

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
OF  
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY SOCIETY**  
held on Saturday 9 June 2018

at The Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral Church of SS Peter and Paul, Clifton, Bristol

**1. Apologies for absence**

Barry Arden, David Heath, Rev John Latham, Anna Douglas, Bobby Drake

**2. Approval of Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 17 June 2017**

The minutes were approved and there were no matters arising

**3. Chairman's Address – Peter Ruback**

The Chairman thanked members for coming to the AGM. He thanked Bob Hardcastle, Chairman of the West Regional Group of the Society for their work in organising the splendid venue. He went on to give a few reflections on where the Society stands at the moment in relation on its challenges and the capacity of the system we operate in to cope with these challenges.

Our raison d'être and the cause when we were founded was of course the casework and the campaigning needed to save buildings under threat and that takes the great majority of staff and volunteer time. This can be seen as reducing the supply of destruction, by making it more difficult to do. But the other side of the issue is to reduce the demand for destruction, by increasing the awareness of our period through education of decision makers, by showcasing constructive reuse and by garnering support for buildings of our period before plans are hatched to destroy or mutilate them.

That is why we were very pleased that we were funded by Historic England to do some work on existing conservation areas and potential new conservation areas for buildings of our period. It spoke to conservation officers and planners independently of any ideas of redevelopment and made the case – so often ignored – that buildings of our period are of value and that the preservation is an important part of rooting ourselves in our history.

We were also pleased when Historic England advised Ministers favourably on the listing of Post Modern buildings. This is no doubt that this was triggered not only by our campaign for dealing with the threat to Number 1 Poultry by lobbying and arguing for its listing, but also by our highly successful conference in 2016 with Terry Farrell and others reviewing the Post Modern period, the buildings and their origins. It is good to think that Post Modern has so smoothly been taken into the world of heritage protection largely because of the Society's work.

That success should not be taken to imply that the battle for earlier parts of the post war period is won. The Chairman has argued in the latest magazine that the currently extremely cautious and hesitant approach to listing (and in fact official appreciation) of buildings of the 1945-79 period should now end and for the purposes of listing and other protections should be treated on a par with the interwar period, the social history and drivers for design now being fully appreciated. In fact, the threat for this period is high, given the preponderance of public sector development with land ownership in the hands of a limited number of players and hence the comparative ease of site assembly.

The Chairman acknowledged the growing contribution of the Regional Groups. They have grown in confidence and capability: are organising a significant contribution to our national events programme and are getting the Society greater coverage and impact than can be done by the Office and volunteers alone. They play to the side of our work which is about communicating what we are about before specific threats emerge.

The Chairman spoke about the question of how the Society should handle post 1999 buildings. These buildings have always been within our remit. They just don't sit well with the name. As a way of breaking open this issue, Trustees have commissioned Alec Forshaw, formerly senior conservation officer at Islington council and highly experienced in these matters, to undertake a review of the work that would be involved in taking on this caseload and whether it would be any different in nature. The hope is that in understanding the likely caseload and threat, and how it might be handled, we will have a clearer idea of the future activity of the Society and hence how we should communicate that, including any possible name changes, or any branding implications. We have described this review as a scope review. Trustees and the Director will want to consider its recommendations and how the Society should proceed.

One thing that we are determined to do is to ensure that the perhaps unfashionable parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century do not get overlooked: for example Neo Georgian and mid-century modern, as well as Miesian buildings are not getting the protection they need.

The Chairman ended by paying tribute to Gavin Stamp. As well as being instrumental in setting up the Thirties Society and being a long standing Chairman, he maintained high standards of scholarship alongside passionate and effective campaigning. In his unique way he communicated the nature of threat – which he deplored - as well as articulating the value of buildings with clarity and honesty to a wide range of readers and avoiding any corruption by fashion. We will miss him sorely.

#### **4. President's Address – Gillian Darley**

The President referred to the Chairman's laying of emphasis on 'awareness'.

In the SAHGB conference (June 8 and 9 with C20 support), a considerable weight was put on the importance of, and identification of, intangible heritage. The President described the *Jaywick for Happiness* heritage trail project, a two-mile circular route around Jaywick Sands, the working-class holiday resort outside Clacton built in the 1930s. The route is demarcated into a dozen or so 'stories', in which a home movie or

photographs and commentary allow the visitor to get a sense of the place, through the imaginative use of personal and oral history. You can follow the scheme online as an app or via the website [www.jaywickforhappiness.org.uk](http://www.jaywickforhappiness.org.uk) or 'walk, cycle, jog, run or even skip' around the trail.

The collective impact of this place, like many others which may seem essentially unpromising, is a way of reinforcing its importance and, with that, its value. Historic England now uses Trip Advisor comments to measure responses to sites. The key factor is understanding, and knowledge may be conveyed in all sorts of ways – far beyond the bare bones of a list description, even if such is available. *New Town Utopia* is a new documentary film made by Christopher E Smith about Basildon New Town. It is not a eulogy but a set of responses from the 'children of the new town', mostly now in their late middle age and many of whom have responded to the difficulties in the town creatively, particularly through poetry and music. It is a 'warts and all' picture compelling in its underlying optimism – both back then and even now. Grayson Perry has included Brooke House, the tower block at the heart of Basildon in one of his pair of 2015 tapestries depicting *Julie Cope's Grand Tour* (she is his fictional Essex girl around whom the *House for Essex* at Wrabness was designed). We are looking at Basildon and Harlow with new eyes, and must take others with us as we do so.

The President has been writing extensively (and positively!) about Essex recently. There is much to be done towards improving public understanding of the New Towns – to begin with by presenting their qualities and achievements to those who actually live there, not all of whom are particularly convinced. Yet the Bata village at East Tilbury (see John Tusa's article in the C20 magazine in 2014) is proof of how this can work, by drawing on memory, shared experience and – eventually – pride. The Society can help in this process, helping to inform, explain and share impressions (and not just hard facts).

Our own research and recommendations into the viability of twentieth century Conservation Areas will be invaluable here. We are in the business of changing minds, throwing light into corners which remain dark for most, and catching the 'arc of taste' as it settles into the mainstream but before the damage is done, quite possibly in ignorance. As the self-styled 'woman on the bus', the President is eager to keep our feet on the ground and put our experience in front of the widest possible public. The tap drips. People are interested. The Society has such a part to play.

## 5. Director's Report – Catherine Croft

- 5.1. The Director thanked the Society's members, both active and passive, for their support, and welcomed this opportunity to present the work of the past year.
- 5.2. Tess Pinto is leaving the society leaving to undertake a PhD on regeneration and conservation under the GLC during the 1960s and 70s. Some candidates have been short listed for her position.
- 5.3. The Director spoke about Casework, in the absence of the Caseworkers and the Casework Committee Chairman who were attending the SAHGB conference, where the previous day's session about how various groups work together was particularly

- valuable. Some of our cases run for years, using a range of tactics and techniques, with a scattergun approach, so that we cannot really know which ones worked.
- 5.4. One example has been our case against the proposed alterations to The Festival of Britain church, St John's Waterloo, which we took to the Consistory Court, and won. It is rare for church cases to be won, and we will only take this action when there is a bigger picture.
  - 5.5. However we find it shocking that a new COI has been upheld by DCMS for a further proposal for the South Bank Centre. We are preparing a FOI request to find out how many times the Secretary of State has not followed HE's advice. We want to make the point.
  - 5.6. In another case we successfully countered a proposal to demolish Ted Cullinan's Ready Mix Concrete HQ, with a proposal for good housing for older people, and this is now the newly proposed use, which has made people think about the building in a different way.
  - 5.7. Alec Forshaw has analysed the Casework Committee agendas of the past three years. It is surprising to note that most cases are from the interwar period. Work on such cases does not however take as long since many are already listed and proposed alterations are less drastic than cases from later decades.
  - 5.8. The recent PoMo group of listings resulted in the Director being asked to write an article for The Guardian. It has spread the range of publications in which the Society features.
  - 5.9. The Director endorsed the Hon Treasurer's comments on the need to fundraise. Legacies make an enormous difference to what we can do. We wish to put together a fundraising committee, and are looking for the expertise to make a professional and appropriate strategy.

## **6. Hon Treasurer's Report and presentation of 2017 Accounts – Carolyn Parmeter**

- 6.1. The Hon Treasurer, Carolyn Parmeter, stated that, in addition to the statutory 2017 Accounts which have been published on the C20 website, the final approved version will include the usual non-statutory page which breaks down the income and expenditure by recurrent activities (membership, casework, events, publications, etc.) and non-recurrent activities. The latter includes special projects, such as the Conservation Areas project, and gifts and donations. These make an important contribution to C20 funds but we cannot bank on them recurring each year.
- 6.2. The accounts show an overall surplus of around £42,000. £16,000 relates to ordinary activities, £26,000 to non-recurrent, and includes £23,600 gifts, donations and legacies for which we are very grateful. The surplus on ordinary activities is due to the fact that Journal 13 did not go to print until early 2018. Had we published it in late 2017, as originally planned, we would have expected a small deficit on the ordinary activities (around £5,000).
- 6.3. Membership and gift aid income is our most important stream of income. It looks healthy (131,611) and broadly in line with 2016.
- 6.4. Events did very well with a profit of nearly £35,500 (the best year yet), bolstered by Japan event (around £11K).

6.5. We continued to receive a HE grant towards casework of £41,000, reduced by 5% from 2017.

6.6. There are a few items of higher than usual expenditure: Casework £16K includes £11K on Conservation Areas, and General Administration includes about £9.5K on IT

6.7. Looking forward:

- HE grant is guaranteed through to April 2020.
- Staff costs will continue to increase – we are now legally obliged to pay pensions and rates will increase.
- We are not proposing any increase to subscriptions this year. We had hoped to introduce monthly direct debits last year but this proved more difficult than expected and we will look at this again.
- We need to continue fundraising - gifts and donations play an essential part in enabling us to publish journals and respond quickly to casework issues.
- In summary, the accounts show a good position, reflecting a successful year for the Society, but we need to continue to grow our income and fundraising.

6.8. The Accounts were approved.

## **7. Ordinary Resolution to re-appoint Argents Accountants Ltd as auditors**

The Resolution was passed.

## **8. Ordinary Resolution to elect six Directors**

One third (5 of the existing 14) of the existing Directors had resigned in accordance with the rotation requirements of Article 24 of the Articles of Association, being: Peter Ruback, Jane Rosier, Ellen Gates, John Clarke and Julia Lane, all of these being willing to stand for re-election. Suzanne Burn had been recommended by the Directors under Article 27 to stand for election. (The permitted maximum number of Directors (Trustees) is 16.)

The Resolution to appoint Peter Ruback, Jane Rosier, Ellen Gates, John Clarke, Julia Lane, and Suzanne Burn was passed.

## **9. Annual Reports**

The Reports from the Publications Committee, the Hon Events Secretary, and the Hon Membership Secretary, had been placed on the About Us page of the website, together with AGM Minutes and Annual Reports from Regional Groups. Paper copies of all these are available on request from the office.

Timothy Brittain-Catlin, Chairman of the Publications Committee, added further observations on the good standard of our publications at a worldwide level, and the monograph series raising awareness of potentially overlooked architects. He reported

that informal confirmation had just been received that the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain has approved £18,000 towards the series, which will help to make up the shortfall left after the withdrawal of RIBA for four titles. SAHGB do not want any books to sell, but would like to join the roster of logos in place of RIBA.

**10. Any Other Business**

Peter Ruback thanked Eva Tyler, retiring as Head of Operations, and welcomed Kate Southey as the new Operations Manager, under a revised office structure.

Susannah Charlton noted that the Report on the Conservation Areas research project (funded by Historic England on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017 of the start of Conservation Areas) is available on the website.

Signed ..... Date ..... 2019  
Peter Ruback, Chairman

*Draft 12 Jun 2019*