

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

OF

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY SOCIETY

held on Saturday 31 October 2020 at 11.30 am

by webinar with advance postal and electronic voting because of Covid-19 restrictions

1. **Attendance:** the Meeting was quorate.
2. **Apologies for absence:** list available from the Society's office.
3. **Annual Reports** from the Publications Committee, the Hon Events Secretary, the Hon Membership Secretary, and Regional Groups had been placed on the Society's website, with paper copies available on request from the office.
4. **Announcement of Advance Postal and Electronic Voting Results**
 - 4.1. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 15 June 2019 were **approved** to be signed by the Chairman.
 - 4.2. The 2019 Accounts were **accepted**.
 - 4.3. Ordinary Resolution to appoint Gillian Darley as President for a further term of one year: **passed**
 - 4.4. Ordinary Resolution to re-appoint Argents Accountants Ltd as auditors: **passed**
 - 4.5. Ordinary Resolution to elect five Directors: one third (5 of the existing 16) of the existing Directors retire in accordance with the rotation requirements of Article 24 of the Articles of Association; of these five, four (Alan Powers, David Heath, Cela Selley and Jane Rosier are willing to stand for re-election, and one new nominee, Mark Eastment, recommended by the Directors under Article 27, will stand for election. (The permitted maximum number of Directors (Trustees) is 16.): **passed**
 - 4.6. Ordinary Resolution to increase member subscriptions, in line with the cycle of regular increases in previous years, to cover regular expenditure and support the Society's mission to save and protect outstanding architecture, to take effect from 1 January 2021, as follows

Individual from £57 to £60, Concession from £42 to £45

Household from £78 to £82, Household Concession from £66 to £70:

passed

5. Chairman's Address

- 5.1.** The Chairman, Peter Ruback, introduced the Meeting, and thanked Members for attending and for voting in advance of the meeting in order to enable the Society to continue to function despite the Covid-19 restrictions. He expressed the Society's gratitude to the Director, staff and volunteers for managing the transition to off-site working during the closure of the office. He thanked retiring Trustee, Timothy Brittain-Catlin, for his service to the Society, as Trustee, Vice-Chair, and Chair of the Publications Committee. He thanked Caseworker Grace Etherington who was leaving.
- 5.2.** PR spoke about the sudden impact of Covid-19 earlier in the year on the Society's plans. Casework had held up, with remote working and virtual meetings by Zoom. Sadly the physical events programme, including a long planned Chicago visit, had to be postponed. Many Members join the Society in part to be able to take part in events, and events make a strong contribution to casework costs. On the upside, the Society was one of the first conservation organisations to start lectures online, with an extensive and varied programme, on an almost weekly basis. In fact one week we had no fewer than 3 talks in a single week. These had attracted audiences double or more than normally travel to lectures given at Cowcross Street (more than could in fact fit in Cowcross Street) and with a much broader geographical and regional distribution, which probably also applied to this AGM. After delivering this online lecture programme for free for several months, and receiving very welcome donations from many attendees, the Trustees decided to move to testing charging a modest price for the Autumn lecture series. There is a cost to running the webinars and we need to make up the lost physical events income. Through the recent Member survey Members indicated they were willing to pay. We were now planning on offering online talks as a permanent part of the future programme, even when we can move back to physical lectures, but of course we look forward to a time when we can have a physical events programme as well.

- 5.3.** PR spoke about changes to planning legislation. This is a Government policy environment which is incredibly fast moving. A change, under the guise of Covid-19 regulations, had led to allowing certain buildings to add on up to two storeys without planning permission. The fact that this only applies to post-1948 buildings, and that no one in Government or Historic England had given a completely convincing justification of this, was of concern, even though it was not yet clear what could be the likely extent of the threat from this change. Following on from this, the Government had floated a “revolution” in planning, with a White Paper offering a plethora of options but with a heavy strand of liberalisation in at least some locations. The Society had been working with the other national amenity societies (SPAB, Victorian Society, Georgian Group, Ancient Monuments Society) to respond to Government in the hope of minimising the threat to heritage of all periods. This was expected to take a good deal of our time in the next months.
- 5.4.** PR spoke about what the Society’s response to recent events in the UK in relation to “contested heritage” and equality. Contested heritage had so far come powerfully to the fore about buildings or public art with direct slavery connections. While only a minority of the buildings and cases the Society would want to be involved with will have such direct links to slavery as Bristol’s Colston statue, some C20 buildings depict the empire in a way that might now be interpreted differently. A group of Trustees had been established to look at how the Society should treat casework and other aspects of its work in relation to heritage that is contested, as to how it should be understood, conserved and interpreted. Importantly, and we are working on this, we are looking at how those processes can best be operated. We will report back when we have reached material conclusions.
- 5.5.** PR noted that the Society is also aware that involvement in building conservation and in the Society is not diverse. Trustees have updated the Society’s Equality Policy, and will be looking at how the Society could reach out to a more diverse audience and how we recruit staff, volunteers and trustees.

6. Director’s Report

- 6.1.** The Director, Catherine Croft, thanked departing Caseworker, Grace Etherington, and introduced her replacement, Coco Whittaker. She thanked Head of Casework, Clare Price, and Casework Committee Chair, David Heath, and the Committee, who

had been continuing to meet on Zoom during the Covid-19 restrictions, and Trustee and volunteer caseworker, Ellen Gates, who was now going to be taking the Committee's minutes.

- 6.2.** The Director mentioned four listing successes of the past year: the Three Ships mural in Hull; Barbara Hepworth's 1970 sculpture in Cheltenham; Grimshaw's 1985-8 Sainsbury supermarket and housing in Camden; and Serge Chermayeff's 1938 Bentley Wood house.
- 6.3.** The Director spoke about other casework in progress. In Plymouth the Society had provided Conservation Area guidance to the local authority. The Halifax swimming pool listing application was turned down but we would be continuing to work on this to protect the tiled mural. Basil Spence's Nuffield Theatre was also turned down for listing but the sculpture might be saved. In Coventry a successful planning application for new university buildings to surround the postwar Architects and Engineering Dept building will result in a change in its character, a disappointing and devastating scheme. The City of London School for Girls had dropped its application to expand into the open spaces. The Society has been continuing to put pressure on the developer of the scheme for Lasdun's IBM building, which had recently been listed. The Society had objected to the proposal to extend the Hopkins building in Shad Thames built for David Mellor. The Derby Assembly Rooms has been granted a COI, and turned down for listing. Members were urged to sign the online petition to prevent the local authority from demolishing this beautifully detailed building. Finally, as covered in the recent magazine, local listing is expected to become more important for the Society.
- 6.4.** Social housing: Lubetkin's Sivill House had been listed.
- 6.5.** Churches: Clare Price had worked with St Winifred's, Southampton (Cachemaille Day, 1937) on modifying their new evangelical congregation's proposal to build a café at the front, to make it more acceptable. This had been a positive outcome.
- 6.6.** Landscapes: the Director thanked Susannah Charlton for her work on the Landscapes book and noted that 20 postwar landscapes had been listed. The Society will continue to apply for more landscapes to be listed.

7. Hon Treasurer's Report and presentation of 2019 Accounts

- 7.1.** Hon Treasurer, Carolyn Parmeter, presented the 2019 Accounts which had been published on the Society's website.

- 7.2.** The small overall surplus of around £11,000 was mainly restricted Monograph funding of £8,200, with a surplus of ordinary recurrent activities of around £2,700.
- 7.3.** Income in 2019 included: the conference run on behalf of the Getty which contributed £8,800 to the Society's overheads; and £10,000 in gifts and donations
- 7.4.** Expenditure in 2019 included £19,000 on special projects: about £5,500 on the website upgrade, the project completed (with further expenditure in 2020) within budget; and £13,400 on fundraising advice for a stronger strategy.
- 7.5.** Events had a very good year (best ever) with profits of nearly £47,000, of which around £7,000 related to commission for the India trip. Events profits were more than 50% above target. This income, which outstripped the HE grant by 20%, had been key to supporting casework.
- 7.6.** Membership, including Gift Aid income, remains the Society's most important stream of income. Income was slightly down (about 5%) on 2018. Other amenity societies were also seeing declining membership. This is an area of slight concern.
- 7.7.** The Society continued to receive a HE grant towards casework of about £40,000, not inflation-linked, and it had been reduced by 5% from 2016. It is possible that the grant may be reviewed again as part of the upcoming Spending Review.
- 7.8.** At the end of 2019, and due to the generosity of Members, including past members who left legacies, the Society had healthy unrestricted cash reserves of around £347,000 (shown in the Accounts as unrestricted cash at bank).
- 7.9.** 2020 would be an unexpectedly challenging year. We did not know when we would be able to return to a full events programme and it was possible that Covid-19 will have changed Members' recreational habits for the longer term. The Society was facing an uncertain financial environment but its healthy reserves should permit staffing and casework commitments to be maintained through at least to the end of 2022. We will keep this under review.
- 7.10.** The modest increase to subscriptions of around 5% which Members had voted for had been the first increase since 2017 and was below inflation increases.

8. Any other business

- 8.1.** Catherine Croft presented some key results of the Member survey. Supporting casework has gone up slightly since the last survey in 2016 and more than 80% of

The Twentieth Century Society

members will definitely renew. PR made a plea for members to renew and preferably take out Direct Debits; being certain about future income helps with strategic planning.

8.2. PR expressed the Society's appreciation and recognition of the support of the late Herbert Robinson, and of the late Fiona McCarthy, former President of the Society.

8.3. There being no questions the Chair declared the meeting closed.

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Date: 2021

Peter Ruback

Chairman