

The John Hampden Society

Minutes of the Special On-Line Meeting held via Zoom on 24th May

Present: Roy Bailey (Chairman), Anthea Coles (Hon. Secretary), Sam Hearn (Hon. Treasurer) Phil Broomfield, (Membership Secretary), Bruce Alexander, Steve Barriff, Charles Harvey, John & Kate Hobart, Simon Marsh, Peter Osborne, Jim & Elizabeth Rodda, Beth Rogers, Gordon Schreck, Peter Aschenbrenner, Gerald McGregor

1. Introduction and Welcome from Chairman:

Roy welcomed everyone to the meeting, there being 17 attendees in all including the Executive Committee. He commented that we are currently denied the opportunity to meet in our beautiful countryside in places such as Hampden House, Broughton Castle, etc., but by video conferencing, we are able to enjoy the company of members far further afield, who would otherwise not be able to join us. He said that, when we are in a position to hold this year's AGM this will probably take place at The Kings Head in Aylesbury as originally intended, but we will probably try to combine these two systems so that more members are able to attend, on-line if not in person. He thought the committee would whole-heartedly embrace this method of meeting because it will save us from having to travel around and it puts Phil on the same footing as the rest of us as he lives about 90 miles from the rest of us. It also means that those members who are reluctant to serve on the committee because of the physical distance can quite easily participate by this system, so cannot use that as an excuse!!!

A special welcome was extended to two members joining us from America, Peter Aschenbrenner from Maryland, and Gordon Schreck from South Carolina, and two members from the Isle of Wight, Kate and John Hobart and Beth Rogers from Fareham.

Roy explained that this was not an AGM, but would follow the format of this year's postponed AGM, using the paperwork that had been distributed to all members prior to lockdown, but with no voting or official business forming part of the meeting.

2. A Message from our Patron, the Earl of Buckinghamshire:

Roy passed on a message from Miles who was unable to be with us on this occasion. Miles and Alison had asked that their best wishes be passed to everyone together with the hope that everyone was well and would stay safe at this difficult time.

3. Apologies for Absence:

Miles Buckinghamshire and James Addy.

4. Minutes of the AGM of 24th March 2019:

Members were asked whether they were happy that these formed an accurate record of that meeting, or whether anyone wished to discuss any pointed contained therein. There were no queries or comments raised.

5. Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

6. Reports from Officers:

a) Chairman's Report: To be taken as read. Roy stated that if there were any questions concerning his report, he would answer them at this stage, but no-one had any questions to raise.

b) Hon. Treasurer's Report:

The 2019 accounts were displayed on the screen and Sam invited questions. He explained that the balance at the banks currently stood at £7,817. A total of £800 worth of 2020 membership subscriptions had been received to date. There has been little expenditure in the current year and the Society was in a strong financial position. He explained that the entry in the 2019 accounts relating to postage stamps showed that we had actually made a

profit, as we now have very few members to whom we have to post items and we are still using old stock stamps which had been purchased at lower rates than the current postal rates.

Sam mentioned that when he resumed the role of treasurer in 2012, he was told that one of the Society's Lloyds Bank accounts was now dormant and could not be used. In 2019 he accidentally paid a couple of cheques into the dormant account, and when he realized his mistake he contacted the bank who told him that the account was still live and that there was £359 in it. This money was now properly recorded in the Society's accounts.

He invited questions on the 2019 accounts or any of the other matters that he had raised. There were no questions but a comment from Gordon Schrek who wondered [in jest] whether considering the largesse of the account, we could not subsidize travel for our American friends to visit for the next AGM! Roy said that we were thinking in reverse. He pointed out that we had visited Hampden, in Maine in 1974 where the local people had paid for one person to travel and eight members of the Society went over there and had a wonderful time there. We are now affiliated to the Hampden Maine Historical Society with Roy being an honorary member and Bob Hawes is an honorary member of our Society. Gordon said that he was also an honorary member of Hampden Maine Historical Society having contributed to the restoration of the museum in Maine.

Roy stated that he was amazed at the size of the bank balance and Sam explained that some of this was due to fees for talks, book sales and Gift Aid with more of the latter due to be claimed.

c) Membership Secretary:

Phil reported that he had chased non-renewing members, of whom 13 had subsequently renewed and 6 had declined to renew. He was still waiting to hear from 5. He confirmed that subscriptions received this year amounted to £825 and the membership stood at 83, showing a drop over the last few years. Roy was surprised that membership had dropped so low and stated that this is a chicken and egg situation because as membership falls we are unable to do so many things as we would like to do and if we do not do as many things as we would like to do, some people think that they are not getting value for their money, but he always misquotes John F. Kennedy, saying "Ask not what the Society can do for you but what you can do for your Society", and thinks it is important to support the Society in any way possible.

Sam pointed out that there had been a period when we had not been able to produce *The Patriot* for a while and he felt that that was a vital contact that members missed and probably felt that they were not getting the value of the subscription. Roy pointed out that we do find that the newsletter and the Google Group mailing list are valuable facilities for keeping in touch with members.

Roy asked whether anyone had anything to add on this subject and Peter Osborne felt that during the current lockdown a lot of communication within communities was taking place via WhatsApp groups and village associations, which were very effective and very important and provided platforms for people to learn what is going on in the area. There are some powerful ones. He is in Great Missenden, just down the road from Hampden, and there are some very powerful associations covering swathes of South Buckinghamshire where we as a Society could reach a large number of people to promote the Society which is unknown to many people in the area who might be interested and these provide a vehicle we have never had before. The Great Missenden Association would be very happy to carry publicity for the Society with a view to informing people what the Society does, what it means and give more information about John Hampden and how to join the Society, which he thought could be a very effective way of increasing membership.

Roy felt this was a very good point and pointed out that we do have a Facebook page which we update regularly and people read it and pass on links to other people and it does have a button allowing people to join the Society. Peter agreed that this was good but wondered why you would go to this page in the first place, if you did not know that the Society exists. He suggests that we network the society through local associations which would enable us to reach a large audience. This lead nicely on to the next item on the agenda.

7. General Discussion:

Peter suggested that we prepare a statement of about 50 – 100 words to introduce ourselves and ask the difference associations whether they are willing to promote the society. He will send a list of these organizations to Roy and Roy will send Peter a supply of membership leaflets. Most Associations will happily do this in return for having their Association promoted by the Society. Peter explained that since lockdown these groups have become a much stronger means of communication than they were as people were using them as an alternative to newspapers etc. to find out what was going on locally.

Beth Rogers supported the idea of networking and suggested we should identify historical societies who have members who would have an interest in the life and work of John Hampden.

Peter offered to speak to Amersham Museum who had previously been interested in a partnership with the Society, whereby each promote the other. Bruce Alexander felt we should promote Amersham Museum and mentioned that we might look at Haddenham village website which is highly active, and we could perhaps liaise with them.

Gordon Schreck felt that we could gain membership in the USA through the Hampden-Sidney College, which is where he first heard of the John Hampden Society from Miles Hobart-Hampden. He had thought for several years that membership was only available by invitation but joined when he found out otherwise. He will reach out to the alumni and introduce them to the Society, hopefully encouraging membership applications from that source. He also suggested corporate membership for the college. He will let us have contact details of the library where we can send a supply of newsletters and membership leaflets and will inform the college to look out for them.

Jim Rodda suggested that we might make contact John Williams School in Thame, the Inner Temple, and Magdalene College in Oxford, all of which were associated with Hampden's education, and interest them in Hampden.

It was felt that we should try to organize more events, but Sam pointed out that the Executive Committee were very stretched, there only being four of us who were heavily committed, both with the Society and other commitments and we really do need to hear from members who would be able to undertake the organization of events. Roy pointed out that as it is likely that most of our meetings in the future will be via Zoom, it would not be necessary for such a member to live locally and, indeed, Membership Secretary Phil Broomfield lives in Bournemouth.

Roy mentioned that we were working on an idea to erect a plaque to John Hampden in Great Hampden Church as there is currently nothing commemorating him there. We have identified a possible position for such a plaque and had a good discussion regarding the possibilities of doing this with the Rector who was very keen on the idea and advised how to go about obtaining Diocesan permission to go ahead. Contact was made with the appropriate department, asking their advice as to what would be likely to be acceptable, but this was rather overtaken by the lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic and we are still awaiting their response. Churches will hopefully be re-opened shortly, and we may hear from the Diocese then.

Roy then mentioned that Jim Rodda is working on a script for a performance about the Ship Money Trial, which he feels would be an ideal subject for an event to be held during the winter months and one that could be streamed to members. Jim is at present having difficulty in interesting the John Hampden School in High Wycombe due to lockdown and is going to contact Lord Williams school in Thame as they have a drama unit. He is working with Stan Twitty in Amersham about this project and will liaise with Peter Osborne and Bruce Alexander in respect of this project.

Roy then mentioned his ambition that the 2021 AGM should be held on the Isle of Wight, which has connections with John Hampden. However, everything is closed at present and he is hoping to hear back from a travel company that he was in touch with prior to lockdown, with ideas of prices, etc. for various packages. If he draws a blank with this that AGM will be held somewhere in the Buckinghamshire area.

Roy has given several talks to various U3A branches and during one of these he had to interrupt the talk to explain about Ship Money! Peter said he would speak to the University of Buckingham to see if they would be interested in a talk.

Another suggestion was that we should consider doing talks on-line, though this would have to be carefully thought through and set up but is worth considering.

Gerald McGregor reported that he had contacted the history departments at major universities and only heard back from Nottingham quickly. Oxford and Cambridge were not interested.

Charles Harvey asked whether we would be taking part in Thame History Fair the date of which has been postponed until 25th October, and the Bucks Historical Fair on 24th October. We had booked to take part in the History Fair and would certainly be taking part when it does take place. Charles said that he would be happy to assist Sam at this event as he did last year.

Roy asked whether there were other ways in which we could improve the website, the leaflets, or *The Patriot* to make them more attractive.

Jim Rodda said that it would be a good idea to put a box at the Ship Money Memorial with Society leaflets displayed there. Roy commented that it would need to be waterproof and Jim felt that there are suitable boxes available, such as those used by the Woodlands Trust so that people visiting the monument could pick up a leaflet about the Society.

John Hobart suggested that we should have information boards bearing a QR code at various sites. Roy pointed out that we have a banner which is used when we do attend events or hold talks, etc. which does bear a QR code, and wondered the best way to go about having the code added to information boards. There is an information board at Chalgrove put up by the Parish Council some years ago, but he is not sure how we could incorporate the code. He mentioned that there is an application to build many houses near the battle site which we are keeping an eye on, but nothing has happened to date. John said that they have them on information boards at various sites on the Isle of Wight and people find them useful. It would be a good idea to think about doing this.

Peter Osborne mentioned the Griffin Club in Amersham, where he could arrange for one of their evening meetings to have a talk on John Hampden aft lockdown is finished. They usually have an attendance of 50 - 60 members. He asked Roy to let him have a supply of Society leaflets.

8. Request for written opinions of the Meeting:

There being no further discussion, Roy asked if attendees would e-mail either himself or Anthea with their comments concerning the meeting and any advice or suggestions for improvements for next time. We will then put some of the comments in the next edition of the newsletter.

9. Any other business:

Roy reported that it had been brought to our notice that a locket containing hair reputed to be John Hampden's was being offered for sale, along with certain paperwork, by auction on Thursday, 28th May. It was felt that the Society would be interested in acquiring this artefact, at which point Peter Osborne said that he had an account with the relevant auctioneers and was au fait with bidding for such items. He offered a lot of advice as to how we should go about acquiring this item and offered to handle it on our behalf and suggested what sort of figure he felt we should consider paying. His offer was gratefully accepted. Roy stated that he was asking for donations from members towards the cost of the purchase and had received several offers already. Peter said he was happy to donate as well as handling the bidding, which he felt should be conducted by telephone rather than on-line.

Beth Rogers asked what we would do with the locket if we were successful and Sam that we would ask Aylesbury Museum if they would like to take it on semi-permanent loan. Gordon said he felt we could not go wrong if we purchased it, despite the fact that it is considered that the hair is more likely to have belonged to John Hampden's father rather than John Hampden himself, a fact that even a DNA test would not prove as they would have the same DNA.

There being no other business, the meeting ended, and it is hoped to hold another meeting later in the year.