

49th Annual General Meeting of The Berkshire Family History Society CIO

Registered Charity 1204390

Held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 19th June 2024
Online via Zoom

Present: 72 members of Berkshire Family History Society. Attendance list available on request.

1. Welcome

Catherine Sampson, the Society Chairman, welcomed everyone to the 49th Annual General Meeting.

2. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from James Puxley, Mark Stevens, Irene Littleby, Dorothy Spratt, Derek Trinder, Patricia Sears, Jonathan Hopson, Vickie Able, Lynette Edwell, Helen Conchar, Caroline Piller and Pat Robins.

3. Minutes of 48th Annual General Meeting

Held on Wednesday 7th June 2023 on Zoom. No comments or amendments were raised. Vicki Chesterman proposed that the Minutes of the meeting be adopted and Martin Pilkington seconded. The minutes were adopted by those present with a majority vote.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the 48th Annual General Meeting

There were none.

5. Chairman's Report

Catherine presented an abridged version of the Chairman's report, with an overview of 2023-24. The main item being the completion of the legal process of becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) following the agreement given at last year's AGM.

Enterprises, our independent limited company was closed, and the Bookshop has been incorporated into the society and the shop website pages are now included within the society website. Catherine thanked those who had been associated with Enterprises over the years.

Feedback received from the 2023 Member Survey is still being taken on board and this information provided the basis of our Strategic Review which took place at the beginning of 2024 and allowed the Executive to agree our values and vision for the future and the main priorities.

Planning has begun for our location move in 2025 due to the closure of Reading Central Library. Currently no location has been identified, but members will be advised of any progress.

The Centre for Heritage & Family History has been open as normal and we have welcomed numerous visitors from overseas and out of county.

The Membership plan has been simplified to one, with a worldwide price of £19 that can include a second named person at the same address. Young people will continue to receive a discount voucher to reduce this cost further and hopefully attract the younger generation.

The six branches have held a range of meetings over the last 12 months, either face-2-face, zoom or a combination of both. The outreach help desks at various libraries around the county have also continued which allows us to fulfil our charitable obligation to support the community and our members.

We continue to keep our members and community informed via various methods including X, Facebook, our Newsletters, the Historian and our Website.

YourTrees, our free and member exclusive service for safeguarding your family tree continues to grow.

The Projects and Publications Group have launched further Marriage and Banns transcriptions, which are available in the Bookshop, and a quarter of a million Baptisms have been added to FindmyPast. The 4th edition of Berkshire Baptisms is soon to be released.

The society made a donation to The Royal Berkshire Archives to allow them to purchase new computers for their research centre and show our support for the preserving and maintaining public access to records.

It has been a very successful year, with attendance figures rising for the programme of events organised by the Events and Education Group. This includes the second online Heritage Fair which was held in association with the Berkshire Local History Association during February. Some of the talks are now available as videos.

Catherine went on to summarise the priorities agreed by the trustees as to the future of the Society which are to:

- Stop the decline in membership by focusing on retaining our current members and attracting new members by promoting the society
- Successfully relocate the Society to a new base
- Complete the merger of Enterprises into the Society
- Review and organise our branch structure
- Review our engagement with our members and the public

She went on to advise the attendees that 2025 would be the Society's 50th year and that a one day conference is being organised.

Thanks were given to all the volunteers for the work that they do to support the Society. Special mentions were given to Society Treasurer, Martin Pilkington and Society Secretary, Vanessa Chappell. Paul Barrett was also thanked for his work as a Trustee and his continuing work as one of our webmasters.

Catherine welcomed questions and comments from the attendees.

Suzanne Stout: *"I just like to say a huge thank you to everyone involved. The depth of work involved for a charity and a voluntary organisation always comes across very professionally and very well organised"*.

Catherine acknowledged her thanks.

Bryan Pledger: *“Regarding the review of the branches, I believe that the decision has already been made to close them by a back door method”.*

Catherine advised that no such decisions have been made and the review of branch structure has not yet begun.

Mike Booth: *“Where are the results of the survey, were they published?”*

Catherine advised that the results were published in The Historian, but will check if they were the full results. [Post meeting: Historian editor advised that only a brief initial report was published in September 2023]

Guy Grannum: *“I joined the society to meet local people, and I am missing the social interaction as most events seem to be during working hours. To attract a more diverse or new audiences you need to look outside the normal Monday-Friday 9 to 5.”*

Catherine acknowledged this comment adding that the social part of the society was incredibly important and that trying to get the balance between zoom and f-2-f would not be easy and that the team of volunteers reviewing the branch structure would hopefully come up with a solution. Guy was asked if he would be interested in joining the review team, which he accepted.

Cathy Oldham: *“Over the past 4 years, I have valued and appreciated the talks and seeing people over zoom as I live in Edinburgh. I get a lot from the zoom meetings, so please keep them. Younger people are too busy with their children’s activities”.*

Alison Pedley: *“I am a new volunteer, I think the idea of evening meetings would go down well with people like myself. We have to strike the right balance, most of our demographic are of the similar age and began their family history research near or during their retirement”.*

6. Treasurer's Report: Financial Statements

Martin Pilkington presented the Financial Statement.

While it would appear to have been a bad year financially, going from last year’s excess of income over expenditure of just under £4,000 to this year’s excess of expenditure over income there are a number of extenuating circumstances.

Income

Donations were down £3,080 as we did not receive a donation from Enterprises due to its merger into the Society. Last year we received £2,680.

We also did not receive any Gift Aid from HMRC due to us having to wait until our status as a CIO was complete and new bank accounts created. Last year we received £2,358.

These reductions in income were offset by an increase in interest on our bank accounts, caused by increasing interest rates. We received an extra £1,665.

Expenditure

Rental of the second floor of the Reading Central Library has increased this year over last for two main reasons. Last year a significant reduction in rent due to the inability to access the library during the Covid pandemic had been negotiated by our Chairman. In addition we had a 2.5% increase in the amount payable from December 2023. Altogether this increased our expenditure to just over £7,101.

We also spent money on IT equipment; £2,500 for computers for the Royal Berkshire Archive and just over £2,000 for computers for our Research Zone.

Additionally a provision of £1,000 has been included for additional solicitors fees in respect of the move to CIO status. A further £1,000 has been provided in case we are liable for corporation tax following the merger of Enterprises into the society.

Questions:

Mike Booth: “How much do we expect to receive from HMRC for Gift Aid?”

Treasurer’s response: “It is hard to be exact, but the expectation is around £3,500.”

The Financial Statement was proposed by Paul Barrett and Seconded by Nick Prince.
The Financial Statement was approved by majority.

Catherine thanked Martin Pilkington for the work that he has done over the years as our Treasurer.

7. Election of Society President

Mr James Puxley has stated that he was willing to be re-elected as President subject to the proposal being approved by the Society’s AGM meeting.

Catherine Sampson proposed that Mr James Puxley be Society President; Vicki Chesterman seconded the proposal. This was approved by a majority vote.

11. Election of Society Vice Presidents

Mr. Mark Stevens (County Archivist)

Proposed by Nick Prince, seconded by John Dunne

Mrs. Irene Littleby

Proposed by John Dunne, seconded by Catherine Sampson

These appointments were approved by majority vote.

12. Election of Society Officers 2023-2024

The Chairman asked that the voting for the society’s officer be taken *en bloc*. This was taken by Trustee Leigh Dworkin.

Chair Catherine Sampson*

Proposed by John Dunne, seconded by Vicki Chesterman

Vice Chair Nick Prince*

Proposed by Vicki Chesterman and seconded by Catherine Sampson

Secretary Vanessa Chappell*

Proposed by John Dunne and seconded by Nick Prince

Treasurer Martin Pilkington*

Proposed by Andrew Rice and seconded by John Dunne

The above nominations were approved by majority vote.

9. Election of Trustees 2024-2025

The Chairman asked that the voting for the remaining Trustees be taken *en bloc*. Those nominated by the Society's six Branches to serve as Trustees and Executive Committee members for 2024-2025, and to represent those Branches were as follows.

Bracknell & Wokingham Branch:

Sandra Barkwith*

Proposed by Marilyn Robinson and seconded by Bryan Pledger

Computer Branch:

Gillian Stevens*

Proposed by John Dunne and seconded by Tony Henty

Newbury Branch:

Nick Prince*

Proposed by Ronald Allum and seconded by Reg Ward

Reading Branch:

Vicki Chesterman*

Proposed by Richard Croker and seconded by Angie Catt

Abingdon (Vale of White Horse) Branch:

Dave Purling

Proposed by Brian Denton and seconded by Martin Buckland

Windsor, Slough & Maidenhead Branch:

Leigh Dworkin*

Proposed by Helen Conchar and seconded by Mike Bailey

Others nominated to serve as Trustees and Executive Committee members for 2024-2025 are:

John Dunne*

Proposed by Vanessa Chappell and seconded by Nick Prince

Andrew Rice*

Proposed by John Dunne and seconded by Catherine Sampson

Alison Pedley

Proposed by Catherine Sampson and seconded by Vanessa Chappell

The above nominations were approved by majority vote.

* Indicates an existing Trustee

11. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Accounts

The meeting was invited to appoint Louisa James Independent Examiner prior to the next Annual General Meeting.

Martin Pilkington proposed the appointment; it was seconded by Nick Prince. This was approved by a majority vote.

12. Other Business

No other business

13. Close of Meeting

Catherine thanked everyone for attending the AGM and those who had contributed to the debate.
The meeting closed at 21.15.