but sent a note around the branch asking if anyone was interested. Bearing in mind my experience in 1982, without hesitation I said yes. I did not know what I was letting myself in for but I just wanted to give something back.

Eighteen years later I am still here! In my youth I had always liked filling in forms, doing paperwork and adding up so the tasks were not too onerous to begin with. I was lucky because the bank provided community spirited work and gave me some 'bank' time to do some of the work. However as my role in the bank changed I then had to do all of the work in my spare time. How the job has changed over the years!

Six years ago I computerised the League's record and the machine now does the adding up.

A simplified resume of what I do is like this:

Daily

Open post and sort the letters and cheques into piles of accounts. List the cheques on the relevant paying-in books. Prepare replies to the letters for Julie, our Secretary, to type and either fax or post them to her. Then I travel to the bank to do the banking.

Weekly

I receive the bank statements at the end of each week and I have to put a code on each item to ensure I post it to the correct column on the computer. I do have the vouchers back with the statements which helps identify the source of the credit paid in. Sometimes the credits go missing or there is an automated item which I do not know about and I have to telephone the bank and obtain duplicate vouchers. Until the duplicates are received I cannot do the bookkeeping on the computer. At this stage I have to check the standing orders to see if the payments are gift aided and if so they have to be logged on the donors' declarations. Julia Hearne our Membership Secretary sends me regular details of gift aided subscriptions paid in by her for me to mark on the declarations. She also sends me new standing orders which I photocopy, write letters to the banks asking them to set up the order and await the first payment. Each week I invest the money we have which is waiting to cover our commitments. The bank's Treasury Reserve Office rings me at 8.30am each Wednesday for this purpose. I work out how much more I can invest or how much I have to take off to meet cheques recently drawn. Interest is credited from the previous investment period. At the moment I am also transferring money regularly from our General Fund to our Matching appeal to meet the commitment we have made to match the *Herald Express* Heart Appeal.

Each week I receive invoices for our Hospital Gift commitments, printing, stationery, postage, minibus expenses etc. I check to ensure all is correct, make out the cheques and send them on to Philip White our Secretary who is the second signatory.

Monthly

I prepare up-to-date financial reports and commitment lists for our Executive Meetings and print these off on the computer. I also attend the meetings wherever possible and present the reports. At the end of each month's bookkeeping I do trial balances for both the Charity and the shop and check to see if the figures are

correct. I am always in close contact with Bishop Fleming, our Auditors and NatWest Bank, our bankers, on a every regular basis.

Quarterly

Here again I prepare finance and commitment reports for the General Meeting and where possible attend the meeting to give the report.

I have to purchase paper, ribbons and other bits of stationery and am a regular visitor to Axworthys in Paignton for this purpose.

Annually

Lots of jobs!

Prepare returns for the Council following draws, flag days etc.

Prepare gift aid forms to go to the Inland Revenue for refunds.

Print off all the entries on the computer in a detailed trial balance for the accountants (getting on for 100 A4 sheets!). Bundle up all the paid invoices, copy letters of acknowledgement of funds, minutes, commitment lists, investment letters, statements and vouchers, correspondence and anything else I might have for the year and take it to the accountant for audit. I also liaise with the treasurers of the districts at this time to agree figures.

With help I count the money at the Fun Day, balance the figures and then produce a list of the amounts each stall has taken.

I am sure I have left out lots of things I do automatically but that is the basis of my role. Quite demanding, but most of the time enjoyable and very rewarding.

I do feel as though I have given something back and if anyone reading this would like to do something to help the Hospital in some way or even feel more fulfilled themselves, please do be in touch with our Secretary Philip White (telephone 295535) or our Voluntary Services Organiser Shirley Weir (telephone 654520). It really is worthwhile.

Christine Piper