

MINUTES
of the
117th Historical Association Annual General Meeting
held on
Monday 20th May 2024
(by Zoom)

Present:

Officers and members of Council: Alexandra Walsham (President), Mike Brooks, Katharine Burn, Sally Burnham, Helen Crawford, Peter Hounsell, Tim Lomas and Helen Snelson. A full list of members present can be found at the end of these minutes.

Staff: Rebecca Sullivan (Chief Executive), Olivia Dent, Mel Jones, Paula Kitching and Emily Randall.

Minutes taken by Dorothy Oxley

Apologies: Alison Kitson (Deputy President), Mike Maddison (Associate Vice President) and Adam Smith (Chair of Higher Education) Apologies had also been received by a number of members.

1. Welcome from the President, Professor Alexandra Walsham

The President welcomed everyone her first AGM as President. She announced that King Charles III has confirmed that he is happy to continue the royal patronage of the Historical Association, which is wonderful news. She also recorded the Association's thanks to the Honorary Treasurer, Mike Brooks, for whom this would be his last meeting in this role, and to Alison Kitson, outgoing Vice President. Helen Snelson had also come to the end of her current role as Chair of the Secondary Committee, though she would be returning in another capacity.

2. Minutes of the 116th Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 25 May 2023

2.1 Approval of Minutes: The Minutes, which had been circulated, were noted, and if any member wished to raise amendments, they were asked to note these in the 'chat'. Alexandra also invited questions about the Minutes. None were raised, and Mike Brooks proposed, Peter Hounsell seconded, approval of the Minutes. An electronic vote was taken and the **Minutes were accepted as a true record**.

2.2 Matters Arising: There were no matters arising which would not otherwise be dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Consideration of the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 30 September 2023

3.1 Annual Report:

3.1.1 Prior to her report, Becky Sullivan announced, with deep sorrow, the death of Nicolas Kinloch, who had been on Council; he had served a term as Deputy President and been on the Editorial Board of both *The Historian* and *Teaching History*. He had been explicit in that he wanted 'no funeral and no fuss', so there would not be the customary brief silence at the meeting in his memory. However, a full obituary would be published in *HA News* later in the year.

3.1.2 Becky explained that the Annual Report (which had been made available to members) referred to the year ending 31st September 2023, since when a great deal had happened. Comments were invited, either in the Chat, or by members raising their hands. None were received, so Becky went on to give key points about the activities since the end of September 2023.

- 3.1.3 Structural improvements to the HA's offices at 59a Kennington Park Road: The work which had begun in January 2024 was due to finish in the last week of May. At the end of 2023, staff had carried out a major sorting exercise, with some items going into storage, others finding a good home and some, inevitably, needing to be thrown away. The office is looking quite different, with double glazing, a door to the garden, and much more light and space, plus an increased working area. Members' 'open days' were being planned for July and August. Members who can't attend on those days but are coming into London and would like to visit the offices are welcome to contact the office about this. The meeting space has also been expanded, with a meeting room capable of holding 20 'workshop style' and 30 'lecture style', so Committees can easily be accommodated and hopefully, small Members' events. Becky formally recorded her thanks to Clara Cook, the team administrator, who had organised the work and communications extremely well. The building firm had also been very good.
- 3.1.4 Retirement of John Andrews: John, the Finance Manager of the HA for 20 years, had retired in February. Rosemarie Koroma, who had worked with John in a supporting role, had now taken over and would be working 2 days a week. She was recently joined by Linda Lobban, as full-time Finance Administrator.
- 3.1.5 The Annual Conference had taken place in Birmingham and had been a fantastic event. Professor Walsham's brilliant talk at the Conference would soon be available on the HA website. In 2025, the Conference would be held in Liverpool on 8th/9th May, and information about this would be circulated soon.
- 3.1.6 The 2024 Medlicott Medal would be presented to Professor Catherine Hall on July 10 at Foyles, Charing Cross Road. Members who wish to attend were invited to contact the office via the Enquiries or Events email address as soon as possible as space is limited. Members who want to nominate someone for the 2025 Award could do this through the website (which sets out the criteria) or by contacting the office.
- 3.1.7 New Developments: Exciting CPD and short courses would be coming up within the next few months, including a short series of webinars looking at different aspects of the Olympic Games, to coincide with this year's Paris Olympics.
- 3.1.8 Current position of History: A question had been raised in the 'Chat' asking whether the journal would continue to be printed for subscribers or would only be available digitally. Becky said that unfortunately the publishers were committed to an online format from January 1 2025. However, the office were exploring print options for members and Emily Randall would be in touch when further information was available.

3.2 **Annual Accounts for the year 1st October 2022 – 31st September 2023**

The Annual Accounts had been made available to members, and Mike Brooks reported on the following key items:

- 3.2.1 Overall financial position: The overall financial position continued to provide the strong underpinning the HA needed to support its activities. While membership numbers were probably past their peak, the substantial increase in membership numbers and the income that goes with that pays tribute to the Membership team and the HA's ability to provide what its members want.
- 3.2.2 In summary, the financial results indicated an overall deficit of £2,000, which was effectively a break even position, when turnover is well over £1,000,000. This compares with a surplus of £120,000 in the previous year and includes a provision for a fall in investments. The HA's ongoing activities had generated a modest surplus of £4,000 compared with £141,000 in the previous year.
- 3.2.3 **Total income** was £1,239,000, a slight reduction compared with the previous year which reflects both lower contract income and a reduced profit contribution from the journal *History*. However there had been a higher level in donations and legacies, which are volatile and difficult to forecast, but very gratefully received! There had also been improvement in investment income which reflects the higher interest rates.
- 3.2.4 **Total expenditure** was £1,235,000, £113,000 higher than last year, reflecting generally increased costs across the board, including higher staff costs. It was a tribute to management that in a period where

income was beginning to turn down, and pressures on expenditure were being felt by all organisations, a breakeven position was achieved.

- 3.2.5 The **balance sheet** remains strong, with total funds at the end of the year being £1,190,000, virtually the same as the previous year. Of that, cash balances, at £1,109,000, are slightly down, by £23,000. A high level of liquidity has been maintained deliberately in order to meet the expected expenditure relating to the building works on 59a. Most of these cash funds are invested in a number of short-term bank deposits. Balances held by branches remains unchanged at £136,000. Moneys are also held in 3 collective investment schemes designed to increase income, all of which are designed specifically for charities which are looking for a modest level of risk for a reasonable level of income. These were reviewed at the last Council meeting and will be kept under review by Council.
- 3.2.6 **Reserves:** Free reserves (which are funds which can be spent for any purpose Council deems appropriate, unlike Designation funds, set up for specific purposes) amounted to £373,000 at the end of the year. The budget for the refurbishment included a contingency of £60,000 and there was confidence that the work would come in under budget. The HA's Reserves Policy states that free reserves should amount to 6 months' free expenditure, and the General fund as at 30th September 2023 is below this level. During the forthcoming year Council will review the appropriateness of the Reserves Policy in the light of the financial risks the HA faces. The aim is to ensure that sufficient reserves exist for the HA to deal with any crises which might emerge.
- 3.2.7 **Auditors' Report:** The report had been unqualified, and Mike thanked the auditors for their work and added his thanks to those already expressed to John Andrews, for all his efforts over many years for preparing these accounts.
- 3.2.8 Questions were invited and the following raised in the 'Chat':
- A member asked if all the HA's salaries were above the National Living/Real Living Wage? Becky confirmed that nobody was taken on at a salary lower than that.
- 3.2.9 Alexandra Walsham thanked Mike for his work as Treasurer, and proposed acceptance of the Report and Accounts. An electronic vote was taken and the Report and Accounts for the year 1st October 2022 – 30th September 2023 were **formally approved and accepted**.
4. **Election of the Honorary Treasurer and Deputy President 2024-27 and re-election of the Honorary Secretary**

On the recommendation of Council, the following were proposed for election, and in each case an electronic vote was taken:

- **Election of Richard Walker as Honorary Treasurer:** Richard had previous experience as Hon. Treasurer of the HA, and his election was **approved**.
- **Helen Snelson as Deputy President:** Helen had completed her term of office as Chair of the Secondary Committee, and her election to the role of Deputy President was approved.
- **Katharine Burn** had agreed to stand for a second term as **Honorary Secretary**, and her election was **approved**

5. **Chair of the Secondary Committee**

Members were advised that the Executive Committee have appointed Sally Burnham as Chair. Alexandra – looked forward to working with her.

6. **Membership update:**

- 6.1 Emily Randall, Membership Manager, gave an update, with slides shared on screen which covered the following key points:

- 6.2 At the end of April 2024 membership stood at just over 10,000, which is a decrease of 7% over the last year. There had been a huge surge in membership in 2021, following which there had been a gradual contraction. It has been a challenging few years in many ways and this is a trend in many membership organisations; when there is strong pressure on people's finances (whether it's cost of living or school budgets), membership may be dropped. The main focus was currently on retaining members rather than new growth – recruitment was down by 25% over the year. All membership groups have seen some contraction over the past year, but it is most marked in Primary, which was down by 9%.

A total of around 28,000 people are currently reached individually through membership, an increase of 28%. This is partly due to a growth in corporate membership, as these memberships cover several individual staff members. The HA's offer to schools, particularly Secondary, is stronger than ever, with webinars and targeted training courses at various career stages, thanks to the HA's brilliant education team and Manager, Mel Jones.

- 6.3 **Impact statistics:** A summary of impact statistics had been published recently in *HA News*. Key figures were:

- 24% of primary schools and History leads in the UK take membership, and 55% of secondary schools, and within those member schools there are 1.1 million secondary pupils and 9 million primary pupils.
- 14,000 people attended Branch events
- 1000 people took short courses
- 2,500 people attended CPD webinars.

The HA had a better understanding of its reach quantitatively and were trying to work on a better understanding qualitatively.

- 6.4 **Research into retention:** Over the past few years, the research focus on retention, finding out what members do and don't like, had been strengthened by over 1,000 responses to the HA's survey, and Emily thanked all those members who had completed this. Again, this had been covered in the recent *HA News*. There had also been member focus groups and a member feedback panel, and Emily invited anyone who had comments to get back to her with these.

- 6.5 **Lifelong learning and structured learning experiences for general members:** The HA had run a series of successful short courses, free for members, led by the HA's Public Engagement Manager, Paula Kitching. A new series, starting in the Autumn, would be 'Witches, Werewolves and Magic' and there was a series of open access webinars, the next one being the summer course on the Olympic Games. There had been good feedback on these programmes and the intent was to develop them further. Emily further reported that the HA's visual series producer had been putting together a new series of content, looking at Power and Authority in Russia and the Soviet Union, and a podcast series on the Ancient Near East.

- 6.5 **Membership packages:** Given the severe pressures faced by history trainees, the HA would be launching a trial online membership to keep costs down. New materials had been developed for people moving into their first teaching post, also other work in initial teacher training areas, both secondary and primary. Other possible membership packages were also being explored, such as one specifically for small primary schools and an integrated CPD and Membership package with revamped curriculum plans.

- 6.6 As well as all this, the HA was looking at overhauling the website and social media output.

- 6.7 Alexandra invited questions via the Chat, and the following were raised:

Serge Van den Broucke asked how many French members were in the HA, and Emily apologised that she didn't have the figures to hand, though she confirmed that the HA did have several members (around 8%) from overseas.

Tim East asked if the tax relief available for employees in respect of professional body subscriptions (Historical Association membership being included in this) was being plugged enough to individual teacher members. Becky confirmed that both primary and secondary teachers could apply for tax relief on their subscriptions.

7. Membership fees

Members were advised that at its meeting on March 2 2024, Council approved the following amendments to membership subscriptions in accordance with paragraph 2.4 in the Regulations (*this information had been provided on the agenda, and is repeated here*):

Individual membership with:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------|
| • The Historian: | £ 71.00 |
| • Teaching History | £ 71.00 |
| • Primary History | £ 51.00 |

Corporate membership with:

- | | |
|------------------|---------|
| The Historian | £139.00 |
| Teaching History | £139.00 |
| Primary History | £ 85.00 |

Concessionary membership with:

- | | |
|------------------|---------|
| The Historian | £ 45.00 |
| Teaching History | £ 45.00 |
| Primary History | £ 41.00 |

Secondary Trainee 2-year subscription £ 75.00 (no change)

Primary Trainee 2-year subscription £ 51.00 (no change)

8. Committee Reports

8.1 The following brief verbal reports were received from the Chairs of the Standing Committees:

8.2 Primary Committee (Helen Crawford)

8.2.1 Helen explained that the Primary Committee had lost some very long serving members at the end of this year, and she thanked them for all the work they had done, while also welcoming new members. The Committee represents a full range of stakeholders in primary education, including Primary teaching professionals from state and private/independent schools and Academy Trusts, and also those in Primary teacher education, and is also working hard to consider and develop regional representation. The challenges facing Primary education have been well documented but Helen felt that the committee has sufficient breadth to respond to some of these.

8.2.2 There had been a review of the journal *Primary History* during the year, working on:

- making each edition tailored both to those who are new to history and subject leadership, and those who are more experienced
- ensuring that editions respond to contemporary events, for example, an article on the Olympics.
- encouraging more contributions from schools successful in achieving Quality awards.

They were also reviewing membership of the *Primary History* editorial board to increase capacity. The Spring edition (based on the climate crisis, and a joint edition with Secondary) had been very successful.

8.2.2 A new 'Beginning Teachers' section on the HA website would hopefully provide subject specific guidance for trainees, mentors and teacher educators. A new 'talking history' competition had been launched with about 20 schools taking part. For local history, a series of 'teach meets' provided an opportunity to share good practice, were being well received.

8.2.5 The Committee had launched a new survey at Conference, with a greater emphasis on evaluating the curriculum and asking what is or is not working well, and where the future direction should be in Primary history.

8.2.6 Helen thanked all the Committee members, and the staff at the HA for their support.

8.3 Secondary Committee (Helen Snelson)

- 8.3.1 Helen said that the Committee had a good spread of 15 members, in different stages of their careers and working in a variety of settings across England and into Wales; she agreed it was important to have regional spread.
- 8.3.2 The Committee had been focusing on support for CPD as well as the Experienced Leader programme, from Beginner Teacher through the Teacher Development programme. The Subject Leader programme continued to do well and there were various supporting webinars. The Committee were putting together materials so that subject leaders can run their own professional development programmes.
- 8.3.3 A new initiative entitled 'Making History Accessible' focuses on things students struggle with, such as abstract concepts.
- 8.3.4 The committee's work on 'young voices' focused on an undergraduate project, where young undergraduates give a 'no holds barred' account on what it was like to go through school secondary history, which could be rolled out to universities.
- 8.3.5 Other key things to report were:
- This year so far there had been 8,500 visitors to the 'One Big History' blog post
 - There had been a big Secondary buzz at Conference.
 - The Committee are about to launch the new Secondary survey, and members were asked to encourage teachers to complete this; it is important as hopefully those who have power or would like power are in a listening mode at the moment.
- 8.3.6 Helen concluded with thanks to everyone at 59a and the volunteers on the Committee who give up their time. She recognised that it is tough for teachers at present, and one aim is to support teachers in learning together and to keep the joy going. The HA is brilliant at that.

8.4 Branches and Members Committee (Peter Hounsell, Chair)

- 8.4.1 Peter said that this had been a relatively quiet year. The Committee continued to support the existing Branch network and encourage the formation of new Branches. Although the Association has over 40 Branches, there are some obvious gaps in their geographical coverage, leaving in particular two major cities without a Branch. There were hopeful signs of the formation of a couple of these, and a suggestion at Conference that there might be another one, even if it is frustrating that there are a whole number of administrative hurdles to negotiate first, and it takes quite a long time.
- 8.4.2 After the Branch Officers' Meeting had been forced to take place online first because of Covid, then a train strike in 2022, Branch Officers finally met together in November 2023, joined by the new President. Topics considered were:
- Cambridge Branch's initiative of a new model of meetings (Sean Lang)
 - Mike Short on ways of generating income for your Branch
 - Some preliminary membership survey information from Emily.
- 8.4.3 Peter explained that his own contribution to the day had been to look at the financial challenges facing Branches, and whether there might be new ways of funding Branches, a topic which had occupied the Committee at its meetings in 2023.
- 8.4.4 There had been consideration over the past few years of what the HA offers its general, non-teaching members, and if they think this is value for money. Attending a local branch is one benefit, though this is not possible for everyone, and it is good to have high quality talks through the Virtual Branch which has a loyal and enthusiastic following. Other benefits are Branch talks made available online, and short courses (organised by Paula Kitching) which have also caught on and greatly enjoyed. Talks offered for general members at Conferences also hit a high standard.
- 8.4.6 The Committee were keen to find new members – see page 46 of the recent *Historian*.

8.4.7 Peter concluded by thanking Suzanna Stern and Anne-Marie Stephenson at the 59a, who support their work and maintain contact with the Branch Officers; the Committee members and all those volunteers who through their love of history, keep Branches active.

8.4.8 Tim East, in the Chat, congratulated the HA on the greatly increased offer to general members, with such activities as the 'Virtual Branch' and short courses.

8.5 Higher Education Committee

9.5.1 As the Chair of the Committee, Adam Smith, had sent his apologies, Paula Kitching gave a brief report on the Committee's work.

8.5.2 There had been a few changes in the Committee, with different leadership and different directions. Adam Smith had taken over as Chair in the summer of 2023, so there had been some changes in the direction of the Committee's activities, while retaining much of what had been done before. A huge amount had been done on the HE section of the website, which is now looking quite good, but there are still some additional changes to be made

8.6 Alexandra thanked all the Committee Chairs for their reports, and the Committee members for their work. There were also comments in Chat congratulating the HA for the work it is doing.

9. Re-appointment of Auditors

Members were requested to agree the re-appointment of the Association's Auditors, Kingston Smith, until the next Annual General Meeting. This was proposed by Mike Brooks and **approved**.

10. Discussion of Business Raised by Members

No members had raised any business which they wished the meeting to discuss.

Professor Alexandra Walsham thanked everyone for their participation and continuing support, and the meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.

Members in attendance: John Alban, Ian Aldridge, Ilona Aronovsky, Barbara Anderson, Paul Bracey, Hazel Dickinson, Morgan Ditchurn, Karin Doull, Tim East, Kathryn Fiddock, Mike Gibson, Jim Greenwood, Siobhan Harris, Rosemary Hayes, Valerie Hayr, Kingsley Jones, Tricia Lawrence, William Lever, Gary Mills, Kathleen Morris, Liz Newman, David Paterson, David Seymour, Mike Short, Robert Sutton, Sue Temple, Chris Trevor, Serge Van den Broucke, David Waller and Maggie Wilson