

THE JOHN HAMPDEN SOCIETY

Minutes of the 23rd Annual General Meeting of the John Hampden Society held at The Barns Centre, Thame on Saturday 10th May 2014

Present:

Mr Sam. Hearn (*Hon. Treasurer*), Mrs Anthea Coles (*Hon. Secretary*), Mr Brian Cox (*Membership Secretary*) and 7 members of the Society.

1. Apologies for absence:

Received from Lord Hollenden, The Countess of Buckinghamshire, Lady Helen Motteux, Gloria Smith, Marion Wierszyki, Sarah Barrington, Anne Kirtland, and Andrew, David, Sam & Tom Wishart.

2. The Minutes of the previous AGM:

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

3. Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

4. Reports from Officers:

Sam stated that he was standing in as Chairman for Lord Hollenden, who had tendered his apologies for absence due to the fact that the date of the AGM coincided with his son's graduation ceremony. Sam would therefore be giving two reports, one on behalf of the Chairman and his own report as Treasurer.

Chairman's Report:

Sam started with a couple of thoughts. Hampden and Hampden's life and activities still remain extremely relevant to the world at large and to this country and we need to keep coming back to the question of how we can increase his profile in the rest of the world. He gave a couple of thoughts on that topic – saying that he was at a political fund-raising event recently and Dominic Grieve was the honoured guest. Sam managed to speak to him and as they were on the edge of the site of the Battle of Turnham Green and probably also on the edge of the Battle of Brentford, where Hampden and his regiment had turned the Kings Army away, he asked whether Dominic Grieve was aware of where he was. He was interrupted by a friend who said Dominic would not want to hear about Hampden – he had had enough of Republicans and all that. At that point, Dominic Grieve interrupted and said "No, Hampden was not a Republican. If anything Hampden was a Monarchist but he was certainly not a Republican and it is as a result of him that we have the form of Parliament that we do have. His labours contributed mightily to that and also helped secure the government that we do have under the law." Sam did not need to say much more and several people in the vicinity heard that Dominic Grieve had strong feelings on the subject of Hampden and put his friend firmly in his place. Sam said that this does illustrate the point that, although some people know who Hampden was and what he achieved, a lot of people who ought to know, do not. The other thought he wanted to bring out was a quote from a novelist called Eric Hoffer:

"In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists."

The Trustees are responsible for keeping Society records and we very much hope that what we have done with the help of the Treasurer is to give a good financial statement showing what we have done and achieved during the financial year to December 2013. We are responsible for safeguarding those assets, hence, for example, the question that we will discuss later on concerning the Co-operative Bank, and so far as we are aware, we have taken all the steps necessary to keep secure the Society's Bank accounts. We also have to ensure that, on a change of Trustees, all necessary transfer of documentation is handled properly.

Activities in the year included the AGM at The Gate Inn at Bryants Bottom, following a Church Service at Great Hampden. We did not have a speaker as such but Colin Cartwright and Andrew Clark came along and talked quite interestingly about *Walking with Bucks Suffragettes*, a booklet which we partly sponsored, and they also produced their book which included references to our Hon. Secretary and to the John Hampden Society. Sam thinks the book is selling well around Bucks, especially in the Chesham museum, and there will be people using it as a reference book in years to come, so the name of the John Hampden Society will be brought to the attention of people doing research into what was an amazing period in Buckinghamshire's history.

There was an interesting event on the date of the battle of Chalgrove, when Ian Hollenden, accompanied by four of the Trustees turned up to lay our normal wreath at the monument. Derek Lester had organised with the Victoria County History committee to run this as a special event. The idea behind this was that the VCH were completing research to insert Chalgrove and the battlefield into the VCH records. You will not be surprised to hear that the local press, TV, Radio, etc. were not there. Two walks were undertaken on the day with Derek leading the long version for the stout-hearted only and Gill leading a much shorter walk, which was extremely interesting, with Gill managing to bring things to life.

The Society had stalls at the Bucks County History Fair in July and the Bucks Family History Fair in September. It was hoped that a couple of new members who signed up on that occasion, would be at the AGM, but they had not come along. There was a lot of enthusiasm at the Fair and we certainly stimulated a lot of interest, so it was a busy time for us.

Dr Paul Hooper has once again been amazingly generous. Sam visited him when he was on the Isle of Wight on holiday, and Paul offered a further donation of books to our library as mentioned in *The Patriot* and listed on the website. In addition, very sadly, Barry Keating, a longstanding member, had died and his wife, Veronica, also a member, has donated to our library a selection from her husband's own library. Barry was a great reader and a very knowledgeable man with many different interests and an interesting man to talk to. A lot of his books went to charity and we are very lucky to have been given the books we have.

Our highlight of the year was the visit to the Houses of Parliament. We had a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament and a week earlier four members had been fortunate enough to have access to Prime Minister's Question Time in the Speaker's Gallery from which the feedback was very positive. These visits were facilitated by John Bercow who is supportive of the Society. We asked if a wreath could be laid on the monument to John Hampden when we went to the Houses of Parliament, but unfortunately that part of the building was being refurbished and the statue was shrouded in polythene sheeting so we were not able to do so.

Sam read out a list of thanks, firstly to Roy Bailey for continuing to make changes to the website and keeping the content up to date. We do have a sub-committee working on a new website and Roy will talk about this later. We are negotiating with the Bucks Family History Society to sell our publications via their website. *The Patriot* continues to be published four times a year though on occasions it is a struggle to fill it, and

it would be a better publication if we had a broader range of people feeding into it with more varied topics. Anyone who could come up with an article was encouraged to do so, it does not have to be written by them, it could be something they had 'stolen' from somewhere else, or something relevant by a friend or relative who has a burning desire to see it in print, but the more contributors we have the better and the more different perspectives we would have. One of our Trustees has produced a piece about the Battle of Chalgrove which was seen by some as controversial, but controversial articles are good as they can encourage debates though they should not be offensive or they will not get past the Editor. This will be discussed again later in the meeting.

Sam commented that we were grateful to Steve Barriff and Beatrice Dobie for their contributions to the running of the Society. Unfortunately with Ian being unable to get to many meetings, having these two new Executive members has been very useful.

Hon. Treasurer's Report:

Sam next had to don his Treasurer's hat, stating that we had had a financially successful year, partly due to the increased subscriptions. The Membership Secretary would tell us about the result of this change still having the scars on his back from sorting out members who had paid twice, paid into the old bank account, or paid the old amount into the new bank account etc. This was anticipated as we said at the last meeting and Sam thanked Brian very much for carrying the load, and pointing out that problems were down to a manageable number this year, after a lot of hard work. On the plus side some people who paid twice or overpaid made a donation of the overpayment, which is reflected in the accounts. Sam then commented that the postage figure seems large and he would amend the accounts before lodging them, because £165 of the postage cost was wrongly allocated, relating to the Suffragette sashes commissioned for use at the Aylesbury event, which, did not arrive in time. They were intended for the Stewards as we had to be able to identify them, but had to make other arrangements on the day. We hoped to sell them to Colin Cartwright for the launching event of his book, but that idea failed and Sam has written the cost off. Unfortunately it was shown under 'postage' as it was listed as stock but Sam re-classify that item. There were additional postage expenses incurred in writing to people about subscriptions, etc.

The Society had purchased a new banner, shown under 'miscellaneous'. This was on display at the meeting. Roy would comment on this later. Sam did say that we are very pleased with it and hope that the members are also. It is of a design and size that we can easily take around with us wherever we are representing the Society and we had discussed transferring quite a lot of the other items from our information boards to, possibly, three more of these banners as they are a good way of communicating and very portable.

The Gift Aid return for the year had not been submitted but Sam would be working on it soon. There would probably be another £200 due to the Society. The paperwork that was handed over to Sam by the previous Treasurer was not in a state that was ready to go as the format of the return has changed, and Sam will have to convert the information to a form that can be used in the Return.

Sam announced that the accounts showed a balance at the bank in excess of £6,000 as at 31st December, which sum had obviously increased since then. This is deposited partly in the Co-op Bank and partly in the Lloyds Bank account, plus a small amount with PayPal. We had taken a decision to move most of the money out of the Co-op account in view of the difficulties being experienced by that Bank and in agreement with the rest of the Trustees, Sam had done this. We were not concerned that the Co-op Bank might be in trouble, but had to be seen to be protecting the interests of the Society.

There being no questions asked concerning the accounts, Sam asked for a vote in favour of signing them as a true record. Roy Bailey proposed that they be so signed and this was seconded by Stephen Barriff, with a unanimous show of hands.

Membership Secretary's Report:

Brian reported that many members renewed their subscription each year by standing order, which does save the Society quite a lot of money and time. There are currently 116 members in good standing for 2014. During the last year we had gained 14 members and lost 10 (5 sadly due to death). There were currently 11 members who had failed to renew and Brian had sent them a further reminder, feeling that eventually most of them would renew. He touched on the problems mentioned by Sam in over the changes in subscription and bank account, but in view of the size of our membership, this was not insurmountable.

Brian is responsible for sales and distribution of the Society's books and publications, and pointed out that there was a table in the hall with a selection of these for members to browse after the meeting and he hoped to sell a few items then.

Bob Hammond asked if it was possible to receive a list of Society members and Brian pointed out this was available on the website. Anthea had sent out a copy with the AGM paperwork to those members who received their paperwork by post. Brian offered to provide Bob with the relevant list.

Webmaster's Report:

Roy Bailey reported that there had not really been any substantial changes since his report a year earlier. We still intend to upgrade and improve the site as the present one is somewhat dated and technology has moved on at such a pace that there are better ways of designing a website and more that can be done with it. Sam, Steve Barriff and Roy have been working towards that end, but had been slightly distracted by other events over the last few months, though they were considering various designs and layouts and investigating possible designers. There was no real hurry as the present site does do what it was intended to do and we need to take it slowly and make sure that we get the new site right and also get good value for money. We need to come to an agreement on a suitable design and what facilities we want. The present website is kept updated with Society events, etc. on a regular basis along with the Members' Area with a constantly updated membership list. The Society is now arranging with the Bucks Family History Society that they will offer our publications etc. for sale on their website, giving us the benefit of much greater coverage. People going onto our website to purchase articles will be redirected to the BFH sales facility with various options for payment. Roy also keeps an eye on the Googlegroup, which continues to be very useful, and as could be seen from the sign at the bottom of the banner, the Society also has a Facebook page, which we can update with various events and items of information. Roy suggested that any member with a Facebook account who has not already 'liked' the JHS website, might like to do so.

The design for a new banner had been considered and a company from Newbury produced a very fine banner for a local group, so Roy asked them if they could do the same thing for us, which they agreed to do. The banner cost £100 to produce, plus £25 to reproduce the artwork, etc. The Committee are very pleased with the finished result, which also incorporated the Facebook logo and a QR code enabling people with smart phones to immediately access the Society website.

Sam commented that, we were considering covering the Hampden genealogy on the new website as this would answer probably the largest single number of queries received in the course of a year. The Bucks Family History group have a method of doing this which may well be helpful to us when the time comes.

5. Election of officers and committee members:

Sam handed over to the Hon. Secretary to read out the nominations as follows:

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

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

Sam stated that if anyone would like to become more actively involved in the Society, we would be happy to consider co-opting them onto the committee, or if they did not wish to do that but had something interesting that they would like to talk to the committee about, they were welcome to attend any Society committee meeting.

Miles Buckinghamshire thanked the members of the Committee for the way they had coped with what had been a very difficult two years for everyone. Sam replied that it had been invaluable having the support of Miles and Ian throughout that period.

6. Plans for future Activities:

Sam reported that we were a little naked in this respect at present. We should have had a talk at the AGM, from Gerald McGregor, a colleague of his, the same talk, concerning the defences of London during the Civil War, that he had intended giving at the visit arranged for Fullers Brewery (which unfortunately had been cancelled). Unfortunately Gerald was taking the local election campaign rather seriously and was unable to make it! However we do hope to arrange an event later in the year and ask Gerald to give his talk then, possibly combined with a meal. Sam would like to put the Fullers visit back on the agenda. The problem is that the brewery only gives tours during the week, which makes it difficult for some people to get there.

We have talked about doing more things with John Bercow and this is something that we need to think about in more detail. It would have been good to have been able to lay a wreath on our visit to the HOP, especially as the Cromwell Society lay a wreath at the Cromwell statue outside the building every year and would be nice for us to get to lay a wreath inside.

He asked that if anyone had ideas about what events they would like the Society to organise would they please let us know. Roy reminded everyone that we had discussed, at a committee meeting, the possibility of laying a wreath at the memorial in Thame. Last year there had been a clash between the Chalgrove Battle Group and their event with the Victoria Family History group and our wreath laying ceremony at Chalgrove. Consequently we felt it would be better if we laid our wreath in Thame, either on the 18th June or preferably on 24th June, avoiding a clash and the Society would benefit from additional publicity. Roy suggested that, if we opted for Thame, it would be nice if Miles could lay the wreath for us. First we would have to find out what formalities needed to be dealt with if we were to go to Thame and in the meantime Sam would try to contact John Bercow to sound him out on the possibility of doing something at Westminster on 24th June.

Beatrice suggested the possibility of a tour of Thame Museum, though Sam remembered that we had done so shortly after the museum was first opened, but felt that we could certainly organise another tour at some stage.

Valerie Horne said she would like to see Lucy Worsley persuaded, given the right material and plenty of information, to do a half-hour programme on John Hampden on TV. She is obviously in touch with sufficient TV Producers to achieve this if she felt so inclined. Valerie commented that Lucy is infectious in her enthusiasm and is absolutely amazing. Sam felt that this question was being addressed to him and stated that after her first series, he had sent Lucy a very ingratiating e-mail which she had taken in good part, because he felt that she speaks with authority and the way she presented one of the most boring parts of our history and managed to make it interesting was quite extraordinary. He announced that he was retiring from Historic Royal Palaces in June to take up a job with the National Theatre and one of the reasons for his e-mail to Lucy was to try and keep in contact with her. He has asked her to do another event like this and the response was very warm and positive but she said that her schedule at that time was such that she could agree to something and then find she had to let us down because of all the filming she was doing. Sam does feel that he should try to push this forward and felt it was worth raising with her again. He also hopes that we will get Adrian Tinniswood back again, though on previous occasions the audience has been small and it would be better if we could attract more interest for a talk by him. Possibly we could work with one of the other groups that we have contact with and organise a joint event with a larger audience.

Bob Hammond stated that the Society has a loyal membership who do not necessarily come to meetings and wondered if we could do something to make them feel more involved. He understood that we had stock items that were not selling and wondered whether such publications could be sent out free of charge to the members. Roy replied that he thought it was a good idea and felt that the Hansford Miller book would be a good choice as we do have a lot of these in stock. Brian sends a copy to new members, but commented that he could easily send a copy out to each member. Bob felt that the Paul Hooper book would be the best choice as it is less read but brilliantly written.

Beatrice mentioned the Thame Charities Fair, which is held every November. We had a successful stall last year, and she asked whether we would like to do the same this year. There is no charge and it is an opportunity to publicise the Society. She also wondered whether we could produce a tea-towel to sell at events. Other suggestions were sweatshirts, ties and hats.

It was suggested that Miles might arrange a Real Tennis tournament, possibly at Hampton Court, where there was a tennis court in Hampden's time and it was just possible that he might just have played there himself, though there was no evidence of this. Miles was happy about this suggestion and will consider it for the future. There is also a court at Merton College in Oxford, which venue might be better supported, as members seem more eager to travel to Oxford than Hampton Court.

7. Co-op Bank:

Sam reported on the problems that the Bank were experiencing, though it seems likely that they will be able to sort this out in time. We could therefore wait to see what happens, hoping that the bank will not disappear. If that was the outcome, we do have Government backing to ensure that we do not lose money invested with them, though it could take a little while to realise our assets. Alternatively we could change our bankers, but having just done so, another change would not be something we would want to do. Sam asked for views on what course the Society should take and the general consensus of opinion was that we should leave matters as they are at present, transferring some of the money from the Co-

op into the Lloyds account, just to be on the safe side. Charles Harvey proposed that we leave matters as they are, which motion was seconded by Sam Hearn and received a unanimous vote.

8. The Patriot:

Sam again mentioned that it has sometimes been a struggle to find sufficient interesting copy to fill each edition though he does not have an issue with the quality. There is certain new stuff coming to light all the time, and if we broaden our remit slightly and include relevant Civil War stuff, this would help. He is hoping that the Battlefields Trust will come forward with their more definitive view on the Battlefield at Chalgrove within the next year, which we would link into with the Patriot, and hopefully Gill and Derek's research will be properly acknowledged. *The Patriot* may not hit the national press, but it is the way we pass on news to our members. Roy explained that Anthea produces the newsletter as Editor and forwards it to him to be proof-read and converted into suitable files to be sent to the printer. In the last year we had changed our printer to a small company in Winchester offering a small discount to registered charities. This is reflected in the accounts which show that the cost of printing has gone down and the quality is much more consistent. Sam commented that working with printers can be fraught with difficulties and it is good to have found a reliable firm to print our newsletter. Roy is always insistent that what comes out in the name of the Society should be of the highest possible quality.

Miles agreed to produce an article for a future edition of *The Patriot*.

9. Constitution:

Sam reported that the wording of the Constitution was not ideal, the original version having been amended at the time that we became a Charity. Unfortunately we duplicated two clauses and some other clauses were no longer applicable. He therefore produced a new version including a provision for future amendments, to be made by calling an EGM in order to discuss amendments with members and take a vote thereon. One other point that needed discussion was the lower age limit for members and at what age a member should be eligible for election onto the Executive Committee. We have always had a junior level membership subscription and do want to encourage younger members, so Sam asked whether there should be a minimum age for membership and a minimum age for the Executive Committee. It was suggested that there should be no minimum age for membership, but membership of the Executive Committee should be limited to members of 18 or over. This was proposed by Beatrice, seconded by Annabel and received a unanimously vote.

Sam will liaise with the Charities Commission to ensure that our suggested Constitution meets with their requirements and then to circulate it to the Executive Committee. At that point Roy will put it on the website.

A.O.B:

Charles Harvey suggested that more use should be made of e-mails to send literature or notifications to members, or tell them these items were available for download from the website. Anthea felt that we were reasonably good at e-mailing rather than posting, but felt we should look into this again. It would save time and money if we were to update our e-mail list. She commented that the overseas postage now is horrific. It had cost £7.60 to send the AGM paperwork to two members for whom she did not have an e-mail address. Miles will let Anthea have the missing e-mail addresses in due course. Roy said that about 50% of members view *The Patriot* on the website, being notified when he uploaded it. Using Roy's latest e-mail list, Anthea feels that she should be able to cut down on postage. She proposed e-mailing all members and asking, if they do not already do so, would they be happy to view/download their copy of the newsletter rather than receive it by post, stating that if they wished to receive a hard copy of any individual edition one would be posted to them. Unfortunately there are still quite a number of members who do not have, or have not notified us of, an e-mail address.

Roy commented that several people had still not paid their subs for the current year and Brian had had to send out reminders. We had always agreed that the cut-off point was 3months, i.e. the end of March, when members would be deemed not to have renewed and he felt it probably was not worthwhile to keep sending out postal reminders at that late stage. Brian agreed but said there were only 11 and he would give it one more go, especially in view of the difficulties experienced with the change of bank and subscription level.

Sam announced that Jim Rodda's wife, who had just joined the Society, had very sadly died. Jim was understandably extremely distressed, which was the probable reason for his non-attendance at the AGM. Miles enquired whether anyone knew how Ian's son was getting on and was told that he has made a good recovery. He also asked about John Adair and was told that he is very frail.

Sam called the business part of the meeting to a close, inviting those present to partake of the refreshments provided.