

## The Church Monuments Society

### Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting held at 12-15 on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, London SW4 0DZ

Mr Mark Downing, President welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Ann Adams, Sally Badham, David Carrington, Val Franklin, Norman Hammond, Susan Jenkins, Philip Lankester, Julian Litten, Sophie Oosterwijk, Ellie Pridgeon, Iona Roberts, Andrew Skelton, Tim Sutton, Jonathan Trigg, Holly Trusted and Iris Westby.

#### 2. **Approval of the Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting.**

The Minutes were unanimously approved – proposed Dr Jean Wilson and seconded Mrs Moira Ackers.

#### 3. **Matters Arising.**

There were no matters arising.

#### 4. **Presidential Address – Mark Downing**

Dear Members and friends,

It is with some sadness that I now give my final address to the membership and a feeling that I have not achieved as much as I would have hoped during my five years as President of the society. It was an honour to have been elected to serve the society as President and as a young member of the society in 1992 I never thought that would join my illustrious friends and forbearers Nick Norman and Claude Blair as President. I do hope that members feel that I have served them well during the five years of my tenure. During the start of my presidency the Covid pandemic halted our normal activities but my thoughts of providing online lectures started before this: their introduction brought a new dimension to the society and for its members: it has certainly increased the society's profile to a worldwide audience and increased the membership size considerably. Another issue that church monuments have had to endure is the Black Lives Matters movement and a possible threat of their destruction and removal. I believe the stance that the society has made, with a policy of "retain and explain" goes a long way to preserve our artistic heritage in a way it is presented now. The high profile court case of the monument to Tobias Rustat at Jesus Collage, Cambridge, was successfully found in favour of preserving it in situ and I am very proud that with the intervention of the society hopefully future cases like this are dealt with in a similar outcome.

I wish to thank all officers and council who have kept the society going since my last address and especially those members who are leaving after their 3 year term on council has expired. The society is reliant on dedicated officers to fulfil their roles and I must thank them for their work during my five year term; also vice presidents who have given me advice.

I wish to report that the recent online lecture series has again proved popular together with the YouTube channel containing past lectures. 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. For the 2024 AGM there will be further positions for Ordinary Members on council, therefore if you wish to sit on the society's council, which is a term of 3 years, please contact the secretary. The essay prize for 2022 was won by Teresa Soley with her winning essay titled "*The New Founders. Tombs in the Convent of Santa Clara, Vila do Conde*". Unfortunately she is unable to attend to be awarded her prize today but the society has congratulated her and the titled will feature in a forthcoming journal.

At the 2014 AGM it was put to the membership for their approval, that the society was to convert to a CIO, which would therefore exonerate council from any liability should such a case arise and our application to convert to a CIO was approved by the Charity Commission in 2022. I am very pleased that this is near completion which has taken a long time to complete; shortly it will be proposed to the membership for their approval.

#### **5. Hon Treasurer's Report and Approval of the Accounts – Jon Dawson**

Introducing the Accounts, Mr Dawson said that there was a deficit of £6470:00, against a surplus of £6635:00 in the year to 31 March 2021, so across the two years there was a small surplus. Mr Dawson highlighted the significant increase in printing costs. There were no questions or comments and the Accounts were approved – proposed Dr Roger Bowdler and seconded Mrs Moira Gittos.

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

Mr Dawson proposed agreement, seconded by Michael Thompson and unanimously agreed.

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

This year currently the total membership stands at 541 a slight decrease on last year. We had a large increase of numbers during the pandemic, and it is mainly these memberships that have not been renewed on going.

This is made up of 51 corporate 490 ordinary, family and student memberships.

The membership breakdown is as follows:

EU Memberships 29

UK Memberships 483

ROW Memberships 29

I am still waiting for subscription payments from twelve corporate and one hundred and twenty ordinary members for 2023/2024.

This does seem similar to previous years a reminder notice will be in the Autumn newsletter and letters, or emails of reminders sent in November.

People often renew at the time of year that they joined the society and not on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June renewal date.

Overall, the membership of the society remains quite steady with new memberships still related to the online lecture series which will resume in the Autumn.

There were no questions or comments on Mrs Downing's report. Thanks to Mrs Downing were proposed by Jon Dawson and seconded by many of those present.

#### **8. Hon Publicity Officer's Report - Prof Madeleine Gray**

We are delighted to be returning to more face-to-face events. The web site and Twitter account continue as the main vehicle for promoting our activities. We now have over 7,000 followers. Recent developments on Twitter mean we have to think about whether it is still a valuable part of our social media activity, but so far nothing has emerged which will completely take its place. We continue to monitor this and we are taking advice from marketing and communications specialists.

We do have other social media outlets: 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. We plan to continue the online lecture series, which has been very successful in widening awareness of the Society's work.

Our Monument of the Month feature continues popular. Recent monuments have included a donation tablet in the form of a wall monument, a monument to Jews massacred in Lisbon in 1506 (this was based on a contribution to our Essay Prize) and the possible grave cover of an Anglo-Saxon warrior queen. 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 blog continues active, and we have been able to use it to publicise the activities of other groups as well. In February, we were contacted by the secretary of the Istanbul Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative. Back in 1995, in volume 10 of *Church Monuments*, our vice-president Jean Wilson wrote a study of the monument to Thomas Baines (d.1680) and John Finch (d.1682) at Christs College, Cambridge. It was a pioneering study of the commemoration of a same-sex relationship, part of the genesis of gay art-history. But Baines had another tomb, in what is now the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery. We have been able to publicise the activities of the Initiative and look forward to including them in our online lecture series. We welcome contributions to the blog: you can send these to [madeleine.gray@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:madeleine.gray@southwales.ac.uk) – ideally as a document in Word plus a picture as a .jpg file.

We are aware that it is becoming increasingly important for people to be able to pay online for events, purchase of back numbers of the Journal etc. We are currently working with our web designers, Considered Creative of Ironbridge, on the most cost-effective way of facilitating this.

Now that we have returned to organising face-to-face events, 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](mailto:madeleine.gray@southwales.ac.uk).

Prof Gray added that she was continuing to monitor the platform formerly known as Twitter and had sought advice on other platforms. She had concluded that, for the present, we should continue with the current platform – X.

## **9. Hon Archivist's Report Hon Archivist's Report – Dr Ellie Pridgeon**

The Society's positive relationship with the Borthwick Institute has continued during the past year. The Institute's security measures ensure that the Society's records are safely lodged on a secure server.

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

## **10. Hon Event's Co-ordinator's Report - Mrs Moria Ackers**

2023 has been an interesting year. We have managed despite various hitches to have a wide and varied programme of events.

As in 2022 our online lecture series has continued to be very successful. We have a following of listeners from all over the world with attendance at lectures of 200 plus. When churches start to be just a bit too cold to hang around in you can now enjoy the many aspects of church monuments from the comfort of your own home. The autumn and spring lecture series have become a fixed item on our calendar.

For those who can't attend them live they are all available on our YouTube channel which is available through the link on our website.

Live events started with a joint event with the Leicestershire Historic Churches Trust at Prestwold and Wymeswold churches in May.

Robin Draper organised a coach day in Gloucestershire in June.

Sadly, the proposed event in Devon was not possible due to the spiralling cost of coach hire.

By the time of this AGM, we will have had our August study day looking at Alabaster monuments in Nottinghamshire.

We look forward to our joint event with the Richard III Society October 21<sup>st</sup> at the Guildhall in Leicester, marking Mark Downing's successful period of Presidency.

#### **Future events 2023/24**

We have several suggested live events for 2024 including a 'Pop-up' in St Davids, Wales and a walking tour in London guided by Roger Bowdler. Do look out for future events in the Newsletter and on the Webpage.

**As always, I welcome any suggestions for future events.** If you know of a group of churches worth visiting and would like to share them with our members, please contact me and I'll guide you through the process of planning such a day.

Mrs Ackers noted that volunteers were needed so that events could be organised and that assistance would be available. Although the on-line talks are free, Eventbrite had imposed a charge for events attracting more than 25 people; although this would not impact the autumn series it was something to be considered in the future. Michael Thompson suggested asking for a donation to off-set costs. Derrick Chivers said that only a few places remained for the joint event with the Richard III Society.

Dr Blood suggested that there could be two events roles – one for events and one for on-line events.

#### **11. Reports on the Society's Publications**

##### **Journal -Jonathan Trigg, Co-editor, Dr Ann Adams, Co-editor, Mrs Nicola Lowe, Book Reviews Editor**

The editors would like to thank the large number of people – authors, peer and book reviewers, translators, Peter McGrath of Groundwork Design and the printers, Henry Ling – involved in the creation of the journal.

Volume 37: This was distributed in August 2023. 610 copies were printed. *CM37* contains five articles, including one on a royal monument in Odelivas, Portugal (the runner-up in the 2020 essay competition), and twenty-one book reviews covering twenty-five books, continuing the practice of bringing non-English texts to the notice of an English-speaking audience.

Volume 38: Articles, which are in various stages of the editorial process, will include the winner of the 2022 essay competition (congratulations to Dr Teresa Soley) continuing the theme of royal monuments in Portugal.

The editors welcome contact over proposed articles for future journals. It is a particular pleasure to include an author who has not written for *CM* before, or not for a period of time.

Journal Style Guidelines: The Guide for Contributors is reviewed after each volume and revised as necessary. It can be found on the website under 'Publications'.

Essay Competition: The essay competition is designed to attract authors who have not written for *CM* before. The deadline for the next competition is 31 January 2025; further information is provided at the back of *CM37*.

New Editor: *CM38* will be the last volume co-edited by Ann Adams. Please contact the editors for further information if you are interested in joining the editorial team. The editors would also welcome more volunteers to assist with copy-editing at the proofs stage (and thanks to Peter Bolton and Tony Carr for their assistance with *CM37*).

Mr Downing said that the current Journal was another 'wonderful issue'.

### **Newsletter Report - Dr Andrew Sargent**

The Editor would like to thank all who have contributed to the *Newsletter's* success this year. As always, their contributions have made stimulating reading for our membership – it would be dull without them!

Two issues of the *Newsletter* have been published in the last twelve months: 38.1 & 38.2. An Autumn issue (39.1) is due in October. If you live overseas and have experienced difficulties receiving your copy following recent international changes to postal rules, please do contact the editor.

This is your Society and your *Newsletter*. Could you 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.

Brief reports on Society events are always of interest and may encourage other members to sign up for future activities. Organisers are always delighted if an attendee volunteers to write it up, so do consider offering.

There were no questions or comments on either report.

### **12. Conservation Cases Recorder Report - David Carrington**

I apologise for not being able to be present in person at this year's meeting.

It has been a quiet year for Conservation Cases since the last AGM. There have been just four 'new' cases and a couple of old ones which have seen a bit more action.

Of the new ones, concerns were raised to the Society about the covering of medieval ledger slabs at Iron Acton church in Gloucestershire. I am always happier checking these things out at first hand and was able to visit the church, confirmed that this was indeed the case, wrote to the parish, subsequently exchanged emails with the incumbent, and have been assured that the matter has been raised with the PCC and that they hope it will be addressed with a planned re-ordering in the next few years.

Less satisfactory has been the case of the monuments at Holbeach church in Lincolnshire. Again, I visited on behalf of the Society, and found the brass to Joanna Welby to be in particularly poor condition, at great risk of theft. I've had no answer to my approaches to the PCC, and have raised the matter with the Monumental Brass Society, who I am told have had similarly little luck. Currently I am stuck on this one!

Another case, also in Gloucestershire, is that of the heart burial monument to Sir Giles Berkeley (d.1294) at Coberley. I've visited, written to the incumbent, confirmed the poor condition which I highlighted in annotated photos in my letter, and suggested they find a conservator to address what is only quite a small job. I've had no reply to my letter in March.

The fourth case was concern for a military effigy formerly at Borthwick church in Scotland, which Mark Downing has advised me is in fact now in the care of the National Museums of Scotland. Revisited cases include ongoing dialogue concerning medieval tomb recesses at Ducklington (Oxfordshire) and a continuing watching brief on our old friend Bishop Montagu at Bath Abbey.

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.

### **13. Election of the President**

Dr Jean Wilson said she was very happy to propose Moira Ackers and this was unanimously agreed. Mrs Ackers took the chair

### **14. Election of Officers and two Ordinary Members of Council**

Mrs Ackers asked that the Officers and two Ordinary Members of Council be elected en-bloc and this was approved – proposed Jon Dawson and seconded Derrick Chivers.

Mrs Moira Ackers	President
Miss Sally Badham	Vice President
Dr Julian Litten	Vice President
Dr Sophie Oosterwijk	Vice President
Dr Jean Wilson	Vice President
Mr Jonathan Dawson	Hon Treasurer
Miss Hilary Wheeler	Hon Secretary
Mrs Claire Downing	Hon Membership Secretary
Dr Elizabeth Blood	Hon Events Co-ordinator
Dr Ann Adams	Hon Journal Co-editor
Mr Jonathan Trigg	Hon Journal Co-editor

Dr Andrew Sargent  
Dr David Carrington  
Dr Ellie Pridgeon  
Prof Madeline Gray

Hon Newsletter Editor  
Hon Conservation Cases Recorder  
Hon Archivist  
Hon Publicity Editor

#### Ordinary Members

Dr Roger Bowdler  
Mrs Moira Gittos  
Dr Susan Jenkins  
Mr Andrew Skelton  
Mr Michael Thompson  
Dr Holly Trusted

#### **15. Increase in Subscription Rate**

The increase was proposed by Jon Dawson, seconded by Mrs Nicola Lowe and agreed.

#### **16. Migration to CIO and Constitution**

In response to a question, from Dr Jean Wilson, Mr Dawson said that the information about Trustees was correct at the time of writing. Derrick Chivers asked how long Trustees served and Mr Dawson replied that one third retired each year but could stand for re-election.

Mr Dawson proposed acceptance, seconded by Adam White and agreed.

#### **17. Any Other Business**

The election of six Trustees was proposed by Michael Thompson seconded by Adam White and agreed. The Trustees are: Moira Ackers, David Carrington, Jon Dawson, Brian Gittos, Hilary Wheeler and Jean Wilson.

Mrs Ackers offered very many thanks to Mark Downing and thanked him for championing the on-line lectures. She felt that the Society faced two future challenges – the closure of churches and monuments being taken down for various reason.

#### **18. Announcement of the Date and Venue of the 2024 Annual General Meeting**

Saturday, 7 September 2024 at the church of St George the Martyr, Borough High Street, London SE11JA.

Mrs Moira Ackers, President  
7 September 2024

Miss Hilary Wheeler, Secretary

Jean Wilson made an address of thanks to Mark Downing which was enthusiastically supported:

When I handed over the Presidency of this Society to Mark Downing in 2018 I knew that he would be a safe pair of hands. He had been a brilliant events secretary, a long-standing and constructive member of Council, and was extremely knowledgeable about military monuments. He is also the most elegant president that the Society has had. What no-one could have foreseen was the awful period through which he had to steer the Society.

I couldn't have done it. Lock-down meant no more excursions, no more study days, and, because of the C of E's ukase that churches must be shut, no access to churches - in fact, no more of many of what members feel to be the chief benefits of belonging to the Society. But Mark, ably supported by Moira, Elizabeth and Maddy, managed to turn what could have been a nightmare into an opportunity.

He had already set up a lively Facebook page, to supplement the Website and Twitter accounts, and set up the combination of AGM and lectures that we are enjoying today. In a remarkably short time we were holding Council Meetings by Zoom, and had instituted the on-line lectures which have proved such a hit that they have become a regular feature of the CMS year - a solution to the seasonably unbalanced events programme. It also introduced the Society to an international audience, with attendees joining in from everywhere from Calcutta to California, and with the lectures being available on the website, will continue to do so. Mark has overseen the Society's fully embracing the possibilities of digital communications, and he has done so while making sure that those members who don't, or can't, use on-line communication - for we must remember that there are still large areas where electronic signals are weak or non-existent - are not excluded.

Societies and Institutions reacted to the covid crisis in various ways, from rolling over and hoping it would go away (exemplified in my experience by the Tate) to seeing opportunities for wider engagement (the National Gallery did this brilliantly). Mark has ensured that the Church Monuments Society has been the National Gallery rather than the Tate. The Society must be profoundly grateful for his leadership and achievements.

And finally, we should thank Claire, not just for her support of Mark, but for her exemplary performance as membership secretary.

Thank you both.