

Minutes of WFHS Committee Meeting 4-8 June 2016

In accordance with our usual practice, a Committee Meeting was held immediately after the AGM. The meeting was opened by the Chairman, Jason Cook at 12.35 pm on Saturday 4 June.

Present: Jason Cook (Chairman), Kim Cook (Research Co-ordinator), Alison Smith, and Roy Cook (Committee Members).

Apologies for Absence: Liz Davey (Treasurer), Chris Davey (Vice Chairman and Assistant Treasurer), Bill Dwyne (Web-master), and Barbara Finemore (Membership Secretary).

The Chairman opened by noting that, as there were only 4 Committee Members present, this did not constitute a quorum. He then invoked Paragraph 6.9 of the WFHS Constitution, which reads as follows:

Taking into account the wide geographical spread of Society members, a Committee meeting may consist of one or more of the following: a physical meeting of Committee members, a conference via telephone (including calls placed via the Internet) or an exchange of e-mails. The Chairman will set a time limit for completion of any such meeting and the Secretary will be responsible for collecting the votes submitted by committee members and submitting the results to the Chairman. After approval by the Chairman, the Secretary will then declare the results in writing to all committee members.

It was also noted that, in accordance with Paragraph 2 of the Constitution, when there is no Secretary, the Hon President should receive the votes and declare the results in writing to all Committee Members. Additionally, although Overseas Representatives do not have a vote, their input should be included in the discussion, and they should be advised about any decisions to be taken.

In accordance with these provisions, the Chairman, having opened the meeting, declared that it would continue to be open, and that Committee Members and Overseas Representatives be advised of this as promptly as possible. Discussion, and any consequent submission of proposals, will be open until 6.00 pm (BST) on Tuesday 7 June 2016, and voting will close on 6.00 pm (BST) on Wednesday 8 June 2016.

The items on the Committee Meeting Agenda are

- 1 Item 11 from the AGM Agenda - **Future of the Society**
- 2 Item 13 from the AGM Agenda - **Date and Venue for 2017 AGM & Reunion**
- 3 Item 14 from the AGM Agenda - **Any Other Business**, to include all items listed under that heading.

Committee members were duly advised on 5 June of these arrangements, and the results from those who voted are as follows.

- 1 **Future of the Society:** Those present at the AGM felt the outlook is now much brighter and very positive, particularly with the Facebook page coming online. It was noted at the AGM that although a number of Family History Societies are in decline, those with Facebook pages appear to be thriving. It was also felt that we need to be more proactive concerning both new membership and renewals.

Proposal: That we should to have a Facebook page and be more pro-active concerning both new membership and renewals.

Votes cast: For: 6 Against: 0 Abstain: 1

The Chairman declared the proposal carried.

- 2 **Date and venue for 2017:** As this will be our 30th Anniversary, those at the AGM hoped that this could be a big event, over two days. Dates proposed at last year's AGM were 20-21 May. However, with the postponement of this year's AGM, we have a wider option on dates. It was felt that it would be unwise to make a firm decision on date or venue at the AGM, but to wait until we have a better idea of new members, their situations (eg, work, etc) and locations, and then let the Committee choose, taking these factors into account. The AGM recommended that venue proposals be sent to the Secretary by 30 September 2016, with Committee decision by 31 October 2016 at latest. The AGM agreed that dates should avoid Bank Holidays, and that the preferred location should be somewhere with a strong Witheridge family link, preferably in Devon.

Proposal: That venue proposals for the 2017 Reunion, preferably somewhere with a strong Witheridge connection and, if possible, in Devon, be made to the Secretary by 30 September 2016, with the Committee to make a decision by 31 October 2016, and that dates should avoid Bank Holidays.

Votes cast: For: 6 Against: 0 Abstain:1

- 3 **Any other business:** This included items introduced both by those present at the AGM, and by absentee members who had responded to our request for their input.

- a Web-site password. This was designed to be changed every year so that members who don't renew don't have continued access to info they haven't paid for. A new password was agreed for this year, to be implemented, say, on 30 June 2016. This will give **Bill Dwyne** time to change it, and for confirmed members to be notified prior to the implementation date. New members will receive password when they join. Password for 2017, to be implemented on 1 February 2017, will be decided by 31 October this year, so that members can be sent password with 2017 membership receipt.

Proposal: A new password for 2016 be set, for implementation on or before 30 June 2016, and password for 2017 to be set by 31 October 2016, and implemented on 1 February 2017.

Votes cast: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

- b Pedigree information. The AGM agreed that any request for pedigree information, whether by members, or by Committee Members, must be directed in the first instance to the Research Co-ordinator, who will either supply it if we have it, or obtain it discreetly.

Proposal: All requests for pedigree information, whether from members, or by Committee Members, must be directed in the first instance to the Research Co-ordinator.

Votes cast: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

- c History of WFHS. The AGM agreed that this should be included on the WFHS web-site, with details of prime researchers, ie Honorary President and Honorary Vice-Presidents, with dates of former Honorary Vice-Presidents now deceased, but no dates for living ones. This will give due recognition to those no longer with us, or now retired, whose work has been the backbone of the Society.

Proposal: To include the History of WFHS on the website, with details of prime researchers.

Votes cast: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

- d Honorary Membership. Members were reminded that Honorary Membership may be conferred only by decision of the Committee, in accordance with Paragraph 4.3 of our Constitution. An Honorary title of President or Vice-President may be awarded only in accordance with Paragraph 6.16 of the Constitution. No individual can make such a decision.

Proposal: That all members be made aware of the status of Honorary Membership, which is the only form of membership for which payment of subscription is optional.

Votes cast: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

- e Accounts. Chairman, **Jason Cook**, was puzzled by odd amounts shown in WFHS income. It was suggested that more detail showing how income was derived, would help. This had been done in the past, and it was agreed that the previous format be shown to the Treasurer as an example.

Proposal: That future accounts be presented in the previous format.

Votes cast: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

- f Membership. At the AGM it was noted that in recent years many members have fallen by the wayside because they have simply forgotten to renew. It was suggested that all members be sent a form for standing order/direct debit, so that we receive more automatic renewals and therefore sustain membership levels more easily.

Proposal: That all members be sent a form enabling them to set up automatic subscription renewal by either standing order or direct debit.

Votes cast: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

[Note: One absentee voter pointed out that standing orders are better, as direct debits cost us more in bank charges.]

- g Research information. At the AGM, the Chairman had read out the text of a response from an absentee member to our request for ideas and suggestions, and this had been forwarded to Committee Members. It had been noted that, interestingly, some of the views expressed were shared by the member who had suggested item 14 c. The writer felt that we have lost track of one of the Society's main objectives – that of researching, and then interpreting the research, and publishing it to give members easy access, and felt that we need to move forward now, and put this into practice. The absentee member added that the huge amount of information we have needs to be catalogued, collated, interpreted, and published. The writer added that Kim Cook had put in an enormous amount of time, money and work into research over the years, and that we should use the money in the bank to pay Kim for the upcoming work

involved in collating the stored material, ready for publication for members. The statement added that, if we don't do this, we'll end up with a room full of papers, files and documents that nobody can interpret.

Those present at the AGM agreed that the Society has lost sight of its original aims as set out in Item 3 of the Constitution. It was also agreed that we hold a huge amount of information which needs to be collated and made available to members, and this needs to be done while those who hold it are still with us. This will be a mammoth task, beyond what it is reasonable to expect on a voluntary basis, and the meeting agreed that we use money in the bank to pay for the stored information to be collated in a manner that will make it more easily accessible by members.

Proposal: That the Society pay for the collating and interpreting of its research information in a manner that will make it more easily accessible by members.

Votes cast: For: 6 Against: 0 Abstain: 1

- h Committee communication. From some of the items raised during the meeting, it was apparent that communication between Committee members had deteriorated during the past year, and that this needs to be addressed.

Proposal: That the Committee maintain good communication across all Society matters.

Votes cast: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

- i 30th Anniversary. It was agreed that much needs to be made of this in advance, and that it should be well promoted on the web-site and on Facebook. It was pointed out that our new member had arrived as a result of visiting the GoONS web-site, being directed from there to the Witheridge FHS site, and then the seeing the AGM update. The Facebook page should also include the Society's objective (Para 3.1-3.6 of constitution), in more informal, friendly language.

Proposal: That the Society use the new Facebook page, in addition to the existing Witheridge FHS web-site, and the Witheridge page on the Guild of One-Name Studies site, to publicise our 30th Anniversary in 2017, and explore additional ways of making it known to a wider audience.

Votes cast: For: 7 Against: 0 Abstain: 0

At 6.00 pm (BST), the Chairman, Jason Cook, declared the meeting over. Votes were then counted, and minutes of the meeting were subsequently prepared.