

2020 Annual General Meeting

The reports below would have been presented at the AGM on 12 September 2020 – year end - but Covid 19 intervened. They will instead be presented at the re-scheduled AGM in March 2021.

Hon Treasurer's Report – Mr Michael Thompson

1. I am pleased to report that the accounts for the year show a surplus of £1,711. The subscription income is up, although there are fewer corporate members now. However, the total income for the year is lower by £2,238. In part this is because gift aid (of £) was not received from HMRC until after the financial year-end.
2. The individual items of expenditure are all broadly in line with previous years, and really do not call for comment.
3. It is necessary for the Society to have liability insurance, not just for the events organised, but also to cover transgressions such as breaching copyright in respect of illustrations or media matters.
4. The number of events and excursions led to higher revenue at £5555, leading to a surplus of £1250 in the year.
5. At the end of the year, the cash at bank was £706, and on deposit with HSBC £2,870 and COIF £13,473. The balance sheet shows the book value, or purchase costs of the unit trust investments. In the notes, the market value is given as £62,777. As is well known, for a number of reasons, stock markets generally had a "correction" in the Spring.

I am now stepping down from serving as the honorary treasurer to the Society. It has been my pleasure to undertake these duties since January 2009, when I was co-opted on to Council. I am pleased to hand over to Jon Dawson, who is a long-standing member and a chartered accountant. As it happens, through work we first met many years ago at the Nottingham Offices of Grant Thornton

Hon Membership Secretary's Report – Mrs Claire Downing

This year at this time the total membership stands at 510
This is made up of 57 corporate 453 ordinary, family and student memberships.

I am still waiting for subscription payments from thirty-one corporate and ninety-eight ordinary members for 2020/2021.

The corporate membership invoices may be sitting in closed offices or unopened emails due to the covid pandemic.

This does seem to be slightly higher than last year and reminder notices will be sent in November.

Since the last AGM we have recruited thirty-five new members although we lost last year a number of ordinary members and one corporate member due to non-payment of subscriptions, resignations and people who have passed away.

The increase in subscription rates from 2017 still continues to be a slight problem. I have re-contacted everyone concerned with a reminder and a new standing order form for their attention.

It would seem that, overall, the membership of the society remains as stable as last year.

Hon Publicity Officer's Report – Prof Madeleine Gray

The new web site continues to be well received. We have implemented a few minor modifications including a more informative method of recording payments and a page to encourage donations and legacies.

The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown has of course necessitated a number of changes. The web site and Twitter account were invaluable as a means of communication as events had to be cancelled. During the lockdown, we used our blog for a couple of virtual study days, to Burrough Green in Cambridgeshire and to Llandaff Cathedral in Cardiff. We would like to see more of these. The blog has been used for all kinds of Society news, news from related organisations and news of books published, as well as topics raised for debate in the Press and on Twitter. Recent posts have included a reprint of an article from the Society of Antiquaries' newsletter on bats in churches, a follow-up on Norman Hammond's article on a slave epitaph in Belize, and a report on some tomb carvings on which we were consulted at Staunton on Wye, Herefordshire. We welcome contributions: you can send these to madeleine.gray@southwales.ac.uk – ideally as a document in Word plus a picture as a .jpg file.

The Twitter account continues to be lively and encourages debate and discussion. We now have over 5,000 followers.

The Society engaged with the debate over monuments to people involved in the slave trade and other monuments to people whose actions are now considered deplorable. Our Vice-President, Jean Wilson, wrote to the Times suggesting that monuments should not be removed but should be better interpreted to educate. Our President, Mark Downing, also had a letter published in the Times on behalf of the Society. These contributions were picked up by the Burlington Magazine: <https://burlington.org.uk/archive/editorial/remove-the-evidence-remove-the-deed>.

We hope to be able to return to organising events in 2021. Along with the Newsletter and Twitter, the web site is an important venue for publicising events and other news. Any news on the web site is also posted on Twitter. It helps if organisers of events and others with news can send a photograph as well as text (text as a Word document) to madeleine.gray@southwales.ac.uk.

Hon Events Co-ordinator's Report – Mrs Moira Ackers

Due to Covid 19 and the lockdown most of this year's events have been cancelled including the Oxford study weekend in January 2021.

It is hoped that we will be able to move our day in Derbyshire and the Symposium at Kings Lynn into 2021. Dates for these will be announced when we know for sure what is happening. We shall also rearrange the themed study day of 'Cadavers & Corpses' which was to have been attached to the September 2020 AGM and has now been cancelled. The March 2021 AGM format under new Covid 19 rules will be kept short and numbers limited.

Until we know when and how churches will be open again, I suggest that we do not plan any events other than those already 'waiting'. Hopefully by the AGM in March we will have a clearer idea of how things stand for the organisation of visits and public events. We may have to rethink previous formats. I don't think many of our members will be keen to travel on public transport to venues or spend a day on a coach. But who knows we might all be back to 'normal' faster than we think? It may be that our first visit day will have to be in members' cars, with numbers limited at the churches and masks worn ... will people enjoy such events? I think we will have to wait and see. But, am certain that advertising further events (other than those mentioned above) and then having to cancel them will be a very discouraging process for the organisers and will give our website and newsletter a somewhat dismal appearance which we need to avoid.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the organisers of the cancelled 2020 events for all their hard work and so sorry that some of these events are now unlikely to happen.

Society's Publications

Journal – Dr Ann Adams and Mr Jonathan Trigg

Editorial Team:

Having been sole editor for volumes 32 and 33 of *Church Monuments*, Jonathan Trigg has been joined by Ann Adams as co-editor. Sophie Oosterwijk has stood down as Book Review Editor, being replaced by Nicola Lowe, but Sophie's expertise is being retained as she has agreed to join the Editorial Board.

Volume 34: This was distributed at the beginning of June 2020, and the editors would like to thank Peter McGrath of Groundwork Design and the printers, Henry Ling, for managing to produce this during a global pandemic. Hopefully it provided members with some welcome reading during lockdown. The mailing envelope is now plastic free (3 pence per unit extra).

Volume 35: The editors are targeting March 2021 for distribution. The following papers are in varying stages of the editorial process:

Articles:

- *Eighteenth-century wall memorials in the southern Welsh Marches*
- *Burial and Commemoration Practices in Late Medieval Welsh Poetry.*
- *The Dry Bones of Sir John Denham.*
- *'His Fame shall make live': the Forster monument at Cumnor, Oxfordshire.*
- *The 'Unknown Layman': An Unidentified Medieval Monument in Hereford Cathedral.*

Shorter articles:

- *Two Rare Discoid Grave Markers from Anglesey (Wales) and their Typological Context.*
- *The Two Tombs of Bernhard I, Margrave of Baden (1364-1431): Evidence and Interpretation.*

The editors welcome feedback and contact over proposed articles for future journals.

Journal Style Guidelines: A revised Guide for Contributors is being finalised for the website.

Book reviews –Volume 34 featured one review articles and fourteen reviews, including three books in German and one containing articles in French and English, continuing the objective of making books in foreign languages more accessible to an English-speaking audience. Reviews planned for volume 35 cover a wide spread of subject matter and eras. From the UK they include *The Monuments Man*, edited by Christian Steer in honour of Fr. Jerome Bertram (obituary in CM34), and Ellis Woodman's *Temples and Tombs Sacred and Monumental Architecture of Craig Hamilton*; from further afield there is a review of a conference on medieval Portuguese funerary sculpture, four thousand years of monuments at Baden-Württemberg, and funerary portraiture in Roman Syria.

Digital Publication: Since 2013 the Society has made digital access to recent journals (2012 onwards) available through the EBSCO Art & Architecture database which is accessible through certain libraries. After seven years, the editors consider that it is timely to review whether this has achieved the desired objectives and whether there may now be better alternatives.

Essay Competition: There was no essay competition in 2019 but the number and quality of entries in 2018 has produced more articles for the journal than just the winning entry. The competition for 2020 (deadline 31 December 2020) has been marketed during the year, including in CM34.

Newsletter – Dr Andrew Sargent

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 published in the year since the last AGM: 35.1 & 35.2. An Autumn issue (36.1) is due in October.

As with everything the Society does, the *Newsletter* depends on our membership, so all members are encouraged to consider whether they could contribute. 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. It is a shame that so many CMS events were not, in the circumstances, able to go ahead, meaning the Spring issue will be thinner than usual and making contributions more welcome than ever!

Conservation Cases Recorder's Report – Dr David Carrington

The previous year, since the last AGM, has been, as the cliché goes, unprecedented. The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly made visiting churches, and worshipping in churches, much more difficult. It has also had an indirect on the conservation of monuments – an effect that might in many ways be very long

lasting, but time will tell. In the short term reduced income and often increasing costs has made fund-raising for the conservation of monuments for many churches much harder. The longer-term impact could be that churches which are already struggling are pushed into redundancy, with the corresponding risks to monuments that have come to light so much in recent years.

In England, at least, there have been some emergency funds made available for various aspects of the heritage industry, but it is too early to tell if this will have a lasting impact, or be the financial crutch that church repair projects need.

Parallel to Covid we have also seen the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. Mark Downing has issued statements on behalf of the Society that address this, but there are undoubtedly new threats to monuments that have emerged as a result of BLM which I would be remiss not to note here. Archbishop Welby certainly hasn't helped the case for preservation. In recent months I have been told by staff at one major church where I've been working that they have audited their monuments and found two with links to slavery. I wasn't told which ones, and couldn't identify them myself, but worry about the potential knee-jerk reaction. I very much support our President's 'don't expunge but explain' statement. I am hoping that country houses don't start getting the cold shoulder if they have links with colonialism and worry about noises coming from the National Trust suggesting that they may place less emphasis on their houses in the future. Public statues such as that to Edward Colston are not within the scope of the CMS, and the demise of the Public Monuments and Sculpture Association seems very untimely. There are, however grey areas as to when 'church monuments' become 'public sculpture'. War Memorials are a prime example. There are many to those who fell in Queen Victoria's 'Little Wars' (in itself a horrible expression) inside churches, which could be argued by some to be glorifying Britain's colonial past. The Society should be actively championing 'explain' to help prevent 'expunge'.

Returning to the usual fare of Conservation Cases, since the last AGM there are 10 new cases – bringing the database of those since covered by previous Recorders as well as myself to 302. It is slightly fewer than in recent years, and I have been slower in making visits where those have been required. Where possible without visits though advice has been given to many churches, mainly regarding sources of funding and where to seek advice, but in one case on the likely impact of modern paint applied over a ledger slab around a brass (at Chigwell, Essex, with the very important early 17th century Harsnett brass).

Finally, finishing on an international note, it was interesting to see reported in the press recently that the 13th century effigy of Berengaria of Navarre, wife of Richard I, is to be moved back to its original location in Épau Abbey (France). Apparently it is to be 'restored to its former glory'. One on-line report I read states 'the goal is to restore the statue as well as the sculpted panels to turn it into a medieval tomb'.