

## **The Kipling Society (Registered Charity No. 278885) – Annual Report 2025/26**

*Address: Bay Tree House, Doomsday Garden, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 6LB*

### Trustees at 30 June 2026

Andrew Scragg (Chair)  
Mary Hamer (Deputy Chair)  
Mike Kipling (Secretary and Treasurer)  
Ian Bell (Online Editor)  
Alex Bubb (Meetings Secretary)  
David Forsyth (Bateman's Liaison Officer)  
Jan Montefiore (Journal Editor)  
Fiona Renshaw (Membership Secretary)  
John Walker (Librarian)  
Paolo D'Indinosante  
Fred Lerner  
Erin Louttit  
Christopher Morrison  
Rufus Vaughan-Spruce

The Society is governed by its Rules, approved by the Charities Commission in 1999 and amended at the AGMs in September 2014, July 2019 and July 2023.

As set out in the Rules, the objective of the Society is the advancement of public education by the promotion of the study and appreciation of the life and works of Rudyard Kipling.

The main activities in furtherance of this aim are:

- (a) to print, publish and issue three times a year (or at such other intervals as the Council of the Society may from time to time determine) a magazine entitled The Kipling Journal devoted to matters of interest to readers and students of Kipling.
- (b) to promote and hold lectures, discussions and meetings, and generally to encourage the study of Kipling's life and writings.
- (c) for the purposes of education and study, to maintain a library comprising Kipling's works, the works of writers on Kipling, and other material (in any form or medium) relating to Kipling.
- (d) to provide speakers on Kipling's life and works for suitable functions organised otherwise than by the Society.
- (e) to employ any electronic or other form of information technology to store, process or provide information about Kipling, the Society and its activities.
- (f) to give assistance and advice regarding Kipling's life and works and on the organisation of any suitable function dealing with them.

In pursuing these objectives, the Trustees have had due regard to Charity Commission guidance on public benefit.

## **Achievements and performance**

As of 23 June, there were **366** individual members, a net increase of 3 since last year's report. We have welcomed 41 new members, and a total of 38 existing members have left the Society or been removed from our list of members for a variety of reasons. The total includes 57 online only members (an increase of 14 over the year); 10 of these are students. There are also **48** corporate members, a decrease of five over the year.

Our autumn programme began with a delightful talk from Muireann O'Cinneide, lecturer in English at the University of Galway. Muireann's brilliant paper, "There's more than engines to a ship": Steamships & Accelerated Unities in 'The Day's Work', discussed on steamships, their engineers and owners in three stories from *The Day's Work*. Muireann's talk was followed by lively discussion and we ended up running well over time, touching on such matters as the difficulty and danger of turning a ship round in heavy seas. At November's meeting, the annual Stammers-Smith lecture was delivered by Kipling Society stalwart, Professor Danny Karlin, on the theme of "How Mowgli Became a Monkey, and other Un-just So Stories". Danny's starting point was the Mowgli restaurant franchise, with its monkey logo and apish conceits, which seem to tap into some corrupted memory of *The Jungle Books* in which the hero is not a boy but a member of the bandar-log.

In February, a particularly large audience turned out to hear our guest, Mr Nick Higham, lecture on "Mavericks: Lionel Dunsterville and the Caspian campaign of 1918". Nick, who used to work for BBC Radio, gave an animated and entertaining account of Dunsterforce, a small force under the command of Kipling's friend, Lionel Dunsterville, that was tasked with securing the Baku oil fields at the end of the First World War. Finally in April, we met over Zoom and, as on previous occasions, I took advantage of the online format to invite a speaker from distant shores. Dr Tai-Chun Ho, an Associate Professor of English at National Chung Hsing University in Taiwan gave an excellent lecture to an audience of thirty-four on the figure of the returned soldier in Kipling's poetry. A vibrant discussion ensued, taking in such poems as "Mandalay", "Shillin' a Day", "Chant-Pagan", "The Return" and "The Last of the Light Brigade". July sees us back at the "Rag" for a talk from a young scholar who, though he joined the Society and Council just a few years ago, has become a much-loved member of our community. Dr Paolo d'Indinosante of the University of Rome will be speaking on "Kipling in/and Italy: Representations, Readings, Rewrites".

In addition, October witnessed a unique event, after we were contacted by Nick Jensen, a sommelier at Gordon's Wine Bar on the Embankment. As many of you may know, this historic drinking den occupies the cellar of Embankment Chambers, directly underneath the flat where Kipling lived after his arrival in London in 1889. Twenty guests tasted a series of wines either mentioned in Kipling's writing or originating in places where he lived, and carefully curated by Nick; and between servings, Dr Alex Bubb gave a short speech about Kipling's interest in wine. We also continued our practice of holding on-line Kipling reading events, with one being curated by Prof. Jan Montefiore in December.

The Society was represented at the Alliance of Literary Societies AGM weekend, as well as at several of the ALS's online events. Three editions of the Journal were produced, all edited so ably by Jan Montefiore as usual. Five e-mail newsletters were also issued. The John McGivering writing competition was again run, this year seeking short prose entries on the supernatural. An excellent 48 submissions were received and prizes have been awarded. The winning stories will be published in September.

The year to the end of May 2026 saw an average of over 4,000 views a day on our website, an increase of 9% from the preceding year. As mentioned in last year's report, the interest by readers in regular features is minimal, so new additions will no longer be made to 'Story of the Month', 'Quotation of the week', 'Walking with Kipling' and 'Reading Aloud'. Our YouTube channel, which now has 143 subscribers, will continue to host recording of our regular meetings. Further fines for displaying a copyrighted image without permission resulted in a volunteer group on the council combining to remove those many images with unidentified sources from the website, reducing the number of images from over 5,000 to closer to 2,000. All the remaining images have now been systematically identified and properly attributed, and in most cases have been replaced with a link to the respective source site. This latter task has been carried out by the Online Editor Ian Bell and the newly appointed Assistant Online Editor, Steve Russ. Our aim is that all images on the site should be

properly attributed. We also hope to further illustrate Kipling's tales and poems with illustrations from past publications which are now in the public domain. After seven years and 369 poems, it was regrettably necessary to end the weekly Facebook discussions of a selected Kipling poem. A volunteer willing to restart this service would be most welcome.

We continued to support the Kipling Society Library at Haileybury School, including a £500 donation towards ongoing digitisation work overseen by the school archivist, Dr Sam Koon. Members can access the library by appointment via our Librarian, John Walker.

We have also been able to support financially a number of Kipling-related activities by other organisations, including LicketySpit for their *Just So* themed work children's story sessions in memory of John Radcliffe, and a donation to Heathfield Choral Society for their concert of Kipling settings. We also provided support to the Croatian Philological Society, for the publication of three translated Kipling stories on topics of migration.

We were contacted by representatives of the local community of St Paul Island, Alaska, who were working on a project to reimagine Kipling's story 'The White Seal' from a modern, Aleut perspective, and wanted to refer to the origin and reception of the original tale in their book. This has now been published with a historical endnote by Mike Kipling. As a result of the local contact, we have also slightly amended the version of the original story on our website in accordance with our policy on derogatory language in texts we specifically recommend for children. We have been approached by Rishi Sunak and Akshata Murty's charitable foundation for advice on Kipling's *Jungle Book* as part of their project aiming to educate young people on the cultural connections between Britain and India, partnering with cultural institution in both countries, including the UK National Theatre and National Museum of India. The range of contacts and support demonstrates that Kipling remains an important global writer and the Society and its library and resources a key element in the promotion and interpretation of his work.

Work is progressing on the plans for the celebrations to mark the centenary of the Kipling Society both in February 2027, 100 years to the day of the first meeting, and throughout the year. There will be meetings, a book of the best articles from 100 years of the *Kipling Journal*, a Society pin, and maybe another wine tasting. We are also organising events on the other side of the Atlantic in New York City, at Yale University and at *Naulakha*. All events will be advertised in the newsletter.

It was pleasing that long-time member, occasional speaker, and renowned battlefields author and tour guide, Valmai Holt was awarded the M.B.E. in this year's New Year's honours 'For services to Military History and War Commemoration'. Sadly, she died a few months later. We also lost two other stalwart members of the Society. In December 2025, John Radcliffe, Vice President of the Society, died; amongst his many achievements were the creation and development of the website and leadership of the online New Readers' Guide project. Past Society president, Lt Col. Roger Ayres O.B.E, died this year; he became membership secretary in 1998, chairman of Council in 2003 and 2004, and president of the Society from 2011 to 2020. Their support for and contributions to the Society were immense and they will be greatly missed.

## **Financial review**

The Society's Accounts are prepared in respect of calendar years. Those for 2025 were published in the May 2026 edition of the *Kipling Journal*. They have been approved by the Independent Financial Examiner, Mark Cummins of TC Group.

Expenditure and income were both higher than previous years due to hosting the ALS AGM. Reserves increased by around £2,750, which was largely due to a substantial increase in interest received during the year.

The Society's investments are currently held in three charity accounts with United Trust Bank: an easy access account and two term accounts maturing in 2027 and 2028 respectively.

The ALS AGM was run at a net cost of under £600 to the Society's funds, which was at the lower end of Council's expectations (some of the expenditure was incurred in 2024, so does not show in the 2025 accounts).

There have been no material changes since 31 December 2025

#### Reserving policy

At 31 December 2025, the Society held as earmarked reserves amounts of £2,642 and £17,465 being respectively the balances of donations made by former members John Slater and Eileen Stammers-Smith. These funds are earmarked respectively for the financing of children's writing competitions and for public lectures relating to Rudyard Kipling. No prizes were awarded from the John Slater Essay Competition Fund during the year. A small charge was made to Eileen Stammers-Smith Memorial Lecture Fund to cover the lecturer's expenses.

The Society also had general reserves of £43,989 amounting to well over two years of expenditure at normal levels. The Trustees have not specified a particular target for general reserves and are content either for them to remain around current levels or to gradually reduce should appropriate uses be found for their expenditure.