

THE JOHN HAMPDEN SOCIETY

Minutes of the 19th Annual General Meeting of the John Hampden Society held at the Mansfield College, Oxford on Saturday, 10th April 2010.

Present: Mr Sam Hearn (*Chairman & acting Treasurer*), Mrs Anthea Coles (*Hon. Secretary*), Roger Paynter (*Membership Secretary*), Mr Maurice Kirtland, Mr Derek Lester, Mr Roy Bailey and 15 members of the Society.

The meeting was opened by the Sam Hearn, Chairman welcoming everybody to Mansfield College, Oxford. He then gave a brief résumé of the form that the meeting was to take.

Sam spoke of the death of Joan Portsmouth, a Society member who had at one time been a member of the Executive Committee, along with her husband, Mike. They were both active members of the Society and her untimely death had been a tremendous shock to the Society. A one minute silence was observed as a mark of respect.

Sam mentioned that the AGM was taking place very close to the anniversary of an important date in Hampden's life and reminded everyone that we were in the beginning stages of a general election. On 13th April 1640, the Short Parliament began and Hampden sat for the first time as member for Buckingham. He pointed out that the author Hugh Ross-Williamson, credited Hampden with starting national general election campaigns.

He pointed out that there was a long list of apologies for absence and felt that this was due to the fact that the Society had taken advantage of the facilities on offer at Mansfield, but unfortunately this had been inconvenient for a number of people who were, as a result unable to attend.

1. Apologies for absence: Jonathan Morgan, Maija Jansson, Prof. Ian Beckett, Leslie Boatwright, David Andrew, Beatrice Dobie, John Gabbitas, June Wailling, Ian Hollenden, Tim Oliver, Richard Pushman, Jim Rodda, Howard Deane, Angela Feaviour, Jane Skinner, Brian Mills, Alice Hawes, Derek Lester, Gill Lester, Robert Stone, Sarah Barrington, Charles Harvey, Marion Wierszycki, Valerie Horne, Sue Hetherington, Paul Hooper and Annabel Bailey.

2. The Minutes of the previous AGM: These were agreed to be true record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

4. Reports from Officers:

Chairman's Report:

Sam reported that it had been another very active year for the Society. Prior to the AGM the Executive Committee spent some time thinking about what the meeting would consist of and discussing strategy and ways forward for the Society, particularly whether we needed to have a larger membership and how we should go about it. He felt that was time well spent and we will be discussing that later. The venue for the last AGM, at The Barns Centre in Thame, gave people the opportunity to look round Thame and visit the museum which has a Hampden section and is well worth a visit. He paid tribute to Maurice and Derek for the work they had put in to getting that section of the museum up to the high standard it enjoys and mentioned that we now sell books through the museum.

6th June 2009 saw a return to Broughton Castle, the first visit for a long time and a good number of people made the effort to attend and had a very enjoyable day, it being a private visit with the Castle not open to the general public, and we were treated to a peep behind the scenes as well as front-of-house and allowed to handle objects. Derek has since done a lot of work with a friend of his and Lord Saye & Sele on identifying some of the portraits, some of which have already appeared in *The Patriot* and it is hoped that more will do so in the future.

On 20th June the Annual Dinner was held in The Spread Eagle at Thame. It turned out to be a beautiful evening with no complaints, and enjoyed by all.

3rd October was the annual Bucks Local History Fair, held at RAF Halton this year, an excellent venue with a superb lecture theatre. The theme was 'Famous Buckinghamshire Individuals' and they had failed to include John Hampden on the list, which was surprising as the Society has turned up to practically every one of their Fairs. However the person who was going to speak about the Verneys had to drop out so they sent out an SOS to the John Hampden Society. Sam was amused to find that the three previous speakers were all unable to talk about their chosen subject without having also to mention John Hampden and how he had affected their subjects, so by the time Roy Bailey (who had stepped into the breach to give a talk on John Hampden) stood up he had had a long build-up. Roy had spent a lot of time re-working his material and brought a new freshness to the talk, which went down extremely well. Sam paid tribute to Valerie Horne, who helped out on the Society stall, despite being in extreme pain from a back injury, which prevented her attending the AGM, but he pointed out the vast contribution that Valerie has made to the Society over the years.

25th October - a lot of organisation went into the Memorial Service held at the Church of St. Mary Magdalen at Great Hampden. The idea had been put forward by John and Jean Gabbitas and John and Derek Lester felt that this was an appropriate time to reveal where John Hampden probably really is buried in the Church which had been a matter of dispute over the years. The Vicar was very welcoming and encouraged us to consider returning in the future, and our current thinking is that we would like to do another service like this but would prefer not to turn it into an annual event, rather to do it occasionally, on some suitable anniversary.

There had been four talks given by members of the Society throughout the year, which was a nice steady source of income and we also sometimes pick up new members as a result.

One of our objectives is to create and hold a library relating to John Hampden and that was, for a long time more of an aspiration than a reality. With very kind donations from Dr. Paul Hooper, of various books, we have begun to put this together and these have been deposited with Derek Lester. Anyone living in the locality who wishes to take advantage of this facility should contact Derek direct. There is a catalogue on the website showing what is currently available. There are also a number of documents available to download direct from the website. The copy of the Great Hampden Parish Register will be included in the library. We have discussed, in the past, the possibility of depositing the books in a formal library but are waiting for someone to come up with a workable plan to enable this. All suggestions to date would mean that we would lose control of the books and be unable to maintain a 'John Hampden Collection'.

Sam stated that over the year, we had produced four editions of *The Patriot* which are being sent out pretty much on time.

During the year, a new Treasurer was appointed, namely Derek Lester, but he is still in training and the books have not been fully handed over yet. He was unable to be at the AGM and his report is to be presented by Roy Bailey.

Hon. Treasurer's Report:

Roy pointed out that if there were any questions after the presentation of the accounts, they would have to be directed to Sam, and continued to say that this had been a very good year for the Society financially, with members' subscriptions including Gift Aid increased from £1,235 in 2008, to £1,345 in 2010, which was a tribute to Roger Paynter's sterling efforts as Membership Secretary. Whilst the increase in income from events from £995 to £1,003.84 is to be welcomed, only the annual dinner actually made a profit. The trip to Broughton Castle broke even, while the Hampden Memorial Service contributed a net cost of £82. There has been a good increase in book sales from £380 to £556. Nearly a third of sales now derive from orders placed via the website and our PayPal Account. All of this contributed to the overall increase of nearly £1,000 in the cash held by the Society in its Bank Account at the year end, totalling £3,678, up from the £2,717 held at the end of 2008. This provides a firm base on which to build and pursue the Society's charitable objectives. The Trustees have agreed, however, that there will need to be an increase in the subscription rate from 2012. This will enable the Society to fund more activities, including a membership drive. It has, however, been agreed that we should take the opportunity to rationalise the membership rates and to reflect the savings that the Society achieved by e-mailing the newsletter to many of its members, or advising them that it is downloadable on-line. Details will be circulated ahead of the next AGM. Members were also reminded that a small voluntary contribution of £2.50 each would go a long way towards defraying the cost of the AGM and the travel expenses of our speaker.

Membership Secretary's Report:

Roger stated that his report was sadly going to show that the Bank Statements indicated that receipt of subscriptions was very slow in the year. He had reminded each member who had not renewed by the end of February, by letter and, in some cases by e-mail as well, but the response had at the best been moderate. As at the date of the AGM, 18 members had still not renewed and a further 7 had formally confirmed their resignation. Very sadly also, of course, our numbers were further depleted by the most unfortunate deaths of Joan Portsmouth and Marie Endean. Although during the year we had recruited a small number of new members, the loss overall total amounts to 27. Roger reported really good news from Grampound in that they had received a large National Lottery grant which enabled them to refurbish their medieval town hall and install an archive of the village including a banner of various events through Grampound history and, though his involvement with Grampound, John Hampden and if anyone wished to see the banner, Roger had brought it with him but had left it in his car. It was suggested that a photo of the banner should be inserted in the next issue of *The Patriot*.

Sam asked whether anyone wished to ask questions on the Officers' reports. One question raised was whether it was possible to claim Gift Aid on subscriptions and Sam confirmed that this was indeed possible, subject to certain criteria, and that the Society already did this where possible. Roger had been chasing members who had not completed a Gift Aid form, with a good response and in future years we should be able to claim a higher percentage of Gift Aid. Sam mentioned that, when we were going through the process of becoming a Charity, which would enable us to claim Gift Aid, he had talked to the Cromwell Association about this and they were very negative about the whole idea, so it was with some smugness that he noted that they were now going down this road themselves.

5. Election of officers and committee members:

The following officers and committee members were individually voted onto the committee by a unanimous show of hands:

Chairman:	Sam Hearn , proposed by Anthea Coles, seconded by Bob Hammond
Treasurer:	Derek Lester , proposed by Anthea Coles, seconded by Roy Bailey.
Hon. Secretary:	Anthea Coles , proposed by Maurice Kirtland, seconded by Miles Buckinghamshire.
Membership Secretary:	Roger Paynter , proposed by Roy Bailey, seconded by Alison Buckinghamshire.
Committee Members:	Lord Hollenden , proposed by John Goodall, seconded by Gillian Goodall. Maurice Kirtland , proposed by Bob Hammond, seconded by Roy Bailey. John Gabbitas : proposed by Maurice Kirtland, seconded by Gloria Smith Roy Bailey : proposed by Gillian Goodall, seconded by Miles Buckinghamshire

Sam emphasized that new executive committee members would be welcome and anyone interested in joining the committee could come along to a meeting to talk about this. Every new committee member brings something extra to the committee, with fresh ideas and initiatives and we do need new blood.

6. Fund Raising & Forthcoming Events:

We have heard briefly from the Treasurer's report that we plan from 2012 to increase the subscription and rationalise it. The motion will have to be passed at this AGM. We know from the past that this move is likely to trigger more loss of renewals because people will look at what they are paying, having to change their standing orders, so the challenge for the committee is to convince members that the Society is worth while and that they get something out of it.

Sale of Books: We actually were not doing quite so well this year with book sales, but we were selling them through the Museum in Thame, and through the PayPal account, not a steady stream, in fact rather erratic, but it was hoped that it will be quite a big income earner. If anyone had any other ideas about fund raising, they were asked to raise them now?

Programme of Events for the coming year:

Derek & Gill Lester were running a Battlefield Walk on **6th June**, details available in the next edition of *The Patriot*. For those who are fit and able this is worth while. It is fairly rough terrain but very rewarding.

18th June - Derek normally lays a wreath on behalf of the Society, at the Monument at Chalgrove, but he would be away this year and the suggestion had been made that we involve the local school in this event. Miles and Alison Buckinghamshire has agreed to officiate and give a brief resume of the battle, with a short service and laying of the wreath. Each child taking part would be presented with a copy of the Frank Hansford-Miller book *John Hampden Of Buckinghamshire - The People's Hero* and Miles and Alison had agreed to sign and personalise each book with the recipient's name. It was suggested that the books should be sent to Miles in advance of the event, so that they could be signed and annotated ready to hand out on the 18th. It was also suggested that two of the older children might lay the wreath. There would be two standard bearers, who would congregate at the school first, and then process to the monument, leading the children. request was made for a Society member to give a brief talk to the children prior to the procession. Everyone taking part was invited back to the school after the ceremony for tea and biscuits. There should be quite a good turnout and the event was being well publicised. The suggestion was made that a musician should be asked to play the Last Post at the close of the ceremony and this would be discussed with Derek.

Sam pointed out that over the years we have talked about involving schools in the Hampden story but have done very little, and it would be wonderful if we had an executive member with links to education so that we could go about this in a professional manner.

The annual dinner was booked for 26th June at The Spread Eagle Hotel, Thame. We had a number of ideas for a speaker, but the idea of using the Rector from Great Hampden had fallen through. However, we should know who the speaker will be by the time the booking forms are circulated. We have now re-organised the event so that the speaker comes on first for about 20 - 25 minutes, which means that everyone can then enjoy the meal without the fear of falling asleep during the talk.

The Spirit of Prestwood takes place in July, in the form of a fete with several local firms taking part and we have been invited to have a table and exhibition, and present the Society. A similar exercise was carried out a couple of years ago at Speen, and it was agreed that we would take part and it would be helpful if anyone having a little time to spare could come along and help man the table, etc. The exact date to be publicised in *The Patriot*.

The Bucks Local History Fair date had not yet been announced but normally takes place in October. We generally have a table at this event. There are a number of other societies normally exhibiting at this Fair and Sam commented that we often meet Society members who are there for pleasure and it would always be appreciated if one or two offered to do a short stint on the John Hampden stall, to give the stalwarts a break, so that they could get a cup of tea.

A visit to the Chiltern Brewery was planned, probably for October. Many people will remember Simon Marsh and his involvement with the Battlefields Trust. He and his colleague, Stephen, have produced a book on the Battles of Brentford and Turnham Green, which has just been published, and it would be good to help him out by publicising this at the Brewery event.

Unfortunately Derek could not be at the AGM as he has been struggling with the Battlefields Trust to get some archaeology going on the Chalgrove Battlefield site and there appears to be a problem with one of the farmers, but on top of that the weather has been too bad for the metal detectorists to get onto the site as it is a naturally very boggy area. Derek would have been able to give us more details in this regard. It is not certain whether it is going to be possible to go ahead with this. If the scheme goes ahead, the Society is prepared to subsidise it to a certain extent, the idea being to try and see if there are any remains in the area that Derek has identified as being where the main battle occurred. No-one has done this in the past and it would be important to us to actually nail the exact position down by this method and it would give publicity to the Society.

The next AGM had not been firmed up as yet. Derek had been doing some work on that, with the suggestion that it take place at Broughton Castle, and it was thought that he had made some progress on that. Some members had expressed a view that it would be good to return to Hampden House, particularly as there are new members who have not been there, either for an AGM or another meeting.

Sam mentioned the Society's *The Hampden Trail* leaflet, describing places associated with Hampden set out as a tour. The Society is now capable of producing something better with colour photos etc. Gillian Goodall had provided line drawings which she had made, for the original leaflet, and they will be rescanned for the new one Gillian will colour these drawings, which will make the leaflet more interesting. It is hoped that the new leaflet will increase the reach of the Society. We had been contacted following the visit to Chenies Manor, by a keen cyclist who had been there, who wanted to create a cycling trail and wondered whether we could co-operate with him on that. John Gabbitas was in contact with this gentleman, and it was possible that we might end up with two leaflets, one for cyclists and one for car drivers.

Gillian Goodall suggested a Sunday afternoon visit to Hampden House in the winter, with a talk by a good speaker and, light refreshments to follow, plus an opportunity to look round part of the house and the church. She felt this might attract a good turnout. Roy expressed his view that it was a good idea to hold talks in the winter. He felt that we might also consider holding such meetings, hiring a village hall in the area and throwing the event open to the general public, commenting that he quite often gives talks for the Society to groups who very often are happy to welcome the general public to the meetings. Gillian offered to speak to Tim to see whether she could arrange the meeting at Hampden House, and she will get back to the committee in due course.

Bob Hammond expressed his concern that the AGMs are being held at a distance from the centre of our interest, i.e. Thame, Hampden, etc. but it was pointed out that we do have a number of members in Oxford and the surrounding area. Roy pointed out that members do come from far afield to attend the AGM and that they are always held in places with a Hampden connection.

Campaign to increase membership: We came up with a lot of ideas for increasing membership but nothing has really come forward out of these ideas. There has been a lot of discussion within the Executive Committee and the one thing that we worked on with some priority was a return to an old idea which we re-worked, though with limited time within the group, i.e. the Hampden connection with No. 10 Downing Street, which has been the subject of articles in *The Patriot*. Hampden's mother's house on the site was demolished by George Downing, but we had failed with our idea to have Downing Street renamed. Instead this campaign is to have the actual house re-named 'Hampden House, 10 Downing Street', in the same way as The White House is 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. We have pushed this idea forward and made contact with a lot of MPs with varying degrees of support and it did not get far enough forward before the 'silly season' of election campaigning began, so we decided as a group that we would wait until after the election and then pick up the campaign again, but one of the people who did give us a lot of support was John Bercow and he is not sure of his future in a new Parliament. However he might be an important element in furthering the campaign. The idea behind this campaign was that the publicity, if we could hit the right note and get national interest, it would advertise the Society and therefore people would be attracted to join. John Goodall still felt we should pursue the Downing Street project for the publicity it would bring to the Society. Sam felt we needed to find a nationally known figure to front the campaign.

7. The Patriot:

We are continuing to produce *The Patriot* regularly every quarter having moved, a few years ago, to full colour. We have finally got the printer to do it the way we wanted rather than the way he wanted, and the results are very good. It is hoped that members find it interesting and useful. We do need contributions as most of the articles are written by members of the committee or culled from other sources, so if members have any interesting information or articles for the entertainment or education of members please let us have them. Gillian Goodall asked whether it mattered how big the article was and wondered whether the newsletter was restricted to four pages, or could be enlarged if necessary. Roy told her that, if we get a large article or a large number of articles we can do a six or eight page version without too much trouble. The other point to remember is that the newsletter does not only go out to members, it is also sent out to various other people outside the Society such as The Houses of Parliament Trust, Battlefields Trust, etc and also goes on the website so that anyone with internet access can go online and read it, so we want to make it as interesting and informative as possible and if anyone has any comments or criticisms now is the time to air them. Gillian wondered whether sending the newsletter out by e-mail would be a saving in postage and Roy explained that anyone with internet access would find it as easy to download it off the website as for him to attach it to an e-mail and send it out, with the same end result. He has, therefore, persuaded everyone who was happy to receive it by e-mail to go to the website and download it or read it on the screen. Every time the newsletter is published on the website he sends an e-mail notifying members that it is available to be viewed or downloaded. Anthea pointed out that anyone who did not wish to receive a hard copy should notify her and she would not post one in future. It was pointed out that new members received several back-copies on joining and Anthea stated that she adds any possible interested organisations to the mailing list. We also take back copies to any talks or events at which the Society is represented.

Gloria Smith said that to promote John Hampden to the wider public the Society should have a documentary about him and get a historian such as Dan Snow to take this on board. Roy pointed out that we had explored this possibility a few years ago and did some test filming but could not raise any backing or interest. Ian Hollenden was looking into getting someone he knew involved but without success. Since then the equipment has become much more portable and it is possible that we could do something but it is a case of finding the outlet. This is something we should look into again. Gillian suggested contacting the National Film School in Beaconsfield to see if any of the students would be interested in this project, but it was pointed out that we had already done this in the past and had meetings at the Film School, but this did not go anywhere. A better idea was to produce a DVD and Sam commented that we had the images and would need to work up a script. Such a DVD could be given to schools and other bodies. The cost of producing a decent would probably be within our resources and if this was not the case we could always ask for donations for a specific project, on which we could also claim Gift Aid.

8. A.O.B:

Sam closed the meeting by introducing the speaker, Adrian Tinniswood, who he described as an Architectural Historian, who is known for a number of books he has produced.