

The Church Monuments Society
Minutes of the 2015 Annual General Meeting held at 2pm on Saturday, 26 September 2015
at the St Alban's Centre, Baldwins Gardens, Holborn, London EC1 7AB

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Council members Miss Sally Badham, Dr Rhianydd Biebrach, Dr John Bromilow, Mr Mark Downing and Prof Richard Marks, and ordinary members Tony Carr, David Kellsall and Iona Roberts. Twelve Council members and nine ordinary members were present.

2. The **Minutes of the 2104 Annual General Meeting** were approved unanimously, proposed: Dr Clive Easter, seconded: Mrs Moira Gittos.

3. Matters Arising from the 2014 Annual General Meeting

Dr Wilson reported that the change of status to CIO was proceeding.

Dr Wilson said that Christopher Chope's Bill, relating to bats, had fallen due to the General Election. Lord Cormack had scheduled another Bill but it was unlikely to proceed due to its low place on the list. Further, Dr Wilson said her attempts to discover additional information had been frustrated as Natural England claimed to have no relevant information about bats.

Dr Wilson announced that the deadline for essay prize submissions was 31 December 2015.

4. The Presidential Address – Dr Jean Wilson

Once again the Church Monuments Society has had a busy year and there is every sign that next year will be equally exciting/faxing!

My first task is to welcome new members of Council and Officers, and to thank those retiring: Barbara Tomlinson, succeeded by Hilary Wheeler, Rhianydd Biebrach, succeeded by James Cameron and John Bromilow, succeeded by a new arrangement, as he has been holding down what amounts to three people's tasks.

We have had a full programme of varied events including, in 2014 on 11 October a Suffolk tour to Boxted, Hawstead, Little Saxham, Clifford and Ampton. On 15 November a conference, for graduate students, with the Monumental Brass Society – Commemoration of the Dead: new approaches, new perspectives, new material.

In 2015, on 2 May a study day at Tong, on 6 June a tour of Nottinghamshire churches including Holme Pierrpont and Langar. On 8 August a tour of churches round Wimbledon, including Addington, Beddington, Cheam, Carshalton and Wimbledon itself and on 22 September a pop-up event at Deene, one of our more informal events which involved a morning session in the church examining the Brudenell monuments, and an afternoon tour of the Brudenell house.

In addition on 9 July representatives of the Society, ably led by Ellie Pridgeon took a stall to the IMC at Leeds to promote awareness of the Society. Coming up this year we have on 10 October, in London, a neo-classical monuments conference and on the 24th a tour of churches near Wolverhampton, particularly focused on the midlands alabasters, but

with something for everybody. On 27 November a study day at Wingfield – a pop-up event.

The Guide Book Competition will be held next year, and David Meara has kindly agreed to judge it. Further details will appear in the Spring Newsletter and on line.

Some years ago, an art-historian friend said to me, "Nicholas Stone's all very well, but he's not Bernini, is he?" In this Society we study monuments from all sorts of angles - the historical, the functional, the type of monument, the material, the workshop. I sometimes wonder whether we perhaps underplay the aesthetic. I am the first person to be guilty of this - I have frequently remarked that I don't much care about monument's quality, provided it says something interesting.

What we should all remember is that almost all the surviving British sculpture from the Middle Ages is in places of worship (not all of it - or indeed, most of it - of course, in the form of funerary monuments) Most early modern British sculpture is in places of worship, most of this in the form of funerary monuments. With the growth of public sculpture, and indeed the market for sculpture for private clients, the proportion of that in places of worship diminishes over time, but even as late as the early twentieth century a large number of the works of the leading sculptors, notably Gilbert, are to be found in places of worship - which still provide a home for those examples of funerary art which the ecclesiastical authorities permit. The objects we study form a substantial body of surviving British art.

So why this is art on the whole forgotten? There are, I would suggest, a number of reasons. The first is that art historians, like other academics, tend to be an atheistical bunch, which wouldn't dream of setting foot into a church and prefer to study their art in museums, or, failing that, in photographic archives. The idea of trekking through a large field populated by vigorous bullocks in order to reach a remote church (Sotterley) would have most of them fainting in coils and their Jimmy Choos.

To be more serious, these objects are very often in remote churches: to take two exceptionally beautiful medieval monuments, Lady Blanche Mortimer at Much Marcle and the exquisite young knight in the habit of a Franciscan tertiary at Connington, they are actually quite difficult get to - impossible without private transport. The same is true of Nicholas Stone's lovely Lady Carey at Stow-Nine-Churches, Watt's wonderful Sir Reginald Cholmondeley at Condover and Boehm's Earl and Countess of Cardigan at Deene. More shamefully, some which should be easy of access, such as Gilbert's ravishing Duke of Clarence at Windsor and Boehm's Princess Alice at Frogmore, are simply not on view - the Royal Household ought to be ashamed about those two! So they take a lot of effort (mind you, art historians are perfectly happy to trek round remote Italian churches, so why don't they turn their attention closer to home?)

This is partly due, I think, to the histories of British ecclesiology and art history. The enlightenment was a period of dreadful neglect of churches, and when this was remedied in the nineteenth-century combination of Gothic and Religious revival, the fashion was for the nineteenth-century view of the medieval (with perhaps a privileging of brasses?) and the more flamboyant and worldly early modern pieces were rejected (eighteenth-century sculpture was, of course, suffering the inevitable rejection that one generation inflicts on its immediate predecessor). To give an example - during the 1840s restoration of my local church, the then font, described as 'an absurd pagan vase' was

discarded. I am pretty sure that this was a work of the 1630s, probably by one of the Colts. We now have a commonplace Victorian gothic font.

Early modern art (sculpture at least) suffered an equally brusque rejection by twentieth-century art historians. Margaret Whitney's influential book makes it clear that, in her opinion, English art only perks up when (a) foreigners like Roubiliac arrived (b) the aesthetic became nicely monochrome and classical. She has no real time for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, nor does she try to understand their aesthetic.

The modernist aesthetic also rejects all that preceded it, while the First World War, for perfectly understandable reasons, led to a near-cessation in the idea of private funerary commemoration of anything but the most unostentatious kind. Our idea of an acceptable monument, whether public or private, is an iconic and non-individualistic. We don't like representation, even when that representation is not of persons themselves, but of objects that are intended to capture their essence. The Diana, Princess of Wales, memorial fountain is valued above the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother gates, even though an iconographer looking at them would say that their associations suggest that the one was a lachrymose (watery) and dangerous (slippery) character, while the other was flourishing, royal, and perhaps a touch vulgar - which is the more accurate? Again, I am being flippant, but while I think that Lutyens's war memorials are a triumph, particularly the Cenotaph, I do think that the women' war memorial has got a great deal of unjustified stick. Nor does public taste always agree with that of the aesthetically educated - the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington (which I seem to be in a minority in disliking) had to be supplemented by representational statues of combatants in order to satisfy public opinion. In any case, we don't like portraiture in commemoration, and tend to be repulsed by such objects (unless by Michelangelo). And, I have to say, much modern representational sculpture is not good.

So we are studying a form that on the whole is no longer practised, and that deals with the great unmentionable - Death. People don't really think that death is a fit subject for art, and so anything that deals with death is not Art.

We must change this. At the moment few speak for the art that is in our churches. The CofE regards it as an expensive liability, EH considers antiquity, but not aesthetics, Natural England disregards art, thinks of churches as wildlife sanctuaries & is devious and obstructive when challenged, and while the modern art market is lively it is not interested in inalienable property, and would rather deal in meretricious claptrap, such as Michael Jackson and Bubbles.

We are one of the few pressure groups which know about this neglected aspect of British art. So let us go on with our studies of oeuvres, of armour, of emotional history, but let us never forget that often what we look at is beautiful, is great art, is the heritage of the country, and should be protected and better known - and that getting it better known is up to us.

5. The Hon Treasurer's Report and Accounts for 2014-15 – Mr Michael Thompson

The Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st. March 2015 have been circulated. The accounts were approved by Council at the May meeting.

Members will recall at last year's AGM, I said that the deficit (£2,306) was misleading for the reasons which I explained at the time. Now this year, let me say the apparently large

surplus has arisen for those same reasons, namely: Henry Ling presented only one invoice for the Journal in the year, the gift-aid repayment claim from HMRC covered a period of more than one year, and the symposium and events organised during the year were all well supported.

The subscriptions for the year amounted to £10,619, sales of back issues raised £611 (for which again, credit must be given to Sue Kelland). One grant of £400 was received towards the costs of publishing a paper the Journal. The repayment of gift-aid amounted to £5759. The investment income from COIF and M & G amounted to £1667, with interest of £95 paid on the deposit accounts with HSBC and COIF. It is pleasing to report the surplus arising from the symposium and events amounted to £2,825. All of which, led to a surplus for the year of £12,521.

At the year-end the cash in the HSBC current and deposit accounts was £11,133, and at COIF £8506 (General Fund), and £495 (John Coales legacy).

The market value of the investments has increased during the year and the total value at the 31st.March was £ 44,004, plus £10,000 transferred at the year-end from deposit to a 'Contingency Fund' with COIF.

May I conclude by again saying the Society's finances are in 'good shape'.

Brian Gittos asked if the 'rolling surplus' was approximately £5,000:00 and Mr Thompson replied that it was £4-5,000:00. Mr Thompson added that the surplus depended on a number of events taking place.

Dr Wilson invited the meeting to accept the accounts, proposed: Mr Norman Hammond, seconded the Revd David Mera and agreed unanimously.

6. Appointment of the Independent Examiner

Mr Robert Burborough of Stephenson Smart was thanked and his re-appointment was proposed by Mr Jon Bayliss, seconded by Mr Colin Harris and agreed unanimously.

7. Hon Membership Secretary's Report – Dr Clive Easter

At the last AGM I reported that we had experienced a drop in membership in real terms. This year the situation has stabilized a little but at the time of writing we have exactly 500 members, down from 506 the previous year. Over the past year we have recruited 19 new members, one of the lowest numbers for new members in recent years. The simple fact of the matter is that our membership is aging and that young people are not joining us. Some deaths have also reduced our numbers, again the result of an aging membership.

One interesting situation occurred recently when I received a membership application form that was at least ten years old. This only goes to show how long in circulation some of our literature is!

All the Standing Order subscriptions came in on 1st June and these were duly processed in early July. As is normal some 100 members had yet to pay their subs but a good number did send cheques without the need for me to prompt them. I also trawled the database for email addresses and sent out about 18 reminders which saved the society time and money. His left a residue of 63 members unpaid, the lowest for a very long time if not the

lowest ever and reminders were sent out recently. This also resulted in low postage costs. I remain hopeful that the vast majority will **not** require a final reminder.

Corporate membership remains unchanged at 61 and we hope that the resignations of last year will be a thing of the past. All but 5 corporate members have paid up for the year and the defaulters will be chased soon.

At the time of writing, the membership numbers are as follows.

439 Ordinary and family members
61 Corporate members
Total of 500

8. Hon Publicity Officer's Report – Dr John Bromilow

Dr Easter read Dr Bromilow's report, after paying a warm tribute to him.

After more years than I care to remember I am stepping down as Honorary Publicity Officer at this year's AGM, partly because I have really done the job long enough and partly because it is high time someone else puts his or her stamp on it.

When I began, the work was very different: there was no internet, no e-mails and no websites. I did use one of those BBC B microcomputers which those of you of a certain age may remember. This was attached to an early printer which was not versatile and certainly not wysiwyg, so a lot of the work was done on an early word processor and even more by hand. Posters were produced entirely on the drawing board and we kept Royal Mail busy. There was a lot of paper publicity then which still carries on but to a limited extent; in fact the website, e-mails etc take so much time that an assistant publicity appointment was appointed for the paper publicity.

With the internet, of course, things changed and I'm pleased to say we were one of the first societies to produce a website. We now hear from people in the USA and the Antipodes which would have been unheard of in the paper days when we were considered an English based - if not a London based - society. In fact the Society's original name, which was revised because of its unwieldy nature, did suggest our international view. The first website was a modest affair with no illustrations, necessarily so as we used coding rather than a web editing program. We improved the website several times as editing programs became more common. I am no website designer so the technology of the latest version was carried out by a professional in that field, while I added all the data and artwork. Unfortunately this has led to instability and the site needs transferring, although all the relevant information is still there and remains so. I had originally intended to carry this out but for a number of reasons I was unable to do so and now the next incumbent can put his or her stamp on the design and make some needed modifications.

I leave you with two items. The first is indeed paper publicity, being a new publicity leaflet which has completed in the 'design office' but not yet printed. These leaflets we feel are essential for publicity but tend to be rather expensive to produce; we believe we have now rectified this problem.

The other is the internet. Some years ago I added some photographs of monuments in the churches we were to visit on a symposium. This seemed to work well so I decided to begin a gazetteer of monuments in Britain and later in France. This grew and the website at one point overflowed. We now have unlimited space and, although I am resigning as publicity officer, I will continue to modify and expand this feature. I will have more time in retirement as this is a lengthy endeavour. Watch this space!

9. Hon Archivist's Report – Dr Ellie Pridgeon

Dr Wilson read Dr Pridgeon's report.

I continue to manage the paper and digital documents relating to CMS meetings and AGMs, and will deposit these in the CMS archive at the Borthwick Institute each year.

CMS Twitter

We now have 1,472 followers, which include individuals and organizations in the heritage academic sectors - and beyond.

10. Hon Events Co-ordinator's Report – Mr Mark Downing

Miss Tomlinson read Mr Downing's report.

So far in 2015 there has been a very good program of events and with an excursion on 24th October to South Staffordshire lead by Robin Draper and on 10th October there is a Conference on Neoclassical memorials. Also there is a joint event in November at Wingfield lead by Sally Badham and Jessica Barker.

The events planned for 2016 are Julian Litten's joint conference in May with the Mausoleum Trust; the symposium at Hersmonceux (Sussex) and a proposed event at Brecon in October. There are excursions to Essex, Yorkshire.

11. Report on the Society's Publications

Journal – Dr Paul Cockerham

Volume 29

Vol. 29 was a large issue of 192 pages, with over 140 pages devoted to five articles, two review articles occupying nine pages, and the remainder of the volume taken up by reviews of twenty-five books. The volume also included, for the first time, translations of the article abstracts into French and German, and details of the Board of Editorial Advisers. Costs were offset by a grant of £400 from the Marc Fitch Fund. Non-member reviewers / referees / Editorial Advisers were each sent a copy with a membership application form in the hope of boosting membership. The volume has been sent to EBSCO for digitisation and should now be available to view on their *Artsource* database.

Volume 30

Articles for Vol. 30 are currently going through the final editing and redrafting process and will hopefully be ready to send to the designers next month, with an estimated publication date of February 2016. It promises to be perhaps the largest volume we have yet published and will be lavishly illustrated, for which we are seeking generous grant assistance.

At the present time the following articles are planned for inclusion in Vol. 30:

Sally Badham and Sophie Oosterwijk, 'Monumentum aere perennius'? Precious-metal effigial tomb monuments in medieval Europe 1080-1430'. (This is a substantial paper for which considerable grant aid towards production costs will be sought.)

Meredith Crosbie, 'Giusto Le Court's seventeenth-century Venetian naval funerary monuments'.

David Green, 'The tomb of Edward the Black Prince: contexts and incongruities.

Jean Wilson, 'Speaking stones: the use of text in the design of Early Modern funerary monuments'.

Rebecca Senior, 'Sculpting heroes' (Shorter Articles).

In addition, Dr Oosterwijk has received and edited eighteen book reviews; more are expected and likely to be included, or held over for Vol. 31. Another eleven have been commissioned for Vol. 31 already. There is again a wider international coverage, thanks also to contacts abroad (esp. Dr Joanna Olchawa). Dr Oosterwijk is grateful for suggestions from members and also for the close collaboration with Dr Oliver Harris, who produces the lists of new publications for the Newsletter.

European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH)

Details of the Board of Editorial Advisers have been posted by Dr Bromilow on the CMS website, which is a prerequisite for listing. Dr Oosterwijk has not yet been able to prepare the application for ERIH accreditation of the journal, but aims to do so this autumn/winter. Accreditation is increasingly important to obtain wider recognition for the journal and to attract papers from national and international scholars.

Finally...

After five volumes of *Church Monuments* I have decided to hand on the baton so Vol. 30 will be my last as co-editor. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of editing such a high-quality publication and working alongside my colleagues Dr Sophie Oosterwijk, Dr Kelcey Wilson-Lee and Dr Kerry Bristol. I must give my special and heartfelt thanks to my current partner-in-crime Dr Paul Cockerham. I could not have asked for a more supportive and good-humoured co-editor and I know that he will be the best mentor for my replacement, Dr James Cameron of the Courtauld Institute

Dr Rhianydd Biebrach
Journal Co-Editor

Dr Paul Cockerham
Journal Co-Editor

Dr Sophie Oosterwijk
Book Reviews Editor

Newsletter – Dr Andrew Sargent

The Editor would like to thank all who have contributed to the success of the *Newsletter* this year, including those who were prevailed upon to write up individual excursions and events. Most are named in the relevant issues, but special thanks are recorded to Brian & Moira Gittos for checking draft copy.

Two issues of the *Newsletter* have been produced in the year since the last AGM; 30.1 & 30.2. An Autumn issue (31.1) is due in October following the AGM.

The Editor would like to encourage members to contribute to the *Newsletter*. Short pieces (up to 3 pages at 400 words per page plus a good photograph) are most welcome. They do not need to be the polished results of a major research project! Or if you are researching a topic try tapping the Society's collective knowledge by asking a question.

If you are attending an excursion or event, you might like to write it up for the *Newsletter* (up to 900 words and a photo). I believe the purpose of the report is to make those who

did not attend wish that they had! In other words, an impression rather than a précis. If this interests you, have a word with the organiser in advance as they will welcome a keen volunteer.

Do not forget *Stop Press!*, our email alerts initiative which members (and non-members) may opt to receive. This will advertise opportunities which from time to time arise between *Newsletters*, such as the chance to visit conservation work in progress, and also be a reminder about booking deadlines. To join, please send your email address to andrewsargent@gmail.com and include 'Subscribe to CMS Stop Press' in the subject line.

Dr Sargent was asked if a précis of the publicity report could appear in a future edition of the Newsletter.

12. Report of the Conservation Cases Recorder – Dr David Carrington

The two main themes of my report this year are redundancy and theft. Fortunately there are some positive outcomes to report as well as cases of great concern.

St. Peter's church at Astwood (Buckinghamshire) was closed and offered for potential sale late last year. It houses various 17th and 18th wall monuments including one particularly fine one to a descendent of the famous Archbishop Cranmer, and one signed by the sculptor John Vidler. There are also two medieval brasses and some very good 18th century ledger slabs. The CMS has been liaising with the Monumental Brass Society over the fate of the church, and these monuments, and in June I wrote a detailed report for both societies on the wall monuments and on the slab housing the Chibnale brass. Julian Litten has added further useful comments on the ledger slabs in particular, and the difficulties of incorporating these into a domestic conversion. The fate of the church remains uncertain, and although there is the possibility of re-housing the brasses and the wall monuments there remains concern for these. The ledger slabs seem to present greater difficulties as they may well be over burials whilst also being in at least one instance associated directly with a wall monument.

Better news can be reported for St. Andrew's church, Ufford (Cambridgeshire). This fine church, with several notable monuments, was closed some three years ago but has been taken on by the Churches Conservation Trust and has been sensitively conserved (including the monuments), and is now open to the public.

A comprehensive update on Operation ICARUS, an investigation led by West Mercia Police, and the resultant recovery of a number of monuments ranging from a Saxon gravemarker to a 15th century brass has been written by Sally Badham and will appear in the forthcoming Newsletter. The excellent news of the successful recovery of these is tempered by the bad news that there have been two recently reported thefts of pre-Conquest stones from Hovingham and Harewood churches (North and West Yorkshire respectively).

I have also dealt with eight other cases since the last AGM, typically offering guidance as to where further advice and grant aid might be found. Otherwise I have been continuing my investigation into the fate of the monuments formerly in the north porch at Bunbury church (Cheshire) — where I am due to take up an offer to inspect them in their new secure store; have offered encouragement to a proposed re-ordering of monuments at Escrick church (North Yorkshire); and have determined that the future of the monuments

in the chapel at Compton Verney (Warwickshire) seems much brighter than it did five years ago.

I conclude with a thank you to members both of the Society and of the general public who have drawn attention to various monuments at risk in one way or another, and for the invaluable support offered by Council in dealing with these cases.

13. Election of a new Hon Secretary

Miss Hilary Wheeler was elected unanimously.

14. Re-election of the President

The re-election of Dr Jean Wilson was proposed by Dr Julian Litten, seconded by Prof Brian Kemp and agreed unanimously.

The serving officers of the Society prepared to stand for re-election:

Prof Brian Kemp	Vice President
Dr Julian Litten	Vice President
Miss Sally Badham	Vice President
Mr Michael Thompson	Treasurer
Dr David Carrington	Conservation Cases Recorder
Mr Mark Downing	Event Co-ordinator
Dr Clive Easter	Membership Secretary
Dr Rhianydd Biebrach	Journal Editor
Dr Paul Cockerham	Journal Editor
Dr Andrew Sargent	Newsletter Editor
Dr Ellie Pridgeon	Archivist

were re-elected unanimously.

This year there are three new Council members to replace Prof Richard Marks, Miss Hilary Wheeler and to fill a vacant post for a sixth ordinary member. Prof Marks and Miss Wheeler were thanked for their valuable contributions. The three nominations – Dr Adam White, Dr Jessica Barker and Mr Derrick Chivers were elected unanimously.

16. Any Other Business

Life membership for Dr John Bromilow was announced.

Miss Tomlinson said that the AGM would be followed by a tour of St Alban's church and tea.

17. Date and venue of the 2016 Annual General Meeting

24 September 2016 at the proposed venue of the Courtauld Institute, London.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 3.05pm.

Following the AGM members adjourned to St Alban's church where the Revd David Meara gave an introduction to the church and its monuments, members were then able to look round the church before enjoying tea.