

BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD AT 5PM ON FRIDAY 14TH APRIL 2023 IN PERSON AND VIRTUALLY

The 70th Annual General Meeting of the British Agricultural History Society took place at 5pm on Friday 14th April 2023 at the Jubilee Conference Centre, University of Nottingham, and on Zoom.

1. **Apologies for absence.** Dr Rebecca Ford, Dr John Morgan, Jonathan Cooper.
2. **Minutes of the 69th AGM** were approved.
3. **No matters arising** from the 69th AGM minutes.
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.** It was noted that Dr John Broad and Prof Mark Bailey have retired from the Committee.
6. **Report of the Chair of the EC.** PROF KAREN SAYER said she was building on Dr John Broad's excellent work. The EC aims to increase membership and diversity, and to strengthen links with the farming community. We are grateful to have co-opted Guy Smith to this end, Ollie Douglas to represent the museums and heritage sector, and Pamela Riney-Kehrberg to strengthen our international links with the Agricultural History Society in the U.S. Ourselves and our network of colleagues are still exclusively based in the Global North and we intend to diversify globally.

We now have policies to ensure compliance with our duties to the Charity Commission, including a Code of Conduct, Data Protection policy, and Finance policy, which are all now standard in the charity sector. The Chair expressed her heartfelt thanks to the working group which assembled the policies. She thanks Catherine Glover for her continuing work on the website and communications and Jay Richardson for joining to help.

The Chair noted that in AHR, RHT, LIBRAL, and many other places, we have a wonderfully rich corpus with which to improve outreach, and that we could begin with schools, especially given the growing national educational emphasis on climate and agriculture. Working with schools would fit squarely with our mission to promote the study of rural and agricultural history.

The Chair thanks the Thirsk Prize Committee and noted that the volume of high-quality material made this year's choices especially difficult.

- 7. Treasurer's Report.** DR DEREK SHEPHERD apologises for the delayed posting of annual accounts on the Society's website but noted that they are now up. Zoe Crumby (our previous examiner) is now too busy to examine the accounts due to a change in her role and the Treasurer has struggled to find a replacement, but is confident of getting someone in post in time to meet our statutory requirements.

The Treasurer expresses concern at the continued fall in institutional memberships of the Society and noted that 30 institutions left between 2021 and 2022. He says this year's accounts are fairly unremarkable and that we made a small loss of £810 this year, against a £1,867 surplus last year. We made a small loss on the Spring Conference, but publishing and distribution costs for *Agricultural History Review* were smaller than last year. The Treasurer has no concerns arising from this year's accounts. He noted that we made a £4,800 loss on investments this year, against a £9,000 gain last year, but that the Society is in a healthy financial position, with £127,000 in cash and investments. DR DEREK SHEPHERD cannot continue this year in the role of Treasurer but is happy to shadow a successor.

PROF KAREN SAYER noted that PayPal is still not working but we still take cheques. We may find that schools would be interested in accessing resources like LIBRAL, AHR, and especially RHT. PROF PAUL WARDE noted that libraries are generally cutting back on journal memberships and increasingly only purchase through publishers. We should expect a long-term decline in institutional memberships, but members are encouraged to ask their own institutions to provide access to the journal, to the benefit of students and colleagues, as a starting point. PROF RICHARD HOYLE noted that we do know the identities of institutional subscribers. PROF CHRISTOPHER DYER noted that many unaffiliated members still need access to AHR, often in hard copy.

The accounts were approved.

- 8. Editors' Report.** PROF PAUL WARDE noted that we have a good number of open access articles, including everything published more than three years ago, and could be more forthright in communicating that. He is happy with the quality and quantity of submissions to the journal. Its proportion of Britain-focused articles happened to increase this year. He is still concerned about the gender balance of writers and is working on this, but has found it easier than expected to achieve gender parity in reviewers. The first issue of the journal is out a little late this year due to circumstances at the publisher.

PROF ABIGAIL WOODS asked what the average time from article acceptance to publication is. PROF PAUL WARDE responded that almost every accepted article gets published within a year. He also thanks Reviews Editor DR JOHN MORGAN for getting through an amazing amount of review material and continuing to do an excellent job.

DR REBECCA FORD, via correspondence, reported that the winter issue of RHT has been produced and sent to members. A reduced run of 800 copies were printed this time. She is now seeking pieces for the summer issue. JAY RICHARDSON noted

that he is working on making SEO-friendly versions of old RHT articles available on the new version of the website.

- 9. LIBRAL Report.** PROF RICARD HOYLE said 1,175 items are now on LIBRAL, including 149 new this year, totalling 19,483 pages. He noted that the Perkins Agricultural Library at the University of Southampton tends to digitise more niche material and that LIBRAL focuses on mainstream publications of general usefulness. New uploads have appeared every four to six weeks. We could always use more feedback but the occasional email of gratitude comes from people who have found something on LIBRAL that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to find. LES HARDY noted that, as an unaffiliated researcher, he finds it very useful.

PROF RICHARD HOYLE noted that C19th farming periodicals and newspapers are very hard to get hold of and have very large pages, which makes them difficult to scan. We do not tend to scan newspapers because of the risk of competition from a commercial archive like the British Newspaper Archive. We currently put up single issues of certain titles as exemplars.

PROF PAUL WARDE noted that LIBRAL has fantastic material and that it could be better communicated. The meeting discussed approaching *Farmers Weekly*, *Shooting Times*, *Country Life*, *Horse & Hound*, and perhaps *Heavy Horse World*.

- 10. Approval of new constitution.** PROF KAREN SAYER noted that we should technically have advertised changes to the Constitution at the point when we notified members of the AGM. We will hold an extraordinary general meeting in three months' time to consider these changes and we can appoint a new examiner for the accounts at the same time. **This course of action would approved.**

DR SPIKE GIBBS said he would make arrangements for the extraordinary general meeting. DR JOHN BROAD said the Charity Commission does not have to approve the new Constitution following a question from PROF RICHARD HOYLE. PROF KAREN SAYER said she has confidence in the new Constitution and the course of action for approving it and that we have new policies to support it.

- 11. Discussion and approval of new formats for *Agricultural History Review*.** DR PAUL WARDE said the journal's first ever editorial in 1953 mentions "shorter notes and comments," which he now proposes to elaborate on.

The new formats will help the journal include a wider range of writers, including early stage researchers who may not be able to commit to writing a full article, and will help build the subject community. It will include more editorials not written by the editor, and more comment pieces, but everything will still need to be peer reviewed. **The meeting approved the proposal.**

- 12. Discussion of new prizes offered by the Society.** PROF KAREN SAYER said a prize related to early career research is in development.

The meeting approved a motion to assemble a subcommittee to develop this work.

- 13. Date of next meeting.** The next AGM will be in Spring 2024.

Exact date TBC.

14. AOB–None.