

The Chapels Society ~ Minutes of the 25th Annual General Meeting

1) The 25th Annual General Meeting of the Chapels Society took place at Dovedale Baptist Church, Dovedale Road, Liverpool on 13th July 2013. The President, Christopher Wakeling, took the chair at 11.40am and called the meeting to order. Apologies for absence had been received from Rod & Margaret Ambler, John Ellis, Anthea & Tony Coates, David Oldham, Christopher Stell, Karen & Alan Sell, Timothy & Judith Bartlett, Mark Watson, Roger Thorne, Moira & Peter Ackers, Michael Atkinson and Clyde & Noreen Binfield.

2) The adoption of the minutes of the 24th Annual General Meeting, held in Heath Street Baptist Church, Hampstead, London on 7th July 2012, was proposed by Paul Gardner, seconded by Mary Ede and unanimously agreed by the meeting. The minutes were duly signed by the President as a correct record.

3) The Hon Secretary (Sara Crofts) noted that it had been a relatively quiet year for the Society although there had been a great deal of change in the wider heritage sector, with issues related to VAT and heritage protection hitting the headlines on a number of occasions. The Chapels Society is able to feed into the discussions about such matters through our membership of The Heritage Alliance, an umbrella organisation that acts as a voice for the sector and is increasingly respected in Government circles. Sara Crofts also reported that the new website was now fully operational and continues to grow. Members were encouraged to forward any relevant stories, snippets of information or photographs to her for inclusion.

The Hon Editor (Chris Skidmore) reminded the meeting that the first fruits of our new publications policy had recently been sent out to members. *Sitting in Chapel*, which contains the papers presented at the conference held in Birmingham the previous year, was published with generous financial assistance from English Heritage and sets a high bar in terms of the quality of its content and production. The Council hopes that the *Journal* will prove to be a useful attraction for new members.

The Hon Visits Secretary (Tim Grass) noted that once again the year's visits programme had been a huge success with a good geographical spread of visits to a range of interesting chapels. He commented that the Council now has a good system of planning and preparing for visits and was pleased to report that there are plenty of interesting trips in the pipeline for the coming year.

The Hon Treasurer (Jean West) gave a brief report on the state of Society's finances, which are looking much healthier since the subscriptions rise was implemented. She was pleased to see that the small deficit from the previous year had now been turned into a modest surplus and, although bank interest rates remain low, the Society had been fortunate to receive a grant from English Heritage to help cover the costs of printing the first *Journal*.

The Hon President then presented the Society's *Annual Report and Accounts* to the AGM. The adoption of the *Annual Report and Accounts 2012* was proposed by Stephen Duckworth, seconded by Ted Royle and agreed nem con.

The President also wished to record the valuable contribution made to the Society's work by Michael Atkinson, Casework Officer and by Paul Gardner, Membership Secretary. These are not elected posts but are vital to the smooth running of the Society's affairs.

4) The President noted that membership rates are being kept under review by the Council but it is unlikely that the subscriptions will need to be raised in the immediate future. The introduction of the new student membership rate was thought to have been a useful step but, as always, there is a need to continue to recruit new members.

5) The President, Chris Wakeling, confirmed that he intended to step down from his role but was pleased to note that Tim Grass had accepted a nomination for the role of President (proposed by Roger Thorne and seconded by David Quick). This meant that Tim Grass would be stepping down from the role of Visits Secretary. The Council had made some efforts to find a new Visits Secretary and had identified a member who would potentially be willing to take on the role from the 2014 AGM onwards. This would leave a vacancy for the upcoming year but the Council felt that this would not be a problem as the visits programme for the remainder of 2013 and the early part of 2014 was already agreed. Tim Grass would be able to continue to oversee the visits programme in the interim period.

The President then noted that the Society's other Officers were willing to stand for re-election as follows:

- Secretary: Sara Crofts – proposed by Chris Skidmore, seconded by Paul Gardner

- Treasurer: Jean West – proposed by Rod Ambler, seconded by Alan Rose
- Editor: Chris Skidmore – proposed by Paul Gardner, seconded by Jean West

The President asked if all the above candidates might be approved en bloc and the meeting unanimously agreed to elect all three officers. He then noted that Alan Rose had reached the end of his first three-year term but is willing to stand again. Paul Gardner and Roger Thorne are due to stand down this year having reached the end of their second terms. Grateful thanks were expressed to Paul and to Roger for their excellent contribution to the work of the Chapels Society. Both have arranged visits for members in their respective regions that were much enjoyed by attendees. Paul Gardner will continue in his role as the Membership Secretary for the time being.

Current Council members willing to continue serving:

- David Quick (until 2015)
- Michael Atkinson (until 2015 and then eligible for re-election)
- Rod Ambler (until 2015 and then eligible for re-election)

Current Council members eligible and willing to stand for re-election:

- Alan Rose – proposed by Chris Skidmore, seconded by David Quick

In addition to Alan Rose, there had been a further three nominations for the three vacant positions on the Council:

- Peter Ackers – proposed by Tim Grass, seconded by Clyde Binfield
- Jenny Freeman – proposed by Sara Crofts, seconded by Christopher Stell
- Martin Wellings – proposed by Andrew Worth, seconded by Roger Thorne

As there were four nominations for the three vacant positions, there was a need to hold an election. Ballot papers were distributed to all those members present at the AGM and Peter West and David Arthur were appointed as the tellers. The votes were duly counted and the President commented that the results had been very close indeed. He then announced that Peter Ackers, Jenny Freeman and Alan Rose had been elected as members of the Council.

6) The Council had appointed a new Independent Examiner during the course of the year – Dr Alexander Calder, who had worked in the financial sector before his retirement. The President commented that Dr Calder had carried out a thorough and detailed study of the Society's accounts and his input been very helpful. As there had been no other nominations, the President asked members if they wished the Council to reappoint Dr Calder to examine the accounts for the following year. Dr Calder's nomination was proposed by Chris Skidmore and seconded by Tim Grass. The meeting agreed unanimously.

7) There was no other notified business.

8) Chris Wakeling noted that it had been an interesting few years for the Society, as matters such as implementing the subscriptions rise had not been straightforward. On the other hand, there had been some notable high points such as the 'Sitting in Chapel' conference and the extended visit to the Isle of Man. He felt that the Society was now in a very strong position and he commented that he had thoroughly enjoyed working with such a dedicated group of volunteers. He commended the work of current and past Council members and wished Tim Grass well in his new role as President.

Chris Wakeling was sincerely thanked for his effective and thoughtful leadership during his time as President. His hard work and dedication to the Society were greatly appreciated by the membership.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm.

Attendees: Edward Royle, Nigel Lemon, John Dearing, Kate Tiller, Paul Gardner, George Morton, M Green, Sylvia Jaquest, Saskia Hallam, Rosemary Arthur, Albert Taylor, Enid Taylor, J A Hilton, Marianne Wakeling, Chris Skidmore, E A Rose, C Buckwell, Stuart Leadley, Alan Petford, Christine Denwood, Jean West, Peter West, Leonard Smith, Angus McCormick, Mary Ede, Roger Holden, Andrew Worth, John Hamilton, Stephen Duckworth, Stella Bond, Barbara Phillips, Robin Phillips, Anne Anderson, John Anderson, M G Jones, Tim Grass, Sara Crofts, Chris Wakeling

Guests: Julie Witherall, David Arthur, Angela Cunningham, Liam Turner