

**Minutes of the
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on Thursday 25 May 2023
Virtual meeting**

Present:

Officers and members of Council: Peter Mandler (President, Chair), Michael Brooks (Hon. Treasurer), Katharine Burn (Hon. Secretary), David Clampin, Helen Crawford (Chair of Primary), Ailsa Fidler, Peter Hounsell (Chair of Branches & Members), Tim Lomas (Associate Vice President), Helen Snelson (Chair of Secondary), Lorna Spencer and Alexandra Walsham (President Elect). A full list of members in attendance can be found at the end of these minutes.

Staff: Rebecca Sullivan (Chief Executive), Melanie Jones, Paula Kitching
The Minutes taken by Dorothy Oxley

Apologies: Alison Kitson (Deputy President), Mike Maddison (Associate Vice President) and Adam Smith (incoming Chair of Higher Education)

1. Welcome from the President

Professor Peter Mandler welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined how the voting would work. He advised that there would be some slight amendments to the agenda. The Committee Reports (Item 10) would be taken in a slightly different order. He drew attention to an error in the agenda which named Helen Crawford as the outgoing Chair of the Primary Committee. He was pleased to confirm that she continues as Chair.

2. Minutes of the 115th Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 26 May 2022

The Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting, which had been circulated, were approved unanimously as a true record.

3. Annual Report

3.1 The Annual Report and Accounts for the previous financial year had been made available to members online or, on request, as a paper copy

3.2 **Annual Report:** Rebecca asked if there were any questions arising from the written report. She went on to update the AGM on activities and developments between 1 October 2022 and the AGM:

- a) **Structural work at 59a:** As reported at the last AGM, significant structural work was needed to ensure 59a remained habitable. A reputable building firm and project manager had been found and quotes were due to go to Executive in summer 2023 with a view to works starting in early 2024. The Honorary Treasurer, the Finance Manager and CEO would be monitoring the spend and reporting back to the trustees to ensure costs remain under control. The work should make the offices more energy efficient and a better working – and meeting - environment for many years to come.

- b) **Website:** The other major ongoing infrastructure project was the overhauling and refreshing of the HA's website, but again this is a slow project. Rebecca did not expect a 'brand new' website by next year's AGM, but hopefully this would be achieved in two years' time. Considerable content needs editing.
- c) **Staff:** Over the last year, two new staff members joined Membership team, David Lewzey and Emily Cowen, both great new additions who some members would have met at the Annual Conference. A new Team Administrator post had been approved by the trustees and we were pleased to welcome Clara Cook to the team. We were also joined by Rosemarie Koroma who joined the HA in early 2023 to support our finance administration and management. Peter Mandler extended the thanks of all to the staff team at 59a.
- d) **The Quality Mark** continues to do incredibly well, particularly in Primary schools. 57 schools had registered since the last AGM, and a further 52 Gold and Silver Quality Marks had been awarded during the year.
- e) **Coronation event:** This was a one-day event organised by Mel Jones with Professor Anna Whitelock for primary pupils and held at City University. Some of the young people there were interviewed about their views on monarchy and coronations resulting in a number of wonderful vox pops which can be viewed on the website.
- f) **Diversity work:** As part of the HA's ongoing work to support a diverse history curriculum, a meeting had been held in summer 2022 with Examination Boards, teachers and academic historians, to look at GCSE specifications and criteria. Further work to build on this was planned and hopefully would be in development before too long.
- g) **Conference 2023:** This was a wonderful event and fully booked despite train strikes and Eurovision. Conference had originally been booked for Liverpool in 2023, but the hosting of Eurovision in the city meant much of Liverpool One would be closed making it almost impossible to host the Conference. This had necessitated a last-minute move to Harrogate. Rebecca was delighted to report that over 400 people attended in person with another 200 joining for the 'virtual' events. She highlighted the brilliant and moving Dawson Lecture given by Martin Spafford, which would be available online in due course. Next year's conference would be in Birmingham, and then Liverpool in 2025. Rebecca thanked all those who made the event such a success with special thanks to Maheema Chanrai.
- h) **The Great Debate:** The 2023 Debate was the largest yet, with 28 finalists, all of a very high quality. Work has begun on planning the 2024 Great Debate.
- i) **Medlicott Medal:** The 2023 Medal will be awarded to Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch at Foyles on the 12 July, when the HA will also be awarding the Young Quills winners and Honorary Fellows and recognising Teacher Fellows and Chartered Teachers and Quality Mark Schools. Tickets are available for members; anyone interested in attending should contact the office.
- j) **Membership:** Rebecca apologised that she would be unable to give the detailed presentation on membership numbers and trends which Emily Randall would have given, had she not been unwell. Rebecca reported that membership numbers were currently just over 10,700, a drop of around 500 in the year since September 2022. Rebecca said a drop had been anticipated, and this was less than had been feared; numbers were in fact holding up quite well, and Emily and the Membership team were working hard on retention. A full membership survey had been launched at conference. E-shots would be going to all members over the next few weeks. She encouraged members to complete this; the survey is

only done every three years and it is important to hear from as many members as possible.

Finally, Becky recorded her thanks to Peter Mandler, whose Presidency of the HA would end with this AGM. It had been a genuine pleasure and privilege to work with him for the past few years; he had a deep interest and understanding of history education, broader education concerns and of the whole breadth of the Association's work. Peter's presidency had begun in the 'virtual' world of Covid, with most of his talks to Branches and Conferences during the first two years being on computer screens. He had been making a very determined effort over the last year to rectify that and had been making mad dashes to give face to face talks at Branches across the country. He had also helped to shape the HA's forthcoming work in particular in relation to diversity. Peter had been a very empathetic and understanding person to work with. All the team at 59a, the trustees and members expressed their thanks to Peter.

Peter thanked Becky and said that, although he had made his farewells at Conference, he wanted to say now that it had been an absolute pleasure and he hoped the members appreciated how well run the Association is. He also seconded what Becky had said about the success of the Annual Conference, which was a mammoth task and a credit to Becky, the staff of the Association and the professional Conference organisers who had worked on this. The conference had been fun, and there was a real sense that people were delighted to be back to face-to-face meetings, though the ability to do a hybrid conference meant that more people were able to participate.

4 **Annual Accounts:**

Mike Brooks, Honorary Treasurer, reported that for the year ending 30 September 2022, the HA's financial position had continued the improvement which he had noted at the previous year's AGM. This financial success was a reflection of the success in the recruitment of members and also, more importantly, the ability to retain a very large proportion of members. This indicated that the HA continued to provide services which members want and value. He expressed his thanks to Emily and the Membership team, whose strenuous efforts continue to bear fruit, because without members, there wouldn't be a Historical Association.

- a) **Surplus and income:** The year ended with an overall surplus of £120,000 compared with the surplus of £183,000 the previous year. Although that might not seem progress, it was achieved after allowing for a small fall of £21,000 in the value of the HA's investments, which are valued only at each financial year's end at their realisable value at that point in time. This isn't an actual loss, unless the HA should sell them, and the Association hasn't needed to dispose of any investments during the year. The previous year, the surplus had included an increase in the value of the investments of £62,000, which means that the HA's ongoing operations produced a surplus of £141,000 compared to £121,000 in the previous year. The total income for the year amounted to £1,262,000, an increase of nearly a quarter of a million pounds compared with the previous year. This reflects both the increase in the membership subscription, higher income from courses, and the return of conference in its in-person format. There is of course a corresponding increase in the costs in respect of the conference, but it's an important contributor to the HA's overall financial position. These increases were partly offset both by a lower level of donations and legacies which, by their nature, are volatile and difficult to forecast, and a reduced contribution from the journal *History*; all academic journals are facing difficulties in retaining their profitability in the current 'open' era, but it is still a valued contribution to the HA's finances.
- b) **Total expenditure** for the year was £1,120,000, which was 20% higher than the previous year, reflecting not only the conference, but increased staff costs and the additional expenditure required to promote the HA in a marketing sense and to publish our quite extensive range of journals.

- c) **Balance sheet:** the HA's balance sheet remains very strong. Total funds and net worth at the end of the year was £1,192,000 compared with just over one million the previous year. Of that, cash balances continue to increase and, at £1,122,000 were £189,000 up on the previous year. Much of this represents prepaid subscriptions, while the balance is held by Branches, the latter remaining largely unchanged at about £136,000. Branches retain funds which are a result of their own Branch subscriptions in order to fund their own operations.

- d) **Free Reserves** (general fund) amounted to £726,000 at the end of the year. The Reserves Policy states that reserves should amount to some 6 months' future planned expenditure, so that if anything goes wrong with the income stream, the HA is able to continue its operations for that period. The general fund, as of 30 September 2022, was some £226,000 in excess of that requirement, which is why we are in a position to plan for building work on the office building (£100,000 had been put in a designated fund, with the expectation this will be significantly higher). This is included in the 2022/2023 budget, which has been deliberately set as a deficit budget, as well as bringing the reserves down closer to the target. The Charity Commission are quite keen that charities should not hoard funds, but should spend them on their charitable activities, so it is important for the HA to have a plan to reduce excess reserves.

- e) **Audit statement:** The auditors have once again provided the HA with an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements, and Mike thanked John Andrews, the HA's Finance Manager for all his efforts in both preparing the accounts and dealing with the auditors, Kingston Smith, who he also thanked.

The Annual Report and Accounts were **approved** unanimously.

Peter Mandler thanked Mike, who had been a steady source of good counsel as well as good stewardship during his three years as President.

5. **Election of the President, 2023 – 2026**

Peter Mandler reported the search had been led by a working group which included Officers of the Association and Anne Curry, a past President. A few names had been put forward and Peter was delighted that Council recommended the election of Professor Alexandra Walsham to the role of President. Peter was pleased to personally recommend Alex who is a highly distinguished historian, specialising in the Reformation and modern British history generally. He was confident that she would prove popular with the Branches and would work very effectively with other organisations. Professor Walsham had been Chair of Faculty at Cambridge until recently, a Vice-President of the Royal Historical Society and co-Chair of Past and Present and winner of the Wolfson Prize for *The Reformation of the Landscape*.

Professor Alexandra Walsham was unanimously elected to serve as President of the Historical Association from 2023 to 2026

Professor Walsham thanked the members, and said she was honoured to be the incoming President and looked forward to meeting many of the Branches and to working with the staff team. She recorded her thanks to Peter, as the outgoing President, for all he had done; he would be a hard act to follow but she knew he wants to continue to be involved in HA activities in the future.

6. **Chair of the Higher Education Committee**

Peter thanked Professor Arthur Burns for getting the Higher Education Committee back on its feet after a period of lapse. He was sad to report that health concerns meant Arthur had to step down. The AGM asked Rebecca and Peter to send their best wishes and thanks to Arthur. Arthur had recommended Professor Adam Smith to the Executive who were pleased to announce that he had

accepted and had been appointed as Chair of the Higher Education Committee for the three years from May 2023. Adam has extensive experience with history in schools as well as with representing historians (as a former Honorary Secretary of the Royal Historical Society). He is also an excellent speaker on the American Civil War and 19th century history.

7. Election of new Trustees

Peter reported the following members had been elected (or re-elected) to serve on Council for three years:

Branches and Members Representatives

Mary Feerick and Elizabeth Matthews

Primary Committee Representatives

Ailsa Fidler and Lorna Grant

Secondary Committee Representative

Philip Arkinstall and Richard Kennett

Higher Education Representatives

David Clampin and Jenni Hyde

8. Membership update

As Peter had explained at the start of the meeting, Emily Randall was unwell and unable to give her planned presentation. Becky Sullivan had already provided some of the membership statistics, and he now invited Paula Kitching to speak on some of the developments in respect of membership.

Paula explained that she had worked for the HA on and off for many years, but the previous year, her job title had changed to Public Engagement and Outreach Manager, which took on board many of the things the HA was already doing in terms of developing general membership, plus a few more areas.

Over the past year, the HA had started to develop the 'lifelong' general membership strand, in a number of ways:

- a) The Virtual Branch, introduced at the start of the Covid19 pandemic, was now a regular feature and held once a month and continued to offer a strong programme that appealed to a wide audience across the globe. The Virtual Branch is free to everyone and offers a broad range of talks bring in audiences of well over a 100 each month.
- b) While the HA has for a long time been accustomed to pulling together and packaging materials for teachers, Paula reported how the team were now developing ways of doing this for lifelong learners and general members. The Association has started doing 'curated' online sections on certain themes; one had been put together recently on 'Women in Power' and others were in development over the summer, bringing articles, podcasts and films together. The 'interpretation' series done for sixth formers were being repackaged for general members and the podcast series were developed to appeal to all HA members.
- c) The big new development over the past 18 months were the short courses. The pilot, on the Berlin Wall, had proven to be very successful; the next, run between January and March 2023, was on England's Medieval Jews, wonderfully presented by Professor Miri Rubin and Dr Dean Irwin. This had attracted over 400 registrations. The forthcoming course running from mid-July to early November 2023, would be on the First Crusade. This would be the first one only available free to members, but anyone can join it for a small fee – which will look remarkably similar to a membership rate, in the hope it will encourage a few people to step over into that. The short courses are a series of lectures with questions on the theme, but there is no essay writing and no conclusion at the end other than to know that you have gained knowledge of a particular historical period or topic.
- d) Finally, a short webinar series was in development for December, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Genocide Convention.

Paula encouraged anyone who had questions to get in touch with her.

9. Membership Fees

Members were asked to note that at its meeting on March 4 2023, Council had approved the following amendments to membership subscriptions. However, no changes had been made to concessionary fees.

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| Individual with The Historian | £68.00 |
| Individual with Teaching History | £68.00 |
| Individual with Primary History | £49.00 |
| Corporate with The Historian | £132.00 |
| Corporate with Teaching History | £132.00 |
| Corporate with Primary History | £81.00 |
| Concessionary with The Historian | £43.00 |
| Concessionary with Teaching History | £43.00 |
| Concessionary with Primary History | £39.00 |
| Secondary Trainee 2-year subscription | £75.00 |
| Primary Trainee 2-year subscription | £51.00 |

10. Committee Reports

Peter Mandler began by thanking all of the Committee Chairs who had run such a tight ship over the past years.

10.2 Branches and Members Committee: Peter Hounsell, Chair of the Committee, reported that:

- a) After the disruption of the Covid years, Branches, which had begun to resume a full programme of lectures, visits and social activities in the 2021/22 season, were continuing to do so.
- b) As well as supporting the existing Branch network, the Committee plays a role in encouraging the formation of new Branches, especially in places where there are obvious gaps in the existing geographic coverage. Peter Hounsell was pleased to report there are some hopeful signs of the formation of at least a couple of new Branches.
- c) The annual Branch Officers' Meeting, held in November 2022, is an important way of bringing Branch officers from across the country together. The plan had been to meet in person, but a rail strike unfortunately forced the meeting online again. Nonetheless, some good, interesting information and feedback came back from that.
- d) One problem Peter Hounsell had referred to in the previous year's report still persisted – trying to retain audience members who had found Zoom made their attendance at lectures more convenient because of the time and distant constraints of in person meetings. Some Branches had made a successful transition to hybrid meetings, but there can be technical challenges in making these work reliably.
- e) Peter reported there were concerns that some branches were facing financial challenges due to the rising costs of room hire, travel and hospitality, and do not wish to increase their local membership rates to compensate. Hopefully the worst of the current cost of living crisis may now have passed, but this affects the recruitment of members both locally and nationally. The Committee is therefore keen to hear from members about whether they feel their subscription now provides value for money, and if they don't, what would they like to see the HA do differently? He encouraged members to complete the membership survey which had been launched at the Conference.
- f) In the following months, the Committee would be planning their response to the challenges of the HA's strategy to 2025, particularly in areas such as diversity, links with local history and support for teachers, particularly in primary schools.

Peter Hounsell stressed the Committee wanted to be responsive to members' needs, whether they attended a Branch or not, and invited members to contact them via the HA staff, if there were issues they'd like to discuss. Also, if anyone was interested in starting a new branch where they live, the Committee would try to put them in contact with other members in their area with the possibility that they might be able to form a committee to progress this.

On behalf of the Committee, Peter Hounsell thanked HA staff members Suzannah Stern and Anne-Marie Stephenson for their support, and thanked all the volunteers who, through their love of history, keep their Branches active and manage to respond to the many challenges that are thrown at them.

Peter Mandler added his thanks also to those volunteers, many of whom he had met during his travels across the country to Branch meeting. It was really impressive how many people had given so many years to Branch activities.

- 10.3 **Higher Education Committee:** As explained earlier, this committee was currently in an interregnum, but Peter Mandler invited Paula Kitching, who had been working with the committee, to give a brief update.

Paula began by thanking Arthur Burns, the former Chair of the Committee, for all that he had done and reported that the Higher Education section of the HA's website had changed slightly, both in colour and in content, some of which had already been changed and other items which were currently undergoing updates. The HA had been fortunate to have an intern who had done a huge exercise, trying to obtain new information around transitions to university, which will add substantially to that section over the next 6 months. Paula had met with the new Chair of the Committee to discuss some of the things which will continue to be worked on over the summer.

- 10.4 **Secondary Committee:** Helen Snelson, Chair of the Committee, reported that:

- a) The Committee had been focusing on continuing the work to develop the sense of the HA being there for history teachers throughout their career – the Teacher Development Programme, as it's going to be called, was primarily developed for teachers in their second and third year of teaching. This has been quite successful, and the Committee realised it had wider reach, for example, teachers returning after a career break, or having taught something like English.
- b) The Subject Leader course continued to go from strength to strength and had been nationally recognised, with programmes being added for non-specialist senior leaders who are managing history. This is quite a difficult thing to market, as they're not the HA's core membership, but whenever somebody can cajole a non-historian into the HA's orbit, they are offered some updates on how to manage a History department.
- c) The Committee was looking at the increasing number of non-specialist teachers being asked to pick up History and would be putting a package together to support them and their subject leaders.
- d) A development pack had been collated for the continuing professional development of history teaching, gathering together some of the excellent thinking and research that has supported colleagues over the years, but which might have perhaps been hard to find unless people knew about, or stumbled upon, it.

- e) The Committee had been actively supporting ways to hear young voices as part of the overall strategy. Helen thanked Katharine Burn, who has been leading on this work, and has quantitative research on the way. The first piece of work done was qualitative, gathering students together from schools associated with Secondary Committee members. Fifteen schools were currently involved, some have managed to involve between 250 – 500 pupils, with questions about what they want to learn in history, and how learning history in school can help them to negotiate the present. Helen encouraged members to look at the information and film on the HA website which collates the findings.
- f) Helen commended the breadth and depth of the HA Conference and explained that the Committee continued to have strong connections with sister organisations, such as the Future Education Network, Euroclio and the Schools History Project.
- g) In June, the Committee would be welcoming new members, and its focus will be on special educational needs, and connections with local and community networks.

Peter Mandler thanked Helen Snelson and reminded members that all of the Committee chairs have more than a full-time day job and are all the kind of people who are volunteering for many other things. The HA were very grateful for the time and space they somehow make for its activities.

10.5 Primary Committee: Helen Crawford, Chair of the Committee, reported that:

- a) There are some challenges in primary education at the moment, but the Primary Committee was in a good place to respond to some of those. She was pleased to say the Committee would be welcoming some new members; the primary teaching community is quite diverse, and the committee membership reflects that, representing some Primary Subject Leaders, some who are cross-phase, others working in initial teacher education, members representing the variety of schools in the primary sectors – multi-academy Trusts, stand-alone schools.
- b) Support for teachers has included:
 - A webinar that evening about diversity in local history
 - The termly publication of *Primary History* magazine, which tries to reflect what's on the national curriculum, to give guidance for schools. But the aim is also to include what is topical, and areas where schools might need support and, not surprisingly, there was quite a big focus on the Coronation
 - The HA website has a Subject Leadership section, available to Corporate members, which has been very useful to any member of staff who's new to primary subject leadership, who might not necessarily have a history background themselves.
 - The Committee is currently working on a new area of the website to support those involved in initial teacher education, both tutors and mentors in schools and the trainees themselves. This should hopefully go live by the end of the summer.
- c) In terms of strategy, the 2 main areas of focus are developing:
 - Voice
 - Links with other organisations (this is quite embryonic now, but Helen C hoped that next year she would be able to report back on some outcomes of this),
- d) The 2020 Primary Survey results had been published, which is important because it is the only mechanism the HA has of capturing the voice of people working at primary level and is useful particularly in thinking about what support schools need in terms of raising the profile of teaching at that level.

Helen Crawford ended by thanking all the Committee members, all those who work on *Primary History*, the Primary Quality Mark assessors, and the staff team at 59a, and Peter Mandler.

Peter Mandler thanked Helen Crawford, noting that the Committee had an extra burden because Primary was the primary area in terms of the growth in membership over the past few years.

11. Reappointment of Auditors

Mike Brooks proposed that the Historical Association should reappoint Moore, Kingston-Smith as auditors until the end of the 2024 AGM. **Agreed.**

Peter Mandler thanked everyone for attending, said farewell as President, but assured members that he would be seeing them in another capacity soon. Members of the Association asked Rebecca to pass thanks to Peter for the past three years.

Members in attendance: Ilona Aronovsky, Arjan Arenas, Paul Bracey, Rachel Brazil, Ian Dawson, Karin Doull, Kathryn Fiddock, Tim Glasby, Chris Leafe, Meirick Lloyd Davis, Kathleen Morris, David Patterson, Andrea Robertson, Andrew Russell, Andy Smith, Alexander Taylor, Stephen Taylor, Sylvia Usher, David Waller, Talisa Williamson