

## **Minutes of the Barnes Literary Society AGM held on 22 March 2017 at the OSO Arts Centre, Barnes Green.**

**Present:** Jane Skerrett, Chair; David King-Farlow, Vice Chairman; Noel Davison, Honorary Secretary; Patrick Harvey, Honorary Treasurer; Sarah Kearney, Caroline Kelsall, Kathy Owles, Louise Carr (co opted) Committee members; Fiona Smith, Julian Glover, Patrons and 17 society members.

### **1. Introduction by the Chair**

Jane Skerrett welcomed members and thanked them for staying on for the AGM and referred them to the agenda, minutes from last year's AGM, and annual report for the year ended 30 September 2016 which were available to those present.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Isla Blair, Roger McGough.

### **3. Minutes of the AGM held on 23 March 2016**

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Heather Parkinson and seconded by Jill Simeoni as an accurate record and the resolution to approve the minutes was passed on a show of hands.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. Chairman's Report**

This is my first annual report as chairman: I took over from Claire Boyling at the 2016 AGM in March so for the majority of the 2015/16 year Claire was chairman. Claire has been on the BLS committee since BLS was founded in 2004; first as secretary and then for two years as chairman. The committee and members owe a great deal to her networking skills and her commitment to BLS which helped to establish the society and enabled it to flourish. Claire was thanked at the 2016 AGM and given a presentation bouquet of flowers to mark her contribution to BLS and her retirement from the committee.

The 2015/16 season provided a stimulating mix of speakers: Rachel Billington set us off in October with her novel about Gallipoli which made use of her family's experience of this conflict, followed in November by Rob Cowen discussing his memoir about a very special patch of common ground in Yorkshire. Local crime writers Elena Forbes and Anja de Jager started 2016 with a discussion on the popularity of crime fiction and their own experiences

in getting published followed in February by Sue Roe talking about Picasso and Matisse. The local author Diana Darke was one of our most popular speakers talking, very topically, about her house in Damascus and her experience and knowledge of the Syrian conflict. The talks season ended with Sonia Purnell talking about her recent biography of Clementine Churchill. We also organised a very enjoyable walk on a literary trail in the city of London with local Barnes resident and guide Robert Woolf in charge. The final event of the season was a visit to the Orange Tree theatre in Richmond.

I would like to highlight our sponsorship of one of the Young Writers' Awards, part of the Arts Richmond programme. BLS took on this 3 year sponsorship to mark our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we fully support this particular aspect of the work of Arts Richmond. 2015/2016 is the third and final year of this sponsorship: it may be that in future years we are able to renew it but this very much depends on our own financial situation. It is a matter the committee keep under review.

It continues to be a challenge to get good speakers for BLS: the relatively recent spawning of local literary festivals has meant we need to be on our mettle to provide the range and quality of speaker our members expect. But with our combination of excellent speakers and events, membership of BLS offers some of the best value in literary London. I am pleased to confirm we are not proposing to increase the membership fees for the 2017/18 season but this is something which the committee keep under review. Membership fees are our only source of income so it is important that we have a full membership of 320. Membership is renewed each season so every September every adult in Barnes (and the environs if there is room) has the opportunity to join BLS.

I would like to thank our patrons, Isla Blair, Julian Glover, Roger McGough, Patrick Neate, Jan Piénkowski and Fiona Smith for the interest and support they have given to BLS. I would particularly like to thank Jan who from the inception of BLS has designed the brochures and some of our posters and has developed the distinctive BLS brochure style. BLS was very fortunate to be able to call on the skills of such a talented artist. Jan has now stood down from working with BLS to concentrate on his own projects but we are very grateful for all he has done for BLS.

I would like to thank Isla Dawes from Barnes Books for her unstinting support for BLS in providing the speakers' books at our meetings and in donating the regular raffle prize at our events. Barnes is very fortunate to have such a well run and friendly local bookshop and such an enthusiastic book seller.

Being part of the Barnes community is an important element of BLS; we are grateful to the Barnes Community Association (BCA) for providing coverage of our events in their monthly magazine Prospect, to the Barnes Bugle and the OSO Arts Centre for their coverage and to all the local shops, businesses and organisations which take our publicity. BLS was part of the BCA organised Societies Day in May 2016 and the Community Information Day at Castelnau Library in June.

I would like to thank our terrific sound engineer Alan Trehwhitt at AT Sound for his hard work and skill in ensuring the sound quality of our events; the staff, trustees and volunteers at the OSO Arts Centre and the Methodist Church, Barnes Green for their hard work and enthusiasm in helping to make our events a success and Anne Cotgreave of Skinny Cat Design for managing our website.

BLS continues to enjoy good audiences and support from our members. We do welcome suggestions from members for speakers they would like to hear: we will certainly do our

best to incorporate them in the programme. We particularly welcome interest from younger members and are actively trying to encourage this.

It has been a privilege to chair the BLS: I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their hard work, professionalism and enthusiasm which make serving on this committee so much fun. Above all thank you to our members who encourage our efforts and make BLS the success that it is.

Jane Skerrett  
Chair

## **6. Honorary Treasurer's report and statement of accounts**

Patrick Harvey, Honorary Treasurer, referred members to the Income and Expenditure account and Balance Sheet for the year and made the following comments. The society is entirely dependent on subscriptions and guest fees for its income and the deficit for the year ended 30 September 2016 was attributable to a fall in membership compared to the previous year. The current year was showing a welcome increase in membership. Income from ticketed events was budgeted to cover costs. On the expenditure side, the cost of room hire was higher because of increased use of the OSO instead of the Methodist Hall. The cost of the sound system was higher because of the number of speakers for whom audio-visual facilities had been provided. Speakers' fees were slightly higher because one of the meetings had featured 2 speakers. On the plus side, the cost of chair hire had reduced because of the introduction of the elevated seating arrangements in the OSO and, although the society was making a contribution to the capital cost, this would finish shortly. Further savings had been achieved by the use of a different printer for the brochure and by no longer providing fresh flowers for meetings. The item for 'Grants and Brochures' included support for the Richmond Young Writers Festival which the committee had decided not to continue although the position would be kept under review. There was a small increase in the cost of the website and other items were in line with the previous year.

Turning to the Balance Sheet, the Honorary Treasurer said the reduction in the society's cash was attributable to the deficit for the year. The figure for 'Subscriptions in Advance' represented those paid by members for the 2016/17 season before 30 September 2016 and were therefore included in the Balance Sheet at that date as a current asset. The Honorary Treasurer recommended that the current rates of subscription stay in place for the coming year. The Honorary Treasurer extended his thanks to the Independent Examiner whose certificate was included in the report.

The Chair invited questions on the report and a member queried the cost of the sound system, particularly in relation to the sums paid to visiting speakers. The Chair said that the cost compared favourably to alternative providers and it was a priority for the society to ensure that speakers could be clearly heard in all parts of the OSO. Favourable comments had been received from speakers and the system compared favourably to those at some alternative events including literary festivals. Additional points made by members were that sound quality had been a problem in the early days of the society and that a number of members were hard of hearing and a good sound system was essential.

## **7. Adoption of the annual report and 2015/16 accounts**

Adoption was proposed by Sheila Hayward Smith and seconded by William Mortimer and passed by a show of hands.

## **8. Approval of the rates of subscription**

The proposal for the current rates of subscription to remain in place for the coming year (£30 for a single membership and £50 for a joint membership) was proposed by Emma King-Farlow and seconded by Maria Harvey and approved on a show of hands.

## **9. Election of officers and members of the committee**

The Chair proposed that the elections be made en bloc and this was approved. The nominations and proposers and seconders are as follows:

<b>Post</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Secunder</b>
Chair	Jane Skerrett	Fiona Smith	Brenda Offredi
Vice Chair	David King-Farlow	Lindsay Wilson	Sue Bowen-Jones
Hon. Secretary	Noel Davison	Peter Owles	Claire Boyling
Hon. Treasurer	Patrick Harvey Jones	Geoff Kelsall	Sue Bowen-
Committee member	Sarah Kearney	Lindsay Wilson	Celia Cleave
Committee member	Caroline Kelsall	Claire Boyling	Carolyn Rampton
Committee member	Kathy Owles	Eleanor Davison	Fina Mason
Committee Member	Louise Carr	Chris Hine	Fiona Dare

The officers and committee members were proposed by Claire Boyling and seconded by Fiona Smith and duly elected en bloc on a show of hands.

## **10. Any other business**

There was no other business. The Chair thanked the members for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.50 PM.