

Society of Genealogists

Paper 2 –Minutes of the 2022 AGM

Action: for approval

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022 MINUTES

Minutes of the 111th Annual General Meeting of the Society of Genealogists held online and in-person on Wednesday, 2nd of July 2022, at 1:08pm.

67 attended online, and 26 attended in person.

1. THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

- a. Chairman Ed Percival elected Patric Dickinson, LVO, MA, FSG, to take the chair.
- b. Paul Blake moved to elect Patric Dickinson. Di Swinfield seconded this. All in favour; 94; All against: 0, All abstained; 0. The motion carried.
- c. Patric Dickinson was voted President and took the chair.

The Chairman reported that the minutes of the 110th Annual General Meeting were approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2021. They had been published on the Society's website and did not require the approval of this meeting.

2. THE AUDITOR'S REPORT

- a. These were circulated to members and published on the website, and thus the President moved to see this as read.
- b. No one contested.

3. THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- a. Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Ed Percival, presented the Annual Report of the Trustees for 2021.
- b. The President declared the Reports and Accounts open to discussion.

Question: Jim Halstead queried the third page of the report, where it was reported that the previous accommodation found proved to be unsuitable. He asked what lessons were learned from this process?

CEO Wanda Wyporska answered: The building had a substantial cladding issue, which was discovered during the due diligence. The Board decided to pull out of the deal as the building would have been under scaffolding for 18 months and because of the risk.

Question: Julian Duffus asked about the library's move from Charterhouse Buildings. The Society parted ways with long-standing members and many library materials, was this process properly thought out?

Chairman Ed Percival responded: In each of these cases, the task in hand was reviewed with the help of staff and their expertise. The lack of library space was considered, and the move provided an opportunity to organise materials which included duplicates. The quality of the information and digitisation was prioritised.

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Question: Martin Webster endorsed Mr. Duffus' comment. He also missed the ability to browse the shelves and saw this as a vital part of society. Will this be restored at the new property?

WW responded: She assured the meeting that space to browse will be restored. Dedicated space for collections and staff, courses and events is at the heart of the Society.

4. THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2021

a. The President asked Mr Percival to speak to the Annual Accounts of the Board of Trustees, in the absence of Treasurer Ray O'Connell.

b. Mr. Percival reported:

- The 2021 net income was £2,490,254
- Legacies and donations were £1,968,775. Donations and legacies reflect notified items, receipts of these are expected over the next 18 months.
- Completion of the Transformation Programme is expected in 2023.
- New premises and relocation will be fully provided for financially at £4,300,000
- Operating break-even is expected in 2023.

Question: Di Swinfield noted that the legacy amount was more substantial in 2021, making a significant difference to the financial position of the society. What spending plans are there for this exceptional windfall?

WW answered: The plans for spending are substantially focused on a property purchase, which includes fit-out costs and special conditions needed to preserve collections. Remedial work on the collections will be invested in, so that previously incorrectly catalogued collections can be re-labelled and enjoyed by members and a wider audience.

Question: Jim Halstead asked why the amount owed from 'other debtors' on page 33 of the 2021 accounts had increased substantially.

EP answered: 'Other Debtors' refer to the amount that will be received from legacies, but it is not yet in the accounts. This has increased substantially since 2021.

Resolution to receive the Annual Report of the Board of Trustees for 2021: Frank Hardy moved to receive the motion. Julian Duffus seconded. All in favour 87; all against 0; abstentions 6. The motion was carried.

Resolution to receive the Annual Accounts for 2021: Colin Chapman moved to receive the motion. Graham Ford seconded. All in favour 88; all against 0; all withheld 5. The motion was carried.

5. THE APPOINTMENT OF THE AUDITORS

a. The Chair asked if anyone had a question regarding the auditor's appointment. None were raised.

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Resolution to appoint Richard Place Dobson as Auditors, in accordance with Section 485 of the Companies Act 2006. Di Swinfield moved to receive the motion. Colin Chapman seconded. All in favour 92; all against 0; all withheld 1. The motion was carried.

6. CEO'S REPORT AND UPDATE

- a. The Chairman introduced CEO Dr Wanda Wyporska. WW gave a report and update on the Society.

7. THE ADOPTION OF THE UPDATED ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION OF THE SOCIETY BY SPECIAL RESOLUTION.

- a. The Chairman stated that clauses 4.20 and 6.5 in the Articles of Association agreed at the 2021 AGM be amended, and new versions be approved in substitution for and to the exclusion of the existing 4.20 and 6.5. The former clauses can be read in the 2021 Articles of Association, and the new clauses can be read in the 2022 Articles of Association, available on the Society's website.
- b. The Chairman asked for questions on the Special Resolution.

Question: Paul Blake noted that these two clauses were bundled together, and the nature of this vote forced members to vote either for both or for neither. He was forced to vote against both, and wanted them to be voted for individually.

EP answered: His concerns were understood, and clauses will be voted for separately in future.

Question: Ian Brown asked about Article 4.20- 'Investments'. He noted that often Board members will only give financial advice if they are retired. Two types of investment are conjoined; investing in subsidiaries or joint venture companies differs from investing surplus funds. Advice would be needed from a licensed professional authority. Is the clause considering the qualifications of those asked to advise?

EP answered: The Board will not act rashly nor cut corners, all individuals consulted will be qualified, including any individuals within the Board.

Question: Alec Tritton noted that the second part of the motion is a license for someone to remain on the Board forever. He noted that in the 2008 Icelandic financial crash, councils did not take external advice before investing. Relying solely on the expertise of Board members could lead to similar financial issues.

Response from a member: Mia Bennett also noted that this would only happen with the vote of the membership. She gave an example of former Board member Richard Sturt, for whom this amendment would have been helpful. His unique skills and knowledge would have benefitted the Board when it came to the previous property sale.

WW answered: Action taken from one trustee only is never acted upon. Standing orders are in place, and there is a process of tendering singular trustee's proposals. The whole Board and CEO are responsible for this process. In regard to trustees sitting for a third term, this needs to be voted on at an AGM.

Question: Alec Tritton responded, why then change the articles?

EP Answered: To be in line with current rules of Charity Commission.

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Trustee Rob George also answered: It is important to keep up-to-date with the law, and in this process the ability to change some articles was uncovered. The Charity Commission recommends nine years for trustee terms, the Society's is currently 6 years. Retaining the expertise of a particular trustee for longer is therefore possible, a question that would be voted on at the AGM if this were to happen.

Resolution to adopt the Updated Articles of Association of the Society by Special Resolution. Michael Peter O'Donoghue moved to receive the motion. Frank Hardy seconded. All in favour 72; all against 11; all withheld; 6. The Special Resolution was adopted, with assurance that votes on such resolutions will be split in future.

8. THE TERMS OF OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

- a. Due to the 2021 AGM change in articles, the terms of office were reset.
- b. Dr Colin Chapman and Miriam Margolyes, OBE have offered themselves up for election as Vice Presidents.

Resolution to appoint Dr Colin Chapman as Vice President. Di Swinfield moved to receive the motion. Anne Ramon seconded. All in favour 88; all against 1; withheld; 1.

Dr Chapman was voted Vice President.

Resolution to appoint Miriam Margolyes, OBE, as Vice President. Karen De Bruyne moved to receive the motion. Michael Peter O'Donoghue seconded. All in favour 75; all against 6; withheld 7.

Miriam Margolyes was voted Vice President.

9. TO ANNOUNCE AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIP OF THE SOCIETY

- a. The Chair introduced the past Chairman of the Fellows and new re-elected Vice Chairman, Dr Colin Chapman, to present members with the honour of Fellowship to the society.
- b. Dr Chapman awarded Fellowship of the Society to Roz McCutcheon.
- c. As Chairman of the Awards Panel, Dr Chapman reported that there were no Certificates of Recognition to award this year.
- d. The Chair reported that Trustees have not awarded the Prince Michael of Kent Award this year.
- e. WW announced certificates of appreciation for volunteers Graham Ford, Bill Roberts, Hazel McGee, Alan Pursell, and Graham Simons.

Question: Paul Blake asked if the older pieces of unused records and microforms in storage would be pulped, and if not, what will be done with them? And what will happen to the Parish Register materials?

WW Answered: Nothing is planned to be pulped. Much of the packing was done in a hurry, and the ecological route for disposing of materials and the rehoming of materials are ongoing discussions.

Question: Grant White noted that many of the LDS films are not available on their website. Will those that are not online be kept?

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Else Churchill, EC, Answered: 85% of the 60,000 films FamilySearch gave to the Society are digitised, and the digitised ones will either be disposed of or rehomed, and physical copies will be kept.

Question: Paul Masterson asked if the microfilms were not the property of the Church of Latter Day Saints when they vacated Kew?

EC answered: They are now the Society's property.

Question: From a member who did not give their name: regarding the FSGs' deaths reported in the last Genealogy Magazine, how many FSGs are there, and can a list of Fellows be produced in the magazine?

WW Answered: A systems changeover meant this data had not been recovered, but it is currently in the process of being confirmed. The list of Fellows in the Annual Report was removed based upon the advice of auditors. Once confirmed, this list can be provided in the next magazine, and on the website.

The Chair thanked all attendees, and declared the formal part of 2022 Annual General Meeting to be closed.

INFORMAL SESSION

Question: Julian Duffus asked if there is a current Royal Patron?

WW: There is no current royal patron, and as it has become harder to engage with royalty in recent years. One person is in mind, and will be pursued. Member recommendations are welcome.

Question: Peter Huntly asked will the digitisation of Parish Records include indexing or will it be a matter of browsing?

EC: All digitisation was done to reduce space. As record transcripts, these will be browsable online rather than browsable by entry.

Question: Howard Shelton asked that before any digitised records be disposed of, can it be made certain that all aspects of them are recorded, not just the directly relevant information? The "subliminal" information of records could be obscured in the digitisation process.

EC: This will be made certain.

Question: Deborah Stock asked what is the strategy for publicising the Society more widely to expand membership?

WW: This strategy is underway, new comms connections have been made and over the summer a large expansion is planned.

Question: Lynette Benton noted that she was very pleased young people were being reached out to. Can this please be spoken about more and how will it be taken forward?

WW: Revitalising older education tools at the Society, and making the new premises a location schools can use for educational purposes is vital. The Youth Conference provided a platform for a youth approach to genealogy.

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Question: Alec Tritton asked when will the Standing Orders be viewable? Last year it was mentioned they would be online, and as they are mentioned in the articles, surely members should be entitled to see them?

WW: These will be put online, excluding the Financial Orders. Once they have been updated with permission of the Board, they will be put online.

Question: Paul Masterson presumed that the new location will remain in central London, and hopes that ease of the transport links for people outside London is a key part of the decision.

WW: This is under consideration for the new property.

Question: Paul Gorry asked when the process of electing Fellows was changed so that Trustees rather than Fellows vote on nominees?

WW: This happened at the previous AGM and was voted upon.

Question: Deborah Stock asked if coordinating with organisations outside of the UK was under consideration?

WW: The Society's records are key to many international researchers, and these connections will be explored, including at RootsTech 2023 in the USA.

Question: Julian Duffus asked if the Society would consider opening on a Saturday?

WW: This decision requires staff consultation, and it will be considered.

Question: Andrew Cumine asked about technology. Previously, he believed that he had found an appropriate data set at the society, but there was no technology to read the data disk. What is being done to make sure all data sets are readable? And what is being done regarding updating materials, and OCR?

WW: A donation has been given specifically for library acquisition, so with this old technology can be resuscitated and new acquisitions will be pursued. Fortunately, we have Graham Ford here, who can elaborate on this.

Graham Ford added: The OCR process will generate searchable PDFs with keywords. There was no previous system to methodically store these different formats and information inside files, and part of the transformation is to include a digital asset management system that preserves information.

Question: Jo Bartlett asked for enhanced ability to access the current premises. Many members are upset at a current lack of access to materials.

WW: The transformation process has taken longer than initially anticipated. The retrieval system needed to be set up currently, along with systems in the office, which also caused delay to allowing members onsite. She thanked members for remaining dedicated whilst the Society faced these delays.

Question: Paul Blake: A new librarian was mentioned, what new hires have taken place?

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WW: A new Archivist and Librarian have been hired on 6 month contracts in order to aid the transformation process.

Question: Liz Butler: The educational aspect of the Society was commended, but the booking system was difficult to use.

WW: Thanked Lori Weinstein and Ruth Willmore for their hard work with this programme. Changing systems is underway and there have been difficulties, so please give feedback to the events team. EC also noted that new developments would happen soon, which should make the process smoother. Volunteers should also be thanked for their help in educational programmes.

WW thanked the President Patric Dickinson, Vice President Colin Chapman, Trustee Chair Ed Percival, all staff and volunteers. The attendees were thanked, and the meeting was ended.