

# ROYAL SOCIETY FORMER STAFF ASSOCIATION

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 22 May 2017

<i>Present:</i>	Mary Manning ( <i>Chairman</i> )	
Choong Kar Chan	Joan Hurrell ( <i>Jt Events Secretary</i> )	Peter O'Rourke ( <i>Hon. Treasurer</i> )
Diana Chapman	Christine Johnson	
Peter Collins ( <i>Jt Editor, BTT</i> )	Linda Mackenzie	Wilma Pereira
Peter Cooper ( <i>Hon. Secretary</i> )	Jennifer Malcolm	Judy Rimmer
Brenda de Vere-Lewis	Jackie Middleton-Smith	Keith Root
David Griffin	Len Mole	Beata Seymour
Marjorie Harris	Susan Moss ( <i>Welfare Secretary</i> )	Jane Silverleaf
Ann Hicks ( <i>Jt Events Secretary</i> )	Mary Nixon	Peter Warren

Mary Manning welcomed Mary Nixon to her first AGM.

### 1. Apologies for absence

Peter Cooper reported that 59 members had sent apologies. The AGM sent its best wishes to Chris Argent who was unable to attend because of illness.

### 2. Minutes of the 2016 AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held on 16 May 2016 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

Mary Manning reported on the highlights of the year:

- the robust finances;
- the increase in membership numbers, including younger members still in work;
- the launch of the Professional Activities Programme, with thanks to Nick Boross-Toby for the use of the Physiological Society, but, as would be reported later, subsequent plans for a seminar on mentoring had temporarily stalled;
- a broad programme of events offering something for all members;
- strong support from members not least their generosity in donations to support the Association's work.

She reported that the relations with the Royal Society were cordial and the Association still had the use of rooms for the AGM and Committee. But arrangements were not always clear, through a lack of continuity at the RS and increased scrutiny where money was concerned. She thanked the Society for providing a room and lunch for the Association's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary lunch.

The Committee had met with Officers of the RS Staff Association, which had been informative and useful. There were opportunities for increased collaboration, which the Committee would follow up.

For the future, the Association's Welfare and Events activities would remain at the core, together with increasing membership and activities aimed at a wider membership. The challenges ahead included finding affordable venues for activities (including, if possible, the RS) and encouraging more members to join the Committee.

She thanked the members of the Committee for their work, especially Chris Argent – *Beyond The Terrace* was an essential element of the Association.

### 5. Hon. Treasurer's report

#### (a) Accounts for 2016/17

Peter O'Rourke reported that there were no changes to the audited accounts from those circulated (AGM17-1). The finances remained healthy thanks to the increase in membership and the anonymous donation towards BTT. The administrative costs were down on 2016, thanks to Committee members' economies, and events had achieved the aim of being cost neutral. Several payments had been made from the Welfare Fund but this remained healthy. As a result he saw no need to recommend any increase in subscriptions at this time. Rather, the Committee should consider whether investment should be made in more member activities, including the Professional Activities Programme.

Peter thanked Nigel Hicks for auditing the 2016/17 accounts.

The motion to accept the accounts for 2014/15 was proposed by Len Mole and seconded by Peter Collins; the meeting agreed the motion.

#### (b) Financial Regulations

Peter Cooper referred members to the Financial Regulations (AGM17-3) circulated with the agenda. The revision of the Rules last year had concentrated on core governance issues, transferring this level of detail to a new set of Regulations. The Financial Regulations aimed to codify the processes in place, coupled with good practice, while retaining the light touch and flexibility needed by the Association. Peter confirmed that, while not a legal requirement, it was good practice to have such Regulations.

As required by the Rules, the Financial Regulations were noted by the AGM.

#### **6. Report of the Hon. Secretary**

Peter Cooper referred to his report (AGM17-2). Sadly, three members had died during the year – Marjorie Smith on 14 October 2016, Frances Chetham on 17 October and Jackie Witchalls on 30 November. The Association was represented at the funerals of Marjorie and Frances but was notified too late for members to attend Jackie's funeral.

Twelve new members had joined, and membership numbers had reached 99 at one point.

As reported by the Chairman, the Professional Activities Programme had held a launch event at the Physiological Society, but plans for a seminar on mentoring, by member Rachel Tobbell, had been put on hold while a suitable venue was found. Peter was planning to get together a small group of interested members to see how this might be moved forward.

#### **7. Report of the Welfare Secretary**

Susan Moss reported on member welfare matters. She had been in contact with several members over the year who had been unwell to see whether there were ways in which the Association could help them and, where appropriate, to send get-well flowers. There had been one 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, three 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays and four 70<sup>th</sup> birthdays during the year.

She reminded members to inform her of any member who was ill, infirm or might otherwise be able to benefit from the Association.

The Chairman thanked Susan for her careful and dedicated work on behalf of members.

#### **8. Report of the Events Secretaries**

Ann Hicks, Joint Events Secretary, reported that three events had been held during the year – visits to the Poppy Factory in which 20 members and guests participated, to the London Transport Museum (12), and the New Year lunch. As she and Joan would be standing down at this AGM no plans were yet in place for events later this year. On behalf of Joan and herself she thanked all members for their support and help. Mary thanked Ann and Joan for all their work over many years, organising events, which were such an enormously important part of the Association's work. She also thanked Jane Silverleaf for organising with such care a fascinating visit to Strawberry Hill House earlier in May.

#### **9. Report on the Professional Activities Programme**

Peter Cooper referred to earlier statements about progress with the Programme. He was hopeful that a series of seminars could be put in place, covering such issues as mentoring, international relations, etc. Work was also needed to establish an effective social networking framework through LinkedIn. He would welcome offers of assistance with these tasks.

#### **10. Report of the Editors of *Beyond The Terrace***

Peter Collins reported that, with regret, Chris Argent was unable to attend, but that Chris had provided a report on the current state of *BTT*68. Peter sought input and feedback from members – content for the newsletter and comments on things liked or disliked. For many members *BTT* provided their social network by which they were kept informed of their friends and colleagues. He thanked David Griffin who proof-read every issue.

The Chairman noted that Chris had indicated that he wished to take a less front-line role in *BTT* while continuing to work on it, and the AGM would be asked later to amend the Committee responsibilities accordingly. She proposed that, in recognition of Chris' role in proposing, initiating and editing *BTT* since its first issue in 1993, he should be awarded the title of Editor Emeritus. The AGM unanimously agreed with this proposal.

## 11. Report on pension matters

Peter Cooper, in his role as Member-Nominated Trustee of the RS Pension Plan, highlighted several matters:

- The RS had reduced the number of Employer-Nominated Trustees to two, both professional Trustees from an external organisation, one of whom had taken over the chair from James Hunt. The secretariat for the Trustees was also provided by an outside body. The number of Member-Nominated Trustees remained at three.
- Notwithstanding the above, the Society's support for the Plan remained strong, as confirmed during the triennial revaluation of the Fund.
- The triennial Review had shown a funding level of 91%, up from 84% three years ago; the RS had agreed a funding plan to reduce the shortfall.
- Investments had performed marginally better than the benchmarks. The Trustees had agreed to move some into Liability-Driven Investment Funds, to match better the income with future liabilities.
- The scale of the funds and use of pooled funds prevented the Trustees having an active socially-responsible investment policy, as had been raised at previous AGMs, but emphasis was put on selecting fund managers who complied with appropriate standards for responsible investment.

Peter reminded Plan members that he and other MNTs (Ruth Cooper, Phil Hirst) were ready to hear from any members with concerns or issues.

## 12. Elections to the Committee

Proposals for elections and re-elections to the Committee (AGM17-4) were considered. The following elections were by shows of hands:

Hon. Treasurer: Peter O'Rourke had indicated he would not stand for re-election. The Committee had reviewed the situation and concluded that a replacement could be deferred while investigations were carried out to look into improving the banking arrangements (the current arrangements with Nationwide being unduly laborious and not permitting internet banking). Until new arrangements were in place Mary Manning, Peter Cooper and Peter O'Rourke would continue to be able to manage the account; the Committee might co-opt if necessary, bringing any appointment to the next AGM. It was noted that increasingly smaller organisations were moving to electronic banking. The AGM approved these interim arrangements.

Events Secretary: Jane Silverleaf to serve for three years, working jointly with Peter O'Rourke. Proposed by Christine Johnson, seconded by Marjorie Harris.

BTT Editor: Peter Collins to serve for three years, working jointly with Chris Argent. Proposed by Keith Root, seconded by Mary Manning.

Co-opted Members: Chris Argent to work with Peter Collins as joint Editor of *Beyond The Terrace* and Peter O'Rourke to work with Jane Silverleaf as joint Events Secretary.

## 14. Appointment of Auditor for 2017/18

Nigel Hicks had indicated that he would be willing to continue as Auditor. Proposed by Peter O'Rourke, seconded by Peter Cooper; the meeting approved the motion.

## 15. Any other business

Mary Manning presented Ann Hicks and Joan Hurrell with gift vouchers to reflect the Association's thanks for the work they had done as Events Secretaries.

It was suggested that the timing of the AGM might be reconsidered to suit all members including those still in work.

Len Mole indicated that he would consider organising a Picnic in the Park.

## 16. Date for the 2018 AGM

The 2018 AGM will take place at 2:00 p.m. on Monday 21 May 2018, subject to availability of rooms.