

Oxfordshire Family History Society

Registered Charity No. 275891

Annual general Meeting 7 December 2020

Held on Zoom, because of Covid-19 restrictions

Minutes

In the presence of the Society's Vice-President, Malcolm Graham, the Chairman, Malcolm Austen, called the meeting to order at 7.15pm. He welcomed the 65 members of the Society (a number which grew to 84 by the end of the meeting) and explained that the AGM was being held much later in the year than usual because of Covid-19. The Charity Commission have given their permission for both the delay and the holding of the meeting online (by means of Zoom).

1. The Chairman presented apologies from Malcolm Plaster, Julie Kennedy, Wendy Poile, Becky Vickers and Norma Auberton-Potter.

2. The Chairman noted that the Minutes of the 2019 AGM had been available to the members online before the meeting and invited comments. As there were none, he asked that the Minutes be agreed and accepted as a true record *nem. con.* This was done on a proposal by Kevin Poile and seconded by Tim Emptage. Note that all votes were taken by online poll and all members were able to select yes, no or abstain.

3. The Society's 44th Annual Report, presented by the Chairman, had been available on the website before the meeting. He invited comments or questions and, as there were none, it was proposed for acceptance by Paul Gaskell, seconded by Kevin Poile and agreed by the members *nem. con.*

4. The Chairman then invited the Treasurer, John Beckerleg, to present the Accounts for 2019 which had been available online before the meeting.

A member, Paul Quartermaine asked why there was a £5000 fall in membership fees when it appeared that there were only 47 fewer members. It was explained that the timing of payments can vary from year to year and, for instance, large numbers paying early or late can make all the difference.

The Accounts were put to the vote, proposed by Paul Gaskell and seconded by Maurice Mearden, and passed *nem.con.*

5. The Chairman then proposed Malcolm Graham as President of the Society, saying he was both sorry and glad to do so. He was very sorry because of the death of Hugh Kearsley, the previous President, who had been such a stalwart member of the Society and its committee

but delighted to invite Malcolm Graham, a long-standing member of the Society and one of its Vice-Presidents to take on the role.

Malcolm Graham said in reply that he was honoured to be asked. He had known and worked with Hugh since the 1980s and was well aware of all he had done for the Society and for all those interested in Family History in Oxfordshire and in developing the Search Suite hoped that his own 38 years of experience working with Oxford city and its libraries to make local history and family History materials available to the general public would stand him in good stead.

Malcolm Graham had been nominated by the Executive Committee and was approved, again *nem.con*.

Malcolm Graham accepted, saying he was humbled by the offer of the role and the Chairman wished him a long and happy term of office.

6. The Chairman then handed over to the President to conduct the election of officers.

The Executive Committee had nominated the following as the Society's officers for 2020-21

Malcolm Austen: Chairman

Tim Emptage: Secretary

John Beckerleg: Treasurer

Sue Honoré: Editor

As no other nominations for these positions and been received, the candidates were elected, unopposed.

It was then explained that, in addition to the elected officers, the constitution provided for the Executive Committee can have a further eight members, though only five (all present members of the committee) are prepared to stand. They are:

Dave Broughton

John Cramer

Christopher Fance

Susan Mattheus

Kevin Poile

Again, as no other candidates had come forward, they were duly elected, unopposed.

7. The Chairman then took the floor to explain that the Society was required to appoint an Independent Examiner for its accounts. The re-appointment of Mr T. K. Hobbs of Messers Capman, Robinson and Moore was proposed by Tim Emptage, seconded by Paul Gaskell and approved by the membership, *nem.con*.

8. The Chairman then asked the meeting to approve the proposed change to subscription rates from 1 January 2021, viz:

- a) raising the ordinary (UK individual) rate to £10 p.a. (was £9 p.a.)
- b) retaining the family (UK household) rate at £10 p.a.
- c) raising the overseas (Worldwide household) rate to £15 (was £12)

The Chairman explained that rates had not been increased for over 20 years and after questions from Paul Quartermaine, Paul Gaskell, and Dave Wedd and Stella Wentworth he further clarified that :

- it was felt to be better that those living in the same household need no longer pay the recently introduced entry fee for non-members if they attended a meeting at Exeter Hall,
- the worldwide subscription was no longer covering the postage for the journal,
- there was no intention to pursue members for the extra £1 if they had not, for instance, managed to update their standing order this year or had, indeed, paid their subscription before the end of the year, which many members do,
- there is still the facility to have more than one email address for one membership.

This motion was proposed by the Executive Committee and approved *nem.con*.

The Chairman formally closed the meeting at 7.45 and then invited questions from the floor.

Bryan Bowen commented that he had noted the donations to the Historic Towns Trust and The Victoria county Histories of Oxfordshire. He believed charities were not permitted to donate to other charities. Tim Emptage, OFHS Secretary, googled there and then and was able to confirm that it is possible if the reason for the donation was within the general remit of the charity, in this case education. Paul Gaskell said that when he was on the committee and Linda Dore the Treasurer, this issue had been checked with the Charity Commission.

Derek Peasey commented that he much appreciated the availability of Zoom for those members who could not attend meetings. Were these going to continue post-Covid? Malcolm reassured him that Zoom meetings were planned to continue, with one live meeting at Exeter Hall each month, and one on Zoom, also each month. There are no live meetings planned before Easter at the earliest.

Dave Wedd commented that the holding of the AGM on Zoom was a good idea. The Chairman explained that there is nothing in the Constitution to allow this on a regular basis but that will be looked at next year to allow the Society more flexibility.

Derek Peasey asked if it would be possible to have a live meeting, or live AGM also available on Zoom, both to attend and vote, but Kevin explained that, at the moment, the Internet at Exeter Hall is just not reliable enough.

Terence Lambourne asked about how great overseas attendance is at Zoom meetings. Kevin explained that he had begun asking participants to note where they were joining the meeting from (generally about 10% from overseas) and that the Society was offering some meetings (usually the “question and answer” sessions) at different times for day to fit in with different time zones. When asked how the numbers compare, Kevin said that there were usually over 100 each time, which is more than at the main lecture meetings on the 4th Monday of the month, and very many more on the 1st Monday meetings when the usual room only holds 40.

The Chairman then introduced Sylvia Levi and Simon Fowler to speak on “Christmas Food and Drink through the Ages”.