



Barnes Literary Society AGM 19 March 2014

Minutes of the Annual General meeting held on Wednesday 19 March 2014 at The Old Sorting Office, Barnes Green.

Present: Fiona Smith Chairman, David King-Farlow Vice-chairman, Sheila Hayward Smith Honorary Secretary, Patrick Harvey Honorary Treasurer, Claire Boyling, Sarah Kearney, Caroline Kelsall, Kathy Owles, Jane Skerrett together with Society members.

1. Introduction by Chairman

Fiona Smith formally welcomed members, thanked them for staying for the AGM and referred them to the Agenda, Minutes from last year's AGM and Annual Report for year ended Sept 2013, which had been distributed to those present.

2. Apologies for Absence

Isla Blair, Julian Glover, Roger McGough, Jan Pieńkowski.

3. Minutes of AGM held on 21 March 2012

The minutes were proposed by Emma King-Farlow and seconded by Celia Cleave as an accurate record. The resolution was passed on a show of hands.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's Report

Fiona Smith, Chairman, included a report in the financial document which she hoped all present had, for the year ending September 2013. She summarised some points and said a few words of thanks.

Looking back at last year's programme we welcomed some excellent speakers who spoke on a wide range of literary topics. These included Joan Bakewell with a fascinating 'walk down memory lane' speaking about her 'life and novels'. In sharp contrast A.D Miller discussed his popular contemporary thriller 'Snowdrops' set in the harsh world of post - Soviet Russia. Bettany Hughes' gave an intriguing insight into the ancient world of 'Socrates and the Hemlock Cup' while David Shukman's presentation on current global environmental issues brought us up to date with threats of climate change. The literary challenges of translation were addressed by local publisher and translator, Alessandro Gallenzi, and novelist and film writer, Rebecca Frayn, revealed to her audience how she found inspiration for her novels in controversial topics.

Visits to the London Library and Dr. Johnson's House gave in depth insights into literary collections and the season closed with a summer outing to the Orange Tree Theatre.

Our links with the wider literary community of Richmond prompted us to propose that we support the Young Writers' Festival with a bursary for the Laureate Awards to celebrate our 10th anniversary year. The young people were very impressive, and the bursary was much appreciated by artsrichmond who organise the festival.

Fiona said a few 'thank yous' to those who are loyal supporters of BLS. Firstly, our patrons, Isla Blair, Julian Glover, Roger McGough, Patrick Neate and Jan Pieńkowski who have continued to give their support for 10 years, and we

appreciate their encouragement. We are particularly grateful to Jan who produces our publicity brochure.

We value our links with the Barnes Book Shop and Isla Dawes's regular donation of a Barnes Book Shop voucher for members. Her attendance at events with our speakers' books adds to the literary content of our events, so thank you, Isla.

She also thanked Alan from AT Sound who quietly on the side-lines works away to ensure that we have what all will agree is an excellent sound system. Members gave them a round of applause.

As many will know Fiona is standing stand down as Chairman and she expressed her appreciation to the current committee and previous committees for their support over the years. Behind the scenes the BLS committee puts a great deal of work into attracting speakers and organising events and outings. What you see at events really is just the tip of the iceberg and it is thanks to their commitment and hard work that BLS continues to thrive; Fiona asked members to join her in showing their appreciation with a round of applause.

Finally she thanked the members. Some have been members since the beginning and others have joined more recently. She hoped that they have enjoyed many events and outings and BLS parties. It is their society and she does hope that they will continue to support it with the enthusiasm they have shown during the 10 years since it was founded. She then passed on to the Honorary Treasurer.

6. Honorary Treasurer's Report & Statement of Accounts

Patrick Harvey, Honorary Treasurer, referred members to the financial report for the year ended September 30 2013, which they had in front of them. Turning to Page 3 of the Report there is an Income and Expenditure Statement. Subscriptions form the bulk of our Income, but decreased last year £500 to £6,500. On the Expenditure side, our six Regular Events last year, including room hire, printing, stationery, publicity, website and overheads, cost over £7,000, i.e. an average of almost £1,200 each.

The remainder of the Income and Expenditure figures relate to special events which can be set against Income from ticketed events. These included outings during the year and the summer visit to the Orange Tree. The net result was a deficit for the year of £441.

Turning over to page 4 of the Report, is the Society's Balance Sheet. Cash and deposit at the bank represent our assets, but include some subscriptions for 2012-3 received before Sept 30. Net financial assets at the end of the year decreased to £6,344. The Society has always looked on these financial assets as a year-end cushion to enable us to face the uncertainties of the number of renewals in October.

That summarises our financial report which has been signed by our independent examiner. We are looking for a new examiner for the next financial year; the Society's constitution requires an independent, suitably qualified, individual. This definition allows any member to be the examiner if interested and able to carry out this task; the Committee would be pleased to hear from them.

As Treasurer he recommended that members approve the Accounts as presented. He asked for any questions but there were none.

He then talked about the subscriptions. He explained that this year we have a deficit and if we keep the subscription at current levels in 2014-5 there would be a deficit of about £500 rising with annual inflation at 5% to £2,000 in 2019. If we increased the subscription to £30

single and £50 joint, this would mean a surplus of about £1,100 in 2015 and a deficit of £400 in 2019. If we were to lose 15% of the membership this would produce deficits of £215 in 2015 and £1,715 in 2019. These figures show the importance of our assets as the cushion.

The committee proposes that the subscription be raised from £25 to £30 for single membership and from £40 to £50 for joint i.e. by £5 per member. To be compatible with this increase, the guest fee will also be raised from £8 to £10. Members have to authorise the rates of subscription.

The Treasurer recommended that the members approve the Accounts as presented. The Accounts and Annual Report were adopted by a show of hands after being proposed by Anne Sadler and seconded by Peter Owles.

The resolution to approve the new rates of subscription was proposed by Heather Parkinson and seconded by Lucy Hine and passed by a show of hands.

9. Election of Officers and Committee Members

The Chairman read the nominations for the coming year with the names of proposers and seconders, as follows –

POST	NAME	PROPOSER:	SECONDER
CHAIRMAN	Claire Boyling	Steven Mindel	John Smith
VICE-CHAIR	David King-Farlow	Patrick Findlater	Pamela Fernant
HON SEC	Sheila Hayward Smith	Esther Senhenn	William Mortimer
TREASURER	Patrick Harvey	Jane Sherwin	Hilary Hawken
CTTE MEMBER	Sarah Kearney	Chris Hine	David Minch
CTTE MEMBER	Caroline Kelsall	Helen Willan	Gill Spillane
CTTE MEMBER	Kathy Owles	Lindsay Wilson	Fenella Deards
CTTE MEMBER	Jane Skerrett	David Wilson	Margaret Barry

The above officers and committee members were duly elected en bloc on a show of hands.

Fiona passed over to the new Chairman, Claire Boyling, who conducted the remainder of the meeting.

She said “Thank you so much for electing me as your Chairman for the forthcoming year. I am extremely grateful to my fellow committee members and to you, the members, for your support. I acknowledge that succeeding Fiona is not going to be an easy task but I shall do my very best to emulate her achievements. And I have a wonderful committee who will keep me on track. I do hope too that you will all let us know what you would like from the BLS. The Society was Fiona’s inspiration back in 2004 and she has worked tirelessly since then to create a viable and exciting Society. The committee (both past and present members) have nothing but praise for Fiona’s management skills and diplomacy. She has guided us skilfully and her ‘standing down’ will leave an enormous gap.

She has multitudinous talents: from finding lively and knowledgeable speakers to organising venues - from interviewing guests to testing sound and lighting (which she does before every meeting) - from writing publicity blurb to opening and summing up event evenings (and without a mic) I could go on but suffice it to say that there is absolutely nothing to which she cannot turn her hand. Perseverance and attention to detail should be her middle names - but she already has a couple of much prettier ones so we won’t overload her!

Although in general evening meetings have gone remarkably smoothly there have been a few hiccups along the way – one or two memorable ones! Every time Fiona has been completely unflappable and the hitches were overcome with the minimum of fuss. And in 10 years she has not missed a single BLS evening event.

We are delighted that Fiona will continue to be involved with the BLS as she has agreed to become a Patron and extremely pleased that both she and John will remain familiar faces at our events. I would now like to present this token of our gratitude for her achievements as Chairman (flowers and inscribed glass bowl).”

9. Any other business

There being no other business the Chairman thanked the members for their support and enthusiasm and said how pleasing that so many of them came to the AGM, and declared the meeting closed at 9.50 p.m..