

THE JOHN HAMPDEN SOCIETY

Minutes of the 22nd Annual General Meeting of the John Hampden Society held at The Gate Inn, Bryants Bottom, Great Missenden on Sunday 21st April 2013

Present:

Mr Sam Hearn, (*Chairman*), Mrs Anthea Coles (*Hon. Secretary*), Mr Derek Lester (*Hon. Treasurer*) and 20 members of the Society.

A minute's silence was observed in memory of Lesley Wynne-Davis, a long-standing, very supportive member of the Society, who had recently died.

1. Apologies for absence:

Received from Ian Hollenden, Charles Woodd, Mary Dodkin, Brian Mills, Jim Rodda, Angela Rodda, Lady Helen Motteux, Hughes Motteux, Marion Wiersczyki, David Andrew, Maija Jansson, Angela Feaviour, Sarah Barrington, Tanjah Hufenbach, Alison Buckinghamshire, Michael Morris, John Seal, Valerie Pushman, Richard Pushman, Roger Paynter, Pat Paynter, Jenny Stevens, and Jane Skinner.

2. The Minutes of the previous AGM:

These were agreed to be true record of the meeting. Proposed by Valerie Horne and seconded by Miles Buckinghamshire.

3. Matters Arising:

Derek raised the issue of fund raising to increase the Society's ability to fund projects. Sam pointed out that he was unable to be present at the last AGM and in his absence it was agreed to raise the subscriptions by a larger amount than he had envisaged. He wondered whether this would deter members from renewing their membership but understood that, at the AGM various members were of the opinion that the subscriptions should be raised by a larger amount and then be held at that amount for a number of years. He therefore deferred to the democratic decision of the meeting and we would be discussing later how we were implementing this. Shortage of finance was not holding the Society back and what we lacked was someone to take responsibility for moving actions and programmes forward. He further commented that, had we been short of money we could always have asked for donations for specific projects.

There were no further matters arising.

4. Reports from Officers:

Chairman's Report:

Sam commented that it was good to see several members that we had not seen before at an AGM. He was sorry that he was not able to be at the last AGM, but he quickly summarised some of the highlights of the year, starting with the AGM at Broughton Castle which had gone well despite the fact that it was pretty cold and it was good that we were able to go back there. In June we staged a big event in Aylesbury, attended by several members, and in October we held a church service at Hampden Church to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Society. Other matters which require a lot of effort by the Executive Team are the production of *The Patriot* and talks to outside groups, though these had only amounted to two during the year. It had been a major year with changes to the subscription, change of account and the new gift aid forms required by HMRC, all requiring particular efforts on behalf of the Treasurer and the Membership Secretary. Sam took the opportunity to thank them for their sterling efforts in this respect.

Sam had invited John Bercow to attend the Aylesbury event, and Derek Lester was prominent in looking after John on the day, persuading him to become a Vice President of the Society. We have had a good relationship with previous Speakers of the House, and John Bercow turned out to be quite a star when he joined us in Aylesbury. He is very keen on the John Hampden Society and we thought that we should not just have him on our notepaper. Sam had therefore written to him and asked him if he could facilitate a visit to the House of Commons for members of the Society and whether there was any chance of us laying a wreath in front of the John Hampden statue in St Stephen's Hall. He mentioned that the previous week there had been a photograph of Lucy Worsley standing there, and Sam had pointed out to her that she was standing in front of his statue making a speech without once mentioning John Hampden! John Bercow replied that, unfortunately, due to restoration works in St. Stephen's Hall the statue would be shrouded in polythene for a considerable period of time, we would not be able to do that this year. However he was happy to arrange visit to Parliament for members of the Society and if we were to visit on a sitting Wednesday he would gladly arrange for some members to watch Prime Minister's Questions from the Speaker's Gallery. Roy had also spoken to his MP and he had also agreed to help us out with this event if necessary.

Sam then mentioned that we had produced new leaflets which were available at the meeting. We had previously printed these ourselves, which had the advantage that we could easily make any changes ourselves but it did not look as professional as having one produced by a printer.

He went on to say that we had talked about a new website but because of other things that had intervened, it had not progressed as far as had been hoped. The good news is that members of the Executive had lots of other ideas as to how we would go about this, who we could talk to and how it would be supported so there has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes.

In response to a question from one of the members Sam stated that the main objective of the website is to get Hampden's name known and we need a more powerful website to ensure that this objective is met, which will hopefully encourage people to join the Society.

Sam said that the Society was very grateful to Lord and Lady Saye & Sele for their hospitality the previous year. He commented that the meeting in Aylesbury on the 23rd June was a joint one to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the Women's Tax Resistance League and the connection of that movement with Hampden's reputation, a point not mentioned in any of the Hampden

biographies. It is still possible to come up with previously unknown information relating to John Hampden and his family. For the benefit of members who were not present at the event, Sam described the day. We were fortunate in being able to follow the wreath-laying ceremony with lunch at the King's Head, thanks to the Chiltern Brewery, but unfortunately we had failed to research access to the room at the Kings Head, meaning that some members were unable to attend, due to the nature of the staircase. The Deputy Mayor of Aylesbury was also present but although he declined to give a speech he was still moved to say a few words.

Our year was rounded off with a commemorative service at Great Hampden Church, followed by lunch at The Gate.

Sam commented that most of the articles included in *The Patriot* are written by members of the Committee and it really would be good if other members would submit articles for publication. He has on occasions asked friends of his to contribute and a wider authorship for *The Patriot* would give it a different feel. We have a similar problem with talks, there essentially being only a couple of people who do this. Talks take time to prepare and to do and if any members knew of anyone who might be happy to give the talks we would like to know.

A question was raised by John Goodall regarding the possible visit to Parliament and attendance at Prime Minister's Questions and Sam replied that it might be that this would be best split into two events as not everyone would want to, or be able to, do both, and the question of whether a meal should be included would have to be considered.

Hon. Treasurer's Report:

Derek stated that he is finalising his work on the site of the battlefield at Chalgrove and there is just one last point to be resolved. He stated that, with regard to the website, he fully approved of what Roy had been trying to do.

Derek then said that he thought it was probably not generally known that he had been having serious problems concerning his position as Treasurer, mainly concerning who was the treasurer and what a treasurer was for.

Derek then reported as follows:

"My thanks go to Sam who checked my accounts and kindly wrote 2012's Profit and Loss account and Balance Sheet. You can ask me questions, but it may be necessary to defer the reply to the Chairman.

In 2011 the Trustees agreed to drop Lloyds Bank for the Co-op, and, while making this major change, increased the subscriptions. This transition is now complete. What was written in the Treasurer's report before you, although meant sincerely, had been revised. It has not been possible to convince my fellow Trustees of the necessity to have a secure website on which to carry out the Society's business, and because of these difficulties, the Treasurer must resign.

It would seem that three years' work of finding ways for the Society to fulfil its Charitable Objects' could be lost and the years of discussion in committee talking about Hampden's genealogy to be just that, talk.

The move to bring the John Hampden Society into the 21st Century must come from the membership. The Committee is obliged to heed proposals carried by a majority vote at an AGM. Would someone care to raise a motion stating 'Does the membership of John Hampden Society want the facility of a secure online UK Bank and user friendly website on which to conduct all Society business?'

It has been an honour serving on the John Hampden Society Committee for the last 18 years and Treasurer for the last four. When the financial web page is operational members and outsiders will be able to join or renew membership, set up Standing Orders, complete Gift Aid forms, purchase books, buy tickets for Society events using their own online bank or PayPal; all achieved without recourse to writing a cheque or using the Royal Mail. Those without an online bank or even those without a computer are also accommodated in this brave new world.

The secure 'Financial Web Page' would also include areas to receive research data, documents and images and where appropriate, links to our 'Book Store' could be suggested.

To accommodate the changes, the Treasurer wrote a comprehensive spreadsheet to account for and record the new information, including membership subscriptions that would emanate from the 'Financial Web Page'.

There has been a misunderstanding between the Webmaster and the Treasurer as to what is possible and what is required of the 'Financial Web Page'. It is a difficult and complex task to make a web page work efficiently especially when harassed by this impatient Treasurer. Computer viruses and data hacking are ever more sophisticated in their operation and must be contained. There has been an area of miscommunication and by way of an apology will the Society accept a donation of £500 towards the cost of compiling a secure 'Financial Web Page'? Moreover, will the webmaster accept this challenge and take the John Hampden Society into a new era?

An Appendix to this report is attached over the page and lists the activities that the Treasurer has put in place for the Society to approve. The Treasurer has been instrumental in finding ways for the Society's membership to meet the Constitutional Charitable Objects. It is noted that only Committee Members contribute articles to *The Patriot*, organise talks or contribute to the knowledge on the website regarding John Hampden. The Treasurer is hopeful that, by revising the website it will allow any member to contribute their time and expertise to the Society. There are plenty of items to choose from and with your enthusiasm to get involved this will ensure the Society's future.

The Treasurer looked forward to another year in office to complete the tasks set out but events have overtaken this and I am obliged to resign as Treasurer."

Sam asked Derek to state why he thought the current website was not secure. Derek replied that as a part time hacker he could hack that site. PayPal is not secure as it is and NASA cannot keep hackers out. There are an enormous number of what they call 'bots' floating around affecting systems and they are expensive to put right, and also somebody playing around could easily get into the

system. He quoted a supposed new member whose application he had stopped, but there are many other japes going around. Sam asked Derek to clarify what he was saying, that because we use PayPal, this was making our website insecure, and Derek replied that that was not what he was saying. Sam pointed out that it was what Derek had said, but Derek then said that PayPal was OK though it was a weakness but we don't have to let it be, but if the front door is wide open, people can get in. Sam asked Derek to explain this to people who are not computer literate and Derek replied that, when entering any website, you can get away with being virtually anonymous and that is what the current issue is at the moment. Some details are not mandatory on our website at the moment and as we have found out there are any number of ways of checking who is genuine and having an e-mail check is one way, because then you can mail back and at least you stand a chance of seeing that you are dealing with a genuine person.

Sam then asked whether there were any further questions on Derek's report. One comment was made that, if we have been given an address and a postcode, that should be adequate. If a false address and post code had been supplied then probably any e-mail address would be equally false. Derek then commented that he and Roy would be able to make the website secure.

Sam thanked Derek for his report. Derek then asked if everyone would read the objectives on the back of his report in the Accounts.

Membership Secretary's Report:

Brian then gave his report as follows:

Membership numbers stood at a total of 132 members. Over the last year we have gained an additional 12 members. Brian also commented that he is the 'Warehouse man' for the Society publications. Derek queried where the majority gain in membership came from and how they became members, suggesting that in part it was due to previous mismanagement in the Society, i.e. wives and partners who had not previously become members but now had done so.

Webmaster's Report:

Roy reported finding no problem with PayPal and was of the opinion that the site was secure, and this had been confirmed by a computer expert. He commented that you do not enter the website – you "access" it and anyone subscribing to membership using PayPal in connection with the website uses a secure server. If Derek thought that it would be easy to hack into our website, why has he not done so? The website was first produced in 1996 as a very simple affair to start with just, one or two pages. Eventually Roy transferred the site to the present professional host and started to get e-mail contact with the world and the website has gradually expanded to its present size with good facilities and has attracted much interest. Roy has done a lot of work on it and spent hours at his computer, trying to sort out the problems and set up pages as Derek wanted them, but this proved impossible and he and Derek had agreed to differ.

The system is now working infinitely better than it was and allows potential members to access a wide variety of items. Roy updates the Diary regularly and keeps the membership list etc. up to date, changing the password regularly to maintain the security. He has started two Googlegroup mailing lists, one for members of the Executive Committee and one that is available for all members. The Committee have looked at several web sites that they liked and the new site when set up should include a Guest Book, an on-site Forum etc. The Society is open to suggestions from members as to what else they would like. A professional site will cost us on-going money to move forward but it should be possible to access the site on a computer, a tablet, a smart phone etc. By incorporating a code on the site, anyone with a scanner on their phone can immediately access the site.

Sam thanked Roy for his report and asked whether there were any questions.

5. Election of officers and committee members:

Sam read out the nominations that had been received as follows:

Chairman:	Ian Hollenden	Proposed by Sam Hearn	Seconded by Anthea Coles.
Treasurer:	Sam Hearn	Proposed by Anthea Coles	Seconded by Roy Bailey
Hon. Secretary:	Anthea Coles	Proposed by Sam Hearn	Seconded by Annabel Bailey
Membership Secretary:	Brian Cox	Proposed by Annabel Bailey	Seconded by Barbara Cox.
Committee Members:	Roy Bailey	Proposed by Gerald Coles	Seconded by Brian Cox
	Stephen Barriff	Proposed by Roy Bailey	Seconded by Anthea Coles.

There being no other nominations individual votes were taken on the above proposals and all were voted unanimously into office.

Stephen introduced himself, explaining that he had been a member of the Society for a number of years, has more time following retirement, and felt he would like to join the committee.

6. Plans for future Activities:

One of the marketing issues we heard about earlier was the new Trail Leaflet and Sam hoped that the new Chairman would be happy to continue with this project. There are a lot of ideas involved which need to be nailed down and some committee members had not heard about until Colin Cartwright had spoken about them.

The new website will be a major piece of work towards marketing the Society, which Derek had alluded to. We do market ourselves at local events and through local events and in the past that has brought forth new members. Bucks Local History Fair is normally held in September and the Society would like to have a presence. It would be good if one or two members would come along and help man the stand for short periods.

Sam further mentioned that we are talking about building up a register of people and organisations to whom we have given talks in the past, so that we can contact them to see if they would like us to give further talks in the future, and would like to gain access to local Schools to give talks, etc. but at present do not have sufficient people to take this on.

Sam had attended, on behalf of the Society, the service at Cromwell's statue. This is the first time that the Society had been represented at this event. He had looked at the Cromwell Society website which is a very good educational website with a great deal of material and had been in conversation with their educational officer telling him that it was somewhat embarrassing that our website could not offer anything like theirs. He asked whether they have much take-up from schools and learned they have put a huge amount of effort into the website and have received almost no interest, showing that one can do a vast amount of work for virtually no return. This needs to be borne in mind as we are a very small Society and we do not have infinite resources. One member, Mrs Beatrice Dobie, volunteered to go into schools and market the Society and Sam said that we could discuss this at a later date. Maurice Kirtland stated that local history had been removed from the school curriculum making this difficult. Valerie Horne had spoken to three senior teachers but without success.

7. Forthcoming Events:

Derek reported that, on 6th May the Regiment would be taking part in a living history event at Chalgrove although the details were still to be firmed up.

Sam reported that we were arranging visits to the Houses of Parliament, and a visit to the Fullers Brewery with a talk by Gerald McGregor on London in the Civil War, possibly in conjunction with Simon Marsh.

Sam then asked if any members have ideas for events for next year, they should put them forward for consideration. He commented that we had hopes of being able to hold an event at Hampden House in the future.

8. The Patriot:

Sam reported on the newsletter, a new edition of which was due out and we had very little material available. We would be very grateful for any contributions from any member who had anything that might be of interest, but on the whole Sam felt that we hit a pretty good standard though he felt we needed more and shorter articles. It was a credit to Anthea and Roy that we do get out four editions a year.

9. A.O.B:

Anthea explained the reason for not having held the AGM at Hampden House for several years. Gillian Goodall expressed surprise, as she had organised a meeting there for the Society with no problems, so it was suggested that we might explore going down that route again, possibly with Gillian's help if necessary.

Sam then drew the meeting to a conclusion with a vote of thanks to Derek in appreciation of the enormous amount of work he has done and is doing for the Society. He commented that it was hugely impressive and we are genuinely very grateful for all that he has done and hopes we can continue to work successfully with him in the future.

Derek responded by reporting on difficulties he was having with the Battlefields Trust in connection with the interpretation of events etc. at Chalgrove. Sam stated that the Society would commit to doing all we could to assist with this.

Mrs Beatrice Dobie announced that she would be happy to become a member of the Executive Committee but Sam explained that it was necessary to be nominated and seconded in advance of the AGM, though under the Society constitution the committee could co-opt a new member at a committee meeting. He suggested that we invite Beatrice to attend the next committee meeting and we could discuss this further.

Derek spoke about the forthcoming wreath-laying ceremony at Chalgrove, which was to be attended by representatives of Victoria County History.

Roy mentioned the Society leaflets which had just been printed and asked that anyone who could distribute/display these should see him after the meeting and he would give them a supply.

Roy asked Derek whether he was prepared to carry on running the Society library and Derek replied in the affirmative.

There being no further items for discussion the meeting was declared closed.