

The Church Monuments Society

Minutes of the 217 Annual General Meeting held at 2pm on Saturday, 23 September 2017, Porch Room, All Hallow-by-the-Tower, Byward Street, London EC3R 5BJ

Dr Jean Wilson, President, welcomed everyone to the 2017 Annual General Meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence** were received from Council members Mrs Moira Ackers, Miss Sally Badham, Dr Julian Litten, Dr Ellie Pridgeon, Mr Jonathan Trigg and Dr Adam White, and members Ben Elliott, Val Franklyn, Brian Gittos, Jane Kelsall, Mr D M Parrott, Christian Steer and Iris Westby.

2. **The Minutes of the 2016 Annual General Meeting** were approved unanimously.

3. Matters Arising from the 2016 Annual General Meeting

In answer to a question from Prof Kemp, David Carrington provided an update in respect of the candles placed on monuments in Salisbury Cathedral. He said that various protective measures, including trays, had been put in place – progress had been made but there was more to be done.

4. Presidential Address – Dr Jean Wilson

Dr Wilson thanked the retiring members of Council, Mrs Moira Gittos and Mr Andrew Skelton. She added that Andrew Skelton had taken over the organisation of an excursion begun by the late David Kelsall and Jane Kelsall, both of whom had done a great deal for the Society. Dr Wilson said that she was delighted that Dr Kelcey Wilson-Lee was rejoining and Dr Christian Steer was joining Council.

Dr Wilson said that there had been a varied range of events since the last AGM, including a study day at Lichfield and an excursion in east Hertfordshire. A number of events had been planned for 2018, including a weekend Symposium in Hereford.

Dr Wilson said that the superb Journal had been redesigned and hoped that everyone liked the new look. The Guidebook Competition had been won by Warkton and that Clive Easter had presented the prize at the village's art festival. Dr Wilson reminded the meeting about the Photography Competition and the 2018 Essay Competition.

Dr Wilson said that there would be a presidential election at the 2018 AGM and that this was a post for which any member could stand. She also encouraged everyone to think about standing for Council.

Dr Wilson was delighted to say that approximately 3000 people followed the Society on Twitter and that Sally Badham had 1981 Twitter followers.

Presidential Address:

I am sure that I am not the only person here who follows Cameron Newham's Twitter feed. Over the summer he has been (amongst other places) photographing East Anglian churches, and it was a picture from one of these - the monument by Sir J Edgar Boehm in St Withburga, Holkham, Norfolk, to Juliana Coke, Countess of Leicester, who died in 1870 - that started me thinking. This exquisite sculpture shows the Countess en deshabille, lying on a chastely decorated sarcophagus, her left hand resting loosely on a book, which we may presume to be a Bible. The position of her hand gives great prominence to her wedding ring. This quiet monument, speaking to domestic virtues, could not be further in tone from Boehm's almost contemporary monument at Deene to the earl of Cardigan - alas, sadly bat-bespattered -, where the bristly earl and his cuddly countess surmount a multi-material extravaganza which highlights the earl's military career, but both are masterpieces, and Boehm deserves to be much better known.

So why isn't he? On a superficial level it is easy to say that many - although by no means all - of Boehm's most important works are in churches and in any case we are only just beginning to overcome the rejection of the Victorian aesthetic which held sway over much of the 20th century, and which was natural - all generations reject the ideas of their predecessors, and this was a particularly strong rejection because of the hold which modernism had and has over the art market. Taste is changing (buy brown furniture now) and soon Boehm, Thornycroft, Onslow Ford, and their contemporaries, will be given their due.

I think that this is too easy, and we need to look further into why English sculpture of all ages is neglected and underappreciated, and what we, as a Society can do about it. Let us start with the Cambridge Camden Society. The President of our elder sibling, the MBS, recently remarked to me that whatever we may now say about Victorian restoration of churches, we should remember that the long eighteenth-century was a period of appalling neglect of ecclesiastical buildings and many nineteenth-century restorers were presented with what were, in effect, ruins. If they painted over medieval murals and turned a blind eye to contractors nicking brasses for scrap, at least they made the buildings sound and put roofs on chancels.

I agree, but there are other aspects we need to consider. The aesthetic and religious model embraced by many nineteenth-century ecclesiologists was that of a Romanticised (in both senses) version of a middle ages that was somehow purer and more authentic than the money-grubbing centuries that succeeded. There was a social as well as a religious vision behind this - the idea of the anonymous craftsman, the community effort...we know this is nonsense, but hindsight is a wonderful thing... This nineteenth-century enthusiasm for the medieval embraced monumental brasses. It also involved the rejection of later monuments which used a different aesthetic vocabulary. Monuments from the sixteenth and long seventeenth centuries were vulgar, ugly, and (perhaps most importantly) privileged the individual in a way that was in direct opposition to the ideal of the community of anonymous craftsmen; classical monuments took their vocabulary from paganism - during the 1840s restoration of the church at Harlton, Cambridgeshire, the existing font, which was almost certainly a seventeenth-century one, was described as 'an absurd pagan vase' and thrown out to be replaced by a restrained gothic design. The Classical style exemplified by Flaxman - a stunningly good artist - was rejected, partly because it was the preceding style, and we all kill our parents, partly because it did produce absurdities and partly because classicism was associated with both paganism and revolutionary politics, as in France (an example of both may be found in Westmacott's Charles James Fox in Westminster Abbey). There may also have been a reaction against the convention of showing the deceased in *déshabille* or only partly clothed in classical draperies - one thinks of Bushnell's Lady Mary May at Mid-Lavant, consigned to the family vault by a Victorian incumbent.

It is a commonplace that the study of the material culture of the past has been informed by both class and cultural considerations. Some art (from India, from Japan, from China) finds its place in art galleries, or at least in galleries devoted to the arts of those cultures (the Oriental Museum - formerly the Gulbenkian - in Durham; the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum in Springfield, Mass). Other art, equally deserving of recognition - that of sub-Saharan Africa, pre-Columbian America, Polynesia - is displayed in museums of ethnography or science. This is not the occasion to discuss colonialism and racism in art history. But to recognise it helps us to recognise a similar process where British art (and particularly British sculpture) is concerned.

The antiquities of Rome and Greece were a mainly aristocratic field of study (aristocrats tended to have the dilettante privilege of leisured travel). The antiquities of Britain attracted the professional classes: clergymen, doctors, schoolmasters, who could only afford to study what was on their doorstep (I know this is oversimplified, I only have ten minutes).

The study of art was informed by these divisions. Medieval sculpture in churches became the province of the historian and archaeologist, while post-Reformation art was the purview of art historians/connoisseurs, who were trained in the aristocratic classical tradition. This is particularly hard on early modern sculptors, whose work was rejected by their immediate successors as outdated, and then not given the reappraisal it merited because it did not conform to a classical aesthetic. The division is exemplified by Laurence Stone's *History of Medieval Sculpture* - written by an historian, NOT an art-historian, and itself indicative of attitude that English medieval art is not art but history, and Margaret Whinney's book on later Sculpture, which gives no value to anything before the Flemings come in, hooray, in the later seventeenth century and save British Sculpture.

I should point out that heroic efforts have been made to rehabilitate early modern sculpture, first by Mrs Esdaile, by our Vice President, Brian Kemp, and most recently by scholars such as Nigel Llewellyn, Peter Sherlock, Phillip Lindley and Adam White. But this - for all their valiant endeavours - does not deal with the heart of the problem with which we are faced: for the majority of art historians, British sculpture in churches might as well not exist. Our Secretary Hilary Wheeler has just accepted an invitation to a meeting of parties interested in setting up a database of sculpture parallel to the already existing ART UK for paintings, where she will represent the Society, but the preliminary material makes no mention of sculpture in churches.

We must never forget that what we study are works of art, many of them masterpieces. They may also be works of commemoration and devotion, but so is much of the accepted canon of easel painting and foreign sculpture. Caravaggio's *Decollation of St John the Baptist*, Michelangelo's tomb of Julius II, etc., were intended for display in, and are still displayed in, Christian churches. And the art-historians don't seem to have any problems appreciating *them*. It is our duty to endeavour as a Society and as individuals both to educate the country about the priceless treasures available everyone in our churches, and to do our best to protect them.

5. Hon Treasurer's Report – Mr Michael Thompson

At the year-end, the bank balances were: HSBC current account £2,301, HSBC deposit account £14,370, COIF deposit account [General Fund] £9,210.

The accounts show a surplus for the year of £4,799, (2016: £3,086). In part this is higher because Henry Ling, the printers of the Journal did not raise an interim invoice during the year. Also, I ought to mention that the gift-aid repayment was not received before the year-end. The cost of the Journal

has been rising. For information, the previous two volumes of the Journal have cost £9177 and £7616.

This year the events – study days, outings and symposium – have made a loss, which is regrettable. This has arisen mainly on account of fewer members and friends attending on the day. Otherwise, expenditure is broadly in line with past years.

It is pleasing to note that the investment income has increased year-on-year. I would mention here that over the years the Society's reserves have been accumulating. The accounts for 2008-09 show the reserves stood at £37,741, of which £12,469 was in M&G. Charifund units. The market value of this investment with M&G is now (30th.June) £24,358. The market value of the investments with M&G and COIF shown in the 2016-17 Balance Sheet is £59,679, which with 'cash at bank' of £25,908 brings the Reserves at the year-end to £85,587.

Following the uplift in the subscription for individual members, it is unfortunate that so few have amended their standing orders for the 1st June renewal. Overall, members may take heart that the Society is 'in good shape', and I will be happy to answer any questions...

6. Thanks to the Independent Examiner and Appointment of the Independent Examiner

This was proposed by Mr Thompson, seconded by Dr Easter and agreed unanimously.

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

At the 2016 Annual General Meeting I reported that the total membership stood at 516. This year it stands at 511. We have 62 corporate members and that number remains unchanged to which we can add 449 ordinary members. Last year we actually gained two new corporate members which bucks the current trend of corporate resignations which have been running at the rate of 1-2 per year for the last ten years.

For 2016, only 13 names were removed for non-payment of subscriptions, a better year than most when I often have to remove about 20 names from the database. Typically, I send out about 100 letters for non-payment of subscriptions – at the time of writing the number still unpaid is 99. Most outstanding payments are made quite quickly but I still often have to chase about 35-40 members who will receive a final letter with a cut-off dated for payment. As I am sure you can appreciate this is all very time consuming and at no small expense to the society.

New members come in reasonably often and most now pay by either an initial cheque followed by a standing order or by PayPal direct to the treasurer with a standing order

The subscription increase that came into effect as of 1 June appears to have gone unregistered by a lot of the membership. I am engaged in sending out reminder letters to those who failed to amend their standing orders and the list of those to whom letters are to be sent numbers over 200. Again this is very time consuming and expensive in postage if nothing else. New standing order forms were enclosed with the spring newsletter and less than 50 revised forms were received.

Overall, I am pleased to report that the membership is stable despite a very modest turbulence and clearly committed to the society. I receive very few letter of resignation other than for reasons of age and its associated infirmities and that is a comfort in itself.

Last year I reported that we had a total of 36 new members. Unfortunately we have not succeeded in reaching that number this year but then again last year was exceptional. To date we have welcomed 23 new members this year including one from Denmark and another from Australia and we remain hopeful that this will increase

Norman Hammond asked if reminders were sent via email and Dr Easter confirmed that they were whenever possible.

8. Hon Publicity Officer's Report – Dr Madeleine Gray

The **Twitter account** continues to be lively and encourages debate and discussion. Twitter has updated its terms of service with a copyright clause which will enable us to Retweet photos of more recent monuments (though it's still inadvisable for us to post our own photos of the more recent monuments).

Monument of the Month: as ever I welcome contributions. You will see from past contributions that we like the important and significant but also the intriguing and quirky.

The redesigned **leaflet** has been printed – copies available for distribution on church visits.

The **web site redesign:** we have quotes and have asked for supplementary information and will reach a decision by the end of the month. It may be necessary to extend the budget, depending on the VAT situation.

Dr Gray asked members to assist her by sending photos, where possible, to publicise events and other news. Contributions for Monument of the Month and suggestions for a mailing list of other organisations, ideally with contact details including email addresses.

Dr Gray added that leaflets about the British Association of British Cemeteries in SE Asia were available. Dr Wilson said that Tony Carr could supply copies of the CMS membership leaflet to members.

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

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

The society has held some splendid events so far this year. In May there was a visit to Rockingham Castle and church, plus a study day at Lichfield cathedral. In June there was a joint conference held with the Ludlow Palmers Guild at St Laurence's church Ludlow. In July an excursion took place in East Hertfordshire; all events were very well attended; with thanks to the hard work by the organisers. In October a study weekend is to be held at Brecon organised by Maddy Grey.

On 17th March 2018 Sally Badham has organised a conference entitled 'Interpreting Medieval Monuments: Iconography and Meaning', which is to be held at Senate House. Robin Draper's coach excursion to Staffordshire, postponed from last year, is being held on 19th May. Andrew Skelton is organising an excursion to Mid/West Surrey on either 11th or 18th August 2018. In October there is to be an excursion to South Warwickshire plus a walking tour of Cambridge.

The society's bi-annual symposium is to be held at the Green Dragon Hereford from 16th-18th September 2018. Preparations are well in hand for this event and should prove to be a splendid weekend.

Andrew Skelton confirmed that the date of the mid/west Surrey excursion was 18 August 2018.

11. Reports on the Society's Publications

Before reading Jonathan Trigg's, Dr Wilson reported that Rachel Morley had had to step down for personal reasons and thanked Tony Carr for the Index.

Since the last Council meeting, I have undertaken a course on copyright law. The journals have progressed as follows:

Volume 31 of Church Monuments and the Index to volumes 21-30 – These were distributed in July 2017, slightly later than expected, due to issues which

were beyond the control of the Society. It has, by all accounts, been well received, with particular praise being given to the new cover design. At 272 pages, it once again exceeds the length of any previous issue of the Journal. As the final issue with which Dr Paul Cockerham had an input, the current editor wishes to thank him for his generous support in the handover process, and also acknowledge the work of Rachel Morley, who sadly was forced to step down from the post of joint editor for personal reasons, but not before making a valued contribution. For the time being, the current editor shall be carrying on in post solely.

Volume 32 of Church Monuments – Production of this is in hand, with the editor expecting to meet with the type-setter later this month with a view to discussing progress. Until that point, a production date is unclear, but the editor hopes for a similar, if not earlier, timetable than before. The Society has continued to receive good quality submissions, both for this issue and those in the future; notwithstanding this fact, submissions to the editor are encouraged,

The following papers have been accepted:

Pray for my child: the Mansell and Aubrey ledger stone memorials at Llantridddy (Glamorgan)

Meanwhile, the following papers are in varying stages of the editorial process:

The medieval wooden tomb effigies at Little Baddow (Essex)

Two rare discoid grave markers from Anglesey and their typological context

Two Elizabethan cadaver tombs in the West Midlands

A Florentine monument at West Dereham (Norfolk) and its patron

'The Decadent Art of the Royleys': the Shirley monuments at Breedon on the Hill (Leicestershire), a case study

Common to Angels: the Howard family memorials at Ewelme (Oxfordshire)

Ledger Slabs with Architectural Patterns in Somerset Churches

Nativity Scenes on Gravestones in County Louth, Ireland

Book reviews – Dr Sophie Oosterwijk continues her role as Book Review Editor and it remains her aim to include non-English publications in order to increase the Journal's international relevance and appeal, especially to the academic community. Volume 31 featured three review articles and twenty-five reviews, while volume 32 currently has twenty book reviews, including one review article, some of which combine reviews of more than one book.

Newsletter – Dr Andrew Sargent

Dr Sargent presented his report.

The *Newsletter* depends on its contributors, and the Editor would like to thank all who have contributed to its success 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; 32.1 & 32.2. An Autumn issue (33.1) is due in October/November 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). We are looking for an impression rather than a précis. If this sounds possible, have a word with the organiser in advance as they will welcome a keen volunteer.

Stop Press! This is a non-intrusive reminder service for CMS and other relevant events, including opportunities which come up at short notice. Members (and indeed interested non-members) are urged to sign up to receive this. To join, please send your email address to andrewsargent@gmail.com and include 'Subscribe to CMS Stop Press' in the subject line. There have been 7 issues of Stop Press! this year, so you will not be bombarded!

12. Hon Conservation Cases Recorder's Report – Dr David Carrington

This is the seventh AGM for which I have prepared a report. As ever I have, over the last year, found myself providing advice to parishes seeking help with the care of their monuments, responded to expressions of concern received from the Society's membership and beyond, and kept a watching brief on reported thefts.

Thefts have been relatively few in the last 12 months, and in fact I have just one reported instance – the disappearance of a cherub from an early 17th century monument in North Lincolnshire – which I am still following up to determine whether it really has been stolen or just removed because insecure. Lead theft does however have an impact on monuments and I have been concerned by the loss of the roof covering last year from the Bedingfeld Chapel at Oxborough (Norfolk) and am aware that the

temporary roof has not been wholly successful from keeping water off the wonderful 16th century terracotta monuments there.

I have been closely involved with Bunbury church (Cheshire) where several early effigies and grave covers were removed from the church and placed in a locked 'store' in the churchyard at a recent re-ordering of the church. I have had some success in persuading the PCC to advertise this better (a condition of their faculty) and have been in discussions about arranging a visit there as part of a Cheshire excursion in 2019 to further reinforce the point.

Both myself and Jean Wilson, together with Society member Revd Ben Elliott, have been involved with a campaign to prevent candle wax dripping on the medieval monuments at Salisbury Cathedral. This appears to have been successful and they are now taking sensible measures to prevent this from happening again.

There are about a dozen other cases that I have been involved with in the last 12 months, ranging raising concerns with English Heritage for the state of the medieval monuments at Lanercost Priory in Cumbria, to following up concerns for early modern monuments in two churches in Warwickshire, to checking the condition of the dismantled monuments in store from the fire-damaged church at Bixley in Norfolk.

I conclude as always 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 the Officers and Two Ordinary Members

The re-election of Dr Jean Wilson, as President, was proposed by Prof Kemp, seconded by Mr Thompson and agreed unanimously.

The following 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	Hon Treasurer
Dr David Carrington	Hon Conservation Cases Recorder
Mr Mark Downing	Hon Events Co-ordinator
Dr Clive Easter	Hon Membership Secretary
Mr Jonathan Trigg	Journal Editor
Dr Andrew Sargent	Newsletter Editor
Dr Ellie Pridgeon	Hon Archivist
Miss Hilary Wheeler	Hon Secretary

This was proposed by Dr Wilson, seconded by Mr Skelton and agreed unanimously. This year there were two nominations for new Council members – Dr Kelcey Wilson-Lee and Dr Christian Steer – replacing Mrs Moira Gittos and Mr Andrew Skelton.

15. Date and Venue of the 2018 Annual General Meeting

22 September 2018 at St Olave, Hart Street.

16. Any Other Business

Mr Thompson explained that an amendment to the Constitution was required to satisfy the Charity Commission, namely that 'Vic Presidents' be changed to 'a Vice President'. He asked the meeting to approve this change which would be put to the 2018 AGM for ratification. This was proposed by Mr Thompson, seconded by Mrs Gittos and unanimously agreed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2.45pm.

Following the meeting, Barbara Tomlinson spoke about Commemorating Shipping and Seafarers in the City of London; followed by tea.