The Royal Photographic Society
Archaeology and Heritage Group

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at The Institute, 67 High Street, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 8AH at 10.30 a.m. on Saturday 12th May 2018

In the absence of Chelin Miller, Gwil Owen was chairman for the meeting, which commenced at 10.34 a.m. with 11 members present.

1. Apologies for Absence

These were received from Andrew Barratt, Rod Bunyan, David Haynes, Eric Houlder, Brian Iddon, Chelin Miller and Dainis Ozols.

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 6th May 2017

Mike Sasse noted two errors in the minutes:

Page 2, the outing to Tudeley and Capel should be deleted from the list of forthcoming outings, this having taken place and been reported as a 2016 event.

Page 5, the last name in the list of existing committee members should be Jim Tonks

With these amendments, the minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record of the meeting, and were signed by the chairman elect once the new committee had been elected.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman’s Report

In the absence of the Chairman, no Chairman’s' Report was available, but the Secretary had prepared a report on group outings:

There have been a number of outings over the last 12 months serving a range of interests. Numbers attending have, though, often been disappointing, sometimes acutely so if one considers the number of Group members excluding current committee (this number being sometimes zero). Bookings are sometimes so late as to make finalising arrangements difficult. We have experienced difficulties in arranging some outings for the first part of this year, but the programme is now underway.
15th May 2017  Romney Marsh Photo Walk and Social: Some 10 members met in Appledore, Kent and visited a number of the local churches including a ruined example.

17th June 2017  West Stow Anglo-Saxon village: Much of interest to photograph here – 8 participants from 4 parties, only 2 ordinary group members.

23rd June 2017  Archaeology Day, Towton, Yorkshire: This was cancelled due to low bookings and late cancellations.

12th July 2017  Cirencester Church and Chedworth Roman Villa: A most interesting day, attended by 6 (5 for the main event in the afternoon, none of whom were ‘ordinary’ group members).

18th September 2017  Cuckfield and Worth Churches: Two very different churches, with good support (11)

7th October 2017  Members’ Showcase: This annual event, formerly the Conference, maintained decent support with 15 attendees, and a wide range of presentations.

17th October 2017  Kenilworth Castle: This went ahead, but with only two bookings.

27th April 2018  Dartmoor: Stone circles, stone rows and Bronze Age settlement with expert guide. 6 participants from 3 parties, all committee members.

In 2018 a visit to Rochester Cathedral had to be abandoned for practical reasons, and it was not possible to go ahead with an intended visit to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

Visits to the Knole Conservation Studios and the Jurassic Coast in Dorset await confirmation, and other suggestions being considered are Stowe, Buckinghamshire, Amberley Museum (Sussex) and Lacock (House and Fox Talbot Museum).

We are, though, confirmed as visiting Newhaven Fort, Sussex and the nearby Tide Mills site on 14th June. And a visit has just been confirmed to the Hulton Archive (Getty Images) in London, which will take place at 10.30 a.m. on 31st May.

The Members’ Showcase will be held on 13th October.

There were no comments.
5. Secretary’s Report

The Secretary’s report follows in full:

This is my first and only year as Secretary of the group, a role I took on from the last AGM to assist the Chairman in her final year in that role before a move abroad would prevent her continuing. I would like to thank Rodney Thring, who carried out the role of Secretary for many years previously, for assisting with the transition.

Apart from the occasional request, there are in fact few matters to deal with from the membership. Welcome packages containing a recent edition of ‘Heritage Photography’ are however sent out to new members together with a letter introducing them to the Group.

During the year the RPS discontinued the scheme whereby new Society members get a year’s free subscription to a Special Interest Group of their choice. The claim was that most members left after a year rather than renewing, so the scheme had not been effective at increasing enrolment in the Special Interest Groups. Examination of the information from our group does confirm this, with a significant number of people leaving the group each year, being replaced by fresh recruits on free memberships. Withdrawal of the scheme might, though, have been effected with more consultation and tact than was the case.

The monthly membership figures indicate that the membership is now falling as expected from late 2017, when the scheme was withdrawn. It is estimated that our membership might fall by around 15% in all, removing the sudden increase observed when the scheme was introduced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Total Members</th>
<th>New Members</th>
<th>Lapsed Members</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2017</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2017</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2017</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2017</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2017</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2018</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our membership has, though, been increasing slowly and steadily since 2010, only around 25% of that increase being attributable to the free membership scheme. The future is difficult to predict, but the underlying trend appears to be level or slightly positive. There will, of course, be a reduction in income, but the loss of transient members will not affect the important number of active group members, and the committee is not unduly concerned.
During the year your Secretary analysed the membership data available to him to get a clearer picture of membership trends over the years, the geographical spread of members, and age profiles for various areas. It is hoped that the committee will make use of the information provided by this. Amongst other things, it highlighted that membership in areas away from the south-east corner of the country has been rising steadily in recent years as a proportion of total membership, and foreign membership even more so. It also showed that age profiles were not consistent throughout the country (average age being highest in the South-East Region), and highlighted a significant number of members in the London area, which seems the most fertile area to encourage more active participation in group activities.

6. Treasurer’s Report

The Treasurer’s Report follows in full:

At the AGM in 2017 the then treasurer, Jim Tonks, stepped down after many years and I assumed the role of treasurer in May. I would like to thank Jim for the support he has given me during the following months.

The Groups finances continued to be healthy during 2017 with an end of year surplus of £154.96.

During the year the Groups and Regions were asked to reduce their bank balances to a level commensurate with their individual future known expenses and risk. The excess funds were to be used for the benefit of their members. Your committee subsequently agreed that we could safely reduce our bank balance to about £2500. To do this your Committee agreed to produce a better quality Journal with increased pages two or three times a year. This would gradually reduce our balance over the coming years without needing to increase subscriptions.

As a result of a further RPS decision in late 2017 to stop subsidising new members with a year's subscription to a Specialist Interest Group of their choice from 1 December, our group has seen a reduction in subscriptions in the following months. During the financial year 2017 there were 19 "free" members which if they do not renew their group membership will result in a shortfall of £285 this year. This reduction can be contained within our policy of reducing our bank balance. But of course the reduction period will be shorter unless we can encourage new members to join. Your committee is actively pursuing this.

I believe that our finances are sound provided that we can maintain our membership and your Committee has agreed to maintain our annual subscription at £15 per member.
RPS Archaeology and Heritage Group  
2017 Annual Accounts

Starting Bank Balance 1 Jan 2017  
£5,424.21

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

**INCOME**

Subscriptions (Dec 2016-Nov 2017)  
£2,259.50  
A

from Member's Day  
£70.00

**TOTAL INCOME**  
£2,329.50

**EXPENDITURE**

Venue hire; LCA Leatherhead AGM and Member's Day + Field trip  
£100.75

Field Trip Donations  
£50.00

Refreshments (AGM & Members Day  
£42.86

Heritage Photography; Lakeland Printing.  
£1,184.70  
B

Heritage Photography; postage & stationary  
£614.78

Council for British Archaeology subscription  
£39.00

Chairman's expenses  
£113.42

Secretary's expenses; postage and stationary  
£129.43

Committee expenses  
£20.84

**TOTAL COSTS**  
£2,295.78

Bank Balance 29 December 2017  
£5,457.93  
C

Outstanding Credits

RPS Dec 2017 Members Subs (from Jan 2018 deposit)  
£122.50  
D

RPS 2017 Life Membership Subs (from Jan 2018 deposit)  
£195.00

Outstanding Debits

RPS Dec 2016 Members Subs (from Jan 2017 Deposit)  
(£196.25)

**NET INCOME for 2017**  
£154.96

**NET WORTH OF A&H GROUP AT 31 DECEMBER 2017**  
£5,579.17
NOTES

A: Subscriptions are deposited into the A&H account one month in arrears. The subscriptions in 2017 include first year RPS members who are subsidised by the RPS. This concession was discontinued on 1 December and it is anticipated that group membership will decrease during 2018.

B: Heritage Photography was increased from 12 pages in Spring Issue to 20 pages in Autumn Issue with improved quality paper.

C: Following comment from the RPS regarding excess funds held in Region and Group accounts, your Committee has agreed to reduce the cash in bank to £2500 over the next few years by continuing the 20 page Heritage Photography with up to 3 issues per year.

D: Life Membership Subscriptions have previously been deposited into the A&H account in March of the relevant year. The subscriptions for 2017 were paid in January 2018. The RPS has confirmed that Life Member subscriptions will in future be paid in the December of the relevant year. i.e those for 2018 will be paid in December 2018.

Walter Brooks thought that it was not necessary to reduce the finances we hold, as we now have a reduced income resulting from the lower membership figures. Garry Bishopp noted that we intended to hold money equivalent to about one year’s turnover.

It was noted that the major expenditure was on ‘Heritage Photography’

The report was proposed by Rodney Thring, seconded by Mike Sasse, and accepted unanimously.

7. Election of Officers and Committee Members for 2018/2019

Mike Sasse advised that there were proposals for two new members to join the committee, one as ordinary committee member (David Bryson) and one as secretary (George Backshall). Two of the current committee (Walter Brooks and Mike Sasse, the current secretary) were standing down. The other committee members had offered themselves for re-election. Of these, the current chairman, Chelin Miller, is standing down from that role, and Gwil Owen is willing to become chairman.
Appointments were proposed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
<th>Seconded</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Gwil Owen</td>
<td>Walter Brooks</td>
<td>Robert Lincoln</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>George Backshall</td>
<td>Rodney Thring</td>
<td>David Bryson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Garry Bisshopp</td>
<td>Ken Keen</td>
<td>George Backshall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Member</td>
<td>David Bryson</td>
<td>Rodney Thring</td>
<td>Robert Lincoln</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Existing committee members offering themselves for re-election were:

Eric Houlder, Ken Keen, Chelin Miller, Rodney Thring and Jim Tonks, who were proposed *en bloc* by Garry Bisshopp and seconded by Walter Brooks.

Mike Sasse thanked Walter Brooks, who is standing down, for his role in arranging outings in the Midlands and adjacent areas.

**8. Any Other Business**

At the suggestion of the Chairman, Mike Sasse led a discussion on a number of issues which it was felt benefitted from debate at the AGM:

**Website**

Mike Sasse noted that, since the RPS website was relaunched a few years ago, the webmaster cannot add material to the website directly, nor change the functionality of the site. The webmaster supplies information to RPS HQ, and they load material onto the site, so the webmaster’ role is more administrative than creative. The functionality is fixed and common to all groups, and information that used to be displayed for everyone’s benefit (e.g. permanent notices, AGM minutes and notification of potential outings) no longer have a place.

George Backshall commented that the website is similar to those for similar societies. He noted that social media are becoming more used for exchange of information and images, and that the group is not active in this area. Facebook is important, as it is possible to promote moderated discussion. Garry Bisshopp noted that feedback from the Special Interest Group meetings suggested that websites are not as interesting for people as other modern media. It was noted that members expect to receive e-mail notification of events.

David Bryson felt that the website was not very user-friendly, but better than some. He thought it did not provide adequate information about contacts, who to submit material to etc., and that HQ did not facilitate enquiries. This all emphasised the important role of ‘Heritage Photography’ to the group. He noted that 3 or 4 groups
now had Facebook pages, though it is not known if these are 'official', and suggested such sites be set up by HQ for each group. He also noted that most of our group members do not have a profile set up on the website, and this helps to learn about other group members.

Mike Sasse felt that the lack of direct control had impeded the group’s progress in building an ordered gallery of pictures that provided a clear message of the group’s identity. George Backshall noted that some of the images were not connected to heritage, and he presumed that members could not add photographs without it going through Bath.

Robert Lincoln asked if we knew who looked at the website – the committee was unaware of any available metrics for website use.

Walter Brooks suggested that a working group be set up to look into these areas, as it was considered that the website was not user-friendly, and that this include what the group wanted and didn’t want on the website.

Outings

Mike Sasse asked the meeting to consider who outings were aimed at – he suggested that, although all people were welcome, outings were not a success for the group unless a number of ordinary group membership attended (i.e. not just committee and non-group members). He asked to what extent they were valued as social gatherings and to what extent as opportunities for photography, and how far people were willing to travel.

Garry Bisshopp suggested that a privileged selling point is best i.e. where photographic opportunities are available to the group that are not generally available. Mike Sasse agreed with this, and noted that such visits are more difficult to arrange (e.g. National Trust houses, where stiff group charges, increased opening times for the general public, or photographic restrictions on items not owned by the Trust, have made such privileged opportunities difficult to arrange).

Robert Lincoln suggested that all outings be arranged such that travel there and back in the same day is feasible.

It was queried whether the group's name gives the correct impression of our balance of activities, or whether omitting the word ‘Archaeology' from the title would be better. Mike Sasse noted that this was an emotive subject often discussed in the past.

‘Heritage Photography’

Mike Sasse suggested we needed a clearer timetable for receipt of articles for the Journal, proof reading and publication to allow contributors and those involved in its production to better work together.
It was suggested that submission information be put on the website.

David Bryson wondered if the publication should be more widely available, and possibly available on the web. Gwil Owen wished to retain hard copy only for the membership (i.e. no electronic journal option). There was agreement that the hard copy edition was an important selling point for the group, and that making it simultaneously available on the web would undermine this. The group might consider making back copies available on the web, so other heritage groups and interested parties could use it. Gwil Owen noted that a far-reaching review of this whole area was needed.

**Newsletter**

Mike Sasse noted that the committee is considering a newsletter to supplement ‘Heritage Photography’, which would include outings updates. There was general agreement at the meeting that this would be in electronic form.

David Bryson emphasised the need for information to be co-ordinated across the website, e-mails to members, newsletters and any other media. A newsletter might include information on new exhibitions and other useful information for members as well as group activities.

Mike Sasse suggested one person would be needed to collate all information in order to disseminate it to the various outlets such as website and e-newsletter.

Gwil Owen would wish to encourage members to contribute material to the newsletter in their own style, without ‘rewriting’ articles, a comment that also applies to ‘Heritage Photography’. David Bryson introduced the idea of mentoring writers.

Walter Brooks felt the e-newsletter needed to be timely, relevant and focussed to be successful.

At the close of the discussion, it was recorded with sadness that long time member Mervyn Seltzer had passed away recently. He had been a Warrant Officer Navigator in the Air Force, and worked in the aircraft industry. At the appropriate time George Backshall will enquire about donation of some of his prints to the group’s archive.

The meeting closed at 12.10 p.m.

Signed ……………………… Date ……………………………

AGM minutes of 12th May 2018

agmminutes2018 MJS 9th June 2018