

Subscription Reminder – For those who do not pay by Standing Order, subs of £12 are now due and should be sent to the Treasurer, Church Farm, 15 Church Street, Scalford LE14 4DL; payable to *Friends of the Centre for English Local History*

A.G.M.

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

**Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting will be held
on Tuesday 19 November 2024 at 19:00 pm, by Zoom¹**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Approval of the Minutes of the previous AGM held on 21 November 2023 (Copy attached)
3. Matters arising from the Minutes
4. Chair's Report (Copy attached}
5. Treasurer's Report, with the Annual Accounts (copy attached) and the Independent Examiner's Report
6. Adoption of the Treasurer's Report
7. Election of Officers and Committee²
8. Appointment of Independent Examiner
9. Policies
10. Any other business

¹ The Zoom link for the meeting is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82895621026>

Meeting ID: 828 9562 1026 Passcode: 326606 (if required)

and the session will open at 6.45pm ready for a prompt start at 7.00pm.. Please contact the Secretary for help if required.

² Nominations for Officers, and committee members, duly signed by the nominee, a proposer and a 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. Please contact the Secretary for further information: Mary Bryceland, 26 Parkstone Close, Wigston LE18 2GH
secretary@englishlocalhistory.org 0116 281 2625

Additional papers

(Item 2) Friends of the Centre for English Local History

Friends of the Centre for English Local History

(now The centre for Regional & Local History)

Unapproved minutes of the AGM held on Tuesday 21st November at 7pm via Zoom

Present: Michael Gilbert, Karen Donegani, Mary Bryceland, John Parker, Jeremy Lodge, Mandy de Belin, Andrew Wager, Freda Raphael, Elaine Brown, Noel Tornbohm, Penny Champion, Philip Ramsey, Bill King, Yvonne Cresswell, Sue Hughes, Heather Flack, Graham Jones, Trixie Gadd; Rachael Jones. For part of the meeting: Phil Batman; Keith Snell.

Apologies: Sue Rumfitt, Margaret Hawkins, Anne Coyne, Pam Fisher, Sylvia Pinches, Dorothy Halfhide, Robert Mee, Angla Muir, Carole Perkin, Tony Perkin, Ann Stones.

Minutes of the AGM held on 14 November 2022

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

Matter arising not covered elsewhere in the agenda. None.

Chair's report

Michael Gilbert's report had been circulated prior to the meeting:

In the last report I described 2021/22 as a difficult time as we dealt with the loss of Marc Fitch House, the challenges facing the Centre and the consequences of the Covid pandemic. I think I would describe this year as both positive and optimistic with much to celebrate. Perhaps one of the most remarkable aspects is that the Friends have seen a growth in membership. Although we have worked at providing more events and activities for members I believe it reflects the strong support that exists for the Centre and for the work of the Friends. Our members want to see research into and the teaching of local history at Leicester continue.

We have been able to carry on with our support for the Centre in the development of their new base on the main campus in the Attenborough Building. It is a pleasant environment for the researcher with access to the Centre's collections as well as newly installed audio-visual equipment. In the coming year it is intended to make increased use of the facility for seminars, lectures and other events. I would encourage members who want to work on the campus to make use of Room 101 as an alternative to the library. I would also like to thank Karen Donegani and Mary Bryceland again for all their continuing work in support of Centre staff.

Another major success has been the Friends website and thanks in particular to John Parker in developing and running the site. If you visit the website you will not only see details of future events and Friends activities but more academic information is being made available, such as the details of dissertations and theses of past students of the Centre. We have worked with staff from the Centre and the School to provide placement opportunities for students in the many museums, archives and societies our members are involved in. This year a MA student and an undergraduate from the School had placements with the SGS Museum in Spalding, Lincolnshire. They were able to work on the society's 'original collection' of books and manuscripts from the early eighteenth century as well as researching artifacts from the museum. We intend to build on the success of the placement programme this year and if you feel that any of the organisations you are involved with would benefit from a placement then please get in touch.

In the post-covid world and with the loss of Marc Fitch House returning to face-to-face events has been challenging but this year we have held the Hoskin's Day lecture in the Attenborough

Building in July and a study day in Wallingford in October organised by Anne Coyne. This has been supplemented by a number of online talks and the Local History Quiz Night (thanks to Richard Jones for organising and being the quizmaster). With the availability of Room 101 and the new AV equipment we plan to hold more in-person activities to complement the Centre's programme of lectures.

With the recent challenges that the Centre has faced the support of the Friends has become increasingly important and with it has come opportunities. We can help with the delivery of the aims of the Centre as well as providing new services and activities for the members. Although these are potentially exciting times success will depend on people to develop and deliver new ideas. We need members to assist with organising events and to work with your committee to build the Friends. If you would like to be involved you would be very welcome and please contact myself or anybody on the committee to discuss how you could participate.

Michael Gilbert commented that we "are not in a bad place" considering the loss of Marc Fitch House and the effects of Covid. The Friends has survived, increased in size, and is still holding events. We are now finding placement opportunities for students from the School of History. This included Sue Hughes (MA course) who did a placement at the Spalding Gentlemen's Society, together with an undergraduate. We are working with Dr James Moore at the Centre for Urban History. If anyone can suggest further places willing to take students please get in touch.

Hoskins Day: good speakers but a relatively poor turnout, only 25, despite a lot of publicity. Hoskins Day 2023: the speaker will be Prof. Corinne Fowler. Zoom talks have been continuing – suggestions for speakers are welcome. The visit to Wallingford had also gone well.

Treasurer's report and annual accounts

Karen Donegani gave the report which had been circulated prior to the meeting:

A summary of the draft, unadopted accounts for the year 2022-23 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 year-end value of the Friends' total assets (including investments at market value on 30 September 2023) is £33,577.94, a decrease of £876.03 (2.5%) of the opening balance. This decrease reflects ups and downs of the stock market. Money in the bank remains stable at £23,251.94 compared to £23,382.39 at the start of the year.

Hoskins Day costs were much reduced this year while the Queen's Mill Burnley Study Day incurred a small loss. Administrative, AGM and newsletter spending is mostly on printing and postage. We anticipate printing and postage costs will be reduced during the current year (2023-24) as changes to our constitution approved at the last AGM mean that we may now notify members of the AGM by email where possible. The number of requests for student support rose significantly compared to the previous year and over £2,000 was paid out. We continue to validate and review every request and focus on providing grants to offset research costs.

Changes were made during the year to our bank and investment accounts. We now have online banking facilities on our Natwest current account. We closed our CAF Gold Current Account, moving the balance to the Cambridge and Counties Bank to avoid CAF charges and take advantage of much better interest rates. We also moved our investments to a new Charities Aid Foundation ethical investment fund which promises better returns.

Our financial position is sound, and we can meet any 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.

I would like to thank our Independent Examiner, Paul Shipman, for agreeing to review these

accounts on behalf of the Friends.

Karen Donegani reported that the accounts had now been signed off by Paul Shipman, the independent auditor. In summary there is the same amount in the bank at the end of the year as at the start despite paying considerably more in grants to students. The amount of student support provided increased from £500 last year to over £2000 this year – something the committee feels is very important. We are working with the Centre staff to spread the message to students. We are also providing slightly larger grants; increased from £200 to up to £500. These support, for example, research trips. All the applications are vetted to ensure that they are within the remit of regional & local history and are for a specific purpose; such as travel costs, or subscriptions.

We are working to reduce costs, for example the committee now meets via Zoom so there are no travel expenses. Something that will make an impact in the future is a change to the Constitution which was made last year meaning that the AGM notice and papers can be sent out electronically to those members on email which results in reduced printing and postage costs.

The Newsletter was also produced digitally and is on the website; again saving costs. Print copies were sent to members who have not provided an email address – about 10% of the membership.

There was a mixed performance on the financial markets: interest rates increased which was good for savings, but the stock market did less well which impacted on the investments. Total assets are slightly up on last year. The move, this year, to online banking has meant that we can now pay bills electronically rather than writing cheques.

Membership is 177, and has increased slightly, despite the sad loss of members through death, or aging.

A member asked how to check whether their subs had been paid – Karen is happy to answer inquiries via e-mail treasurer@englishlocalhistory.org.uk

Penny Champion asked whether there is a policy on the size of reserves – is there a closing balance that we aim not to go below? Karen replied that we have no contractual commitments other than a subscription to BAH, and to our internet providers, so there is no need for a reserves policy. The committee had discussed whether to limit student grants to no more than our income although we did go slightly over this year. The committee will always consider grant applications even if it means taking money from capital sums.

The approval of the treasurer's report

Proposed by John Parker, seconded by Penny Champion. Approved unanimously.

Election of officers and committee

Thanks were given to Robert Mee who was treasurer and had remained on the committee – he has now stood down. Also to Andrew Wager who was a former secretary and who has also stood down from the committee.

The following list of nominations was shared on screen:

Officer	Standing	Proposed	Seconded
Chair	Michael Gilbert	Karen Donegani	Mary Bryceland
Secretary	Mary Bryceland	Michael Gilbert	Mandy de Belin
Treasurer	Karen Donegani	Michael Gilbert	John Parker
Membership Secretary	Karen Donegani	Mary Bryceland	Michael Gilbert

Officer	Standing	Proposed	Seconded
Editor of the Newsletter	Mandy de Belin	Mary Bryceland	John Parker
Programme Secretary	Vacant		
IT Coordinator	John Parker	Karen Donegani	Michael Gilbert
Committee	Anne Coyne	Karen Donegani	Mary Bryceland
Committee	Jeremy Lodge	Michael Gilbert	Mandy de Belin
Committee	Linda Harrison		
Committee	Vacant		
Committee	Vacant		
Committee	Vacant		
Student Representative	N/A		
Student Representative	N/A		
Centre Representative	N/A		

The secretary reported that nominations closed 7 days before this AGM but people could be co-opted to the committee. Michael suggested that those considering co-option should contact committee members and the matter would be discussed at the next committee meeting.

It was agreed that the officers and committee could be elected en bloc.

Proposer

Secunder: Noel Tornbohm

All in agreement.

Appointment of the independent examiner.

Paul Shipman had agreed to continue in this role and was reappointed.

Any other business

Graham Jones congratulated Mandy de Belin on the Newsletter which was “a stunner”.

Comments were made on the strengthening of the Centre through the appointment of Associates. It was not known how many students were following the MA pathway.

Trixie Gadd asked whether Hoskins Day could be a hybrid event – in person and online. Mary said that the committee had made it an in-person event this year to encourage people to have a look at the Centre in the Attenborough buildings. The committee would bear this in mind.

Graham suggested that perhaps a recording could be made available.

On 14th December there will be Christmas Quiz, via Zoom, at 7pm. Look out for publicity.

(Item 4) Friends of the Centre for English Local History Chair’s Report 2023/24

This is my last report as Chair of the Friends and it is pleasing that we are continuing to grow and develop as a group. The past five years have been exceptionally challenging both for the Friends and for the Centre and could have led to our demise. In 2020 we had the double hammer blow of Covid and the closure of our spiritual home in Marc Fitch House. We had to curtail our in-person activities for a number of years although successfully moving online with the provision of talks,

lectures and even a virtual Hoskins' Day. The loss of Marc Fitch House was a particularly sad event with the challenge of maintaining the Centre's unique character during the move to the Attenborough Building on the main campus. This combined with the financial difficulties faced by the university, and academic institutions in general, have placed the future of the Centre at risk. It is a tribute to Angela Muir and Richard Jones that it has been able to weather these storms and to continue to provide high quality local history teaching and research.

These trials have inevitably brought the Friends and the Centre ever closer together. We have been instrumental in helping to set up the joint Centre for Regional and Local History and Centre for Urban History libraries in the Attenborough Building. We have been able to run a series of events for members including, most recently, the Study Day at the Centre for Fenland Studies in Ayscoughfee Hall Museum, Spalding in September. We are planning another Study Day at Naseby in spring 2025. This year's Hoskins' day was particularly successful bringing together a number of speakers including Colin Hyde and Pam Fisher as well as our Hoskins' Day lecturer, Professor Corinne Fowler. It was well received with double the attendance from the previous year. The placement programme has continued with the Friends facilitating opportunities for students and researchers, so far successful placements have been found for three MA and Undergraduate students. Work on the programme is continuing with three organisations offering placements in 2025 (SGS, Spalding; Delapre Abbey, Northampton and St Mary Magdalene Church in Newark). Through our website and social media engagement we are attracting considerable interest from outside the membership and providing a hub for sharing local history news and information. A final optimistic point to note is that the Friends membership is continuing to grow.

Inevitably, there will be difficult times ahead and with falling numbers and financial challenges the future of the Centre may continue to be at risk. Along with that the future role of the Friends must be discussed. I believe we must be more than just an alumni group for the university and embrace a wider role in supporting study and research into local history. This would include inviting and even encouraging membership from outside our normal catchment of the Centre. Our membership has a wealth of knowledge on all aspects of the discipline and I am sure can offer much more in terms of supporting students and publishing research material. The support of the Friends is a valuable asset to the Centre.

Finally, I would like to thank everybody for their support for the Friends over the past five years. It has been a pleasure and privilege being the Chair of the body and it is pleasing to be able to leave in a robust state for the future. I would like to wish the Friends and my successor my very best wishes.

Michael Gilbert Chair, Friends of the Centre for English Local History