

The Friends of BPMA

Minutes of the sixth Annual General Meeting of the Charitable Company 6 December 2011

Minutes of the sixth Annual General Meeting of The Friends of the British Postal Museum & Archive held at the Phoenix Centre, London WC1 on Tuesday 6 December 2011 at noon.

1 Welcome by the Chairman. Brian Sole welcomed the 41 members and guests.

2 Apologies for Absence were received from Mary Chick, Andrew Watton, Steve Knight, Peter Laird and Roger Dedman.

3 Minutes of the fifth AGM held on 7 December 2010 (*already distributed*) were accepted unanimously as a true record on the proposal of Dennis Conboy; seconded by Andrea Polden.

4 Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2011. These had been distributed in advance and Cyril Parsons had available copies of the full report and accounts for those who wished to see them.

The accounts were accepted unanimously on the proposal of Derek Brunning; seconded by Pat Wortley.

5 Report of the Hon Treasurer Cyril Parsons reviewed the Annual Accounts by making the observations set out below.

As forecast at the 2010 AGM 2010/11 was a difficult year financially. If we exclude the net donations to the Anniversary Appeal, The Friends incurred a loss of £927 in 2010/11 compared with a loss of £170 in 2009/10.

Income from subscriptions decreased by £223, while receipts from Gift Aid increased by £254; we received nothing from Sundry Sales in the year (2009/10 £318). Bank interest continued at a very low level. During 2010/11 funds held in the deposit account declined by only £483 from £8,646 to £8,163, thus we still have adequate reserves.

Excluding our donation to BPMA, expenditure during the year increased by £304, mainly on account of a rise in spending on printing and stationery.

An increase in subscription rates, the first in over 10 years, was agreed at the 2010 AGM, but with the rate for UK-based Friends who are 65 years of age or older being held at £15 per annum. As Treasurer I was most grateful to the number of Friends who last spring dealt promptly with the reminders sent out with the Questionnaire.

Unfortunately in December 2010 we did not know how many UK-based Friends were aged 65 year or more. Subscription income received so far in 2011/12 has increased by only around £300. Some Friends who for a

number of years have paid their annual subscription by standing order may have overlooked the need to execute new mandates if they did not qualify for the concessionary rate.

The Trustees have been heartened to note that donations received so far this year amounted to over £250, in part by some Friends who qualify for the concession rate opting to pay the full £20 rate (or more).

We are fortunate that Andrew Watton has been successful in selling what is probably the last batch of the stock of postcards and other material that he has been storing for the past 10 years. Thus we cannot expect income in future years to be boosted by such sales.

Sadly for us income from advertising in *Cross Post* has declined. Some dealers, who have previously supported us, are now making greater use of the internet for promoting their businesses.

At best your Trustees anticipate that we may break even at the end of 2011/12, so they are investigating whether we can make any savings. Indeed the Management Board is re-examining the cost of producing *Cross Post*. The Friends who agreed to receive copies of the *Newsletter* electronically are already saving us postage and copying costs. Fortunately, as our reserves are currently more than our annual outgoings, we can afford to hold subscriptions for at least another year. If we can recruit more new Friends than we lose, we may be able to delay a further increase in subscriptions.

Brian Sole reported that the full Friends report and accounts for 2010/11 had been previously circulated and was also available on the BPMA website at www.postalheritage.org.uk/friends and he thanked Cyril Parsons for his work on dealing with the financial aspects of running the Friends during the year.

The report was accepted unanimously on the proposal of David Hill; seconded by John Cane.

6 Chairman's Report. Brian Sole gave a brief résumé of the year starting with the sad demise of the Swindon project and ongoing plans for a replacement home.

A reorganization of the Friends saw the establishment of a Management Board and Board of Trustees intended to better manage the running of the organisation.

More than 150 questionnaires had been returned by Friends, providing much useful data for future planning.

Stands had been staffed at both Stampex shows, while successful visits had been made to the BPMA Store at Debden for the annual Social Day, Cartor Security Printers and the Postal Museum in France and to the BPMA photographic show at Swindon.

Unfortunately, a planned philatelic talk about the Aerial Post had to be cancelled following lack of support from the membership.

Two issues of *Cross Post* and of the *Newsletter* had been ably produced by Richard West and Mark Kearnes respectively.

Finally, several members over 65 had kindly paid the increased subscription rate, or more, and this extra money was treated as a donation to BPMA.

A question from the floor queried what had happened to the National Lottery Heritage grant that had been allocated for the Swindon project. Dr Steel responded, confirming that no money had been spent and that it had therefore been returned in full.

A second question related to the cancellation of the BT Tower visit, asking whether it would be resurrected. It was confirmed that this was not possible owing to the revised restrictive policy by BT relating to the public visiting the building.

7 Report of the Director of The British Postal Museum & Archive. Dr Steel reported that 2011 had been another busy year.

A new BBC Radio 4 series *The People's Post* had started the day before and BPMA staff had been involved in helping researchers prepare suitable topics. BPMA is uploading information and imagery to its web and social media sites for all 15 episodes to support the expected demand from a largely new audience for information beyond what the 15 minute programmes provide.

The Masters of the Post book has been published by Penguin Books, largely researched at BPMA over a three year period by the author and his team.

The Postal Services Act had received Royal Assent in June and early fears about the future security of BPMA records were largely unfounded. There had been lots of political pressure and an amendment to the draft has compelled a statutory annual report on BPMA to be presented to Parliament. The separation of the companies continues in readiness for the final split in the Spring of 2012, with BPMA helping to ensure that appropriate record keeping is maintained going forward.

The Swindon photographic exhibition was a great success and a London venue is being investigated to show them to a wider audience, hopefully during the Olympics. A major philatelic exhibition will also be held during the Olympics, with BPMA intending to supply appropriate material for display.

The Mail Rail (ex Post Office Underground Railway) project has reached the tendering stage and the conservators hope to be decided upon in the coming week, with work starting in the new year.

News has started to filter out regarding Royal Mail's plans for its Mount Pleasant complex, with refurbishment due to start soon, which will result in BPMA having to close for the first week in January to enable the roof to be repaired.

Discussions continue with Royal Mail regarding a new home for BPMA, but in view of the problems with Swindon, Dr Steel was not in a position to reveal current plans, but assured those present that discussions were still very much underway with Royal Mail.

Dr Steel advised that he had recently been appointed to the Board of Trustees of BPMA.

A Friend advised that the company handling orders for the *Masters of the Post* book had gone into administration and that those having ordered via Penguin's supplier have been notified.

After Dr Steel delivered his report, Brian Sole presented him with a cheque for £500 being a Friends' donation towards the Mail Rail conservation project. In his thanks, Dr Steel stated that this would enable work to commence earlier than would have been the case.

8 To elect four Trustees to serve for the next three years. Four Trustees – Mesdames Jean Elley and Avice Harms and Messrs Derek C Brunning and Mark A Kearnes, who resigned by rotation – were re-elected unanimously, being proposed by Tom Norgate; seconded by Andrea Polden.

9 To re-elect Mrs. M P Chick, BEd FMAAT AFA as Independent Examiner of the Charity's accounts until the next AGM. Mrs. Chick was re-elected unanimously, being proposed by Cyril Parsons; seconded by David Belton.

10 Any other business. There was none that had previously been advised. However, a Friend requested that Cyril Macey should be thanked for his many years of commitment to the Friends, especially in his role as Chairman. Brian Sole was happy to acknowledge this and to add his thanks, reminding those present that Cyril was still a trustee, so continued to make a contribution to the running of the Friends. He also congratulated Cyril and his wife Phyllis on recently having celebrated their Diamond Wedding anniversary. Cyril's response included thanking BPMA for giving them both grandstand seats at last year's Lord Mayor's Show.

BPMA's Chris Taft was invited to expand upon the Mail Rail project and he explained how there are three carriages from different eras at Debden and that some external funding had been received, but that conservation (they are not being renovated) is expensive and that more funding was still required, so BPMA will undertake the project in stages as funds become available. A special Mail Rail day will be held on 21 April at Debden to raise awareness to the wider public with talks, viewing of the carriages and hopefully a conservator on site discussing the work being undertaken. He added to Dr Steel's thanks for the donation.

Brian Sole advised that the annual Social Day at Debden will be on Saturday 19 May and that a visit to the British Library's Conservation Studios is planned for later in 2012, as is a visit to Royal Mail's Tallents House.

The meeting closed at 12:50.