

**Minutes of EHBG Annual General Meeting Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023  
2.00pm at Harwich Guildhall**

Present

Chair	Martin Bridge
Secretary	Jenny Bishop
Treasurer	John Payne
Committee	Brenda Watkin Elphin Watkin David Andrews John Walker Terry Vanner and 21 Members

1. Vote of thanks to our hosts and Brenda and Elphin for a wonderful morning

2. **Apologies for absence**

Anne Padfield, Tim Howson, Ken Drinkwater

3. **Minutes of AGM for 2022 and matters arising**

The minutes of the 2022 AGM were approved as a true and correct record. There were no matters arising.

4. **Chairman's Report**

Firstly, a huge thank you to the local team here, who were gracious enough to say that they were honoured to have us, when I think it should actually be the other way around, we are honoured to be your guests. Thanks also to Elphin and Brenda for setting up today. It's great to be in Harwich where I have been lucky enough to have looked at a few buildings over the years, as well as the Crane (another report I need to write up!).

As usual we have had a varied group of talks this year, with more interesting topics to come, and of course we are back in Moulsham Mill on a face-to-face basis. Numbers have been a little disappointing, but seem to be picking up now. We have also had varied success in hybrid meetings, Zooming to folk who can't make it into Chelmsford (or chose not to) – and I guess this is the new normal! I'm pleased to say that the last talk was successfully 'broadcast–' although there were some dodgy moments when it looked as if the local internet connection was going to let us down.

The Day School just a few weeks ago was, I think, a great success, and had the added bonus of a visit to a Maldon building afterwards (thanks to Tim). I hear the bookstall did well too.

I was asked if it might be possible to move back to Cressing for Day Schools, certainly an attraction in itself, but I'm not sure what the situation there is likely to be in the next few years.

As ever, we are reliant on all the time and effort of the volunteers who make things happen, and I am pleased to say the committee have all agreed to continue for another year, although Ken did warn that it may be his last year as Membership Secretary, and I'm hoping one of the others will step up to this position. There is of course always room for new blood – including the Chair – which I seem to have fallen into on a rather long-term basis!

We have a few formal items on today's agenda, tweaks to the Constitution, but also a proposal to increase the subs to keep up with inflation and keep the high standards of things like the Newsletter, but I hope it will not take too long, and we can get back to enjoying the delights of Harwich.

With that positive note I shall hand over to John for the Treasurer's Report.

5. **Treasurer's Report**

Over the Covid period, when traditional AGMs could not be held, the Treasurer's Report and Accounts have been published in the Newsletter prior to the AGM. This had the advantage that all members had the opportunity to consider the accounts before the relevant AGM, with the disadvantage that, not being adopted, they were open to challenge. This year, effectively post Covid, the accounts are offered in the traditional way at the AGM so that they may be published, after adoption, with the Minutes of the meeting.

The significant change in 2022 was that towards the end of the year the Group moved from virtual Zoom to face-to-face meetings at Moulsham Mill, with a Zoom option for those unable to attend in person. In doing so the Group has incurred additional and continuing internet service costs. Initially take up at Moulsham Mill was poor but it is hoped the incremental increase seen since will continue while at the same time the Group offers Zoom access to meetings for the more dispersed members, who are asked to be patient as the 'virtual' techniques improve.

To comment on the specifics of the accounts, the bank balance carried forward from the end of the financial year (31/12/22) was £15,494 (2021-£13,124) which seems a creditable performance as we transition out of Covid restrictions. To be taken into account, however, is the windfall to the Group of £2148 (August 2022) following the untimely winding up of our sister society HEARS. Adjusting for this, our end of year balance would have been £13,346, not dissimilar to the 2021 result.

### **Income**

Subscriptions were down slightly at £1870 (2021- £1970), possibly because there was no membership promotion (the Crossing Temple green book in 2021) for 2022. The virtual Day School provided income of £103 and book sales £1553. A very enjoyable group visit to Maldon, arranged by Tim Howson, produced income of £330.

### **Expenditure**

Expenditure followed the usual pattern except for the changes consequent on Covid, mainly a noticeable internet service provision cost without any balancing reduction in cost elsewhere. Postage charges and printing costs for the newsletter go inexorably higher. The Group also paid for dendro work at Mundon Church and contributed to the cost of that at Silver Street, Maldon.

Taken as a whole I am pleased to be able report that the overall Group finances remain in good order for 2023. However it is a fact that there has been a reduction in income and relative increase in expenses over the Covid period which taken with inflation, particularly on printing and postage, leads the Committee to propose a modest increase in the cost of annual subscription to the Group, the first such increase since January 2008. Details of this proposal are described in more detail in Agenda item 8.

I would like to thank Clive Hallett for his assistance and for reviewing these accounts. Clive has agreed to continue as Honorary Accounts Examiner for the year to 31st December 2023 if that is the wish of the meeting, see Agenda item 10

The treasurer's report was approved

## **6. Editor's report**

The editor is considering articles from newsletter for publication and considering reprinting the green book.

## **7. Change to the constitution**

Proposed change to the constitution to provide public liability insurance for non-members at EHBG functions.

The Committee proposes that Section 3 of the Constitution on Membership:

“Membership shall be extended to persons interested in furthering the aims of the Group. There shall be three categories of Membership:

- Individual Member
- Joint Member - any number of persons residing at the same address
- Institutional membership costing at least double that of individual membership

The Committee shall have power to refuse membership and shall not be obliged to state its reasons.”

Be changed to:

“Membership shall be extended to persons interested in furthering the aims of the Group. There shall be four categories of Membership:

- Individual Member
- Joint Member - any number of persons residing at the same address
- Institutional membership costing at least double that of individual membership
- Day members - persons who are not full members but are attending functions run by EHBG. They will be granted day membership for the duration of the event.

The Committee shall have power to refuse membership and shall not be obliged to state its reasons.”

The change to the constitution was proposed by Elphin Watkin and seconded by Barbara Martin. The change was agreed.

## **8. Subscriptions**

The Committee proposes that the subscriptions, which have remained unchanged since January 2008 at £15 for individuals and £20 for households, be increased to £20 and £25 respectively due to rising costs. The proposal was proposed by Lee Prosser and seconded by Jenny Bishop. The change was agreed.

## **9. Election of officers and committee**

The Chairman - Martin Bridge, Secretary - Jenny Bishop and the Treasurer - John Payne, were elected unanimously.

The Committee – David Andrews, Jane Briscoe, Ken Drinkwater, Charmain Hawkins, Tim Howson, Terry Vanner, John Walker, Brenda Watkin and Elphin Watkin were elected unanimously.

More nominations are welcome and should be sent to the secretary, Jenny Bishop.

**10. Appointments of Hon. Accounts Examiner**

Clive Hallett was appointed. It was noted that he does a wonderful job

**11. Any other business**

None

The AGM closed at 14.17pm.