



**Minutes of 2023 Harrogate Civic Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held at 7.30 pm on Monday 13 March 2023
at Harrogate Theatre, Harrogate**

Preceded by a tour of the theatre and talk by theatre staff

Welcome and Introduction SH welcomed those attending as listed below. He introduced the members of the Committee who were on stage and thanked them for their hard work and commitment over the year.

Committee members present: Stuart Holland SH (Chair), Susan Amaku SA (Vice-Chair), Angela Fahy AF (Secretary), Chris Dicken CD (Treasurer), Andrew Brown AB, Henry Pankhurst HP and David Siddans DS.

Members present: Wendy Cross (minutes), Barry and Veronica Adams, Godfrey and Vivien Alderson, Nick and Chris Anderson, Peter and Sylvia Bagnall, Ann Beeby, Michael and Jane Bell, Ross Bingley, Peter and Jane Blayney, Peter and Christine Brown, Brian and Beryl Dunsby, George Eglese, Clare Elliston, Paul Fennimore, John and Sarah Frearson, John and Maggie Fox, Sue Fox, Tony and Heather Goodall, Andrew Goss, Joan Glassford, Paul and Liz Hatherley, Chris Holland, Norman and June Johnston, Philip and Cheryl Johnston, Andrew Jordan, Dennis and Liz Kelly, Michael Laycock, Val Mitchie, Jenny Moore, Mike Newby, Phil Noonan, Helen Page, Valerie Pickard, Richard and Liz Pugh, Beverley Robb, Val Rogers, Granville and Judith Simpson, Tony Thorndike, Mel Towler, Valerie Williams and Alan Wright.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Nigel McClea (Committee), Richard and Chris Butler, Angela Dicken, Geraldine Faith, Sian Greenwood, David Inglis, Jeff and Caroline Jaycock, Joyce Legge, Eleanor McClea, Fiona Movley, Stella Pilling, David Rhodes, Sarah Russell-Floyd, Anne Smith, Paula Stott, Eric Thompson, Ken Waight and Colin and Sue Welch.

2. Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting

Accepted as a true record by a show of hands.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

None.

4. Trustee's Annual Report

This had been circulated in advance. SH highlighted the following points:

There are now some 320 members, with around 80 new members having joined during the year. Two new members' evenings have been held to welcome them. Approximately 6 members have been lost, most of them because they have unfortunately passed away. SH spoke about the death of Malcolm Neesam, the Society's most eminent member, who joined the Society a year after it was founded and always did so much to support the work of the Society. The last event in which he was involved was the memorable launch of his epic work 'Wells and Swells' earlier in the year.



The year saw a busy schedule of events held for members and SH thanked AF for all the work she did to organise these. They included talks on Brass Bands, the future of local governance by Councillor Swift and Wallace Sampson, schooldays in Edwardian Harrogate by member Paul Jennings, the Convention Centre (held at that venue), Zero Carbon Harrogate, and Blind Jack of Knaresborough. There were also visits to Allerton Castle, a 'Behind the Scenes' visit to the Yorkshire Showground the day before the Great Yorkshire Show opened and a Christmas Social at St Wilfrids Church Hall.

Plaques were installed at The Club, at 9A Royal Parade to commemorate Pickersgill Palliser, founder of the Harrogate Advertiser, and at the corner of Parliament Street opposite the Royal Hall to commemorate Louis Copé, fashion entrepreneur of the early twentieth century. Another plaque was installed at Grove Road Chapel, by its owner, Mark Hinchliffe, with the assistance of the Society. The second edition of the plaques map and trail was published.

September saw over 20 venues taking part in Heritage Open days, this year ably and enthusiastically led by Kevin Hales, with Grove House being one of the highlights. The event was sponsored by Harrogate Spring Water.

The HCS newsletter continues to go from strength to strength with 6 or 7 full-colour newsletters now issued every year, under the editorship of David Siddans. Thanks were also expressed to Margaret Siddans for her proofreading.

The Planning and Development sub-group, a mainstay of the Society, this year considered 275 planning applications and submitted responses to 110 of them. The Society was also consulted by the Council on 27 applications. Of the decisions made by the Council, the subgroup considered 45% of them to be good, 15% fair, 15% were withdrawn and 25% were considered unsatisfactory.

As far as the Station Gateway was concerned, the Society was involved in three meetings with the team but little progress seems to have been made.

The new Civic structure is now occupying our thoughts and the Society has had the opportunity to make a statement to the new Area Committee, in which the Society said it would like to be involved with planning issues and a meeting is soon to be held to discuss how this can be set in place.

Another highlight of the year was the extremely successful Harrogate on Film project, in conjunction with Harrogate Film Society and the Yorkshire Film Archive. This is shortly to be repeated and as both sessions are once more sold out there may well be a third showing!

There was also a collaboration with Harrogate Dramatic Society to produce a Royal Walk for the Queen's Jubilee, and an extremely successful exhibition marking 150 years of Harrogate Railway Station. This project, held with the help of the History sub-group, had to be extended by four months and there is now talk of a possible book on the subject.

The website, managed by CD, has also gone from strength to strength and is full of information of all kinds about the work of the Society. SH urged members to explore it, mentioning in particular the articles on Harrogate history, now numbering around 24, some written and



others edited by Paul Jennings, a member of the History sub-group. Website activity is tracked and statistics collected. These show that the website is visited on average 600 times per month, 80% of these being first-time visits. The separate Plaques website has an average of 150 visits per month, many of them also new.

CD reported in his role as Treasurer that the finances were in a healthy position, with income mainly from membership. Gift Aid on membership fees produces important income too and the treasurer urged members who have not signed up to this to do so if they can. There was also this year a donation of some £500 from Hornbeam Developments, who sponsored the 'Wells and Swells' book launch and generously allowed the Society to keep the surplus of £500 generated. Expenditure on publicity shows a slight rise as now that meetings are once more held in person there are costs related to the hire of halls. On the other hand, there is no longer any need to pay for a Zoom account. As is now common practice, the bank no longer offers charge-free banking to charities. However, interest rates have gone up and the Society has a healthy excess of income over expenditure.

Members were then invited to ask questions on any aspect of the Report.

One member asked if there would be a plaque to commemorate Malcolm Neesam and SH informed the meeting that this has been discussed with Harrogate Borough Council and there almost certainly will be. The Borough Council has suggested it be located in the Library Gardens, perhaps along with a bench and/or tree. In discussions with MN's nephew it was thought that later this year would be the right time to consider this.

Another member asked whether MN had received all the awards to which he was entitled during his lifetime. SH responded that MN had received the Freedom of the Borough, entitling him to a civic presence at his funeral. He also mentioned that the portrait of Malcolm, painted by one of our members, is now hanging in the Mercer Gallery and that Malcolm's extensive Archive, as yet still set up, has also been moved there.

Member Sylvia Bagnall told the meeting that she and some others had tried repeatedly to get Malcolm an official honour, unfortunately without success. However, they gave Malcolm all the many letters received in support of such an honour so that he might see the esteem in which he was held.

The Trustees' Report was accepted by a show of hands.

5. Re-election of Committee Members and Officers, and Election of any Committee members co-opted since the last AGM.

As all Committee members had expressed their willingness to serve again for a further year, they were all standing for re-election. All were re-elected by a show of hands. No new members have been co-opted onto the Committee in the course of the year.

6. Election of any Committee members nominated in accordance with the provision of the Constitution before this AGM



No such nominations were received, but new Committee members do need to be added.

7. Proposed change to the Constitution to facilitate improved management of membership fees

AF explained the reasoning behind these changes, as detailed in the agenda. One member asked what would happen if someone joined part way through the year and CD explained that people joining between end January and 1st May would not be required to pay until 1st May. The Committee resolved to reduce from six months to three the period after which membership lapses for non-payment. The two amendments to the constitution were approved by a near unanimous show of hands.

9. Any other business

SH thanked the membership for their support and for their interest in the events over the year.

Member Barry Adams asked a question about the emphasis on the word 'preservation' in the Society's published materials and said he thought the focus should be more on 'conservation'. He had previously submitted a suggestion for discussion that the wording on the website be modified with particular reference to the word 'preserving'. He urged the Society to reinforce progressive conservation in its work for the town rather than preservation of the status quo. SH agreed to look at this. Member Michael Laycock said the Society should not be afraid to use the word preservation. HP said that 'preservation', 'conservation' and 'restoration' were all appropriate in the appropriate context. Member Tony Thorndyke said that the use of these words was very subjective, giving the example of the restoration of the Royal Hall. BA reiterated that he thought 'conservation' was not given enough prominence.

SH informed the meeting that a small change needed to be made to the constitution because of the membership secretary role being taken over by members Brian and Beryl Dunsby, working together. Because of GDPR rules it was proposed to amend 'secretary' to 'secretariat' in order to enable both of them to access the membership data. This was agreed by a show of hands.

SH also appealed for members to come forward to offer their assistance in any area in which they were interested, and spoke of how the four sub-groups (Planning & Development; History; Publicity; Events) were working very successfully with help from members.

SH ended by thanking the theatre staff for the tour and talk, the membership for their interest and his wife, Chris, for all her support over the year.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.