

The Church Monuments Society

Minutes of the 2012 AGM and accounts for the Year 2011-12

MINUTES of the 2012 Annual General Meeting held at 2pm, on Saturday 8th September 2012, at Faith House, 7 Tufton Street, Westminster, SW1P, 3QL.

The meeting was chaired by the Honorary President, Miss Sally Badham.

- 1. Apologies for absence** were received from Dr Adam White, Dr John Physick, Dr Paul Cockerham and Dr Andrew Sargent

2. Approval of the minutes of the 2011 Annual General Meeting

The minutes were approved. They were proposed by Dr Easter and seconded by Mrs Gittos

Matters Arising:

None.

3. Presidential report (delivered by Miss Sally Badham)

“I am pleased to be able to report that, thanks to all the hard work of the Council and the splendid support of our members, the CMS has had another good year. Despite the continuing tough economic climate, we have finally broken through the 500 membership target. We are operating on a sound financial footing and do not expect to have to increase our subscriptions in the immediate future.

Our publications have arrived on members’ doorsteps on time and full of interest. Over the past year we have held a range of events in various parts of the country from Yorkshire to Devon, all of which were well attended and many of which were over-subscribed. Mark Downing will report on the events held in the calendar year but I would like to express my personal appreciation to all those who organised them. However, the highlights of the past year were undoubtedly the Victorian monuments conference organised by Jane and David Kelsall and the Cardiff symposium organised by Mark Downing and Rhianydd Biebrach. I trust you will find next year’s programme equally enticing: we have some very special events planned.

However, the year has not been without its downside. Council has become increasingly worried about the risks to our monumental heritage, two of which I would like to highlight. On average every year twenty churches are declared redundant and sold for residential or community use. When this happens, monuments normally remain in the building after it is sold. In time this can lead to problems of access to the monuments and even a threat to their very existence. The CMS was asked to intervene in the case of Wolferlow church, Herefordshire, which houses an important late 13th century effigy, but despite a courteous reception from the Church Buildings Council, the Church Commissioners and English Heritage, the possibility of moving it elsewhere regrettably did not materialise.

Theft is another serious problem. Sometimes there is a happy ending, as with the bust by Henry Cheere at Shoreham, Kent, which, as reported in the Newsletter, was recovered, but such cases are in a minority. In the last few months three monuments have been stolen from the Herefordshire/Gloucestershire area; the circumstances suggest deliberate targeting and perhaps thefts to order. With the aid of the CBC, we are doing all we can to publicise the thefts and alert other churches in the area to the risk.

There are signs that our voices of concern are being heard. As a result of the activity of the past year, the CBC is hosting a symposium cum workshop in November on the topic of 'Current challenges to our church monuments' at which I will be presenting the first of seven papers and at which the Church Commissioners, English Heritage and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport will be represented. The aim is for the event to result in a report with recommendations to improve the situation in future. Following this in April next year, the Society of Antiquaries will be holding a conference on the future of the fabric, fixtures and fittings of medieval churches, including monuments. Let us hope for some genuine progress."

4. Hon. Treasurer's report (read by Michael Thompson)

Copies of the accounts ending 31st March 2012 as examined by Jane Allen ACA were provided. Mr Thompson reported the total income for the year was £17, 597. The surplus after expenditure was £4, 256, of which events contributed £926.

New equipment included the purchase of archive material and the item for bank charges related to foreign cheques (mostly subscriptions paid in US\$ and Euros).

The James Johnson bequest of £1,000 has now been spent on upgrading the website and legal fees incurred in connection with EBSCO has been charged to the John Coales bequest. The general reserves now stand at £37,396. The rate of interest for money on deposit is low at present but the funds invested with M & G and COIF have shown a better yield

Mr Thompson reported that the current Independent Examiner, Jane Allen, is only prepared to serve for one more year. Mr Robert Burborough, of Stephenson Smart, Peterborough has agreed to be appointed from next year. The Treasurer noted the Stephenson Smart had been accountants for his former company and Mr Burborough was his personal accountant, there was not however a conflict of interest.

The rates of subscriptions will not be increased for the present.

The accounts were accepted proposed by Dr Jean Wilson and seconded by Tim Tatton Brown.

5. Thanks to the independent examiners: appointment of independent examiners

It was proposed that Jane Allen should continue as independent examiner. This was proposed by Jane Kelsall and seconded by Dr Clive Easter.

6. Hon. Membership Secretary's report (read by Dr Clive Easter)

The Membership Secretary reported that membership numbers remain healthy. Towards the end of 2011, fully paid up members totalled 500 for the first time. This year he hoped the Society would do even better. Final reminders for payment of subscriptions will be

sent out in October with a deadline of November. After that membership will cease for those who have not paid.

At present there are;

452 Ordinary and Family members

66 Corporate members

Total 518

The Membership Secretary reported 34 members late with subscriptions. The degree of membership turbulence has dropped from 5% several years ago, to under 3% at present, The Society continues to maintain a loyal and committed membership.

A request for members to submit Gift Aid forms will appear in the forthcoming newsletter. Over 100 subscription reminders are sent out each year; if more members could pay by standing order, it would reduce the work and expense this causes.

The present economic climate has not caused a major loss of members and the society has continued to grow.

7. Hon Publicity Officer's Report (read by Dr Bromilow)

Dr Bromilow reported that there had been problems with the website going down each month as its popularity resulted in its traffic allowance being exceeded. The site has now been upgraded at a cost of £80-00 for three years and now has unlimited traffic allowance and space.

AGM minutes and accounts will in future be online with hard copies available for those who request them. The constitution will also be placed on the website.

A large amount of photographs are being sent in and this part of the site is becoming extensive, however 'Monument of the Month' articles are thin on the ground and Dr Bromilow requested contributions. Nothing formal is required, just a short article on a monument that interests the contributor, perhaps saying why they chose it and a photograph or two. Prints can be scanned and returned to members.

Information on stolen monuments has been posted on the website as a security warning and to aid their recovery. During the next year Dr Bromilow intends to redesign the society leaflets.

8. Archivist's Report (read by Dr Ellie Pridgeon)

Over the last year, the Church Monuments Society archive has been catalogued and repackaged in standard acid-free folders and boxes. Dr Pridgeon has been negotiating with various repositories to permanently house the archive, and it is likely a final decision will be made before the end of 2012. The collection will eventually be accessible to readers, researchers and Church Monuments Society members.

9. Events Co-ordinator's Report (read by Mark Downing)

Mr Downing reported a wide range of events taking place in 2012. The excursions to West Oxfordshire and South Yorkshire were fully booked, as was the study day at Exeter Cathedral in May. A small party went to Puddletown to see the conservation work to the effigies there, undertaken with the help of the Claude Blair memorial fund. In October, an excursion is planned to South-East Cambridgeshire. Attendance at the symposium in August was somewhat disappointing with only 39 taking part. 33 residential participants included only 25 from the membership. The cost was reasonable, so causes may have been the economic climate or the location.

As agreed by council, the 2014 symposium is to be held at Canterbury. This is to be a joint symposium with the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies and it has the potential to be a first class event.

2013 event include a Renaissance day conference in March, a study day at Puddletown in May and excursions in April to South Lincolnshire, a longer tour based in the North-East in June/July, Hampshire in August and Gloucestershire in October.

10. Report on the Society's Publications

JOURNAL (report read by Dr Rhianydd Biebrach)

Volume 26 of the journal was published in May and came in well within budget. Burst binding was trialled and appears to have been successful, so this will continue into the future. The volume had a distinctly medieval bias but a good geographical range, fulfilling the Society's international remit. It was published with the aid of generous grants from the Francis Coales Charitable Foundation. The Greening Lamborn Trust and the Isobel Thornley Bequest Fund. It was the last volume with Dr Kerry Bristol as editor. This role will now be undertaken by Dr Biebrach and Dr Cockerham with Dr Kelsey Wilson-Lee remaining as Book Reviews Editor.

The 2012 essay prize was awarded to Matthew Ward, a doctoral student at Nottingham University, for his essay on the Tiptoft monument in Ely cathedral.

Volume 27 is nearing completion and should be ready to send to the designers by the end of September, with an intended publication date of February 2013. With the agreement of council a new 'Shorter Articles' section has been introduced, with the aim of publishing papers which are too long for the Newsletter or present research findings at in interim stage. The editors, pending the agreement of Council, plan to introduce full colour in Volume 28.

Digitisation

Following discussion at the last Council meeting in March, and more recent internal consultation among the members of the digitisation sub-committee, Dr Wilson-Lee has now submitted to EBSCO the revised draft of the licensing agreement that was shared with Council in March. Before doing so, the final amendments requested by Council were made, including all references to sub-licensing. Members of the sub-committee will continue to report on the progress of negotiations.

NEWSLETTER (report read by Miss Tomlinson on behalf of Dr Sargent)

The Newsletter Editor thanked all who had contributed to the success of the Newsletter this year. Most are named in the relevant issues but special thanks are due to Brian and

Moira Gittos for checking draft copy. Two issues had been produced in the year since the last AGM; 27.1 and 27.2. An Autumn issue (28.1) is due in October.

The last issue was the start of an initiative to 'cross advertise' relevant events with the Monumental Brass Society. It is hoped that this will benefit both Societies, increasing members' enjoyment by giving more opportunities to explore monuments in the company of like-minded people.

The Editor reminded members that the Newsletter was their vehicle. Short contributions (up to 3 pages at 400 words per page plus a good photograph) are very welcome. The Notes & Queries section is invaluable as a means of tapping the Society's collective knowledge.

11. Report of the Cases Recorder (read by Dr David Carrington)

Dr Carrington thanked members of the Society and general public who have reported monuments at risk and for the support offered by Council.

He dealt with nineteen cases last year, two in Wales, the rest in England. When approached by parishes seeking help and advice on conservation projects, Dr Carrington has offered encouragement and contacts for further advice, avoiding giving specific conservation advice or making recommendations of particular conservators which would represent potential liability issues for the Society.

Where memorials at risk have been brought to his attention, Dr Carrington has written to the parish or the trust caring for the church and raised the Society's concerns, stressing the significance of the monuments and encouraging the parish to address the issues involved.

Monuments under in churches under threat of closure and monument theft have been a recurring problem this year. Two churches in North Wales, at Penmynydd (Anglesey) and at Llanuwchllyn (Merioneth), house important monuments yet have uncertain futures. Two churches in Herefordshire containing important medieval effigies, at Wolferlow and Welsh Bicknor, have been closed. At Wolferlow the building has been sold for conversion to a private house with the effigy still in situ. Although the current owner is sympathetic to the monument, its longer term future is less secure.

Four thefts have been reported since the last AGM. Minor sculpture from the important Smyth monuments at Theydon Mount (Essex) was stolen but spotted when it appeared at auction. It is believed now to be returned to the church. A recent spate of thefts in Herefordshire (at Abbey Dore and Castle Frome) and Gloucester (at Newland) would seem to be the work of criminals making planned thefts of smaller monuments or (at Newland) the broken head of a full-sized effigy. The most recent occurred in August and nothing has as yet been recovered.

12. Proposed changes to the constitution

Rule 21 currently reads...

“Corporate Members may send up to three representatives to any general meeting or function of the society.”

It is proposed that this should be replaced by...

“Corporate members may send up to three representatives to any general meeting or function of the Society. One member per organisation can vote at general meetings. Likewise there is one vote per family membership. Members under 18 years, have no voting rights at the AGM”

This proposal was approved unanimously

13. Re-election of Council Officers, Events Co-ordinator and election of ordinary members of council

The re-election of the President, Miss Sally Badham was proposed by Professor Brian Kemp and seconded by Dr Julian Litten. This was carried unanimously.

Other serving officers were prepared to stand for re-election and this was unanimously accepted.

The Council proposed a new Journal Co-Editor: Dr Paul Cockerham. This was carried unanimously.

Two ordinary members were proposed: Dr Jean Wilson MA, PhD FSA and Professor Richard Marks MA, PhD, FSA. Their election was uncontested.

14. Any other business

The President congratulated Matthew Ward for winning the Essay Prize Competition with his entry on the Tiptoft monument in the presbytery of Ely cathedral which will be published in the next Journal. He was unable to attend owing to ill-health but receives a cheque and certificate.

15. Date and venue for the 2012 Annual General Meeting

It was proposed that the next Annual General Meeting should be held on the 7th September 2013, at 2pm in the Seminar Room, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (Royal Museums, Greenwich).