

THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
Minutes of the 114th Annual General Meeting
Held on Thursday, 13th May 2021
by Zoom

Present: Peter Mandler (President), Katharine Burn (Deputy President), Mike Brooks (Honorary Treasurer), Tim Lomas (Honorary Secretary), Arthur Burns (Chair, HE Committee), Bev Forrest (Chair, Primary Committee), Mike Short (Chair, Branches Committee) and Helen Snelson (Chair, Secondary Committee). A full list of trustees and members in attendance can be found at the end of these minutes.

Staff in attendance: Rebecca Sullivan, CEO; Maheema Chanrai, Mel Jones, Emily Randall

1. Apologies for Absence

Professor Peter Mandler explained that formal apologies for absence from the AGM were not required from members and noted that all members of the Executive Committee were present and a number of trustees.

1. President's welcome

- 1.1 Professor Mandler welcomed everyone to this, his first AGM as President, explaining that although he hoped this meeting would be short and business-like, it was an important opportunity for the HA's members to hold the organisation's Board and Executive to account.
- 1.2 Rebecca (Becky) Sullivan, the CEO, outlined the technical arrangements for the meeting which was conducted using the Zoom platform. Maheema Chanrai was on hand to help with any technical issues. The meeting was being recorded for transcription by Dorothy Oxley.

3. Minutes of the previous AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held on 13th June 2020 had been circulated and were approved as a true record.

4. Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 30th September 2020

- 4.1 The Annual Report and Accounts had been circulated. Professor Mandler explained that Becky Sullivan would present the Annual Report, while Mike Brooks, Hon. Treasurer, would present the accounts, then there would be a proposal to formally accept these, and a vote.

4.2 Annual Report

- 4.2.1 Becky explained that she did not intend to say much about the printed Annual Report, as members had read this, though she would be happy to receive questions or comments. Instead, she would focus on the current year, as this was already more than halfway through, and the HA had been quite busy since the report was written.

- 4.2.2 Becky had hoped that the team would be back in an office environment in 2021; instead people had mostly had to continue to work from home. Some members of the team (Katie Logan, Joseph Wilson and Olivia Dent) had been going into the office to ensure that post, membership packs, deliveries and other such things were dealt with, and she thanked them for this. All the team at 59a had been amazing, keeping everything going in difficult circumstances. Becky also thanked all of the volunteers – Committee members, Branch Officers, journal editors who put in hours of work to ensure that the HA’s journals were of a high quality, everyone who has helped with webinars and online presentations, as well as juggling their working lives, family commitments, and for many working in educational settings, having to deal with the challenges of teaching in different ways. It was a real honour to work with such committed people.
- 4.2.3 One of the challenges of the past year had been holding two virtual Annual Conferences. The first Annual Conference, in November, had been a leap of faith as the HA had never tried anything like an online Conference before, but it seemed to have worked. Over 500 people participated, there were some really great talks, and she thanked everyone who participated and supported the live sessions, Maheema who kept everything on track, and Simon Davis who edited 30 recordings very quickly. Simon had just finished editing a further 55 recordings for the HA’s second Annual Conference, which would be coming up on 24th–29th May. It looked as if over 400 people would be taking part. Once this was over the team would start planning a ‘live’ conference in Bristol in 2022.
- 4.2.4 Because of Covid, the final of the Great Debate 2020 had been postponed from March 2020 and held in Autumn 2020 as a virtual event. It had been very inspiring nonetheless, and Becky recommended members should visit the HA’s website and see the presentation given by the winner, Thomas Locke from Chichester. Details of the 2022 Great Debate would be announced formally in a week or two. The plan was to link this with the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee, with young people being asked to reflect on changes in their locality over the last 70 years. There should also be some other HA events around the Platinum Jubilee.
- 4.2.5 The HA’s vibrant CPD programme had really taken off during the past year, with Melanie (Mel) Jones working with the Primary and Secondary Committees; Becky thought Committee Chairs would have more to say about this work.
- 4.2.5 The HA’s ‘Virtual Branch’, with talks hosted by Paula, which had begun during the first lockdown continued to attract a healthy audience.
- 4.2.6 With all this activity, a new member of staff had been appointed, Olivia Dent, to support Events and Membership. It wasn’t easy to start a new job in the middle of a pandemic and she hadn’t yet actually met the person she works mostly with, Maheema. That would happen next week, when the staff would be getting together to say goodbye to Katie Logan, who had been a really important part of the Membership team since 2016. She will be very much missed. David Lewzey had recently been appointed to Katie’s post.
- 4.2.7 Becky apologized that there was not time to go through everything that had been happened over the past year. It has been remarkably busy one with some highs – notably with membership – but with sad moments too. 2020-21 had seen more last farewells to old friends; she expressed the HA’s sympathy for their families and loved ones.

4.3 Annual Accounts

- 4.3.1 Peter Mandler invited Mike Brooks, the Honorary Treasurer, to present the Annual Accounts. Mike began by reporting, with pleasure, that for the year ending 30th September 2020, the HA's finances had remained remarkably stable, and this was over a period in which several charities have suffered substantial losses and in some cases their existence had been threatened by the economic woes resulting from the Covid pandemic. This outcome is largely due to the fact that the HA does not rely on fundraising in the way many other charities do; instead, its financial strength comes from a loyal and increasing membership base, whose continuing subscriptions reflects a high level of satisfaction with the benefits that membership provides.
- 4.3.2 Mike explained that as members had seen the accounts and all their accompanying notes, he planned to only pick up a couple of key numbers. In the year to 30th September 2020 there was an overall deficit of £38,000 compared with a deficit of £99,000 in the previous year. The whole of this deficit was represented by unrealised losses on investments, which are required by accounting standards to be valued by market value at the end of the year, and this loss is 'unrealised' in the sense that we have not sold any of those investments. Since then, the market has recovered substantially and the HA's investments are back in profit.
- 4.3.3 The HA's operational, ongoing activities were more or less breaking even compared to a deficit of £107,000 in the previous year. Looking first at the income line, the total income amounted to £918,993, a small increase of £22,000 compared with the previous year, and the significant increase in members has not yet been reflected in income as much of the cash received is in respect of pre-paid membership subscriptions, so the benefit of that will be coming through in the current year. Of this increase, £16,000 represents additional donations and legacies, for which we are extremely grateful, although of course it's very hard to forecast this. The Executive are thinking of how this might be improved in the future. Total expenditure was £918,498 which was lower by £85,000 than the last year, which largely reflects lower expenditure on projects, as those for which the HA received finance in previous years come to an end. Plus, of course, the cancellation of the 'live' Annual Conference; there were some costs involved in that.
- 4.3.4 At the end of the year, total funds were £809,000, down by £38,000 compared to the previous year, and that reduction is the deficit mentioned earlier. The cash balances, on the other hand, are very substantially up, by £150,000 compared to last year. About half of that is represented by the pre-paid subscriptions mentioned earlier.
- 4.3.5 The important number which Treasurers always look at is the Reserves number, and our 'free' reserves, which are shown on the balance sheet as the General Fund, amounted to just over half a million pounds at the end of the year. Our Reserves Policy states that our reserves should amount to 6 months' planned expenditure and the General Fund is still considerably in excess of that, which gives the HA the stability to invest in all its activities and in the staff of 59a, which is the bedrock of the HA's success.
- 4.3.6 Mike invited questions, and Ian Mason asked about current membership numbers. Becky explained that Emily Randall (Membership Manager) would be giving a full report. No other questions were raised.

4.4 Mike Brooks proposed, and Gillian Burnett seconded, the approval of the Annual Report and Accounts, and an electronic vote was taken. The Report and Accounts were **approved**.

5. Election of Deputy President and Honorary Secretary

5.1 Peter Mandler said a few words about the outgoing holders of these offices before the voting. Katharine Burn had been Deputy President and would be appearing shortly in another guise so he would not say too much about her, but since becoming President he had become aware that there is a 'Brains Trust' running the HA, comprised of Becky Sullivan and Katharine Burn, with the President as a kind of under-strapper. He was very grateful to Katharine for her wisdom and good judgement. He praised Tim Lomas, the Honorary Secretary, as the person to whom you go when you need to know what all the precedents are and who carries the lore of the organisation. After serving in many functions over many years, Tim was retiring as Honorary Secretary but would still be taking an active role in the HA. Peter thanked both Katharine and Tim for their service.

5.2 Peter explained that his first year in office had been a strange one, in that due to Covid he had not been able to get out and meet members at Branch meetings and Conference, though he had done so virtually, and had also spent time on Twitter, where members kept up a very active presence of debate. He had become aware that the HA relied very heavily, first of all, on the work of a small professional staff team, and also on a very active membership at all levels. Participation and authority were distributed very widely throughout the organisation and there is a sense of good feeling which makes the HA very effective.

5.3 **Deputy President:** Council had nominated Alison Kitson for this role (a three-year term of office) and she is willing to serve if elected.

Elected unanimously

5.4 **Honorary Secretary:** Council had nominated Katharine Burn, and she also was willing to serve.

Elected unanimously.

5.5 Peter confirmed that there had been no other nominations for either role.

5.6 **Honorary Treasurer:** Mike Brooks had agreed to accept nomination for re-election for a further term as Honorary Treasurer.

Elected unanimously

5.7 Peter thanked all the members for voting and the Officers for their willingness to serve.

6. Appointment of Committee Chairs

6.1 Peter thanked Mike Short who had finished his term as Chair of the Branches and Members' Committee, having had to serve almost half of his term in this bizarre situation where he could not meet with his Committee, or with Branches and Branch Officers. He had however dealt with this with great aplomb. Council had approved the nomination of Peter Hounsell as

Chair of the Branches and Members Committee to succeed Mike. Council had also approved the nomination for a second term of Bev Forrest as Chair of the Primary Committee and Helen Snelson as Chair of the Secondary Committee, both of whom had done a marvellous job rising to the challenges posed by the pandemic, and the HA's schools work has intensified, which is quite extraordinary given the circumstances. The fourth Committee Chair, Arthur Burns (Higher Education Committee) is still in the middle of his term so does not need re-appointment.

7. Membership Update

- 7.1 Peter invited Emily Randall, the HA's Membership Manager, to address the AGM. Emily explained that she would be giving the headline news from the last twelve months.
- 7.2 In April 2020, the HA's membership had been 8,503 and the growth in membership which had been big news at the last AGM had fortunately continued, with the membership now being 10,194, a growth of about 1,700 over last year, a 20% increase in total. The last time the HA had seen membership numbers reaching these giddy heights was about 30 years ago or more. Emily thanked all the members whose support had helped the HA to grow and extend its work, even over the past year when things had been very difficult. She showed a graph demonstrating the growth over the period 2018 to 2021. The growth was continuing, though at a slower pace. The really big leap had come between April 2019 (membership 6,260) to its current level of 10,194, in total, a 63% increase. Keeping up with the demand had been a bit of a challenge for the small Membership team, and she thanked Joseph, Katie and more recently Liv (Olivia) for all their hard work behind the scenes.
- 7.3 When the HA had been setting its strategic targets, the KPI for successful growth that would provide a sustainable future for the work of the HA had been 'Increasing members to 8,000 by 2021'. It had felt like an impossible task at the time so to have exceeded it by over 2,000 was really great news. It meant a greater network with more voices and ideas. The top-level membership figure included both individuals and schools. With school members there were multiple staff users, so the total individual reach was closer to 22,000.
- 7.4 The important thing now was consolidating some of that growth by continuing to understand members' needs and to deliver a high quality, comprehensive and tailored membership service to the very wide cross-section of groups making up the service.
- 7.5 Looking in more detail at the type of member by their main journal, 19% take the *Historian*, 41% take *Secondary History* and 40% take *Primary History*. This is not very different to the previous year, and Emily showed graphs demonstrating the rates of growth from 2021, with 6% increase in *Historian* members, 27% in *Secondary History* members and 21% in *Primary History* members. The Membership team had been working successfully to grow corporate or 'whole school' memberships, and the HA now has a corporate school presence in 25% of the UK secondary schools and 10% in UK primary schools, which means the HA is reaching more teaching staff, supporting students more widely, and delivering the biggest impact possible.
- 7.6 Key reasons for the growth are:

- Further development of the benefits the HA offers, and Committee members have done a huge amount of work on CPD
- The continuing emphasis on subject expertise in the Ofsted standards
- More tailored support for every career stage, from beginners to subject leaders and mentors
- More frequent and accessible online programmes, such as the Virtual Branch which runs monthly talks, and fantastic work done by various Branches, many of whom have produced strong online programmes, and also the brilliantly crafted online CPD calendars, all responding to members' key concerns
- Actioning member feedback and improving communications with members. The feedback provided in the 2020 membership survey has informed much of the HA's planning. Emily thanked all those who had responded; the team are still busy unpicking some of the results and will be giving details of future commitments in the Summer edition of *HA News*.

7.7 Future plans include:

- Further development of the 'Historian' (General) offer, putting in some detailed research to construct more interactive learning experiences.
- Digital and website developments
- Raising members' awareness of what's on offer, including all the new resources and CPD programmes, podcasts and films.

7.8 Emily concluded by thanking all those members whose dedication and contributions had helped the HA to grow. Peter thanked Emily for her role in the HA's success, and invited questions but none were raised.

8. Membership Fees

Peter asked members to note Council's decision to amend the membership fees, applying small increases to all membership types, which had been set out on the agenda.

9. Committee Reports

9.1 Peter invited the Committee Chairs to report on their activities.

9.2 **Primary Committee:** Bev Forrest reported:

9.2.1 Bev returned to the amazing increase in Primary membership, this was a brilliant achievement and a testimony to the hard work of the committee members and the team at the HA. It was even more amazing as the increase had taken place during a very challenging time for those working in primary schools. Committee members had been quick to seize on the opportunity to support primary teachers during the pandemic and produced a range of high-quality home learning resources, including fabulous schemes of work. Whilst supporting existing members, these free resources had also attracted many new members previously unaware of the HA.

9.2.2 With lockdown, Committee regretted not being able to deliver face to face training and events, but had quickly adapted to the exciting new online world, and Primary members can

now access a broad range of webinars and courses, which are highly effective in getting the HA's message out to all parts of the country.

9.2.3 Whilst delighted to celebrate all those new members, the Committee understand that there is no time for complacency and have been working hard to find out what teachers, and especially new members, want from the HA, using such communications as the 'Ask the Committee' sessions and topical webinars. A key message from members is how much they love the schemes of work and subject leader resources.

9.2.4 One key focus had been supporting teachers in embedding diversity in their curriculum and teaching; a number of resources had been revised and an extensive programme of themed webinars delivered.

9.2.5 Alongside the Committee, a special mention must go to Karin Doull and the Primary History Editorial Board, who continue to produce a high-quality journal, the only one of its kind for primary history. Also, a special thanks to the broad team of contributors who work with the committee to produce such an amazing offer.

9.2.6 Bev concluded by saying that with recent and forthcoming publications from Ofsted and planning for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, it looks like being a very busy 12 months ahead, and she felt privileged to represent and work with such an inspiring group of people as the Committee. Sadly it had now been about 18 months since they had met face to face and though they had continued to meet by Zoom, she really missed those meetings at 59a, engaging in great discussions but also sharing a few laughs. She hoped all would go well with the journey out of lockdown and the Committee would be able to meet in London in July. She thanked Becky, Mel, Emily and Maheema and the rest of the team for their support, and also gave a special thanks to Tim Lomas for his hard work and dedication in developing primary history over the years. He had been an inspiration to everyone.

9.3 **Secondary Committee:** Helen Snelson reported:

9.3.1 Despite the 'slings and arrows' of current circumstances, secondary history is hale and hearty and secondary teachers are a boisterous and varied community; nurturing that community so it becomes more diverse and open to all is one of the Committee's key roles, and she thanked staff and members who had given freely of their time and expertise.

9.3.2 Rather than going into details of the Committee's activities, Helen invited members to:

- have a look at the Secondary pages of the HA's website and specifically the CPD calendar;
- peruse the One Big History Department blog and to have a look at some posts there for a real flavour of some of the work that is going on
- look at the Secondary strand of the upcoming Conference – there is some absolute gold on there.

9.3.2 Much has been done and much remains to be done, but the Committee remains entirely focused on supporting all history teachers and teacher educators across the community to be the best they can be and to inspire teenagers to love history and the past.

9.4 **Higher Education Committee:** Arthur Burns explained that:

- 9.4.1 As with all committees, Covid had a big impact on their work, requiring virtual meetings. It had also created considerable uncertainty, tasked as the Committee is with mediating relationships between schools and HE, having to watch massive changes in both sectors in policy and practice regarding their students. In one sense, this represented an opportunity, as never had schools been so anxious about what is happening in university admissions and so uncertain about how to support and advise applicants, and never have universities been so anxious about how well-prepared students will be for the transition to university.
- 9.4.2 In addition, both sectors had begun to review their pedagogy in the light of Black Lives Matter and forced to de-colonise the history curriculum, which had once again begun to attract the interest of politicians.
- 9.4.3 The HE Committee had a clear sense of how it could deal with these issues within its overall mission of enhancing the opportunities for the HE sector to engage with all aspects of the work of the HA, doing this not only through its own work but through the initiatives of individual members within other communities.
- 9.4.4 The Committee's work has inevitably been affected by Covid and the individual circumstances of key personnel. Although not so far ahead as they had hoped, they looked forward to real progress to concrete results in the next few months in terms of their priorities. Most significantly, work is now being completed on a thorough overhaul of the HE section of the HA's website, a precondition for most of the Committee's long term ambitions. This includes the writing of new materials on how academics can contribute to the HA's work in the context of their own career development, e.g. in writing for the HA's journals, contributing to CPD for teachers, or speaking to HA branches. The site will also provide a guide to school history, bringing HE staff up to speed, and explaining how the HA offers academics a much wider engagement with schools than they would be able to achieve with purely local efforts.
- 9.4.5 The Committee aims to continue working on the Transition to University materials, partly by increasing the 'hub for schools' web content, which has grown substantially in response to the pandemic.
- 9.4.6 In pursuing their objectives, the committee will continue to work with colleagues in the RHS and History UK as history is currently viewed more than usually contentious. There is a need to defend its place in the curriculum in both schools and universities. The next few months will be busy but they look really rewarding, and the team that has been assembled, supported by the staff at 59a, looks up to the job.

9.5 **Branches and Members Committee:** Mike Short reported that:

- 9.5.1 As everyone would remember, the last AGM was in June 2020, at which time the HA's Branches and the Branches and Members Committee were in a hiatus of uncertainty, waiting and hoping that the return to normal would be possible in the autumn. However, normal has not returned, and bearing in mind that the Branches represent a wide range of circumstances, approaches, expectations and enterprise, most Branches are coping well with the pandemic, some of them running very extensive programmes. Some Branch Officers have developed confidence and expertise in running online communications, with

interesting and encouraging results. This is also true of many members. Online lectures are proving popular with members and also with viewers from beyond the normal branch areas, and some non-members are being drawn into a new awareness of the HA and its Branches.

- 9.5.2 Members of the Committee have made contact with all of the HA's Branches to see how they're getting on and if they'd welcome any advice or support. The Committee has also produced a protocol for people wanting to start a new Branch, so there is a system for giving them support. This year, a new Branch has started in Leicester, in the least auspicious of circumstances, but it's got off to a really good start, given excellent support by Committee member Anne Wagstaff. Exeter isn't a new Branch, but it's a Branch which ran into some difficulties. Now with support from Tim Lomas, the Branch has an idea of a new direction.
- 9.5.3 Two new guides for Branches had been produced, one 'Working with Local History Societies' which includes case studies of the Local History Week and Local History Forum, written by Gillian Burnett and Tim Lomas, and one on 'Working with local schools' and, yes, Tim had a hand in that too, with Mary Feerick.
- 9.5.4 Committee has not achieved all it wanted to, which might have been the case even without the pandemic. It has been a frustration to the Committee not to be able to hold the usual Branch Officers' Meeting as this is an opportunity for Branch Officers to come together to air their views, to network with each other, and to hear what's going on at the national level.
- 9.5.5 Mike confirmed that this was his last Branches and Members report, and it was important that he didn't miss the opportunity to thank a number of people, beginning with Becky and her wonderful team, not, sadly, currently at 59a – he missed the warm welcome whenever he went there and hoped they would soon be able to go back. He particularly mentioned Anne-Marie Stephenson, who had been a wise friend and counsellor during his time as chair, and a tremendous supporter of the Committee's work. He also highlighted Suzannah Stern, who had come back to the HA after a long time away raising her little boy. She has already proven to be a tower of strength in working with the Committee and doing well considered and highly competent work, as Peter Hounsell would discover. He also praised the members of the Committee; it had been a joy to work with them. They were totally committed, always willing to undertake work, to come with new ideas and contributions to make. He wished Peter Hounsell well in his role as the new Chair.

10. Reappointment of Auditors

Peter Mandler proposed the re-appointment of the auditors, Kingston Smith, until the next AGM There were no objections and this was taken as agreed unanimously.

11. Discussion of business raised by members

No members had given notice of items they wanted to discuss and none were raised at the meeting.

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 Peter congratulated Becky Sullivan; he said he had known her for a number of years and when he had taken over the Chair he had known that she kept the HA like a well running

machine and his job would be enjoyable while Becky made sure that everything was working properly. She had continued to do this successfully even through the very difficult time when everyone was working from home. The Association had continued to innovate, grow, look forward and think of new and interesting ways in which it could serve the growing community of supporters of history.

12.2 He then declared the AGM closed and thanked everyone for attending. He looked forward to see many members at sessions of the virtual Conference and hopefully to see many at Branch meetings and at a face-to-face Conference in due course.

Full attendance

Peter Mandler (President), Ilona Aronovsky, Terence Blunden, Paul Bracey, Mike Brooks (Hon. Treasurer), Helen Burdock, Katharine Burn (Deputy President), Arthur Burns (chair, HE), Henry Burke, Gillian Burnett, Saray Clayton, Chris Corin, Ian Dawson, Karin Doull, Lisa Duffy, Margaret Elbro, Peter Elliott, Gemma Farrell, Ailsa Fidler, Bev Forrest (chair, Primary), Jerry Gambs, Nicola Garlick, Natasha Gibson, Mike Gibson, Stephen Gilbert, Tim Glasby, Emma Griffiths, Peter Grover, Robert Guyver, Faheem H, Laura Harrington, Valerie Haye, Jayne Holmes, Peter Hounsell, Alison Hramiak, Kingsley Jones, Richard Kennett (trustee), Alison Kitson, Sean Lang (trustee), Michael Leaman, Tim Lomas (Hon. Secretary), Michael Maddison (Executive VP), Ian Mason, Elizabeth Matthew, David Mears, Caitriona Ni Cassaithe, Nazmiye Og, Ozlem Olgun Kyici, Amy Oliver, Aisha Parveen, Harry Pierpoint, Tony Pratt, Edward Robinson, William Russell, Michael Rye, Jane Saul, David Shearman, Mike Short (chair, Branches), Khalid Siddique, Helen Snelson (chair, Secondary), Kerry Somers, Suzannah Stern, Becky Sullivan, Stephen Taylor, Melanie Tebbutt, Sue Temple, Neil Tidman, Jason Todd (trustee), Chris Trevor, Matteucci Vincenza, Mollie Whitworth and Liberty Yospa.