

MINUTES of the 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
(the “Meeting”)
of
The Sussex Archaeological Society
(the “Society”)
held at
The Rudkin Room, Fishbourne Roman Palace (“FRP”)
starting at 10.30 a.m. on Saturday 19th October 2024

PRESENT:

Martin Bell, Anne Bone, David Bone, Jessica Butt, Stuart Chatfield, Anne De Poitier, Charles Harding, Chris Hayward, Diana Hill, Sophie Hill, Jeremy Hodgkinson, Amanda Jones, Glynn Jones, Ian Judd, Pamela Kent, John Lower, Robin Milner-Gulland, Mike La Rooy, Fiona Marsden, Matt Pope, Catherine Reay, Andy Sanderson, Jean Sanderson, Andrew Smyth, Gavin Stewart*, Peter Varlow, Sarah Watson, Caroline Wells, Carol Woods and Keith Woods.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Staff: John Baldock (General Manager), Katie Pearce (Marketing Officer), Gavin Stewart (Associate Director and Member*), Rob Symmons (FRP Curator).

Auditor: Mark Cummins (TC Group)

There were 16 online member attendees.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE RECEIVED FROM:

Mike Allen, Peter Balmer, Geraldine Bridgewater, Kate Evans, Mark Evans, John Funnell, Maria Gardiner, Oliver Gilkes, Colin Johnson, Stephen Knott, Jan Oldham, David Rudling, Brian Short, Judy Moody-Stuart, Janet Pennington, Richard Vernon and Jane Vokins.

1. Welcome by the President and apologies for absence

Martin Bell ("**MB**"), in his capacity as the Society's (Retiring) President, took the Chair and welcomed Members (including those viewing online) to FRP. MB noted that the agenda and other papers for the Meeting had been duly circulated to members with the Meeting notice and that they were also available, in their full form, on the Society's website.

MB noted that members had been given the opportunity to pose questions in advance and may also do so at the Meeting. He stated that any questions requiring more detail would be responded to, in writing, after the Meeting.

MB reported that 9 Members had registered votes, abstentions or proxies in advance that would be added to the votes recorded at the meeting. MB reported that apologies for their absence had been received from 17 members. No others were declared at the Meeting.

MB then discharged his very sad duty to report the deaths, since the last AGM, of 12 members:

Mr. David George Hooper, Mr. Michael Moriarty, Mrs. A. P. N. Blake, Mr. Glen Bruce, Mr. Trevor Clements, Mr. J. W. Osborne, Mr. S. H. Webbe, Mrs. R. A. Edwards MBE, Miss J. M. Vann, Mr. Albert Eric Nash, Mr. T. D. Baxendale and Dr. M. A. Turner.

On behalf the Society and its members MB expressed thanks to those deceased members for their support and condolences to their families and friends.

2. To approve the minutes ("Minutes**") of the Annual General Meeting held on 2nd December 2023.**

There were no questions in the room or online and MB moved to a vote.

(Proposed: Keith Woods, Seconded: Caroline Wells)

*It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes, as previously duly made available for Members' inspection, be approved.*

There were no matters arising from last year's meeting.

3. To receive the report of the Trustees for the year to 31 March 2024 (the "Report**")**

MB advised Members that a detailed Report had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. MB invited the Chair of Trustees, Amanda Jones, to present the Report.

Amanda Jones ("AJ**"), Chair**

AJ thanked MB and welcomed all present to the wonderful FRP. She also welcomed those members joining via Zoom. AJ considered that all members care passionately for the Society and that the annual meeting is an opportunity to celebrate the highs, acknowledge the lows and look forward to the times ahead.

Questioning what the Society is, AJ noted that, for her, the Society is its historic properties, its collections, its archives, its research, its publications and its people (all taking their rightful place within the Society family - something she hoped all members will never forget).

Considering its people, AJ noted how lucky the Society is to have them. At every turn this year AJ had witnessed the skill, dedication and sheer determination and hard work of staff, volunteers, friends groups and trustees; their passion was evident and the strongest and most wonderful foundation the Society could have.

AJ was therefore delighted to introduce David Bone, the Chair of the Friends of FRP ("**FoFRP**"), to say a few words of welcome. She noted that the Friends groups at FRP, The Priest House, Marlipins Museum, Michelham Priory and Anne of Cleves House represent the most amazing groups of people; working tirelessly and giving their time and expertise freely day-in, day-out to support each of the wonderful, historic properties. She noted how they are increasingly a central part of what the Society does.

David Bone

David Bone ("**DB**") expressed his honour at being invited to speak on behalf of FoFRP, which had been founded in 2004 (initially to help raise funds for the Collections Discovery Centre and other parts of the Palace). He noted that most of FoFRP's members could be considered more as patrons than volunteers and have contributed financially over the years. He considered FoFRP's role as important in light of the Palace's distance from the Society's other properties. DB welcomed AJ's recent encouragement of collaboration and networking with other Friends groups during the Society's recent challenges. DB stated, based on recent experience, how important FRP is in an international context. DB offered FoFRP's support in assisting the Society in the future.

AJ thanked DB, his committee and all of the Society's Friends Groups across the Society's property portfolio, for their unwavering support.

AJ noted that being presented at this Meeting is the Trustees' Report for the financial year ended 31 March 2024, a copy of which was available on the website and at the Meeting. AJ apologised sincerely for the late availability of the Report and encouraged members to listen carefully to Sarah Watson, Chair of the Society's Finance & General Purposes Committee, who would be explaining the financial results in more detail.

AJ, however, asked members to consider that the fact that the accounts were available at all, and two months earlier than last year, was down in no small part to the late nights and early mornings put in recently by individual Trustees and the Society's new auditors. AJ thanked them for going well above and beyond their expected duties to ensure that they were available at the Meeting. AJ advised that, whilst she will always expect and aim for the annual report and accounts to be available to members at AGM, it is not actually a company law requirement (which is that the document is shared with Members in advance of being filed at Companies House by 31st December). AJ re-iterated, though, that the Society will always aim to have them available at the annual meeting so that they can be fully presented and discussed.

AJ encouraged Members to read the Trustees' Report in detail as it set out the extent of the Society's activities – both achievements and challenges – throughout the 2023/24 year. AJ noted that, as previously explained at the previous year's AGM, it was to be another year of significant change. She drew attention to a few aspects in particular.

First and foremost she advised Members of Trustees' key responsibility as Directors under Company Law – to protect the Society's assets and ensure its creditors will be paid. She acknowledged that this sounds stark, but it was the reality of where Directors' focus has had to remain this year. Whilst there was much that Trustees wanted to do (and much that members wanted them to do), above everything else Trustees simply had to ensure that the Society was a going concern and had the ability to remain so for a period of at least 12 months after the date of signing the accounts.

It was noted that, last September, Trustees were delighted to receive the news that their application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Resilience Fund was successful and that a sum of £249,993 was secured; a strong endorsement of the Society's organisational change plans.

AJ further advised that, in December, the trustees appointed Counterculture on a short-term basis - an organisation that specialises in transformation work and a team with a wealth of experience of working within the heritage sector. This decision injected much needed leadership skills in finance, marketing, events and fundraising. She reported that a second round of restructuring then followed in the spring – focused on creating a much more flexible staffing model so as to better serve the still seasonal nature of much of the Society's activities.

AJ reported that these changes, and several others, reduced the Society's annual loss in unrestricted activities from £570,000 to £394,000 and in 24/25 trustees are currently working towards a breakeven budget. She considered that improving the bottom line by such a sum is an achievement in any organisation, but to do so in one with a turnover of only £1.5m in the space of two years is no small feat. She noted her gratitude to everyone in the team who had helped throughout the process.

In addition to Tom Wilcox and his colleagues on the Counterculture team, AJ made special mention of Annie Wills who had worked tirelessly to drive so much of this change, much of it on a single-handed basis, turning her hand to any task that needed to be done. She also acknowledged the work of Greg Talbot who joined for an interim period as General Manager.

AJ reported that John Baldock and Gavin Stewart have recently been appointed the Society's General Manager and Associate Director respectively and that both were at the Meeting.

AJ advised that, despite the difficult financial decisions that had to be made, the Society's reach continued to build and the 2023-24 year saw over 133,000 people engage with its collections, historic properties, events and activities – an increase of some 40% across the past 2 years; surely something to acknowledge and celebrate.

AJ was also pleased to be able to announce that, after much hard work by the team, agreement has been reached on the sale of the property known as the Margary Block in Lewes. She reported that the sale is for the building only and not any of the surrounding land, drive or access. She reminded members that, at an EGM in January 2019, members gave permission for this property to be sold and it is being purchased by its immediate neighbours, Sir John and Lady Maya Tomlinson, who will transform it into a studio and community events space. It was noted that the Society will continue to have access to it and Trustees are very much looking forward to working with Sir John in the years to come. She reported that the property has been sold for £550,000 and, after costs, the sale proceeds will inject at least £520,000 in cash into the organisation. She noted that, importantly, this will allow the trustees to reinstate the restricted reserves to their full balance - and finally commence the delivery of many of the projects they so generously fund.

AJ then invited Members to hear first-hand about some of the work the Society's team has been undertaking and expressed her pleasure that Rob Symmons, Curator at FRP, had agreed to tell Members more about some of the curatorial activities that he and his colleagues have been delivering.

Rob Symmons

Rob Symmons ("RS") thanked AJ for the opportunity to represent the work of his whole team.

RS first noted the appointment this year of Harry Redburn as Finds Liaison Officer to work jointly on a job share with the existing officer, Jane Clark. RS explained their case history and events this year (including an emergency excavation of a 3rd c. coin hoard near Petworth. He advised that their work will be covered in more detail in one of the forthcoming online

lectures. RS invited members to join their Facebook page. RS also reminded members of the great achievement in fundraising, analysing, interpreting and securing the Pulborough torc for the Society's collections.

RS thanked the Museums Officer, Emma O'Connor for her work during the year – in particular the various exhibitions and events that she had arranged at Marlipins. RS also noted the success of the (externally funded) 'Time Travel/Culture Shift' event aimed at learning opportunities for disabled adults.

RS was pleased to, this year, co-host the annual national Roman Archaeology Conference with the Archaeology South-East team at UCL.

RS also advised members that the Society was co-supervising a PhD with Portsmouth University investigating *et al.* a sediment core from the harbour and pollen samples from FRP – providing an insight into the Roman impact on the area. Another PhD was, in conjunction with Newcastle University, investigating FRP's (as yet unstudied) window glass. He concluded by noting that the Society continues to collaborate with various other groups and Reading University on a project investigating the use of metal alloys in Roman Britain.

AJ thanked RS and his staff and colleagues for their work during the year - especially during this period of radical change.

Staff

AJ reported that, this year, the dedication and hard work of the Society's staff and volunteer teams had, yet again, come to the fore and she took the opportunity to thank them. It was noted that they continued to show commitment and dedication to the Society despite many challenges - and for this the Society was grateful.

AJ particularly recorded thanks to those staff members who left the Society's employment during the year. Some had been with the Society for several years, others a few months, but all contributed to the Society's journey. AJ acknowledged Chloe Andrews, Tom Buckemeyer, Louise Creasey, Abi Hawkins, Simon Holman, Lee Hurst, Jess Keeley, Finlay Larkin, Arwen Legg, Izzy Roberts, Roman Tewksebury, Elouise Thompson and Sarah Tingley. AJ thanked them for their work and invited members to applaud them.

Trustee Recruitment

AJ noted that, at the Meeting, members would be asked to consider the election of Trustees to serve on Council for the next three years. She reported that in her view an open and inclusive recruitment search had identified in Peter Chivers, Pamela Kent and Portia Tremlett exceptional individuals with the strategic partnership, education, marketing and curatorial expertise required to help govern the Society at this time.

AJ reported that Council would be recommending the re-appointment of Adam Bates who chairs the Trading Company, Matt Pope ("MP", Vice Chair) and Mike la Rooy (currently serving as a co-opted Council member) for election.

AJ advised, as she had last year, that navigating the challenges of the current climate is not for the faint-hearted nor is it for those without the skill, judgement and knowledge required to govern a Charity of the Society's complexity. AJ considered how fortunate the Society was to have such experienced individuals putting themselves forward for election; she hoped members would support them all.

AJ also welcomed Jean Sanderson who had accepted Trustees' invitation to be co-opted to Council for the forthcoming year – bringing a wealth of experience across the public and private sector and an enormous passion for archaeology at grass roots level.

AJ reported that Joe Sullivan would be retiring as a Trustee after serving the maximum term of nine years and through some incredibly challenging times. Joe was thanked for his service and wise counsel.

AJ also thanked all Trustee colleagues and co-opted Committee members for together steering the Society through such a period of change.

AJ advised that, today, MB was to stand down as President after serving for three consecutive terms - a period of six years in total. She noted that MB's dedication and loyalty to the Society has been unwavering throughout and that the Society is indebted to him for the grace with which he has undertaken the role.

AJ was delighted to announce that Mike Pitts FSA had accepted an invitation to become the Society's next President and, subject to member approval, will take up the post from the end of the Meeting. She advised that Mike Pitts is a freelance journalist, archaeologist and businessman who specialises in the study of British Prehistory. She noted that he is the editor of several books, is extremely well published and was author of British Archaeology – the publication for the Council for British Archaeology - for over 20 years. AJ advised that, having run his own restaurant business for several years, Mike Pitts is acutely aware of the need for heritage organisations to modernise and that commercial business acumen must hold its rightful place alongside the need for curatorial expertise. AJ stated she was very much looking forward to working with Mike Pitts and encouraged members to give him their support.

Looking forward

Not for the first time AJ noted the Society's ability to play a leading role in the social and economic life of Sussex. Despite there being much work still to do, AJ expressed pride in the many achievements celebrated since the last AGM. AJ cited some examples:

- The launch of the Long Man Annual Lecture and having Oxford University and BBC Historian, Dr Janina Ramirez giving the inaugural address in February.
- Seeing the team at FRP deservedly winning a Sandford Award for excellence in heritage education and taking their place amongst leading UK heritage offers such as Bath Abbey, Bletchley Park, Historic Royal Palaces and the Brontë Parsonage Museum.
- The public's reaction to the Sussex Guardians Appeal - helping the Society reach its target of £25,000 - and matching the generous pledges from the Friends groups and Trustees.
- The Society's properties being mentioned in Gatwick Airport's new marketing campaign. (AJ advised that their promotional film would be shown at the end of the Meeting).

AJ, however, noted that it wasn't just the big headlines that meant so much to her. For her, there were many special moments on this journey and, again, she gave a few examples:

- A lovely letter received from an elderly lady from Colorado, USA, generously enclosing a cheque and letter of encouragement in support of the Society's programme of change.
- The team of willing volunteers who recently rallied around to enable the opening of Bull House during Lewes Heritage Open Days; attracting 663 visitors over the 3 days.
- A delightful elderly gentleman recently regaling her with his memories of knowing, and sharing photographs and letters of, Stella Hotblack when he was a younger man and recalling her visiting the

jewellery store where he worked to purchase 2 gift watches for the volunteers working to repair the roof of Michelham Priory mill.

- Finally, and best of all, she reported how young Felix (perhaps the youngest attendee ever at our online lecture series) asked the question on everyone's lips at last Tuesday's online zoom lecture regarding the true location of the Battle of Hastings - Felix wanted to know that if William had ordered for an Abbey to be built on the site of the battlefield, and an Abbey was built in Battle, what did they say for any new research that the battle took place elsewhere?

In conclusion

In conclusion, AJ thanked members for their ongoing support and for attending the Meeting (either in-person or online). Thanks were also recorded to the staff and volunteers who had worked hard to organise the meeting.

AJ hoped that members would continue supporting Council's endeavours to create a Society that takes its rightful place in the local and national heritage story - transforming it into the dynamic, contemporary and relevant heritage organisation it so deserves to be – and delivering against all of its objects in respect of the archaeology, history and heritage of Sussex.

She advised that transformation takes time; on average around a decade. She noted therefore that, if measured since the Covid pandemic, the Society was only approaching the mid-way point in that journey. She considered that there is still much for the Society to do and that it can't be done alone. She also noted that all stakeholders must work together. As the Society continues to roll out its strategy (and increasingly work with wider stakeholders and partners) she wished to leave members with a thought and, by borrowing a few words from John F Kennedy: to ask members to ask themselves: 'not what your Society can do for you but, instead, what you can do for your Society'.

AJ asked everyone to work together in increasingly new and innovative ways to ensure a truly successful future for such an amazing organisation in one of England's most wonderful counties.

4. To receive the financial statements and accounts and the Auditor's Report thereon for the period to 31 March 2024 (the "Accounts")

MB invited the chair of the Finance Committee and General Purposes Committee, Sarah Watson, to present the accounts.

Sarah Watson ("SW", Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee ("FGP"))

SW thanked, staff, volunteers and Council for their work in producing the Accounts (noting that they were still in draft format at this stage).

SW reported that the year's focus had been on increasing income and stabilisation, noting that the Committee Chairs had met on an almost weekly basis to consider the Society's operations and going concern status. The FGP had worked hard during the year to appoint a new finance team and place the Society's business on a mature and sustainable footing.

SW re-iterated that the Society's business had been operating at a loss for many years (with staffing representing its highest costs). Whilst there had been a loss of £395k this year, this represented a reduction from last year's loss which was £541k, despite increasing costs. SW reported that, whilst income was broadly stable, unrestricted donations had fallen and fundraising will be a major focus for next year. The activities of the Society's trading company had, however, shown a 20% improvement on the prior year. There have been successes in developing the Society's trading

activities – particularly weddings, for which the Society has some excellent venues. Overall expenditure had been reduced by 8%, largely due to the restructuring that had been implemented. She advised that the award from the National Lottery Heritage Fund had provided the necessary resources to help implement that restructuring.

In response to submitted queries regarding the relative performances of the Society's sites SW advised that the position was more complex than the headline figures might suggest. Whilst some sites (such as FRP) produce a greater headline income they do, in turn, require a greater amount of head office support activities to maintain them. SW noted that the Society was investigating greater input from volunteers – especially for the smaller properties.

SW concluded by advising that the sale of the building known as the Margary Block would be the major balance sheet event during the 2024/25 year. Wise use of the cash that will be released will be a key focus of FGP. SW noted that, whilst she would wish to present a more positive set of figures, members should be in no doubt that achieving a balanced budget for 2024/25 would be her main priority in the coming months.

Questions from the Floor of the Meeting

Ann Bone queried why debtors, at £133k, was such an apparently large amount.

SW and Mark Cummins ("MC", representing the auditors) noted that it was a similar figure to previous years and represented items such as weddings where deposits had been taken for events taking place in future years.

Robin Milner-Gulland ("RMG") noted that, for many years, the Society's properties had failed to break even despite repeated assurances that there is a plan to do so. He queried the benefit of the Society's dual aims as both an archaeological society and in his opinion a minor player as a visitor venue and whether the benefit of that dual role had been considered? He suggested that local councils should take over management of the Society's museums.

SW advised that that very topic is discussed on a regular basis. She advised that the Society's operating model had not been attended to for many years and was now being addressed. AJ added that she believed, from contacts in her wider business role, that the Society is a major player in the county's wider cultural life. She also advised that, whilst the Society's problems date back many years the current and most recently appointed trustees had made great strides. AJ also advised members of the Society's objects - that do encompass a much wider range of activities than what is now considered to be covered by archaeology. She advised that its properties are as much a part of its collections and responsibilities as anything else in its museums. AJ concluded by advising that there was no prospect in the current financial environment of local authorities (or any other similar bodies) taking on responsibility for the Society's museums. If the Society ceased to support them they would be unlikely to survive. Therefore, it was very much in accordance with the Society's articles to support them and secure their future.

Anne Bone commented that, in Hampshire, a number of similar museums face closure due to the fact that local authorities have withdrawn or reduced funding from what is viewed as discretionary services.

Auditor

SW invited MC, a partner of the Steyning office of the new auditors, the TC Group, to briefly address the Meeting

MC thanked the Society for being instructed. He advised that, whilst the accounts are in draft form, he envisaged no substantive changes to any of the numbers before final sign-off. MC confirmed that, along with Council and based on the information he had seen, he will shortly be happy to sign the accounts on the going concern basis as already explained by AJ and SW.

Questions Submitted in Writing by Members

MB then considered the questions that had been submitted by Members in writing, in advance of the Meeting.

Judy Moody-Stuart ("**JMS**") had asked if it would help in any way with membership or Sponsorship of the Society if the adjectival phrase "....and Historical" were added to give a wider scope to The Society with a possible title of: " The Sussex Archaeological and Historical Society"?

AJ thanked JMS for her query and advised that the subject would be discussed at a future council meeting. Furthermore she invited comments from the Meeting (noting that such a change would require a special resolution at a future meeting for which the necessary notice must be given). Jeremy Hodgkinson gave his support for the proposal but noted that it had been rejected by the members at a meeting in the past. Anne Bone advised that it may not be advisable without suitable market research as the existing name had created such a well-established brand. Peter Varlow highlighted that there was already confusion arising from the 'Sussex Past' brand that ought to be considered as part of the wider proposal. AJ suggested that the Society will post a formal response on the website and will consider the proposal (including various legacy and marketing considerations) in more detail.

RMG noted that, given the Society's many praiseworthy initiatives lately, the abrupt suspension of Sussex Past & Present ("**SP&P**") came as an unwelcome surprise. He asked the Chair to explain what financial saving has led to this and was it fully discussed by Council?

AJ noted her appreciation for the thanks given for the recent initiatives. She acknowledged that, along with some other discretionary costs, SP&P had been temporarily suspended (by Council resolution in May 2024) due to financial considerations. The printing and publication costs, alone, came to £19k per year. No final decision on its future had yet been taken. Matt Pope ("**MP**") advised that the curatorial team regularly discussed the promotion and distribution of the type of content that has appeared in SP&P wherever possible in a variety of ways (including, for example, social media). MP noted that Sussex Archaeological Collections had met its deadline this year – a considerable achievement under the circumstances. MP also noted that a temporary suspension of SP&P had been a necessary price in preserving the jobs of the Society's staff. SW advised that members' requirements of the ways they receive information is changing and that that is part of the current review. Peter Varlow commended the Society on its improved email and website communication. Anne De Poitier agreed with the move to electronic communication but asked for the 'Members Update' section, formerly in the paper version of SP&P, to be included in it.

RMG noted that the Chair has been sending out informative memos to members, but there seems to be no way of responding to these, or asking for further details (e.g. of the long questionnaire circulated earlier in the year). He asked if members may have her email address please?

AJ invited any member to contact her at: chair@sussexpast.co.uk . General queries could be addressed to membership@sussexpast.co.uk . AJ took the opportunity to re-iterate how under-resourced the Society is; ideally most communications should be coming from the

Executive, but staff, trustees and volunteers were having to be flexible and resourceful to ensure the functioning of the Society.

RMG asked how many CEOs or their equivalents has the Society had in the last 5 years?

AJ advised that there had been two. Tristram Bareham left (after ten years' service) on 31st October 2019. Andrew Edwards served from 12th April 2021 to 9th September 2022 (leaving for personal reasons). Between those dates (and just after) a number of interims on short-term contracts had been employed: Catherine Cavanagh, Helen Anson, Simon Dowe. Leanne O'Boyle (formerly Head of Historic Properties) served in an executive director capacity from 26th September 2022 to 30th January 2024. Since then, Greg Talbot had briefly served as interim General Manager and has now been replaced, permanently, by John Baldock. Gavin Stewart (formerly a trustee) had stepped down to serve a (three-month) temporary period as Chief Executive during the year. Gavin Stewart now serves part-time as an Associate Director. AJ further advised members that all had been commendable professionals within the industry and thanked them sincerely. However, due to the Society's historic failure over many decades, to now properly modernise some felt the task was simply too great. AJ commended the current and remaining staff who were working hard to deliver the necessary change.

David Rudling asked if, in the continuing and unacceptable delay (for the second year running) in members being sent the accounts for the Society's last financial year, could the financial loss or surplus for each property in 2023/4, to include each property's share of central overhead costs, be clearly identified?

MB noted that the subject had been covered, briefly, in SW's earlier report to the Meeting. SW advised that the necessity of each site to use and contribute to central support costs was not always appreciated. She noted that the simple view that some sites effectively supported others was more complex than the headline figures suggest. AJ encouraged members to view the Society across its offer and to see the Society's strength as a whole.

Maria Gardner asked: when can we expect to hear news of a SAS-lead excavation and when will the Tidemills report be published?

MP first advised that there are no plans to publish the Tidemills work yet as there are not sufficient funds to do so – the costs would run to tens of thousands of pounds. He noted that a similar previous project - at Clayhill - also remains unpublished. He explained that, when these projects were first instigated, there had been no plan put in place to fund publication and the current generation of Trustees is dealing with that legacy. He assured members that the archive was safe and that publication was likely in the long term. However, it was not currently a priority with the limited resources available. He stated that the current Council will only instigate a new excavation when there is a clear need to do so and when funds are available to complete the project, including publication. He explained the Society was currently focussed on where it can assist – such as providing SAC as a means of publishing the work of others. He also advised that a key issue was storage and the limited capacity and ability to conserve the finds that would inevitably result.

Jeremy Hodgkinson proposed, and MP agreed, that the research section of the Society's website could give more information on the collaboration with other societies in which the Society is currently engaging.

John Funnell asked a question on the future of Sussex P&P which had already been dealt with in the Meeting. John Funnell also asked, when a new Librarian would be appointed and why had no such

appointment been made during the last two years? He also asked who if anyone is currently making decisions about acquiring new books, discarding books no longer needed, directing the library volunteers, and developing the Library as a research resource?

MP said attempts have been made to appoint someone of the sufficient background and skills (and with the spare time) to fill the huge void left by the sad loss of Esme Evans. Whilst this has not yet been achieved the library is open and being staffed and secured by a dedicated team of volunteers under the management of the Museums Officer.

There were no further questions and MB moved to a vote.

(Proposed: Caroline Wells, Seconded: Jeremy Hodgkinson)

*It was **RESOLVED** that the report and accounts of the Trustees for the year to 31st March 2024 be received.*

5. To appoint auditors for the year and to authorise Council to fix their remuneration

(Proposed: Glynn Jones, Seconded: Matt Pope)

*It was **RESOLVED** that TC Group Holdings Limited be appointed auditors to the Company until the conclusion of the next period for appointing auditors within the meaning of s485 Companies Act 2006 at a remuneration to be agreed by the Trustees.*

6. To elect Members of Council in Accordance with Regulation 33 of the Articles of Association

MB explained that there were currently six Trustee vacancies and that six nominees (whose personal statements and details of Proposers and Seconders, have been publicised to members prior to the meeting). MB invited each nominee present (Pamela Kent, Mike Le Rooy and Matt Pope) and the proposed co-optee (Jean Sanderson, "JS") to briefly introduce themselves to members.

The vote on each nominee was taken individually, as follows:

- Adam Bates ("**AB**")
(Proposed: AJ, Seconded: MP as Chair and Vice Chair of Council)
*It was **RESOLVED** that AB be appointed Trustee of the Society in accordance with Regulation 33 of the Articles of Association.*
- Peter Chivers ("**PC**")
(Proposed: AJ, Seconded: MP as Chair and Vice Chair of Council)
*It was **RESOLVED** that PC be appointed Trustee of the Society in accordance with Regulation 33 of the Articles of Association.*
- Pamela Kent ("**PK**")
(Proposed: AJ, Seconded: MP as Chair and Vice Chair of Council).
*It was **RESOLVED** that PK be appointed Trustee of the Society in accordance with Regulation 33 of the Articles of Association.*
- Mike Le Rooy ("**MLR**")
(Proposed: AJ, Seconded: MP as Chair and Vice Chair of Council)

It was **RESOLVED** that MLR be appointed Trustee of the Society in accordance with Regulation 33 of the Articles of Association.

- Matt Pope ("**MP**")
(Proposed: AJ, Seconded: GJ as Chair and Member of Council).
It was **RESOLVED** that MP be appointed Trustee of the Society in accordance with Regulation 33 of the Articles of Association.

- Portia Tremlett ("**PT**")
(Proposed: AJ, Seconded: MP as Chair and Vice Chair of Council)
It was **RESOLVED** that PT be appointed Trustee of the Society in accordance with Regulation 33 of the Articles of Association.

MB declared that AB, PC, PK, MLP, MP and PT were duly elected Trustees of the Society with immediate effect.

AJ advised that JS will be co-opted as trustee by Council in accordance with regulation 37 of the Articles of Association of the Society.

7. Any Other Business

Gavin Stewart ("**GS**") Associate Director

MB invited GS to address members.

GS commended staff, trustees, volunteers and friends for the way they have supported the Society since his appointment to his position in August. He advised how his prior (brief) period as trustee had given him an additional unique view of the Society's difficulties and strengths. GS noted that organisations like the Society are the lifeblood of society and he cared deeply about it. GS advised that he will be working for one day a week to help ensure the Society's financial stability, to work on special projects (such as the sale, and future, of the building known as the Margary Block) and to assist collaboration with third parties such as local authorities and the CBA. GS invited John Baldock to explain his plans for the future of the Society.

John Baldock ("**JB**") General Manager

JB noted that his overwhelming thought after his first few months in the role was the enthusiasm of the staff and other stakeholders he has encountered. JB was aware of the Society's long history but noted that his job was to look to the future – he stated his desire to move the Society from a functioning organisation to a flourishing one. JB stated his desire to work with members and others to make the Society fit for the future.

Election of New President – Mike Pitts

MB noted that, due to his retirement, it will be necessary for the Society to appoint his successor. He reported that it was the intention that Mike Pitts will be proposed as his successor.

MB gave his full endorsement of Mike Pitts and noted that he had been brought up on a farm in Oving and was now, amongst his many other achievements, a world-leading archaeologist. Mike Pitts was, unfortunately, unable to attend the Meeting. MB moved to a vote.

(Proposed: Caroline Wells, Seconded: Anne Bone)

*It was **RESOLVED** that Mike Pitts be appointed President of the Society in accordance with Regulation 27 of the Articles of Association.*

Retirement of MB

Before concluding the Meeting AJ moved to thank MB for his six-year period in office.

She noted that when MB took up the post in 2018 he could have had no concept of what lay ahead – a world-wide pandemic and national lockdown, and a subsequent pressure on the heritage sector like never before. She noted that, throughout that time, MB had given his all to supporting the organisation in every way possible: by attending meetings of Council, sharing his views with Trustees and generously supporting the Society financially and in many other ways. She noted that he had never failed to attend when the Society needed him. She recounted her lasting personal memory of Martin, with other trustees, a few years ago as sleeves were rolled up in a team effort to clear growth at Holtye Roman Road. A much-deserved glass of Sussex cider, with wonderful company, was enjoyed afterwards. MB was thanked for all he had done for the Society and for all the support and encouragement that she knew would continue in the years ahead.

A presentation, on behalf of the Society, was made to MB.

MB thanked members, noting how much he had enjoyed his time as president and learned so much back in the county where his career had begun in 1966.

MB concluded by reminding members about the Society's Tuesday online talks – a great innovation of recent years. He noted that, last Tuesday, a most successful talk on the location of the Battle of Hastings was very well attended. He advised that the next talk, on 29th October by Gary Webster, will be on the Changing Chalk Project. He noted that further talks will be: on 26th November by Arthur Reynolds on Lewes Castle and on 10th December by Jane Clark on The Portable Antiquaries Scheme.

He also advised members to consider the various events coming up at Michelham Priory, Lewes Castle and Museum and Fishbourne Roman Palace for the half term period – support of which is vital to the Society's financial sustainability.

MB also encouraged members to complete their sets of the South Downs Series books with the most recently-published 'Country Houses of the South Downs' by Sue Berry and other excellent gifts available in the Fishbourne Roman Palace and other society shops.

In concluding the AGM, MB thanked members for attending, for their contributions to the meeting and their support of the work of the Society.

He noted that the AGM will be followed by a film relating to the Society's contribution to local tourism and a talk by Prof. Naomi Sykes of Exeter University on the animal remains that have been recorded at Fishbourne Roman Palace and their role in the local community.

The meeting concluded at 12.40 p.m.

Mike Pitts

President

CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

Dated: 25th October 2025