

**Minutes of the Barnes Literary Society AGM held on 22 June 2021 at St Mary's Church, Church Road, Barnes, SW13.
(To be approved at the 2022 AGM)**

Present: Jo Weinberger (JW); Kathy Owles (KO), Vice-Chair, Kathy Kock (KK) Honorary Treasurer, Sue Pandit (SP), Louise Carr (LC), Fina Mason (FM) and around 20 society members.

1. Introduction by the Chair

JW thanked the members for staying on for the AGM and said that the normal attendance sheet would not be signed because of covid restrictions but the committee would note the members present.

JW highlighted the documents which had been made available to members which include the agenda, minutes of the previous year's AGM, the annual report, treasurer's report and financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020. JW also referred members to the proposed new BLS constitution which had been uploaded to the BLS website.

2. Apologies for absence

Caroline Storey

3. Minutes of the AGM held on 22nd September 2020

The resolution to approve the minutes was proposed by Jane Sherwin and seconded by Clare Boyling and passed with a show of hands.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairmans report

JW referred members to her report and said she would not read it out just serve some highlights.

She remarked that 2019/20 had been an unusual year for the BLS along with everyone else.

The season opened with a fascinating talk from the well-known novelist Tracey Chevalier talking about her new novel A Single Thread. In November the BLS welcomed the novelist and human rights activist Elif Shafak, who gave us an insight into the trauma suffered by women following sexual violence in a patriarchal society. In January the church was packed out when Isabella Tree came to talk about her book Wilding and gave a wonderful presentation describing her and her husband's attempt to re-wild their land at Knepp in West Sussex. Mick Herron came in February and discussed his latest novel in the Slough House series with SP, another very successful event.

JW explained that the arrival of Covid 19 meant we had to cut the programme short and cancel both the outing and the summer soiree.

A lockdown window in September enabled the postponed AGM to be held and Roger McGough came to read some of his very entertaining lock down poems.

To keep in contact with members during lockdown JW said that a BLS blog was started on the website and a book group on Facebook, both to maintain a literary focus for those who wanted it.

Regarding membership, as there is no longer a cap since the move to St Mary's, it reached 420 for this 19/20 season.

The single membership fee remained at £30 equating to £5 a talk. JW said that the BLS believe this to be very good value for money. This level of fee was maintained for 20/21 and there will be no increase for the coming season.

JW thanked our very supportive patrons: Isla Blair, Julian Glover, Roger McGough, Patrick Neate, Jan Pieńkowski, Venetia Vyvyan, Rhidian Brook and Harriett Gilbert and particularly Roger McGough who stepped in at the 2020 AGM.

JW thanked the BCA for coverage of the events in Prospect, Sarah Arthur for inclusion in the Barnes Bugle, Arts Richmond and all the local shops and businesses who help with our publicity.

This season saw the unveiling of the new website resulting from the generous bequest of former committee member Noel Davison. JW expressed the Society's gratitude for this gift and also thanked Sarah Arthur for setting it up and her continuing support.

JW also thanked Venetia Vyvyan at Barnes Bookshop for book sales and the raffle prizes, Phil Bladen for help with sound tech and Izzy Lovell for our fantastic event photographs. She also thanked the Committee of volunteers for all their enthusiasm and hard work.

JW referred briefly to the Treasurer's report which shows a surplus for the fourth year running. This is good news for the BLS enabling funds to be set aside to meet the objectives of the Constitution as much as possible.

In 19/20 there was a successful trialling of the FISH bus to assist members of the community who have difficulty accessing the events. It is hoped that this can be extended in the future.

The BLS hosted a short story competition to raise funds for the Barnes Castelnau Centre and broaden the reach of the BLS into a relatively deprived area of Barnes. £300 was raised and JW thanked the judges Roger McGough, Fiona Smith, Jenny Hartley and Jane Skerritt for gifting their valuable time.

The Committee has decided to register the BLS as a charity so the funds can be used more efficiently to carry out its objectives. The old constitution will be replaced with a Charity Commission model constitution which is similar to the old one and can be viewed on the website.

JW reminded members that notices of the intention to propose resolutions to amend the constitution and to amend the year end date to July were given in the AGM on 22nd September and to members by email on 7th June 2021.

6 Treasurer's report

KK referred members to the accounts for the year ended 30th September 2020. These have been independently examined and KK thanked John Forbes for his assistance.

Key points - income decreased overall by 7% but expenditure overall decreased by 48 % resulting in the net surplus for 19/20 increasing to £8604, the highest ever. This is the fourth year in a row a surplus has been delivered.

Income decreased slightly because despite a substantial increase in membership fees and guest tickets there were no ticketed events and the post humous donation of Noel Davison impacted 2019.

Expenditure decreased substantially as there is no longer a need for sound system hire at St Mary's and there was no expenditure on the website.

KK said that today the financial situation remains strong as costs were more than covered in 20/21 and there is approximately £24k in the bank accounts. She is confident that the BLS can continue to deliver a programme whatever challenges are thrown up.

KK invited questions on the report but none were raised.

7. Adoption of the annual report and accounts

The adoption was proposed by Juggy Pandit and seconded by Jane Sherwin and passed with a show of hands.

8. Approval of rates of subscription

The proposal to maintain membership fees at the same rate was proposed by Patrick Harvey and seconded by Robin Eastwood and passed with a show of hands.

9. Motion to adopt a new constitution

The motion to adopt a new constitution was proposed by Fina Mason and seconded by Louise Carr and passed with a show of hands.

10. Motion to change the date of the financial year

The motion to change the end of the financial year from 30th September to 31 July was proposed by Maria Harvey and seconded by Eleanor Davison and passed with a show of hands.

11.Election of the trustees

The current committee will be become trustees when the BLS is registered as a charity.

The election of the trustees en bloc as set out below was proposed by Peter Owles and seconded by Nick Carr and passed with a show of hands.

| Position | Name | Proposer | Seconded |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Chair | Jo Weinberger | Sue Bridle | Asha Pandit |
| Secretary | Caroline Storey | Juggy Pandit | Hazel Sackey |
| Treasurer | Kathy Kock | Eleanor Davison | Juliet Slot |
| Vice Chair/ Membership | Kathy Owles | Patrick Harvey | Rita Golden |
| Hospitality | Louise Carr | Paul Weinberger | Jane Skerritt |
| Events secretary | Sue Pandit | Maria Harvey | Brenda Offredi |
| Events Manager. | Fina Mason | Jennifer Silcox | Peter Owles |

12.Any other business

Roger Jeffries offered congratulations to the Committee for the superb quality of the films and for keeping going through the pandemic. He also asked whether the BLS would be claiming gift aid on the subscriptions once it became a charity. KK confirmed that the fees would be eligible and that she would try to put the administration regarding gift aid in place for next season.

Patrick Harvey asked about current membership figures, member numbers watching the films, and the viability of continuing with films in the future. KO confirmed current membership was 350. JW noted that filming for next season would depend on Government restrictions regarding capacity in the church. Filming events is an expensive addition to the BLS programme, however, if audience numbers are restricted in the church, filming is likely to continue to allow all members an opportunity to see the events.

Jane Skerritt made a special point of thanking and congratulating the committee for all the work undertaken to keep the BLS going through the difficult challenges of the pandemic and noted that an excellent job had been done.

There being no further matters arising JW thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed

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