

BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD AT 5PM ON MONDAY 4TH APRIL 2022 ON ZOOM

The 69th Annual General Meeting of the British Agricultural History Society took place at 5 pm on Monday 4th April 2022 on Zoom.

1. **Apologies for absence.** Prof Nicola Verdon, Prof. Paul Warde.

2. **The minutes of the 68th AGM** were approved.

3. **Matters arising.** None.

4. **Elections of officers.** The following were elected unopposed:

Prof Nicola Verdon President

Dr Spike Gibbs Secretary

Dr Derek Shepherd Treasurer

Prof Paul Warde Editor

Dr John Morgan Book Reviews Editor

5. **Election of ordinary members of the Executive Committee.** Three members have been nominated for three spaces:

Prof Karen Sayer

Dr Samantha Shave

Dr Sarah Holland

All three were elected.

6. **Report of the Chair of the EC.** Dr John Broad said his year working with the mainly new officers and members of the EC had been a pleasure. He had established sub committees to look at a number of concerns. Administration and communications systems have to be changed as Catherine Glover plans to retire from running the website. Communications including the website need to attract a wider membership including younger members and those interested in rural affairs and landscape as well as academics. Specification for tenders for a new website will go out this month. Job description for an admin/website support post will be advertised in the autumn. Covid forced conferences on line and caused us to think about the nature of future conferences including hybrid events.

Ben Kennedy asked for a postal address for the Society for all queries. This used to be Exeter and had not been replaced. John Broad said it was difficult to achieve a long term address but this would be explored.

John Broad thanked Paul Brassley and Jean Morrin who stepped down from their posts after the AGM. John Broad is also stepping down but he and Jean Morrin will assist successors for a few months. John Broad also thanked member so the EC for their work and especially Dr Juliet Gayton, Dr James Bowen and Dr Susan Kilby who were leaving the EC.

7. **Treasurer's Report.** Dr Derek Shepherd apologised to members for problems with the post room in Exeter who had not passed on cheques until a few days before this meeting.

Membership had increased slightly this year from 380 individuals and 206 institutions in 2020 to 396 individuals and 202 institutions in 2021. It is pleasing to have 16 new members and more did join during the conference.

The accounts had been signed off by the examiner. The Society made a moderate operating profit in 2021 to 2022 of £1800, better than the £12,000 loss in the previous year which could, however, be explained. Gift aid would be reclaimed. Investments had done fairly well rising from £121,300 to £133,600 largely due to the performance of M & G Charibond. We have sufficient reserves.

The accounts were approved and the examiner reappointed.

Dr Broad thanked Dr Shepherd for this work.

8. a) **Editor's report.** Submissions of articles had fallen from 24 to 19 in 2021 to 22 but 5 papers are expected in the near future. There are low numbers of articles by women. 50% were about British History and this would lead to increased representation of British articles in AHR. Hoped to get more submissions from the Rural History conference in June. Prof Warde thanked Cathy Glover for her excellent copy-editing and liaison with Carnegie Press.

Open access started on 1 April for all publicly funded work. Authors can deposit their submitted article in their own institution. While the long term implications are unclear, they should not decrease demand for the review nor diminish authors choice to be published in it.

b) **Book Review Editor.** Dr John Morgan has received 40 reviews, 26 on Britain and Ireland and 14 on Europe and the wider world. Wide range of book reviews from Anglo Saxon landscape to EU Common Agricultural Policy. Currently he has 47 reviews in hand for vol. 70 onwards and 65 books out for review. John Morgan selects reviewers from personal contacts and EC contacts and the web. He invited anyone who would like to become a reviewer to get in touch with him via the website and indicate their area of interest. John Morgan thanked Cathy Glover for her copy-editing and Rachel Clarke at Carnegie Press and Paul Warde for assisting his work.

c) **Rural History Today.** Since last year's AGM two issues of RHT have appeared with a wide range of articles. Now have an ISBN number from BL. Dr Rebecca Ford thanked Helen Greenback for managing dispatch and Jane Glennie for designs.

9. **Libral.** Prof Richard Hoyle reported progress with digitalising agricultural and rural text for free access. 200,000 pages now on the website of which 33,000 were added last year. Aim to add 12 items each month. There are some problems with the host platform based in Canada for which we do not pay. Varied types of publication, hopefully to appeal to a wide audience including *General Views* of the counties of England. Prof Hoyle invited members to suggest texts but warned some are much more difficult to obtain.

10. **Discussion of new constitution.** Dr John Broad withdrew this article as detailed comments on the new constitution had very recently been received from Prof Hoyle. Dr Broad said drafting the constitution at a meeting was not possible. In future documents would appear well before the meeting with a time limit for the acceptance of substantive amendments. The plan anyway was to apply in the next year or two

for Charitable Incorporated Organisation status and the work done on the constitution would be useful for this.

11. Discussion of nature of future conferences. Covid had forced conferences onto Zoom. We now had to consider the future and members' views were invited.

Spring Conference. Chris Lewis argued for face to face because of the value of meeting people and exchanging ideas. There was much support for this view. Whether same dates/weekday/weekend was a more difficult decision because of changed university terms making weekends more attractive for some but that would lead to increased costs. There was support for trying out a weekend and for hybrid conferences in the future. Bill Shannon wanted to retain the afternoon field trip which he said was a highlight of this conference.

Winter Conference. There was considerable support for retaining the Winter Conference in its usual form although some expressed reservations about travelling to London just for the day.

On-line seminars. The potential of these for reaching a wider world audience was also noted.

12. Motion placed before this meeting by Ben Kennedy that the name of the society be changed from 'The British Agricultural History Society' to 'British Society for Agricultural History'. Ben Kennedy argued that the Society today did not comply with its expressed objectives at its foundation especially being a society for all interested in rural and agricultural affairs but had been taken over by academics. Secondly, he argued it was no longer a society for British Agriculture as only 50% of the Review was British agricultural history. So he argued a more honest name would be the British Society for Agricultural History. Dr Jean Morrin said the EC did not support this motion as the society did still promote British Agricultural history but appreciated the value of comparison with overseas work. The content of the Review depended on submissions. Many members expressed sympathy with Mr Kennedy but argued against his motion. The spring conference attracted many non academics even in recent years but perhaps in less numbers than previously. The last 20 years much more comparative history had emerged especially from the important European Rural History Organisation which BAHS was instrumental in founding. Many members counselled against changing the brand of the society which was well known and respected.

The motion was rejected by 96% to 4% of the votes.

13. Date of next meeting. TBA but this time of year in 2023.

14 AOB.

- a) Members views were sought on whether RHT remain as a printed magazine or become digital only. The cost of a printed magazine was clearly higher than on-line. Postage at present was largely covered by dispatch of paper copies of conference programmes. All who spoke preferred printed editions of RHT which they could enjoy and share with others. Juliet Gayton said we only have email addresses for 80% of members so purely electronic would exclude

20% of membership. Rebecca Ford would investigate more environment friendly paper.

- b) Similarly members were consulted about whether **future membership payment systems should be purely on-line**. Problems had arisen in recent years as some members had not updated their standing orders and because of problems with the mail office in Exeter during the pandemic closures. Existing members who paid by cheque would be protected but the EC would continue to investigate on-line payment systems which facilitated rolling membership or fixed term payments.
- c) **Dr Paul Brassley thanked Dr Broad for his hard work as Chair of the EC** which was greatly appreciated by the Society.