

ROYAL SOCIETY FORMER STAFF ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19 May 2014

<i>Present:</i>	Mary Manning (<i>Chairman</i>)	
Ratti Bulsara	George Hemmen	Susan Moss
Choong Kar Chan	Ann Hicks (<i>Joint Events</i>)	Judy Rimmer
Diana Chapman	<i>Secretary</i>	Keith Root (<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>)
Alan Clark	Christine Johnson	Beata Seymour
Vera Cockle	Linda Mackenzie	Nadia Slow
Peter Collins	Jennifer Malcolm	David Sturt
Peter Cooper (<i>Hon. Secretary</i>)	Jackie Middleton-Smith	Peter Warren
Brenda de Vere-Lewis	Len Mole	Eileen Wilson
John Deverill	Peter O'Rourke	Jackie Witchalls
Sandra Goodall	Maurice Oak	
David Griffin	Wilma Pereira	

Mary Manning welcomed Judy Rimmer and Linda Mackenzie to their first meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Peter Cooper reported that 34 members had sent apologies.

2. Minutes of the 2012 AGM

Peter Cooper reported changes to the draft minutes previously circulated to members as follows:

Minute 8 (Members' welfare matters): to amend that it was Joan and George Hurrell's golden anniversary.

With this amendment the minutes were confirmed. Copies of the confirmed minutes are available from the Secretary or from the website.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes.

There was none.

4. Report from the Chairman

(a) Overview of the year

Mary Manning said that her first year as chair had been a mixed and enjoyable experience, but rather different from what she had imagined. The expectation had been to consolidate the changes to the Association agreed at the last AGM, with a membership drive and the initiation of new and more varied activities. Some of that had been started and there was an excellent New Year lunch. However the final three months of the year had been dominated by successive decisions of the Royal Society over its support for the Association – decisions that were both confusing and conflicting. The AGM agenda had, therefore, been revised to concentrate on these matters, which were fundamental to the future of the RSFSA. It had also been decided that it would be inappropriate this year to invite the Executive Director of the RS to come to the AGM, but she hoped this practice would be resumed next year.

(b) The future of the Association

Mary drew members' attention to paper AGM14-1 which laid out the sequence of actions and decisions relating to the RS's support for the Association since the last AGM. Mary reported on the outcome of her telephone discussion (arranged by the RS), with the Executive Director, Dr Julie Maxton, and the RS Finance Director, Mr Andy Hibbert. The RS had decided, with regret, to cease with immediate effect, all direct financial support for the RSFSA. The decision had been taken in the context of a wider review of RS financial obligations and a better understanding of the Society's obligations and duties under Charity Law, which concluded that financial support for the RSFSA fell outside the charitable objectives of the RS. This unexpected decision made all previous discussions irrelevant but, based as it was on the RS's interpretation of charity law (albeit an overly strict interpretation, some believed), the decision was difficult to argue against. The RS had expressed its regret but it was resolute. It was, however, keen to retain good relations with the Association and had offered various forms of support that did not have direct financial costs, and which, as would be seen, would ensure that the Association could continue to operate.

Peter Cooper said that, in looking at the future of the Association, the Officers and Committee had concentrated on what it believed constituted the core purposes of the Association and how these might continue to be delivered. These were:

- (i) To provide a social network and means for those who have worked at the RS to keep in touch with each other, through *BTT* and the website;
- (ii) To provide welfare assistance in the form of a ‘helping hand’ to members in need, especially those who are ill or infirm;
- (iii) To recognise members who pass away, by attendance at funerals, flowers/donation, and a tribute in *BTT*;
- (iv) To produce a members’ newsletter accessible to all members, containing news of members and, ideally, entertaining, interesting or informative material;
- (v) To arrange and/or coordinate self-financing trips, visits, lunches and events for members and guests.

Keith Root explained how he saw the finances of a future Association addressing these aims without a financial contribution from the RS towards either the running costs of the Association or, crucially, the provision of the Welfare Fund. Income from members was around £690/year with continuing ‘in kind’ support from the RS for the AGM and Committee meeting costs. The RS would also meet the costs of printing *BTT* for one more year. The Association’s reserves stood at around £2k. He concluded that the Association’s finances could be balanced for the coming year on the following expenditure basis:

- (i) setting aside a sum of £200 for welfare support on the same basis as at present;
- (ii) provision of the website and increasing its use as a means of keeping members informed;
- (iii) preparation and distribution costs of *BTT*;
- (iv) reducing mailing costs by rationalisation of contents and reduction to three/year;
- (v) other administrative costs at a comparable level to recent years.

The future was less rosy, Keith added, not least as the costs of printing *BTT* would need to be found from mid-2015 onwards, but the Association’s reserves did allow a period for solutions to be found. Not only, therefore, was he confident about the viability of the Association for the next few years, but he saw no need to rush into raising subscriptions at this point. That should be reviewed at future AGMs as the new funding model worked its way through.

In discussion various points were made:

- (i) The ability of the RSFSA to provide help and support for former colleagues was its core purpose and must continue. Given the age profile of the membership the costs were likely to increase.
- (ii) Members might be asked to contribute to a new RSFSA Welfare Fund, replacing the RS-funded one. Several members present indicated they would do so; Dr Warren offering to match all contributions made up to a figure of £200. Some suggested that Fellows, if informed, might also contribute.
- (iii) Keith reported that Chris Argent had obtained indicative costs for printing *BTT* – £28/issue in black and white or £115 in colour. Increasing the number of members obtaining *BTT* via email or from the website (both of which would continue to be in full colour no matter what happened to the printed version) should be encouraged.
- (iv) Some members asked if the RSFSA might be registered as a charity, to obtain the benefit of Gift Aid and VAT exemption. The Committee would look at this option but it was felt that our objectives and member benefits would not meet the necessary criteria; there was also an effect on the administrative workload and costs.
- (v) It was suggested that a dispute over an invoice some years ago might have led to the RS’s change of heart, but Mary responded that she saw no signs of this – it was a recent business decision stemming in the main from a different working environment.

Concluding the discussion, Mary thanked the members for their positive and helpful suggestions and offers. It was encouraging that the AGM was agreed that the Association could and should

continue – the objective must be ‘business as usual, with some economies’ and the Committee would pursue this aim. It would also take forward the proposal of a Welfare Fund, contacting all members accordingly.

5. Hon. Treasurer’s report

Keith Root tabled a finalised version of the accounts for 2013/14, signed by the honorary auditor, supplementing his report AGM14-2. He noted that the unexpectedly high surplus for the year was mainly due to the RS’s changing its funding policy during the year, which had led to its paying both the normal grant and the full costs of the New Year lunch.

The motion to accept the accounts for 2013/14 was proposed by Peter Warren and seconded by David Sturt; the meeting agreed the motion.

6. Report of the Hon. Secretary

Peter Cooper referred to his report AGM14-3, previously circulated. Sadly, Nancy Tupholme had died on 3 January 2014, at the age of 101, and we had been informed that Margaret Earl had passed away on 22 February 2009. On the positive side, we had gained four members: Stephen Cox, Cheryl Davies, Linda Mackenzie and Judy Rimmer. There were now 71 members.

He noted that 55% of members were receiving Events notifications by email, 45% receiving AGM papers by email and 35% were receiving *BTT* electronically. He thanked those who had opted for this form of delivery, which would be helpful in resolving the Association’s current funding issues. He asked that others consider the option, but he assured the meeting that distribution by post would continue to be available.

7. Report of the Welfare Secretary

Susan Moss reported on member welfare matters. We were all glad to see Maurice Oak and Beata Seymour at the meeting. Regrettably Frances Chetham and Jean Lamb were unable to be present because of accidents.

Susan reported that she was in touch with several members to see whether there were ways in which the Association could help them. The Association continued to send greetings cards on 80th, 90th and 100th birthdays and on significant wedding anniversaries. She asked to be informed by anyone who was aware of any member who was ill, infirm or might otherwise be able to benefit from the Association.

8. Report of the Editor of *Beyond The Terrace*

Chris Argent, *BTT* Editor, had sent his apologies and a report (AGM14-5). Peter Cooper picked up on the Editor’s report, in particular the discussions of the Committee, at the Editor’s request, that a second, joint Editor be found. This person would concentrate particularly on attracting material from members, reflecting the broadening membership base, but also provide cover in case of holidays and illness. He encouraged all members to consider whether they might take on this role – Mary Manning agreed that this was a good way for members to get further engaged in the Association and contribute their interests and ideas.

9. Report of the Events Secretaries

Ann Hicks, Joint Events Secretary, apologised for Joan Hurrell’s absence and reported on events during the year. A very successful and fascinating visit had been made to the De Morgan Centre on 7 November 2013 and an equally interesting, but less well attended, visit to the Charles Dickens Museum had been on 23 March 2014. The New Year lunch had been provided in style by the RS and, not surprisingly, was the best-attended ever.

Looking to the next year, she and Joan were looking at an event in the autumn 2014 and spring 2015. It was hoped that a New Year lunch could continue but, under the new financial arrangements, this would need to be self-financing and thus all members would have to pay for themselves and their guests. She asked what sort of meal and level of cost members might wish to see – various ideas were suggested, with a cost of £20–25 per head.

Peter Cooper noted that it was intended that, in addition to the core programme organised by the Events Secretaries, other events and visits would be arranged at the initiation of members. There had been a visit to Bletchley Park and Mary Manning was arranging a walking weekend in North Yorkshire. He encouraged members to consider what they might be able to offer. John Deverill

noted that, some years ago, there had been a visit to Jane Austen's house in Alton, returning to his house afterwards, and he would be happy to do this again.

10. Report on pension matters

Len Mole, who looked after pension issues on the Committee, reported that the RS was planning to close the Pension Plan to new entrants. This would not affect RSFSA members, whether pensioners or deferred pensioners in the Plan. The administration of all pensions was now being done by Barnett Waddingham, including the payment of pensions paid from CMG annuities. This should make matters clearer and simpler, although there were some transition issues.

Peter Cooper said that he had spoken to one of the Pension Trustees and learned that they were planning to issue a newsletter to all Plan members. In discussion it was suggested that members would like the newsletter to include information on who the Trustees were, how (and whom) to contact and the latest funding statement.

11. Amendment to the Rules

Peter Cooper drew attention to paper AGM14-4, which gave notice of the intention at next year's AGM to amend the rules to make the Welfare Secretary an *ex officio* member of the Committee.

12. Elections

Peter Cooper announced that there were no changes to the Committee this year – Keith Root had agreed to stay for a further year – and therefore no elections. The Committee had agreed to co-opt Susan Moss again to deal with welfare matters, pending the Rules change proposed in item 11 above.

It was noted that formally Keith Root would complete his five years in 2015. However, given the current financial situation and the need to rebalance the Association's income and expenditure, it may prove beneficial to consider whether his term might be exceptionally extended at the next AGM.

13. Appointment of Auditor

Keith Root, Treasurer, recommended that Nigel Parfitt be reappointed auditor for the 2014/15 financial year and thanked him for his work this year. The proposal was agreed.

14. Any other business

(a) Anniversary Reception

George Hemmen asked whether members would be invited to the RS Anniversary Reception. Peter Cooper responded that the RS nowadays only invited pensioners in the RS Pension Plan (excluding deferred pensioners), and that he had not heard whether invitations would be issued this year.

(b) RS Pensioners Fund

David Sturt noted that the RS was to absorb the RS Pensioners Fund (the private fund for which the RSFSA had been able to propose potential beneficiaries) into the RS Pension Plan; he did not believe that was appropriate. Peter Cooper said that was a matter for the RS and Charity Commission, and not one where the Association had a responsibility.

(c) Thanks

Eileen Wilson thanked the Committee for all its work, and especially in handling the RS's changing position on funding of the Association. The meeting concurred.

15. Date for the 2015 AGM

The 2015 AGM will take place at 2:00 p.m. on Monday 18 May 2015.

PRC, 20 August 2014

ANNEX – RSFSA BUDGET FOR 2014/15 AS DISCUSSED AT THE AGM ON 19 MAY 2014

RESOURCES

The RSFAS has the following resources in funding and in kind:

- R1 Total Reserves (General Fund plus Welfare Fund) £2,055.67
- R2 Access to rooms for AGM and Committee Meetings (alternative accommodation in central London would be prohibitively expensive).
- R3 For 2014/15 only: Lunch at AGM and Printing of BTT
- R3 Subscription income from all current 71 Members: £690 (all now received, thanks)

EXPENDITURE 2014/15

The estimated costs of supporting the three key activities agreed at the AGM are as follows:

Welfare Fund: a ring fenced Welfare Fund (WF) has been established to cover all of the existing areas covered by the previous Royal Society grant plus gifts in recognition of 80 and 90 year birthdays and Golden Weddings. There was £65 carried over in the fund from last year and £225 is required in 2014/15 to bring it up to cover the expanded remit of just under £300. Any expenditure above this would come from the reserve.

Communications : in 2014/15 about £230 would be required to cover postage, telephone, maintenance of the website (the RS would continue to print BTT in 2014/15). While all effort will be taken to reduce costs in this area through use of electronic communication the importance of maintaining postal communication is recognised.

Administrative Overheads: the cost of stationery and printing, committee meetings and the AGM in 2014/15 is estimated to be £230, with Members paying for their own lunch at the AGM.

Hence in Summary the situation in 2014/15 is as follows:

Income from existing Subscriptions: £690

Expenditure:

Welfare Fund top-up	£225
Communications	£230
Administrative costs	£230

Total Expenditure £685

Longer Term Funding Arrangements for the Welfare Fund

The AGM agreed that it was important for this fund rise with the expected increase in demand, but recognised that in 2015/16 even £200 would be difficult to find from the General Fund, without calling on the reserves. It was therefore agreed that the Welfare Fund should be expanded through donations to the funds. £60 was donated at the AGM with promises of other donations, including an offer to match donations up to £200.

Other Budgetary Expenditure in 2015/16

The Committee will be exploring the other budgetary requirements during 2015/16, including the loss of the free printing of BTT, and will report to the AGM in May 2015.

KDJR

25 Aug 2014