

The Church Monuments Society

Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting held at 2pm on Saturday, 11 September 2021 at the St Alban's Centre, Leigh Place, Baldwin's Gardens, London EC1N 7AB

Mr Mark Downing, President welcomed everyone to the 2021 Annual General Meeting and said he was delighted that the Society was able to hold an 'in person' meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Council members Dr Ann Adams, Miss Sally Badham, Miss Elizabeth Blood, Mr Jon Dawson, Mrs Moira Gittos, Dr Julian Litten, Dr Sophie Oosterwijk, Dr Andrew Sargent, Dr Adam White and Dr Jean Wilson and members Derrick Chivers, Brian Gittos, Norman Hammond, Philip Lankester, Nicola Lowe, Ann Norman, Tim Sutton and Michael Thompson.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting

The Minutes were unanimously approved – proposed Dr David Lepine and seconded Mr Francis Williams.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Presidential Address - Mr Mark Downing

Dear Members and friends,

Firstly I wish to thank all officers and council who have kept the society going during the pandemic. It has been a difficult 18 months.

Since my address to the society at the re-scheduled AGM on 6th March via Zoom, my desire to hold online lectures has been fulfilled with a two month series of excellent lectures. These lectures have been a revelation for the society which has also increased our membership considerably. I wish to thank Elizabeth Blood and Moira Ackers for their organisation and the setting-up a YouTube channel so people can catch-up these lectures ensuring they are preserved for the future. A second round of lectures is planned for November.

The society is slowly returning to in-person meetings and the joint symposium at Kings Lynn with the Monumental Brass Society will be held in September 2022 and promises to be a fabulous event. We are also looking at providing additional events for 2022. The society has run another successful essay prize competition with the winner being Dr Christina Faraday with the title of her essay 'The Elizabethan and Jacobean Monuments of

Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge'. We are lucky enough to have her here to address the members with her paper.

Once again I recommend members let the membership secretary have your email address to receive notifications for online lectures and pop-up events at short notice.

The society has been bequeathed a collection of books and various materials. While the society is grateful for this generosity, we have a policy of not accepting such material as we don't have a storage facility.

For the 2022 AGM there will be further positions for Ordinary Members on council, therefore if you wish to sit on the society's council, which is for a term of 3 years so please contact the secretary.

5. Hon Treasurer's Report for Year Ended – 31 March 2021- Mr Jon Dawson

It is my pleasure to present my first report to the members of the Church Monuments Society. I would like to apologise for not being with you in person but unfortunately personal circumstances has prevented my attendance on this occasion.

The year ended 31 March 2021 was a difficult year for the Society as it was for many charities and many people. The Coronavirus pandemic prevented physical events from taking place and deprived members of the opportunity to meet and socialise with each other. We all hope that this proves to be a temporary issue.

Despite the pandemic the finances of the Society remain in a strong and stable position.

Income for the year reduced from £21,944 in 2020 to £11,626 in 2021.

Membership income remained almost unchanged from last year's level at £12,999 but no income was generated from events. Indeed, the payment of refunds in respect of cancelled and postponed events has resulted in negative income in the accounts.

Expenditure was also reduced markedly by the pandemic.

There was no expenditure on physical events and expenditure on printing and meetings was also much reduced so that total expenditure was reduced from £23,235 to £10,439.

The overall result for the year was a surplus of income over expenditure of £7,174.

At 31 March 2021 the total funds of the Society stood at £73,391 having increased by £7,174 as a result of the surplus for the year.

The investments held by the Society are included in the accounts at their original cost or at their market value at 31 March 2009 rather than their current market value. The market value of these assets at 31 March 2021 was £76,220. The corresponding value at 31 March 2020 was £62,777. The increase in market value was brought about by the buoyancy of the stock market at 31 March 2021.

Accordingly, the finances of the Society are in good order to meet the challenges of the future, whatever they may be.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to our former treasurer, Michael Thompson who performed sterling work for the society for so many years.

There were no questions or comments on Mr Dawson's report.

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

Mr Downing requested the approval of the meeting and this was unanimous.

7. Hon Membership Secretary's Report – Mrs Claire Downing

This year currently the total membership stands at 558
This is made up of 58 corporate 500 ordinary, family and student memberships.

I am still waiting for subscription payments from fifteen corporate and one hundred and fifteen ordinary members for 2021/2022.

This does seem similar to previous years and reminder notices will be sent in November. People often renew at the time of year that they joined the society and not on the 1st of June renewal date.

Since the last AGM we have recruited sixty new members.

Last year twenty-nine members resigned or were removed from the database due to non-payment of subscriptions, resignations were due to old age, cutting back on spending 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 quite buoyant this is due partly to the excellent online lectures for which I have received many complimentary emails from new members.

There were no questions or comments on Mrs Downing's report.

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

The new web site and Twitter account have continued as a vital means of communication during Covid-related restrictions. Our blog hosted a third virtual study day, to churches in the Vale of Glamorgan. 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 note on tombs to servants of the

Gage family at the churchyard of St Peter's, West Firle, a report on the web survey of the Cove Burying Ground, one of New England's earliest graveyards, and Sophie Oosterwijk's light-hearted take on funerary art from the Dutch fantasy-themed amusement park 'De Efteling'. We were also able to include the text and illustrations of Anne Norman's lecture on the early years of the Society, given at the 2019 AGM – grateful thanks to Anne for that. 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.

Our Monument of the Month feature has been picked up by a number of enquirers. Recently, we heard from a great-great-nephew of one of the men named on the Monmouth war memorial (our MotM way back in June 2017). The church at Wenvoe is having conservation work done and Mike Statham's article on the Wenvoe war memorial (February 2018) prompted the church to ask to be put in touch with him and to ask about his work on the archives of Clarkes, the Cardiff monumental masons. We also had a postscript on last year's article on the war memorial in the intriguingly-named village of Bedlam in Shropshire. It was threatened by development but the threat has now passed. As you will see from past Monuments of the Month, they can be significant, interesting or just quirky. Short notices for Monument of the Month can serve as preliminaries for more detailed academic study, or can be used to get wider readership for something already published.

The Twitter account continues to be lively and encourages debate and discussion. We now have over 5,500 followers. We also have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/3343925989030017>, a YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYjecKekCismOHg679yY0mg> and a presence on Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/church-monuments-society-32669221889> for our online lectures. Grateful thanks to our President Mark Downing, to Elizabeth Blood and to Moira Ackers for all their hard work in setting up and running these.

The Society has continued to engage with the debate over monuments to people involved in the slave trade and other monuments to people whose actions are now considered deplorable. We have also contributed to campaigns against the closure of University archaeology departments.

We hope to be able to return to organising events in 2021-2. 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.

Prof Gray added that she welcomed submissions for Monument of the Month. There were no questions or comments on Prof Gray's report.

9. Hon Archivist's Report – Dr Ellie Pridgeon

The Society's records, pertaining to all meetings, continue to be deposited with the Borthwick Institute. The Borthwick Institute has robust security measures in place to check every file for viruses before the files are stored on a secure server.

There were no questions or comments on Dr Pridgeon's report.

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

We are now thankfully and very carefully coming out of the Covid restrictions and so I can report that we have had one successful live 'pop-up' event at Barrow upon Trent and are back to planning future 'live' visits and events.

When the very idea of being able to meet and enjoy church visits was out of the question, we managed to organise a very successful online lecture series in spring 21 (see the detailed report below). I would like to thank all our contributors, for many of us it was a steep learning curve! I also want to thank Elizabeth Blood for organising and tutoring us through the whole zoom lecture experience. She has now edited the talks and we have our own YouTube channel on which these and future talks will be available to the public.

The success of this lecture series has encouraged us to start planning an online winter festival of lectures when it is far too cold to enjoy a visit in a church. This will follow the same format: Four talks presented at 5pm on each Saturday (this is a good slot for our international friends to join us).

Sadly, our proposed September walk around the churches of Ipswich has had to be cancelled due to access issues. We hope to resurrect this event in 2022.

Future events 2021/22

Saturday 23rd October 2021 a 'pop-up' tour based at Holy Trinity, Sutton Coalfield. This will be organised by Robin Draper. Details and the Eventbrite link to book a place will be on our website.

September 2022 Symposium, Kings Lynn organised by Christian Steer. Details will soon be confirmed and advertised in the Newsletter and on our website.

Sally Badham has organised a joint study day with the Ecclesiological Society. First Saturday of October 2022

Church visits are in the process of being organised for 2022. So do lookout for details in the Newsletter and online. I hope that by our next AGM I'll be able to report that we are able to organise coach tours of churches once more.

As always, I welcome any suggestions for future events.

Online lecture series report

Reach of the series:

Total number of bookings on the series: 2,849

Total number of countries known to have tuned in; 13 (UK, USA, Canada, Ireland, Poland, Germany, Trinidad/Tobago, Greece, Italy, Singapore, Finland, India, Bermuda).

Total number of attendees: Minimum c.1478*

Average turnout rate against bookings: 62% (exceptionally good!)

Average number of these who stayed the whole duration of the talk: 94% (excellent!)

*This figure based on the peak attendance number spotted on the day, which fluctuates constantly so the very highest may have been missed. It also does not take into account the fact that in many households more than one person was watching the lecture on a single device – e.g., couples.

Cost of the series: Speakers and event coordinators: Free - all voluntary on this occasion

Eventbrite: Free (for free events)

Zoom: £297.58 (for 2 x months of Pro and Webinar to allow us up to 500 attendees)

Data storage [will last many series, not just this]: £110.60 (for 2 x external hard drives to secure the audio and video recordings of each event)

Benefits of the series:

28 new members since the start of the series up to early June. The Hon. Membership Officer advised: "I usually receive two or three membership applications per month, after [one of the talks in the programme] I received 11 in one weekend." = wow.

Launch of YouTube channel, to advertise the Society and to upload videos of events. Over time, these will build up viewings and will accrue subscribers.

Over 315 Followers on Eventbrite (followers get instant notification whenever we advertise a new event – they are effectively a mailing list and a captive audience).

Eventbrite offers us a bookings platform going forwards, for live or digital events - it works for both.

Choice feedback comments:

"I will join your society but want to take this opportunity to say how much I have enjoyed your lectures. Had no idea of your society's existence but delighted to find a body of like-minded folk who enjoy and appreciate monuments of all ages! One of those rare boons of Zoom and COVID-19 - living in the Highlands of Scotland these are events that I would never have been able to appreciate otherwise. Thank you!"

"Thank you for a very interesting and entertaining series of lectures. I look forward to learning more from a winter series."

"Excellent series, looking forward to the recordings of the ones I missed."

"Thank you...have only just discovered you!"

"Fabulous series. Thank you so much. It's been wonderful."

"Best talk I've been to during the whole pandemic. Thanks."

There were no questions on Mrs Acker's report. Miss Blood and Mrs Ackers were thanked for arranging and facilitating the excellent on-line lecture programme.

11. Reports on the Society's Publications

Journal – Dr Ann Adams, Mr Jonathan Trigg and Mrs Nicola Lowe

Volume 35: This was distributed at the end of June 2021. The editors would like to thank authors, reviewers, Peter McGrath of Groundwork Design and the printers, Henry Ling, who succeeded in producing this volume despite the challenges posed by Covid-19 restrictions. In addition to a global pandemic, *CM35* marks the first volume produced when the UK was not part of the European Union. The UK's exit from the EU necessitated Royal Mail changes to its processes and consequent changes to the distribution system at our

printers which have resulted, regrettably, in disruption of mailings to our members in the European Union.

There has been a change in format from endnotes to footnotes which, the editors' hope, will be easier for readers.

Volume 36: The editors are targeting March 2022 for distribution.

Articles, which are in various stages of the editorial process, all focus on monuments in England, primarily from the sixteenth to early twentieth centuries. We hope to expand the geographic scope further in *CM37* with, subject to peer review, two articles on monuments in Portugal.

The editors welcome contact over proposed articles for future journals.

Journal Style Guidelines: The Guide for Contributors was revised and is on the website.

Book reviews –Volume 35 featured fifteen reviews (including three covering two books) and continued the practice of including non-English texts to bring them to the notice of an English-speaking audience.

There are twenty reviews planned for volume 36, covering a wide spread of subject matter and era. They include books on memorial practices and materials as well as accounts of individual cemeteries and tombs located across Europe and the USA.

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. In July 2021, driven by foreseen developments in Open Access requirements, and the need to remain attractive to research-funded authors, the Council took the decision to give notice to EBSCO. A review is being undertaken to assess the feasibility of proving digital access through the CMS website.

Essay Competition: The essay competition is designed to attract authors who have not written for CM before. The editors are grateful to the three judges for their thorough assessment of the eight entries. The winning entry will be published in *CM36* and, subject to peer review, one further entry is expected to be published in the journal.

Details for the 2022 competition (deadline 31 December 2022) were included in *CM35* and will be repeated in *CM36*. Guidelines have been amended to include a minimum word limit (6,000) as well as the existing maximum (10,000) and to specify that the entry must be in English.

There were no questions on the Journal report. Dr Lepine said he was pleased to see footnotes and Dr Bowdler thanked the Editors for the assistance they had given him.

Newsletter – Dr Andrew Sargent

The Editor would like to thank all who have contributed to the *Newsletter's* success this year, especially those who volunteered items in order to help fill the gaps left by the cancellation or postponement of so many events. As always, they made stimulating reading for our membership. In the light of recent developments, Dr Roger Bowdler's explanation of the Listing of church monuments (36.2 pp.6-19) was very timely.

Two issues of the *Newsletter* have been published in the last twelve months: 36.1 & 36.2. An Autumn issue (37.1) 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 preferably in JPEG format) 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.

There were no questions or comments on Dr Sargent's report.

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

Since last year's AGM we have continued to live with the pandemic, with access to churches both to visit and for worship only really starting to return to some kind of normality very recently – we hope for good.

We will probably only appreciate the impact of Covid on monuments by way of reflection in the future. In terms of specific new cases to cross my desk there have been nine (compared to ten last year). In many cases I like to visit a church before responding to a general concern raised to the Society, not least so that I can be sure I have my facts and background information in place, and this of course has been restricted this last 12 months.

One case this year involved giving advice for sources of grant aid, and how to find a suitable conservator, to St, Moran's church, Lamorran, Cornwall, for the lovely painted relief carving slate memorial to Sir John Verman and his wife of about 1660. This was well received and resulted in some success in raising funds by the parish. At the other end of England – and all cases were (disappointingly) English this year – I have given advice to the Grace Darling Memorial Trust about setting up a maintenance regime. Grace Darling's monument in the churchyard at Bamburgh (Northumberland) is a really important work not just as a fine design and sculpture (C.R. Smith's original effigy is now in the church) but also for what it represents – for the story of Grace Darling as well as being a rare example of a prominent 19th century effigial monument to a lady. It is rewarding when those responsible for the care of monuments reach out to the Society, and we are able to provide tangible help.

I have set up a watching brief on the monuments severely damaged by fire at Mackworth church (Derbyshire); and raised concerns about apparent deterioration to monuments at Cogges (Essex) and Sapperton (Gloucestershire). I have been in correspondence with the parish at Hanbury (Staffordshire) about their monuments and expect to follow this up with a visit in the near future to discuss the concerns raised and what might be done. Floor ledger slabs, and the re-ordering of churches, also continues to present challenges, and we have been looking closely at proposals in this regard for St. Michael-le-Belfry in York.

As ever, I am always open to new cases being brought to my attention by the Society's membership, as well as non-members, and will endeavour to deal constructively with enquiries anywhere.

There were no questions on Dr Carrington's report and Dr Bowdler expressed his thanks to Dr Carrington.

13. Election of the President

Mr Mark Downing was re-elected – proposed Miss Hilary Wheeler and seconded Dr Roger Bowdler.

14. Election of Officers and Two Ordinary Members of Council

Mr Downing asked that the Officers and the two Ordinary Members of Council be elected en-bloc and this was approved – proposed Miss Val Franklin and seconded Dr David Lepine. Mr Downing thanked Dr Roger Bowdler, the retiring member of Council, for his work and advice/

Council Members

Mr Mark Downing	President
Miss Sally Badham	Vice President
Dr Julian Litten	Vice President
Dr Sophie Oosterwijk	Vice President
Dr Jean Wilson	Vice President
Mr Jonathan Dawson	Treasurer
Miss Hilary Wheeler	Secretary
Mrs Claire Downing	Membership Secretary
Mrs Moira Ackers	Events Co-ordinator
Dr Ann Adams	Journal Co-editor
Mr Jonathan Trigg	Journal Co-editor
Dr Andrew Sargent	Newsletter Editor
Dr David Carrington	Conservation Cases Recorder
Er Ellie Pridgeon	Archivist
Prof Madeline Gray	Publicity Officer

Ordinary Members

Miss Elizabeth Blood
Mrs Moira Gittos – co-opted
Dr Susan Jenkins
Dr David Lepine
Dr Holly Trusted
Dr Adam White

15. Announcement of the Date and Venue of the 2022 Annual General Meeting

Miss Wheeler said that the meeting would take place on 10 September 2022, with the venue to be confirmed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2.15pm and Mr Downing thanked everyone for attending.