

# Minutes of the Anglo-German FHS 26th Annual General Meeting

Held on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2014  
At King's Cross Methodist Church, Crestfield Street, London.

## 1. Welcome by Vice-President Peter Towey

## 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jeannette Spence, Betty Landrock, John & Irene Short.

## 3. Minutes of last AGM 8<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

The previous minutes had been published on the AGFHS website and were agreed and signed as a true record of proceedings.

## 4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

## 5. Chairman's Report by Noële Barnfield

This has been a year of change in some ways for the society meaning quite a challenging time with some important decisions for the committee and me as your chairperson. Jenny & Peter Towey moved last year, meaning that the library has had to be moved from their house to a temporary home at the German Historical Institute. Your committee are currently in discussion about its future.

Also, Jenny & Peter, who have always been our main representatives, are no longer able to run the society book and information stall at family history fairs. These are a significant part of making the society known and engaging new members and we are strongly urging members to come forward to volunteer. If not, we shall have to cease attending, which will have a considerable effect on the society.

Please talk to Peter and Jenny or myself if you can take the bookstall to a FHF local to you or can help at any of the fairs. It is probably best suited to a couple and, ideally, we would like someone who is also willing/able to store the equipment (stands etc.) that Peter & Jenny use.

Significantly, next year WDYTYA will not be held at Olympia (although I am not sure if the venue has been confirmed – NEC Birmingham has been mentioned) and this will mean we may not be able to be present. We will keep you updated about this.

Also, the production schedule for the Blatt has had to be changed slightly with three editions a year now, instead of four.

Of course, all the ordinary work of the society has continued, including our bi-monthly meetings here at King's Cross, with our bookshop, and excellent speakers. We have not had any regional meetings recently but would like them to continue, when and if they can be arranged. Again this is largely down to you as members to instigate, but your committee will support such meetings in any way we can.

Despite the changes to the terms & costs of hiring the hall we have managed to continue to have our social events in June and December, due to some excellent negotiating by Jeremy with the administrator. I know that those who attend these really enjoy them and have fun trying to answer the quiz questions and of course partaking of the authentic German food supplied by our caterers, which is always delicious and plentiful.

Significantly, and I think very poignantly, 2014, is the Centenary of the outbreak of WW1, a defining moment for Britain as a whole but from our perspective particularly those of German nationality who were living in the UK at that time, changing their lives forever. Don't forget that Paul Barnfield is our Internment Curator and will try to assist with any queries you may have.

We continue to produce a variety of high quality, useful, interesting and entertaining publications and resources, including the excellent Mitteilungsblatt. New book ideas are always welcome and can be put through the committee for possible publication

Unfortunately, our membership is down a little on previous years but we still see new members joining and I hope we make them feel welcome when they attend here and that they will be able to progress their German family

history. Despite the slight drop in numbers, I hope you will all agree that we still have a very successful, helpful and enjoyable society, which is of real benefit to our members.

So, as ever, I want to record my thanks to everyone on the committee for all that they do and also to all the other regular helpers and contributors who fulfil many essential roles, and make mine much easier.

Firstly, Peter and Jenny, our Vice-presidents. I cannot underestimate the contribution they have made over the years and the knowledge that they have. As they have to step back a bit from their active roles I want to personally and on behalf of the society, thank them both for their enormous hard work.

Sadly, Jeannette Spence who has been our stalwart secretary, also feels she has to step down, both from her post and also from attending meetings. Jeannette, as well as her usual secretarial duties, collates all the annual reports and produces the AGM agenda, as she has for today. She has also been responsible for overseeing things like the Pam Freeman Award and keeping in touch with all those who arrange our regional meetings. This is not an onerous task but it is a vital one and again, I really would urge you, if you have a computer and access to the internet to consider volunteering as our next secretary.

I do not in any way want to bring doom & gloom to this meeting but nevertheless, I cannot stress enough that we really do need more help and especially more committee members. I have to be honest and say that if more people do not step forward, to assist the relatively small group we currently have, (many of whom perform more than one role) then I believe the future of the society is in serious jeopardy. Please, don't leave it to someone else, volunteer yourself.

My very sincere thanks, for all their help this year, also go to Ann Gilmore, who arranges our brilliant programme. Ann's husband, Jeremy Gilmore, our treasurer, who takes care of all matters financial and ensures we maintain a healthy bank balance. Sue Neale who acts as our minute taker, helps collate them, and can also often be found in the kitchen. Betty Anderson, who is your very hard working membership secretary, as well as assisting give a warm welcome to everyone as they arrive, in conjunction with Norma Shepherd, ensuring they sign in & offering them raffle tickets etc. Jennifer Taylor, for leading the editorial team and continuing to produce an excellent periodical, which keeps all the members in touch. Irene Cowan, who has particular responsibility for our book production. To David and Lynn Burling for their continued support, especially of course for the quizzes David manages to produce so ably for all our socials.

Rose Mint, Betty Landrock, Peggy Maloney, and all the refreshment team who always look after our needs so capably and to everyone else who so generously give of their time, effort and expertise to support the Society.

Thank you

## **6. Treasurer's Report for the year ending 31st March 2014 by Jeremy Gilmore**

As you will see from your copy of the accounts, we finished the financial year with an increase in total funds of £670 with respect to assets at the end of 2012-13; and with the deposit account remaining untouched and standing at £9633 after taking into consideration the minimal added interest.

With respect to income over the year, the significant differences compared with 2012-13 are:

- 1) A £571 or 4.8% decrease in membership subscriptions. This continues the downward trend we saw in 2012-2013, though not as significant as the 11% drop in that year.
- 2) On the positive side, there continue to be increases in sales of books, with a £344 or 10.8% increase w.r.t. 2012-13. This has been helped by the enthusiastic uptake for Peter's new edition of 'How to Research Your German Ancestors'.

All other items remained approximately in line with last year.

With respect to expenditure, the significant differences are:

- 1) Other Printing costs have risen significantly this year, as I predicted at last year's AGM, as we have replaced Bookshop inventory and published a new and expanded edition of Peter Towey's 'Researching Your German Ancestors'. We hope to have the opportunity to add further reprints or revised editions this year and perhaps even new publications. In fact you will see copies of Jenny Towey's new German Genealogical Dictionary on the Bookstall today.
- 2) There have only been modest expenditures on Equipment, though we may expect the need to replace ageing electronic equipment in the foreseeable future.

- 3) The significant cost of £794 under the Library heading covers the expenses for transporting the Library from Plymouth to its temporary home at the German Historical Institute in London.

All other items remained approximately in line with the previous year. I would like to point out that the costs of producing and mailing the 'Blatt have remained flat with respect to 2012-13, despite the significant increases in postage, thanks to careful cost control by our printer, Roger Chouler and Associates.

The estimate of the value of the Society's assets shows a modest increase in Bookshop inventory, but with the continuing depreciation in the value of electrical equipment, the overall figure for assets remains stable.

In summary, it has been another financially stable year for the Society, with levels of funds continuing the upward trend reported last year, though more modestly. I should stress though that this is key to allow us to reprint a number of current publications to replenish the Bookshop inventory, but also importantly to introduce new titles. It is intended that subscription rates should remain at the current level for the foreseeable future.

As I mentioned at the end of my Annual Report last year, the committee has been considering taking the important step of gaining charitable status for the Society. Paul Barnfield will discuss this later in the AGM.

I would like to finish by thanking John Short for his advice, and the meticulous auditing of the accounts and dealing with the masses of paperwork that he has to sift through.

## **7. Other Reports**

**7.1 Regional Meetings Report** – Due to the resignation of Jeannette Spence, there was no separate report this year. Please refer to the Chairman's Report.

**7.2 Editorial Team Report** by Jennifer Taylor

This year we have moved to a new publication pattern – three times a year, autumn, spring and summer. The reason for this change was not primarily economic, but the new scheme allows for some editorial time to be freed up to consider occasional issues on particular themes. Having the Society Website available as a means of conveying additional or urgent information made it possible to take this decision, but the Blatt itself, of course, remains print based, and for this year the summer issue has been enlarged to ensure members get value for money.

The production of the Blatt is a team effort. As members are welcome to submit hard copy, thanks are due to the typists who turn this into a form recognised by our machines. Also, thanks are due to the team of proof-readers who valiantly strive to extirpate the errors that the editors have missed. This year, as you know, we sadly mourn the death of Ron Binnington, who died in harness. Happily, though, we have also been able to welcome new members to the team, so the process continues.

Looking ahead to the autumn, we are hoping to devote the whole issue to WW1 – if you have not sent your contribution in yet, please do so. To be considered for the autumn issue, we would need to have it by 1<sup>st</sup> September, but if you are unable to meet that deadline there are four more years of commemoration to go, so in one sense there is plenty of time.

**7.3 Bookshop and Fairs Report** by Jenny Towey

Sales of Peter Towey's new book "How to Research your German Ancestors" have gone extremely well. Another new publication for our bookstall is my "German Genealogical Dictionary" – available here today! Online book sales are beginning to pick up as the recession eases.

We have had to cancel going to the York FH Fair, the joint FFHS & Essex FHS conference and WDYTYA?Scotland this year: however, we did attend WDYTYA? in London in February – a big thank you to all the volunteers – and we had an excellent response from those who visited our stall. I believe the announcement of next year's English venue is imminent but, with some insider trading, I believe the dates are 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> April 2015!

We have accepted an invitation from Weston-Super-Mare FHS for their open day on July 12<sup>th</sup> and may attend the Bristol & Avon FHS's open day on 27<sup>th</sup> September. It is also our intention to be at the Woking FH Fair later in the year – but all of these depend on how Peter feels after his prostate cancer treatment.

#### 7.4 Membership Secretary's Report by Betty Anderson

Unfortunately the Society membership has continued to fall and now stands at 798. 63 members have joined since the last AGM and of those only three joined at the WDYTYA which was very disappointing.

Despite this, August and February continue to be the best months for recruitment. An exception this year was in January when eleven members joined. This may have been influenced by the WW1 centenary.

The majority of members renewed their membership on time however the number not renewing by the 31<sup>st</sup> October continues to rise and I sent approximately 200 e-mail reminders out to which about half replied.

Once again may I remind members that renewal time is here again and that you will find the renewal form for next year's membership in the Summer edition of the Blatt.

Finally may I say thank you for the kind donations.

#### 7.5 Programme Organiser's Report by Ann Sternberg Gilmore

In the past year we have had talks on a range of topics—in June 2013 I was very pleased to welcome Professor Robert Lee, retired, to give an updated version of the talk he gave for our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference in Liverpool in September of 2012. His talk was entitled *'The German Community in Liverpool, c1750-1918'*. In August we heard from Tony Weston, thanks to member Muriel Breschinsky-Brent, on the topic of *'A Woman of Wax: The Remarkable Life of Madame Tussaud'*. The second talk in August was from Wies Rogalski on *'Polish Resettlement in Britain after WWII: Memories from a Polish Resettlement Camp'*. Wies is a volunteer at the Rural Life Centre in west Surrey, where he and his brother have set up a fascinating exhibition on the experience of Polish refugees using memories and artefacts from the resettlement camp where they grew up. In October we heard from two speakers from Germany: Karl-Heinz Wuestner speaking on *'German Pork Butchers – A Notable Group of Immigrants in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Great Britain'* and Corinna Meiss speaking on *'Looking for Your German Relatives – A Case Study from Goslar'*. Karl-Heinz was also one of the speakers at our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference and I was pleased that he was able to come back and do his talk for our London meeting. He has traced the emigrant Pork Butchers from a very small area of southwest Germany to several specific areas of Great Britain and Ireland, and he has a personal interest in the topic since he has relatives over here who are descended from German Pork Butchers. Corinna has been and still is a real God-send for many people who post queries on our society's website--she checks it regularly and helps many members and non-members alike. It also helps her own work since she researches German ancestors in her area, not only for herself but for others for pay. If you would like some help from her the society has her contact details or you can place a query on the website for her. I'd like to thank member Rosalie Daniel for persuading Corinna to come to London to give us a talk!

In December, we heard from member Michael Potter on *'The Tale of a Shirt: The Escape of Wilhelm Karl Fischer from Russia after the Revolution'*. The second talk in December was from Kathy Chater speaking on *'Tracing Your Huguenot Ancestry: The German Connection'*. In February this year we heard from AGFHS member Andrew Genrich about *'My Family: From Germany to Australia via England'*—well, that was his original title, his talk was on the same topic but he slyly changed his title without telling me beforehand! We also heard from Sarah Paterson of The Imperial War Museum and now a member of AGFHS on *'An ABC of the First World War Prison Camp Experience'*. In April we heard from Steve Pilcher, Deputy Director of the Historic Chapels Trust with offices at St. George's German Lutheran Church, on *'The Last Working Tall Ships, In Particular the German Sail Training Ship, the Herzogen Cecile'* and the second talk in April was from John Marriott, a retired history Professor with a life-long interest in the history of London, speaking on *'The German Migrant Community in East London'*. This was an updated version of a talk he had given in March of 2013 at St. George's German Lutheran Church in Alie Street in East London. Several of our members had asked if we could arrange for him to speak to us, and I was happy to oblige. And I am extremely pleased to say that later this afternoon after our tea break we will hear from Roy Bernard, who, with his late wife, Margaret, started our society. Without Roy and Margaret we would not be here today!

I would like to say a special thank you to those members who gave talks in the past year, and I hope to hear talks from more of you in the next year or two. Hearing stories of other members' experiences and adventures when chasing their ancestors is inspiring and can re-invigorate the rest of us for our own research. Please contact me if you would like to give us a talk—I am booking for 2015 (and beyond if you like to plan ahead!)

Also, many thanks to those of you who have suggested speakers in the past. Please let me know if there is someone you would especially like to hear. Ideas for future topics and/or speakers – with or without German connections, are most welcome. Since most of our members also have British ancestors as well as German ones, a talk on tracing your British ancestry or on some aspect of British social history would be very welcome, too. And please remember that Jeremy is happy to help you with putting your illustrations into a Powerpoint presentation.

## **7.6 Website Editor's Report** by Jeremy Gilmore

In the course of last year our Website Editor, Ian Myers, had to stand down from his role for personal reasons. We would like to thank him for all his work in maintaining, upgrading and hosting the website over several years. Subsequently the Website Editor's role has been taken over by myself, in theory on a temporary basis, though to date no-one has answered our adverts for a new Editor. Again the Committee would like to encourage any member with the necessary IT skills to consider this job – the website uses the Joomla Content Management System (which I have found very straightforward to use, although having had no previous experience of website management) and only requires occasional updating. The Message Board continues to attract a significant number of questions – we should thank Corinna Meiss for all her helpful answers, but we would also encourage other members to share their experience.

## **8. Election of Officers**

Gwen Davis was proposed and elected as Secretary.  
All other current officers were re-elected for a further two years.

John Short was re-elected as the Society's Independent Examiner.

## **9. Any Other Business**

**Changes to Our Constitution** – Paul Barnfield advised that due to the AGFHS's decision to apply for Charitable Status, it was necessary for some small changes to be made to the wording of our current constitution (a copy of which is on our website). The suggested minor changes were discussed and then accepted by those present at the AGM. Paul will now send a copy of the revised constitution to the Charity Commissioners for approval.

**Library** – Noële Barnfield advised that although our Library has been temporarily housed by the German Historical Institute, this was not a permanent solution. She warned members that this much under used facility was no longer practical and may eventually have to be disbanded.

**Pam Freeman Award 2014** – The winner of the award was Michael Potter for his excellent article, 'Surprise, Surprise, Surprise', which was published in issue 106 of Mitteilungsblatt.

**Peter Towey** thanked everyone for attending.