A.G.M.
FRIENDS OF THE CENTRE FOR ENGLISH LOCAL HISTORY
(now the Centre for Regional & Local History)
(Registered charity No. 1073528)

Unapproved Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 18th November 2025 via Zoom.

Present: Anne Coyne, Karen Donegani, Mary Bryceland, Michael Gilbert, Sue Hughes, Phil Batman, Heather Flack, John Parker, Mandy de Belin, Freda Raphael, Diana Musgrave, Barbara Harvey, Pam Fisher, Dave Fogg Postles, Ralph Weedon, Yvonne Cresswell, Graham Jones, John Goodacre, Andrew Wager, Anne Stones, Angela Muir, Richard Jones.

The meeting was chaired by Anne Coyne and was quorate.

Before the meeting opened, Drs Angela Muir and Richard Jones gave a brief update on the Centre for Regional and Local History. [*Not verbatim]* The University is proposing some fairly significant changes with redundancies across various areas including History. An announcement was made about 10 days ago that History is not facing compulsory redundancies but it is hoped that 25% of History staff (i.e. 6 people) would apply for voluntary severance by January 2026. If this doesn't happen compulsory redundancies would be made. Modern Languages and Fim Studies are closing; Chemistry and Geography are merging. Seminars, in association with the Centre for Urban Studies, are being run in person and online. Recruitment across MA programmes has been difficult with no recruits from the 3rd year undergraduates. The use of AI in the reorganisation programme was mentioned.

1. Apologies for absence: none.

2. Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 19 November 2024.
Proposed: Mandy de Belin, seconded: Anne Coyne. The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising from the minutes: There were no matters arising.

4. Chair's report
Anne Coyne spoke about the report which had been circulated. There were no questions. This is my report as Chair of the Friends for 2024/2025. When Michael Gilbert wrote his final Chair's report last year, he detailed the difficulties the Friends and the Centre had faced during the previous few years, that was the Covid pandemic and the closure of Marc Fitch House. Unfortunately, the challenges continue, and as you are all probably know in June of 2025 the University announced that History, including the Centre for Regional and Local History would be part of a change consultation process due to financial pressures facing the University. This process is still ongoing and the outcome is not likely to be known by the time of the AGM on the 18th of November.

Despite the unknowns, the committee of the Friends remain committed to promoting and supporting the study of Local History as taught by the Centre. In 2025 to date, we have supported post-graduate students and PhD researchers with Small Grant Awards to help meet research and travel costs. We would like to do more so if you know of current postgraduates or PhD candidates who are studying some aspect of Local History at the University of Leicester, please direct them to the application form on the website.

https://www.englishlocalhistory.org/wp/the-friends-grants-and-bursaries

One success of 2025 is the launch of the Phythian-Adams Award; this provides financial assistance to students studying for the BA in History at Leicester University who are preparing their dissertation topics and need to visit and conduct research at an archive within the UK. Applications are made via Dr Angela Muir. There have been two BA student placements this year at Spalding Gentleman's Society who are currently running the Fenland Study Centre at Ayscoughfee Hall. The Friends provided financial support to cover travel expenses.

Hoskins Day was a great success again with 57 people attending. Professor Mark Gardiner gave the keynote address and the talk focused not on the rural landscape but the dwelling-scape and looked at the extant medieval houses. Hoskins Day also featured two postgraduate students Chloe Phillips, researching Black Histories of Cornwall prior to 1900 and Rob Hedge, who is examining the patterns of small rural settlements in North Worcestershire and South Shropshire between the 11th and 15th centuries.

We have held two very interesting study days this year. The spring visit was to the Buddhist Centre at Thornby Hall looking at the building and its history, followed by a tour of Naseby Battlefield. The autumn visit was to the local museum at Ashby de la Zouch, a talk about the history of Grace Dieu Priory and then followed by a tour of the ruins of Grace Dieu and the surrounding estate. Everyone who joined the study days, enjoyed these but the study days did not attract the expected numbers. The study days are designed for Friends to join so I would encourage you to come along to the next one. If you would like to visit a certain town or area for a day or examine a certain topic related to local history, please email me with those suggestions. It is your Association so please tell us what you would like the committee to run. We may have to curtail the study days if they are not supported in the future.

Our social media presence continues to expand with engagement increasing with both followers and other associations. I would like to conclude by thanking all members of the committee for their hard work throughout the past year. So, thank you to Karen, Mary, Mandy, Sue, John and Michael. As always if we have more committee members we can do more to promote the study of Local History, so please email me if you would like to volunteer. We will make some minor changes to the constitution at the AGM so please join us online as we need 20 people present to authorise the changes.

I would like to thank you all for supporting the Friends and I look forward to meeting you in person at one of our events.

5. Treasurer's report, with the Annual Accounts and the Independent Examiner's Report.

Karen Donegani spoke about the reports which had been circulated. A summary of the accounts for the year 2024-25 is provided on the AGM page of the Friends' Website. Printed copies have been sent by post to those members we cannot contact by email.

The Friends' assets, including investments at market value, were £38,299 at year end, an increase of £1,789 (5%) over the year. Our annual surplus (receipts less payments) is close to last year at £1,618, largely due to the receipt of Gift Aid funds for the period 202224 and a one-off donation from the sale of second-hand books from a member of university staff. Money in the bank has increased to £26,433 compared to £24,814 at the start of the year. Hoskins Day costs were again kept to a minimum as the Centre for Regional and Local

History paid for the refreshments provided. Our two study days, at Thornby Hall/Naseby in April and at Grace Dieu Priory in September, made a loss. (Some income and costs for the latter study day will be included in 2025-26 accounts). Administrative costs are higher than last year, largely due to the provision of a Zoom Pro account for the AGM, committee meetings, and talks.

The overall cost of printing and distributing the annual Newsletter has reduced significantly by digital publishing.

The number of requests for student support grants was a little higher than last year but only £900 was paid out. Research support grants are now available to any University of Leicester BA or MA History student or PhD candidate who undertakes regional or local history research.

Our financial position is sound, and we can meet our financial obligations for the coming year. In view of our lack of contractual commitments, we do not have a reserves policy at the present time – all funds are available for meeting our charity objectives.
I would like to thank Dave Postles for volunteering to undertake an Internal Review of the end of year accounts.

6. Adoption of the Treasurer's Report and the Independent Examiner's Report
Proposed: Anne Coyne, seconded: John Parker. Approved.

7. Changes to the Constitution
John Parker introduced the proposed changes which had been made available with the AGM papers. Over the past year he had been looking at reviewing the Constitution using one of the Charities' Commission templates; however, with possible changes to the Centre, the Committee felt it would be better to wait. However, Section 9 is causing problems:

1. Section 9: the 5-year rule. Unless this changes the current secretary would have to stand down and there is no replacement. As a small committee we aren't able to rotate jobs.
2. Rewrite the whole of Section 9. This is confusing, ambiguous and open to interpretation. The Charities Act refers to *Trustees* as the people who manage the organisation. Our Constitution doesn't mention Trustees but refers to *Officers and Committee Members.* The Constitution doesn't specify the roles, but merely lists them.
3. Section 11: to enable nominations to be made via email as well as by post.

Proposal: Sections 9 and 11 to be re-written as detailed: [*The current Constitution Sections 9 and 11 are in the Appendix at the end of the minutes]*

A Proposal to Amend Section '9.0 COMMITTEE' of the Friends of the Centre for English Local History Constitution.

9.0 COMMITTEE should state:

9.0 COMMITTEE

The Association and its property shall be managed and administered by a committee comprising of the officers and other members elected in accordance with this constitution. The officers and other members of the committee shall be the trustees of the Friends and in this constitution are together called 'the trustees'

9.1 The Committee shall have the following officers
9.1.1 Chair
9.1.2 Secretary 9.1.3 Treasurer and members
9.1.4 a minimum of two and a maximum of six additional members.

9.2 Each of the trustees shall retire with effect from the conclusion of the annual general meeting next after his or her appointment but shall be eligible for re-election at that annual general meeting. All trustees shall be members of the Association.

9.3 The committee shall have the power to invite individuals to its meetings. Such persons shall not be entitled to vote. Such individuals may be:
9.3.1 Representatives from the staff and student bodies of the University of Leicester.
9.3.2 Co-opted individuals having special skill or knowledge in relation to the consideration of matters where such special skill or knowledge would be likely to be of assistance.
9.3.3 Other individuals on an ad hoc basis.

9.4 The Committee shall have the general management and direction of funds and affairs of the Association, and in particular (but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing):
9.4.1 May nominate any Friend to serve on another body;
9.4.2 May pay the whole or any part of the reasonable out-of-pocket expenses of any Officer or Friend in or about the execution of his or her function and duties on behalf of the Association;
9.4.3 May fill casual vacancies from time to time from its membership:
9.4.4 May appoint from time to time such sub-Committees from its membership as may be necessary or desirable to carry out its business.
9.5 No member of the Committee shall acquire any interest in property belonging to the Association or receive remuneration or be interested (otherwise than as an officer or member of the Committee) in any contract entered by the Committee.

A Proposal to Amend Section '11.0 NOMINATIONS' of the Friends of the Centre for English Local History Constitution.

11.0 NOMINATIONS should state:
11.0 NOMINATIONS
11.1 The Association in general meeting shall elect the officers and the other trustees. Nominations for trustees and officers must be notified to the Secretary by email or post at least seven days before the Annual General Meeting, along with the names and contact details of a proposer and a seconder. If an election is necessary, voting will be by secret ballot.

Proposed: John Parker, seconded Karen Donegani. Agreed.

8. Election of officers and committee
Graham Jones started a discussion on the titles of officers, committee members and Trustees. He commented that some roles are no longer defined e.g. Events organiser – it was explained that they are now organised by committee members as individuals or as a

group. It was clarified that all the committee members, as they are involved in the management of the organisation, are Trustees.

John Parker mentioned an ongoing discussion with Dr Pam Fisher re the numbers involved on the committee. He was also happy to correspond with members and take ideas on board.

The changes to the Constitution having been agreed Mary Bryceland did not have to resign as Secretary under the 5-year rule.

Committee	Standing	Proposed	Seconded
Chairman	Anne Coyne	Karen Donegani	Mary Bryceland
Secretary	Mary Bryceland	Karen Donegani	John Parker
Treasurer (and Membership secretary)	Karen Donegani	John Parker	Michael Gilbert
Editor of the Newsletter	Mandy de Belin	Sue Hughes	Anne Coyne
IT Coordinator	John Parker	Michael Gilbert	Mandy de Belin
Committee	Sue Hughes	Mandy de Belin	Karen Donegani
Committee	Michael Gilbert	Mary Bryceland	Sue Hughes
Committee			
Committee			
Committee			
Committee			
Student Representative	N/A		
Student Representative	N/A		
Centre Representative	N/A		

The committee was proposed en-bloc by Freda Raphael, seconded by Heather Flack. All were elected.

9. Appointment of the Independent Examiner
Karen Donegani proposed Dave Postles for the role and was seconded by Graham Jones. Agreed.

10. Any other business
Graham asked for thanks to be recorded to Angela and Richard for keeping the Centre going - agreed by everyone!

The meeting closed at 8pm.

APPENDIX: Constitution before the AGM held on 18th November 2025

9.0 COMMITTEE currently states:

9.0 COMMITTEE

9.1 The Committee shall consist of the following officers and members:

9.1.1 Chairman
9.1.2 Secretary
9.1.3 Treasurer
9.1.4 Membership Secretary
9.1.5 Editor of the Newsletter
9.1.6 Programme Secretary
9.1.7 A minimum of two and a maximum of six additional members
9.1.8 One member of the Centre's staff
9.1.9 Two student representatives
9.1.10 Information Technology Coordinator

9.2 The Officers and Committee members listed above, except for the Student Representatives who shall be nominated by the student body and the Staff Representative who shall be nominated by the Centre, shall be elected each year at the Annual General Meeting and shall be eligible for re-election providing no-one shall be re-elected to the same office for more than five consecutive years. All Officers shall be Friends.

9.3 The Committee shall have the power to co-opt any person having special skill or knowledge but in relation only to the consideration by Committee of matters where such special skill or knowledge would be likely to be of assistance. Such co-opted persons shall not be entitled to vote.

9.4 The Committee shall have the general management and direction of funds and affairs of the Association, and in particular (but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing):

9.4.1 May nominate any Friend to serve on another body;
9.4.2 May pay the whole or any part of the reasonable out-of-pocket expenses of any Officer or Friend in or about the execution of his or her function and duties on behalf of the Association;
9.4.3 May fill casual vacancies from time to time from its membership:
9.4.4 May appoint from time to time such sub-Committees from its membership as may be necessary or desirable to carry out its business.

9.5 No member of the Committee shall acquire any interest in property belonging to the Association (otherwise than as a Trustee for the Association) or receive remuneration or be interested (otherwise than as a member of the Committee) in any contract entered by the Committee.

11.0 NOMINATIONS currently states:

11.0 NOMINATIONS

11.1 Nominations for Officers, duly signed by the nominee, the proposer and the seconder must be in the hands of the Secretary at least seven days before the Annual General Meeting. If an election is necessary, voting will be by secret ballot.