

THE JOHN HAMPDEN SOCIETY

Minutes of the 16th Annual General Meeting of the John Hampden Society, held at Hartwell House Hotel, Hartwell, Aylesbury on Saturday 12th April 2008.

Present: The Earl of Buckinghamshire, Lady Buckinghamshire, Lord Hollenden (*Chairman*), Mr Bob Hammond (*Vice-Chairman*), Mr Sam Hearn (*Hon. Treasurer*), Mrs Anthea Coles (*Hon. Secretary*), Mr Maurice Kirtland, Mr Derek Lester, Mr Roy Bailey, Mr John Gabbitas and eighteen members of the Society and visitors.

1. Apologies for absence: Mr Graham Barfield, Mrs Marion Wierszycki, Mr Michael Morris, Lady Helen Motteux, Hughes Motteux, Angela Feaviour, Mike Malone, Mrs June Wailling, Mrs Mary McCormack and the Hart family.

Lord Hollenden opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to Hartwell House.

2. The Minutes of the previous AGM (21st April 2007) had been distributed and were agreed to be true record of the meeting with no amendments necessary. Proposed by Gillian Goodall and seconded by John Goodall.

3. Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

4. Reports from Officers:

Chairman's Report 2008:

Lord Hollenden stated that, thanks to Sam Hearn, members had received concise accounts for the year. He went on to talk about the various activities that had taken place during the year, reporting that it had been a very active year for the Society with the publication of the book on *The Short Parliament* by Dr. Paul Hooper, who was guest of honour at the annual dinner in June 2007. There had been a number of events, including a lunch at the Chiltern Brewery with a talk on the Battles of Turnham Green and Brentford by Simon Marsh of the Battlefields Trust and the talk by John Adamson at the last AGM. The Society celebrated its 15th Anniversary in great style with a visit to Chenies Manor, when we were privileged to be given a guided tour of the Russell family memorial chapel, together with a talk by Ken Goodearl on the history of the church, followed by a tour of the Manor. This culminated in a splendid dinner at the Manor, with a short talk by Roy Bailey on the founding of the Society.

The Museum in Thame opened during the year, with a wonderful display on the life of John Hampden containing artefacts lent by the Society, which has paid an important role in presenting these items to the public.

The Society collaborated with the Battlefields Trust in a lottery funded project to mark the battlefields at Turnham Green and Brentford, Sam Hearn and Derek Lester being extensively involved in this. There were four illustrated talks on John Hampden, delivered by different members of the Society to third party organizations and the Society also had a stand at the Bucks Local History Fair in October.

Another extremely important aspect of the Society is the issue of its publication *The Patriot* and Lord Hollenden thanked Anthea, the Secretary, for all her hard work in that, ably assisted by Roy, and also Derek for assisting with overseeing the printing.

Lord Hollenden also thanked Bob Hammond, who was stepping down as Vice-Chairman and from the Committee. Bob has been a longstanding member of the Society and a hardworking member of the Committee; thanks were due to him for all his hard work.

Hon. Treasurer's Report:

Sam Hearn reported that there were three things to comment on. Firstly, he was not standing for re-election as Treasurer due to other time consuming commitments. No one had come forward to take his place and he would be happy to discuss the post with anyone who was interested. Secondly, he confirmed that the Society had had a successful year. Thirdly, the accounts were presented in more detail this year and he would welcome any comments about the new format. Reverting to the question of him not standing for re-election as Hon. Treasurer, Sam stated that he would continue to perform the function in the short term, but will have less time to give to it. Sam is standing for election as Vice-Chairman and therefore will be remaining on the Committee and hoped that he would be supported in his election to this post.

The accounts this year had been drawn up to be more in line with what the Charities Commission would require were the Society larger, including a balance sheet, which was quite straight forward and hopefully the new format would be useful to members who were unable to attend Society functions, only receiving information via the Newsletter. At the end of December, we had over £2,000 in the bank, a healthy position to be in. The dark side of the coin is that, although it looks like a prosperous year, the printing costs for *The Patriot* has risen fairly dramatically from £190 to £405, because, until the middle of 2006, much of the printing cost was borne by a friend of the Society, which arrangement came to an amicable end, and another printer was found, who does a reasonably priced job. On balance the Committee have some doubts about quality, though members are quite happy with it. If a better printer can be found, a move will be made. The current printer is about to put his prices up so costs will rise again anyway. This is one of our largest costs and if we continue to produce four newsletters a year we have no option but to meet the rising costs. Postage prices went up last year and are about to go up again. The Society has bought a bulk supply of stamps to stave off the evil day, but inevitably there will be a time when subscriptions will have to be increased. There has only been one increase since the Society was founded 15 years previously, but any increase will not come into effect until 2010. Members would be advised well in advance of the increase taking

place and at that time the opportunity would be taken to change the Society's Bank Account, as there had been problems with Lloyds TSB over the years.

Sam answered questions and Derek Lester commented that, although there was a problem with the quality of the printing he was hopeful that a solution had been found which would be tested over the course of the next few issues. He mentioned that other quotes had been received from different printers which greatly exceeded the charges made by the current firm and these firms were also located at considerable distances from the area which would make collection of the finished product either expensive or extremely difficult. Roy Bailey had seen the printer a few weeks previously, and thought Derek's solution might well solve the problem. Valerie Horne wondered whether the Society could claim back VAT on books purchased, but this is not an issue as VAT is not chargeable on books. Roy reported that about one third of the members receive their newsletters by downloading it from the website, which is a big saving in postage costs. Sam was about to put in an application for Gift Aid which should result in a receipt by the Society of just under £240 this year, slightly more than we received last year, as members are completing their forms and returning them to him. He pointed out that there was a dish on the table in which any contributions towards the cost of the coffee could be placed as this was quite an expensive item, not included in other charges to the Society. Sam made the point that, if we had someone with time to organise events, we could hold more events to raise funds. If we had more money there are things the Society would like to do, but overall it does not have huge ambitions, though with more resources this would not be the case.

John Goodall asked whether Society members were still given a 10% discount on articles purchased at Chiltern Brewery. Several members were surprised to learn of this but it was pointed out that it is necessary to make oneself known when making purchases there in order to receive the discount, which is still available to Society members.

Membership Secretary's Report: Lord Hollenden introduced Roger Paynter, who had kindly agreed to become our new Membership Secretary.

Roger started by commenting what a pleasure it was for himself and his wife to be at Hartwell for the AGM, having travelled up from Cornwall in order to do so. His first experience of the Society was in 2001, when the Society went to Grampound and placed plaques on the house that had been associated with John Hampden when he represented the village in Parliament, and also in the Church. He said how much the Society contributed to Grampound's Feast Day and felt that the Society would like to know that the plaques still look good. He said that the Society's link with Grampound is remembered and enjoyed. Roger reported that he had floundered somewhat during his early days as Membership Secretary, but having studied the Society's list of members he reported that he had deleted four names, including the late Viscount Hampden who had been a Vice President of the Society, two names had been added, and it was a pleasure to welcome Howard Deane of Bristol, and Robert Stone of Hughenden Valley, High Wycombe, as new members. His review of the membership renewals for 2008, provided him with quite a shock when it revealed that 39 members had not renewed, but following correspondence with them, he was pleased to record that 24 further renewals had then been received or promised. Roger commented that it is easy to forget to send a cheque and direct Bank payment is certainly the most beneficial method of renewal from the Society's point of view. He will take any possible opportunity to express this point of view. Within the 15 remaining non-renewals are 4 adults, 1 under 18 overseas member. The final membership situation is, therefore, that the Society's 14 Life Members, 2 Honorary Members, 28 Joint Members, 67 Adult Members, 5 Family Members, and 1 Adult Overseas Member, comprising a current total membership of 117.

5. Election of officers and committee members:

Lord Hollenden stated that he was advised that he was happy to stand as Chairman again, obviously subject to being proposed and seconded. Proposed by John Gabbitas and seconded by Roy.

Lord Hollenden then reiterated that Sam Hearn was not seeking re-election to the post of Honorary Treasurer, but would like to stand as Vice Chairman. Proposed by Derek Lester and seconded by Anthea Coles.

The following members had agreed to stand for re-election to the Executive Committee and were proposed and seconded as indicated:

Roger Paynter, Membership Secretary, proposed by Roy Bailey and seconded by Valerie Horne.

Anthea Coles, Honorary Secretary, proposed by Gill Lester and seconded by Maurice Kirtland

Roy Bailey, proposed by Bob Hammond and seconded by Annabel Bailey.

Maurice Kirtland, proposed by Bob Hammond and seconded by Roy Bailey.

Derek Lester, proposed by Alison Buckinghamshire and seconded by John Gabbitas.

John Gabbitas, proposed by Alison Buckinghamshire, seconded by Derek Lester.

There being no other nominations, the Vice Chairman made the point that anyone who would like to become a co-opted member of the Executive Committee could approach the Honorary Secretary at any time. He also announced that Society members could attend any Committee Meetings as observers and declared the 2008 Executive Committee duly elected to serve until the next AGM.

6. Fund Raising:

Sam did not say a lot about fundraising as members could see what the Society is doing currently and each year book sales bring in a certain amount, the books all being sold at a profit. He suggested that if anyone knew of any other possible outlets for the books we could probably sell more and bring in more funds. We can now sell books via the website using PayPal, though no-one had, as yet, taken advantage of the facility. The Society is having the badges re-made, having sold the original batch and the manufacturer no longer trading, so another source has had to be found. Derek has located another firm and it just needs finalisation of the order by the

Committee. The John Hampden Grammar School take quite a large amount (probably 100 a year) and they are given to the pupils as awards. Another item sold this year is the replica of the Hampden Jewel, manufactured for the Bodleian, who gave us a discount on the 10 that we purchased. These have all sold, though not quickly, so a further stock has not been purchased but if there is a demand we will continue to stock them. The Society needs someone to organise events and would welcome suggestions and/or help with this. Sam plans to do another Day School, which he will be working on, though this is not a major fund raising event as venues tend to be expensive. Roy commented that it is important that we do not lose money on these events, though it was important to remember that the object of the Society is to promote knowledge and understanding of John Hampden. Sam said that it was a benefit of sitting on a reasonable amount of money, that if we wish to put on an event without making a profit, we are in a position to do so.

7. Programme of Events:

Mention was made of Derek's forthcoming Chalgrove Walks on Sunday, May 11th, to commemorate the official listing of the battle of Chalgrove Field as such and not merely a skirmish. Gillian Lester told the meeting that Chalgrove Parish Council have a website giving quite a lot of information about the Battlefield, and also with links to the Society website. This should be publicised in *The Patriot*.

Derek mentioned that, on 12th July, the Regiment would be attending Speen Fete and it had been arranged that the Society would run a stall there in an attempt to recruit some more members. This would also be an opportunity to sell books etc. and help with fund raising.

Sam mentioned the need to increase membership, there having been a decline over the years. One idea is that the Society should hold a special meeting which all members will be welcome to attend, to discuss ideas on ways of increasing membership. No date has been set as yet, but once this has been done, all members will be notified, and anyone who feels able to make suggestions would be welcome to attend. We do need to increase membership back up to around 150, otherwise it means that the Society is entering into a long decline. Gillian Goodall suggested a small article in Speen, North Dean and Great Hampden Village/Church Magazines, would interest local people and could include a membership form.

The Annual Dinner had again been booked at The Spread Eagle Hotel in Thame, for 28th June, commencing at 6.45 in the bar, to be followed at 7.00 by a talk by Diana Purkiss prior to the meal. Booking forms had been sent out with the paperwork for the AGM and it was hoped that this event would be well supported, as is normally the case. The date is slightly later than usual this year, but will revert to normal next year.

8. A.O.B:

Jean Gabbitas told those present that she and John had, earlier in the year, attended a service in a Cathedral, attended by members of the Johnson Society, with hymns, readings and music appropriate to that period and a wreath laying ceremony at the Johnson tomb. She and John felt that it might be something that the John Hampden Society could consider doing at Great Hampden Church on an appropriate date, with coffee and refreshments to follow, either at the church or at the local public house. This idea was very well received though Sam pointed out that care must be taken that the service could not be construed as tying the Society into one denomination. Further work will be carried out to ascertain the feasibility of organising this.

Derek pointed out that he and Gill lay a wreath, provided by the Society, at the Monument in Chalgrove every year, which entails tidying up the monument each time. He felt that, if the Society wished to raise their profile on 18th June it might be possible to organise one of the local papers to turn up and photograph the wreath-laying for publication in the local press. Sam felt that this would be better achieved if some of the Regiment could be in attendance at the time and wondered whether this could be incorporated into a fund raising campaign at some time.

Roy Bailey suggested that, for the sake of people from out of the area, like Mrs Smith who regularly attends Society events despite the long journey, it might be possible to combine a church service, the wreath laying and the annual dinner on the same day, it would be an incentive to these people to make the journey. The wreath could always be laid on the Saturday.

The question was raised by Valerie Horne as to whether the school at Chalgrove were interested in what went on, as, if only one class could be prevailed upon to attend the wreath laying, parents would automatically spread the word. This was felt to be a very good idea. Another suggestion was that a ceremony could be held by the statue in Aylesbury, possibly with the Regiment in attendance, which would attract plenty of publicity.

Anthea mentioned that two copies of the newsletter had been returned marked "gone away". At least one of these members paid by standing order, but had not notified a change of address and she wondered whether anyone present might know these people. Unfortunately this was not the case.

Sam commented that traditionally our AGM had been held in the afternoon, but the last two years this had been changed to the morning, which meant that anyone coming from a distance did not find it so convenient. He wondered what the general feeling would be to changing back to the afternoon. Opinions were equally divided (as someone mentioned – "that's because we are getting lunch!"). It would be possible to have lunch and follow up with the AGM and hope everyone remained awake for the latter event.

There being no other business to discuss Lord Hollenden thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was declared closed.