

BRADFORD ON AVON MUSEUM SOCIETY

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT 7.30 ON 3RD APRIL 2025 IN THE LIBRARY MEETING ROOM

The following members attended: David Stokes, Chris Young, Ethel Johnson, Murray King, Vivienne Kynaston, Pam Rolph, Andrew Rolph, Katie Froud, Julian Orbach, Joceline Bury, Mary Clark, Dorna Daw, Elizabeth Harris, Mervyn Harris, Andrew Jenkins, Rick Buettner, Sue Denmark, Peter Mann, Jane Mann, Roger Jones, M'Lou Llewellyn, Sophie Hawke, Jeremy Hawke, John Banks, Chris Dale (Treasurer), Kate Turnbull (Chair), Roger Clark (Curator), Val Holden (Secretary).

1. **Apologies** received from: Derrick Hunt, Carole and Peter Hood, Pam and Ivor Slocombe, Roy and Viv Canham, Joyce Shaw, James Holden and Doreen Ellis.
2. **Minutes** of the Annual General Meeting held on 19th March 2024. Approved.
3. **Matters Arising.** None.
4. **Correspondence.** None.
5. **Reports from Officers.**

Hon Chair's Annual Report by Kate Turnbull.

Kate welcomed everyone to the AGM and reminded everyone present that when Society business was over, the meeting would be honouring the contribution made by Mervyn to the museum.

2024 had been another extremely busy year for the museum. Below are some of the year's highlights:

- A three week exhibition on the life and works of the Caribbean writer, Eric Walrond, attracted 1069 visitors from all over the UK and worldwide. The exhibition was only made possible because of our collaboration with the Preservation Trust, Wiltshire Museum and BoA library.
- We are particularly proud that we were able to steward the exhibition and steward the museum at the same time, something we could not have contemplated a year earlier. The only negative aspect of the exhibition was the difficulty of managing opening and closing of a venue at some distance from the museum. It required a huge amount of planning and organisation but we learned a lot from the experience which will feed into any future exhibitions we stage in the West Barn. One key takeaway from the experience is the need for more do-ers.
- Annual visitor numbers 2024. We were open for 358 two hour sessions and welcomed 4,957 visitors, up on 2023 and 2022 though pre-pandemic levels were around 6000 pa.
- Annual Fundraising Lecture. This now regular feature is our main fundraising effort for the year. This one was also our most successful yet, with nearly all tickets sold, generous sponsorship, and excellent book sales at the end of the talk. The talk on Bradford: a Town made all of Stone was enlightening and lively and delighted the audience.
- Award of grant for an Audience and Income Development project. The grant enabled us to appoint consultants to conduct surveys of our visitors, stewards and our local community. The consultants brought their experience of working with other museums in the south west

to help us consider how we might develop and engage our audiences. On income generation, we were given a wide range of case studies from which to draw parallels with our museum. A useful workshop for trustees, volunteers and the curator helped to steer our ideas on income generation, particularly what would and would not work. The consultant's report contained ideas for income generation based on our collection.

- The project's recommendations identified **four aims** which will feed into the museum's new business plan;
 - remain a well-run and sustainable museum
 - develop and engage with our audiences and local community
 - ensure financial security through fundraising, donations and income generation
 - inspire and encourage learning
- Trustees have identified certain activities/projects they wish to undertake which broadly fit the aims listed above,
 - accreditation
 - re-introduction of sum-up machine for online payments
 - changing opening hours
 - recruiting people to do specific tasks
 - new talks/walks programme
- Current premises. Our premises are leased from Wiltshire Council. Recently we have been asked to pay a charge which we previously did not have to pay. This makes it more imperative than ever that our fundraising is successful as we have to cover this charge from income rather than reserves.
- New premises. Kate has been working on a feasibility project, together with the Town Council, looking at the potential for future co-locating with the Town Council and the TIC. Work is at an early stage.

Hon Treasurer's Annual Report by Chris Dale.

Financial Strategy: Chris explained that it is best described as a measure of our performance against a specific set of objectives, which are:

- That the museum will aim to break even or achieve a surplus
- Activities such as exhibitions or publications are undertaken purely for their intrinsic value rather than solely for profit
- Funds held in reserve are for future development

Some key achievements in 2024 included:

- A three week exhibition on Caribbean-born and former town resident, Eric Walrond, attracted 1069 visitors
- Award of a £6,336 grant from Museum Development South West, to carry out a project on Audience Development and Income Generation
- More volunteers added to the pool of stewards
- A well-attended and successful Annual Lecture: Bradford: a Town made all of Stone
- Another three titles added to the museum's books offering
- Additional content added to the museum's website.

Financial results:

- Chris reported a surplus of £1,161 on publications, compared with £844 in 2023.
- The overall surplus for the year amounted to £9,432 (in 2023, £13,964).
- A sum of £4,056 remains in restricted funds for the future maintenance of the Iron Duke.

- Accounts reviewed by Haines Watts, though as Kate pointed out when thanking him, Chris undertook the majority of the financial preparation before it was presented to accountants for review and approval, and this substantially reduced the amount the museum had to pay.

Hon Curator's Annual Report by Roger Clark

- Visitor numbers up in 2024
- Roman case re-arranged during winter closure
- Changes to the Rubber case and tennis balls loaned to Bath museum
- A framed, long, end of year photograph of staff and pupils of Fitzmaurice School, now on display.
- New acquisitions include: stone carving on what might be a column base, photograph of WW2 motorcycle Dispatch Riders in Bridge Street car park (transferred from Chippenham Museum), oil painting of a foxhunting scene, bill for school uniform from Goodall's, a collection of National Transport tokens, folding model of a farm c1900, pre 1900 watercolour painting of Barton Orchard.

Publications report by Roger Jones

- Three new publications printed during 2024: Improving Life in 19th C BoA by Ivor Slocombe; Belcombe Court, cloth factory to country house, by Matthew Slocombe; and Testaments in Stone (non-conformist chapels in BoA) by James Holden. Lately Ivor Slocombe brought probate registers up to date with Probate Registers 1700 – 1800.
- A book on the Roman Villa site is in the pipeline. Dan Farrell may write a book on the Moulton Bicycle.

Talks and Walks report by Julian Orbach

- A collaboration with the Preservation Trust will see a programme of six, monthly, talks commence in May with the first talk by Tim Mowl in the United Church, on gardens and landscapes in the novels of Jane Austen.
- Planning for a walks programme is still in progress.

Stewards report by Val Holden

- Steward numbers have risen to 37 thanks to ongoing recruitment and training.
- Two steward co-ordinators regularly monitor the rota and act quickly to fill gaps.
- The annual party, to thank stewards for their support and hard work, took place in January and was well attended and enjoyed by all.
- Stewards were canvassed on their views about lengthier opening hours and a broad level of agreement was achieved.

6. Any Other Business

Research Group's reports

- Rob Arkell leads a team of volunteers who carry out surveys using the museum's equipment with test pits dug to confirm or refute their findings. Survey work has been undertaken in *Little Ashley, Bradley's Field, Broughton Monkton and Dudley Field, near Holt*. At Little Ashley, finds of a Nash Hill ridge tile, glazed sherd and handle fragment suggest the presence of a

building; further investigation will be carried out when the field is free of crops. Initial magnetometry findings in Broughton Monkton revealed areas of interest and were followed by digging test pits: some Samian pottery fragments found. At Dudley Field, a medieval ridge tile (possibly from Nash Hill kiln), found during survey work raises the possibility of the presence of a medieval building; test pits to be dug in the autumn will clarify the situation.

- Jane Mann and Becky Clarke completed their project on Ridge Tiles, a survey of medieval ridge tiles in the Salisbury Museum store to establish a type series. The report has now been written up and published with lavish photographs; it bears the museum's logo. It has received praise from a number of interested bodies and a copy has been requested by the British Museum.

Other Business

- Andrew Jenkins asked if it would be possible to obtain photocopies of the Gainsborough portraits of the Tugwell family of Bradford clothiers, on display at No 1 Royal Crescent in Bath, for our archives. Curator will consider the request.
- Sue Denmark; neighbour of Doreen Ellis, expressed Doreen's good wishes for the museum. Sue said that there were many stories about Doreen's time as a local GP and felt these memories should be collected if possible. Kate agreed to circulate Sue's email address among the membership and ask people to contribute their memories of Doreen.

Presentation to former Chair, Mervyn Harris.

For 40 years Mervyn has steered the museum and Kate hoped members had had an opportunity to view the display boards around the room which showed some of the Museum's (and Mervyn's) highlights over this period.

Kate reminded the meeting how instrumental Mervyn had been in saving Miss Christopher's Pharmacy; raising the funds needed to purchase her collection, finding a building to house it, and opening the museum just four years after the pharmacy closed.

Something else Mervyn had been keen to return to Bradford was a calendaring machine, known as the Iron Duke, which was at the time in many pieces and in store in a shed near Bristol. With the help of interested parties and Lottery funding, Mervyn's wish came true and the Iron Duke was restored and returned to its home in Bradford.

In appreciation and gratitude for Mervyn's devoted work trustees wish to bestow on him the title of Founder and Vice President.

Valerie Holden, 12/4/2025