

BRITISH AGRICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD AT 5PM ON FRIDAY 25TH APRIL 2025 IN PERSON

The 72nd Annual General Meeting of the British Agricultural History Society took place at 5.00 pm on Friday 25th April 2025 at the FOOD Museum, Stowmarket

- 1. Apologies for absence.** Carol Beardmore, John Broad, Jonathan Cooper, Elly Robson Dezateux, Heather Falvey, Sarah Holland, Mark Hailwood, John Martin, Jane Rowling, Derek Shepherd, Sarah Spooner.

BESS RHODES, noted that she is stepping in as chair, this is due to the fact the SARAH HOLLAND cannot be here due to a flare-up of illness and a family emergence. The society wished her the best.

BESS RHODES noted that this is the first meeting of the AGM since Nicola Verdon was tragically killed.

- 2. Minutes of the 71st AGM.** The society approved the minutes. PAUL BRASSLEY proposed, RICHARD HOYLE seconded.

- 3. Matters arising from 71st AGM minutes.** No matters arising were raised.

- 4. Election of officers.** The following were elected unopposed.

Spike Gibbs	Secretary
Derek Shepherd	Treasurer
Paul Warde	Editor
John Morgan	Book Reviews Editor
Richard Hoyle	Director of LIBRAL

Proposed by LES HARDY, seconded by ALAN WADSWORTH.

- 5. Election of ordinary members of the Executive Committee (EC).** REBECCA FORD and JOHN MARTIN stood down after the reaching the end of their maximum eight-year terms. JORDAN CLARIDGE, DANAE TANKARD and ABIGAIL WOODS stood down after reaching the end of their four-year terms.

CAROL BEARDMORE, ELLY ROBSON DEZATEUX, MARK HAILWOOD and SARAH SPOONER stood for six open spaces on the EC. They were elected unopposed.

BESS RHODES led the AGM in thanking departing EC members for their work and welcoming new members to the EC.

- 6. Report of the chair of the EC.** SARAH HOLLAND pre-circulated a written report. This provides information about the society's plans to commemorate Nicola Verdon's contribution to the field. BESS RHODES also reported that Sarah plans to stay on as chair of the EC.

PAUL WARDE provided more information about the plans to commemorate Nicola's contribution, following discussions between him, Sarah Holland and Richard Hoyle. The plan is to hold a workshop in Sheffield, preferably in conjunction with Sheffield Hallam, before Easter. There will also be an edited volume which will draw on the papers given at the conference but also on other submissions. To avoid overlap with the workshop, the Spring conference will be held a bit later next year (likely May or early June). The event is being planned with input of Nicola's family and partner who would like to attend.

BESS RHODES led the AGM in thanking Sarah Holland, Paul Warde and Richard Hoyle for their work.

- 7. Treasurer's report.** SPIKE GIBBS summarised a report provided by DEREK SHEPHERD. This notes that the society has made a loss this year of £3779, although this follows a surplus of £17726 last year. This is due both to falling income with subscriptions down £1957 and journal sales down £3775 and rising expenditure with publications costs and LIBRAL costs up by £10468 on last year. We paid two sets of examiners' fees this year which is an accounting quirk. Overall, expenditure was £49230 versus £33227 last year. However, the Society is still in a healthy position with £150230 in cash and reserves which is approximately three times annual expenditure.

RICHARD HOYLE raised two points. Firstly, as the fund has now been spent, the Thirsk Prize should not have a separate link in the account. Instead, this should come from our general funds. Secondly, our EURHO subscription seems to have not been paid in the last two years. This should be clarified as we are a member of the organisation and therefore should be paying our share.

PAUL WARDE noted that the *Review* still pays for itself and more generally we are a charity not here to accumulate large reserves. He asked about the large newsletter costs.

SPIKE GIBBS suggested this is probably the communications assistant role.

PAUL WARDE noted this is a good investment in membership. There is some concern we are losing members by accident and need to be more pro-active in reaching out to members who may have not renewed by accident. While things are fine now, if the trend were to accelerate this would be problematic.

PAUL BRASSLEY proposed the accounts be accepted, JORDAN CLARIDGE seconded this.

- 8. Editors' reports.** JOHN MORGAN provided a written report. He thanked Paul Warde, Mary Rose Cheadle and Catherine Glover for their work. He noted it is increasingly difficult to get some publishers to provide physical copies of books, although some publishers are still exemplary in providing this service. He invited any society members who are interested in reviewing to get in contact.

PAUL WARDE provided a written report. He thanked Mary Rose Cheadle and Carnegie press for their work and noted that the next issue is in press and he has articles in hand for the subsequent issue. The submission rate is holding up but there is still a disappointing gender balance of submission which doesn't reflect the wider field but the work coming to the society. He continues to turn articles around quickly. There is an issue of falling subscribers and we need more information about this, as our membership and subscribers are synonymous. He highlighted that we are now close to the 75th anniversary of the society and *Review* in 2027 and we should start thinking about this now.

SPIKE GIBBS summarised a report by REBECCA FORD. This notes that the winter issue of *Rural History Today* has been sent to members and is available online. It includes an article by Nicola Verdon submitted a few weeks before she was tragically killed. This piece reflects many of her research interests 'being an informative and lively account of the indomitable Ethel Haythornthwaite who campaigned to preserve and protect green spaces on the outskirts of Sheffield'. She is putting together the summer issue with the input of our talented designer Jane Glennie. She welcomes anyone to get in contact with any ideas and thanks everyone who has contributed in the past.

9. **LIBRAL report.** RICHARD HOYLE said this has not been a vintage due to personal circumstances. LIBRAL continues to operate in the same form, with deliberately eclectic choices. He noted he has finished the 'easy' *General Views* so now is moving on to the more difficult ones.

CATHERINE GLOVER noted an increase in users and the fact that users can create their own accounts. She is pleased that some bugs have been fixed but others remain. As the library platform is free they have no leverage to get these fixed.

RICHARD HOYLE noted they get appreciative emails and says are very happy to get requests. He is struggling to upload the papers of the Oxford Farming Conference.

ALAN WADSWORTH noted he knows the outgoing chair of the Oxford Farming Conference so can put them in touch.

LES HARDY and ALAN WADSWORTH both noted how useful they find LIBRAL and how useful it is for researchers without access to university libraries.

ALAN WADSWORTH asked about the discrepancy between numbers of LIBRAL members and numbers of society members.

CATHERINE GLOVER noted that the groups do not entirely overlap, for instance medievalists might be society members but not use LIBRAL resources.

PAUL WARDE noted that while we can't target individual LIBRAL members who are not society members, a general email to all LIBRAL members making them aware of the society and how it supports LIBRAL might get members. CATHERINE GLOVER agreed that this would be a good idea.

10. Date of next meeting. The next meeting will be held at the 2026 Spring conference. As noted above, this will be held slightly later than usual next year.

11. AOB. The AGM was asked for their input on a proposal to make changes to the rubric of the conferences and initiatives fund. This would allow the society to support modest publication costs and consider applications at four points in the year.

RICHARD HOYLE asked if a separate budget would be set for this fund.

SPIKE GIBBS noted that this was not planned currently. However, an eye would be kept on application numbers to see if this is necessary going forward.

SPIKE GIBBS noted that the society is planning to launch a new version of the website. This will hopefully be more user-friendly and faster than the current version.

BESS RHODES thanked Paul Warde again for his work on the conference.

RICHARD HOYLE asked if the EC would seek feedback on this conference from members. CATHERINE GLOVER highlighted this should reach members who hadn't come to understand their reasons. IRENE HALLYBURTON suggested giving a small number of answer options to provide clear feedback.

12. Election of the President. The AGM confirmed the election of RICHARD HOYLE as president of the society and congratulated him on his appointment.