

## **Barnes Literary Society**

### **Minutes of the AGM held on 22 March 2022 at St Mary's Church, Church Road, Barnes, London SW13**

**Present:** Jo Weinberger [JW], Louise Carr [LC], Fina Mason [FM], Kathy Owles [KO], Sue Pandit [SP], Elaine Redler [ER] and around 22 members of the Barnes Literary Society.

#### **1 Introduction by the Chair:**

JW thanked the members for staying on after the lecture to attend the AGM. She pointed out that an attendance sheet was being passed round and asked members to sign.

JW highlighted the documents relevant to the AGM: the Agenda, Minutes of the 2021 AGM, the Treasurer's Report and the financial accounts for the year ended 31 July 2021. These documents will be available to all members on the Society's website.

JW reminded people attending that, in order to propose or second a motion at the AGM, it is a requirement that they should be members of the BLS. It was asked that anyone proposing or seconding should state their name clearly in order that the records are accurate.

#### **2 Apologies for absence:**

Apologies were received from Claire Boyling, Kathy Kock and Fiona Smith.

#### **3 Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 22 June 2021:**

The resolution to approve these Minutes was proposed by Sarah Kearney and seconded by Patrick Harvey. The motion was passed by a show of hands.

#### **4 Approval of the Minutes of the SGM held on 31 November 2021:**

These Minutes relate to the status of the BLS changing to that of a Charity. The resolution to approve these Minutes was proposed by Eleanor Davison and seconded by Jane Skerrett. The motion was passed by a show of hands.

#### **5 Matters arising:**

There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

#### **6 Chair's Annual Report:**

As the full Report will be available to members on the BLS website, the Chair delivered an overview of the contents. For the benefit of members who have been unable to access the full Report, it is summarised here.

JW reminded members that Season 20/21 was another season in which the pandemic, and its accompanying rules and regulations, dogged the much-anticipated programme. She commented on how excited the Society was to be able to open the season with an in-person talk by Tom Holland in October. However, in order to comply with government regulations, there were many differences: members of the Committee worked beforehand

to clean all surfaces that members might touch, arrange socially-distanced seating and ensure adequate supplies of hand sanitiser. Members had been requested to pre-book because of limitations on numbers and they were asked to take their seats immediately which prevented the customary socialising and buying of drinks beforehand. They dutifully complied with these new practices. Attendance was definitely worth it because Tom Holland's talk was magnificent. His wonderful, enthusiastic talk on his book *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind* explained how Christian values remain a large part of the secular agenda and how Christianity's enduring impact is not confined merely to churches.

JW explained that, as the capacity of the church was capped, meaning that many members were not able to attend live events, the Committee were pleased to have made the decision to film each of the talks. To this end, Kate Levy, from Mindplan Productions, was employed and she produced a high quality film of Tom's talk.

By November, as anticipated, the government disallowed live events but, thankfully, Toby Faber was happy to be filmed via Zoom. JW commented that it was interesting to watch him on screen, utilising the latest 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, whilst leading us through the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of Faber and Faber from its beginnings to his current place at the top of the literary tree.

January showed us in another national lockdown but fortunately all of the remaining authors were happy to proceed on Zoom and we were able to film some amazing talks and interviews. These films are still available to members on the BLS website. The continued lockdown also meant that we were unable to offer the customary outing in April.

Although there was some easing of restrictions by May, the virus was still very much a concern. The Committee decided that it would be a safer option to host an additional in-person talk in the spacious venue of the church rather than host the customary summer party. We were incredibly lucky to secure Natalie Haynes for the evening to talk about her book *Pandora's Jar: Women in Greek Myths*; she treated us to a fabulously fun evening in which she gave us all the ins and out of the stories of Jocasta and Clytemnestra amongst others and all from the female point of view.

Natalie's talk was followed by the postponed AGM at which we passed two motions. The first was to amend the BLS constitution in order to apply to register as a charity and the second to alter our financial year to run from August to July.

Membership numbers dipped slightly in 20/21 which is understandable given the circumstances. Our total membership for 20/21 was 333. However, this season we have recovered somewhat and our current membership stands at 365. The fee for single membership remained at £30 which equates to £5 per talk. This fee has been held for the 21/22 season and will not be increased for the 22/23 season.

JW commented on how lucky the BLS is to have such supportive patrons and she thanked them all. She also extended a warm welcome to our new patron, Joanna Trollope. JW went on to mention Jan Pieńkowski, one of our patrons from the outset, who passed away in February. He was a great support to the BLS, initially arranging the banner and doing the annual brochure and publicity. He also offered his lovely garden for the first party and, together with David Walser, gave a talk on their beautifully illustrated book, *Sacred and Profane*.

JW went on to thank the Barnes Community Association [BCA] for providing coverage of our events in *Prospect Plus*, Sarah Arthur for including us in the *Barnes Bugle*, *Arts Richmond* for their coverage and all of the local shops, businesses, libraries and organisation which take our publicity.

Further thanks went to St Mary's for the use of the church, Andrew Summers and Phil Bladen for their help and support and Izzy Lovell for event photographs. Also Kate Levy of Mindplan Productions who produced the excellent films for each of our talks.

JW commented on the amount of organising required to put on our events which is facilitated by the marvellous team of volunteers; she thanked them all for their enthusiasm and hard work. She also thanked Penny Kegerreis for helping the Committee with the set-up and cleaning.

JW then mentioned that, as well as losing Jan Pieńkowski this season, we also lost one of our Committee members, Caroline Storey. Caroline was an enthusiastic member of the Committee; she was well read, thoughtful and always brimming with ideas. She will be sorely missed.

JW moved on to comment briefly on the Treasurer's Report. Despite pandemic restrictions meaning that we were unable to make income from either bar sales or the summer party, and considering the cost incurred filming all seven of the season's talks, she was pleased to inform members that we remain in the black. We have weathered the last couple of tricky years well and remain in a strong financial position. She took the opportunity to thank all the members for continuing to support the BLS through these difficult times.

JW highlighted the small grant that we gave last year to the Barnes Children's Literature Festival. Due to the pandemic, TFL withdrew funding for transport for state school children to attend the festival. The BLS gave a sum of £500 enabling 60 children from the Deer Park Primary School in Richmond to attend the Festival. Further to this, in the light of the successful registration of the BLS as a charity **this season**, we have finalised a grant-making policy. Where possible, we intend to offer small grants and bursaries to organisations that meet the charity's objectives. The grant-making policy, together with all other BLS policies, will shortly be available on the website.

## **7 Treasurer's Annual Report:**

In the absence of KK, the Report was read to the members by SP.

KK referred members to the Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet for the period ended 31 July 2021. These documents are given as an Appendix to these Minutes.

She reminded members that at the last AGM a resolution was passed to change the year end from 30 September to 31 July.

The accounts have been examined by our independent examiner John Forbes; his report is on page five of the accounts. KK thanked John for his assistance in preparing the final accounts.

Income overall decreased by 24% partly as a result of membership falling from a peak of 420 in 19/20 to 333 in 20/21 and also because the pandemic prevented us from delivering the bulk of our live programme and from organising special events.

Expenditure overall increased by a massive 88% primarily because we provided members with our full planned programme online and the filming costs of £4080 significantly outweighed the reduction in church hire costs. Speaker fees were more because the previous season was curtailed by the pandemic.

Despite this we managed to deliver a surplus (albeit much reduced) of £212 and carried forward reserves as at 31 July 2021 are £22,389.

### **Current Financial Situation**

Today our financial situation remains strong and there is approximately £28k in the bank accounts as a result of a good level of membership renewal and several new members joining in 21/22.

As we are now a registered charity, next year members will be able to gift aid their subscriptions if they are UK income tax payers which could potentially increase our income by up to 25%.

## **8 Adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts:**

The resolution to approve the Annual Report and Accounts was proposed by Peter Beck and seconded by Nick Carr. The motion was passed by a show of hands.

## **9 Approval of Rates of Subscription:**

The resolution to maintain the current Rates of Subscription at £30 was proposed by Jane Sherwin and seconded by Sarah Kearney. The motion was passed by a show of hands.

## 10 Election of the Trustees of the Charity:

JW welcomed Elaine Redler to the Committee. The nominations of the Trustees are as follows and it was suggested that they should be elected en bloc:

Position	Name	Proposer	Seconded	Signature of Trustee
Chair	Jo Weinberger	Nicholas Cage	Juggy Pandit	
Secretary/ Events manager	Fina Mason	Jane Skerrett	E Hughes	
Treasurer	Kathy Kock	Paul Weinberger	Patrick Harvey	
Vice Chair/ Membership	Kathy Owles	Sarah Kearney	Nicholas Carr	
Hospitality	Louise Carr	Juggy Pandit	Paul Weinberger	
Events Secretary	Sue Pandit	Patrick Harvey	Jane Skerrett	
Committee Member	Elaine Redler	Eleanor Davison	Maria Harvey	

The resolution to re-elect the current Trustees en bloc was proposed by Patrick Harvey and seconded by Lucy Hine. The motion was passed by a show of hands.

## 11 Any Other Business:

Jane Skerrett wanted to thank the Committee for getting through the most demanding last two years and for continuing to deliver a full programme for the members. She expressed thanks on behalf of the whole membership.