

Minutes of the Anglo-German FHS 27th Annual General Meeting

Held on Saturday 13th June 2015
At King's Cross Methodist Church, Crestfield Street, London.

1. Welcome by Vice-President Peter Towey

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Gwen Davis, Jennifer Taylor, Debbie Hall, Ray Haffner.

3. Minutes of last AGM 14th June 2014.

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. Chairperson's Report by Noële Barnfield

As I am sure everyone is aware that this 2014/2015 season has seen the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of WW1 on 4 Aug 2014 and, next week, on 18 June 2015, the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, both very important events in their own way, with WW1 in particular having a very poignant significance for many members. As a Society we have sought to commemorate this anniversary by producing relevant articles for the Blatt and assisting with and attending exhibitions that particularly highlight the plight of the innocent German in the UK who, overnight, became an 'enemy alien'. Some members were also able to attend a conference on the Isle of Man last September, which included a visit to the site of the internment camp at Knockaloe. Don't forget that Paul Barnfield is our Internment Curator and will try to assist with any queries you may have.

I am pleased to report that overall, this has been a good year for the Society, although we note with sadness the death of some of our members, particularly Doug Stone who was a very active member until unable to attend due to ill-health and who was, for many years, the Society treasurer.

Our joint Vice-Presidents, Jenny & Peter Towey, have continued to be our main representatives, at family history fairs. However, they did indicate last year that they no longer feel able to continue running the Society book and information stall at these events, but so far no one has come forward. These regional fairs 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 may 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 offer to 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.

We did not attend the WDYTYA event this year, as it was held at the NEC Birmingham which meant the Society was not able to send enough experienced

volunteers to make attending viable. We will keep you updated about our plans for next year.

Our bi-monthly meetings here at King's Cross, continue to have a good attendance, with our bookshop usually available, and, thanks to Ann, many excellent speakers. Also thanks to Ann, we had the pleasure of a wonderful and well attended concert in November, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Islington Meister Singers, held at the beautiful St George's German Lutheran Church.

We had our usual social events in June and December. 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.

As already indicated, we have had some really excellent articles in the Blatt. The changed production schedule from four editions to three does not seem to have had a significant effect and will allow for 'occasional' papers to also be produced. New book ideas are always welcome and can be put through the committee for consideration for publication and we would very much like to encourage anyone with ideas to discuss them with us.

Jenny & Peter recently held a regional meeting at their home in Weston Super-Mare, which was deemed 'very good'. We would encourage other members who feel they could, to host occasional meetings for members in their areas we appreciate not everyone can or wishes to travel into central London. If you think you would like to arrange/host such an event, the committee would seek to assist with suggestions on how to plan a meeting, advice about speakers (possibly one of the committee or other members) Again, this is largely down to you as members to instigate, but your committee will support such meetings in any way we can.

Unfortunately, our membership is still down a little on previous years but we continue to 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.

Last but certainly not least, I must mention your committee and all the other regular helpers, for all that they do to fulfil many essential roles and to make mine much easier. Some have been carrying out these roles for many years, so I also really want to encourage others to consider how they can help, even if you prefer not to be an actual committee member.

For instance, Peter and Jenny, indicated last year that they really need to step back a bit from their active roles, yet they have continued to do so much, because no one has offered to assist. They have made an outstanding contribution to the Society over the years but we do need new people to come forward to fill some of their roles. I do not wish this to sound like a 'moan' or be all doom & gloom, but sadly, 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

jeopardy, which would be a real loss. Please, don't leave it to someone else, volunteer yourself.

On that note, and on behalf of all the members, I would particularly like to thank those who have done so much this past year to assist in the smooth running of the Society. I have already mentioned our Vice-Presidents, Peter & Jenny. Thanks also 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, not to mention keeping our web-site up to date and many other things in the background. John Short, who is our Independent Examiner and assists Jeremy by checking and agreeing the accounts for us. Gwen Davis, (who cannot be here today) who kindly took up the role of Secretary again last year. Sue Neale who acts as our minute taker, and can also often be found in the kitchen. Betty Anderson, who is your very hard working Membership Secretary, as well as assisting to give a warm welcome to everyone as they arrive, in conjunction with Norma Shepherd, ensuring they sign in & offering them raffle tickets etc. Paul Barnfield, who is our Internment Curator and seeks to answer members queries in relation to anything to do with internees and their families. Jennifer Taylor, (who also cannot be here today) 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. Also, of course, David and Lynn Burling for their continued support, especially of course for the quizzes which David manages to continue 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.

Lastly of course to you the members. Thank you for attending meetings and supporting the Society. I hope you enjoy today and will continue to enjoy the Society.

Thank you

Noële Barnfield – Chairperson & events organiser June 2015

6. Treasurer's Report for the Year Ending 31st March 2015 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 £1436 with respect to assets at the end of 2013-14; and with the deposit account standing at £14860 after taking into consideration a transfer of £5000 from the current account and a slightly improved rate of added interest.

With respect to income over the year, the significant differences compared with 2013-14 are:

- 1) A £1232 or 11% decrease in membership subscriptions. This continues the downward trend we have experienced each year since 2010.
- 2) Also on the negative side, there has been a significant reduction in sales of books of £1657 or 47% w.r.t. 2013-14. This is partly explained by the fact that the Society did not attend 'Who Do You Think You Are? 2015' with its move to the NEC in Birmingham.

All other items remained approximately in line with last year.

With respect to expenditure, the significant differences are:

- 1) The apparent large increase in Fees and Insurance is due to this year's Liability Insurance being paid at the very end of 2014-15 financial year.
- 2) The costs for printing of the 'Blatt were less this last year with the reduction to 3 issues but as has been explained by the Editor, this will be compensated for this year by the publication of a special edition in the autumn.
- 3) Other Printing costs have risen again this year, with the major expense of £1702 for a printing run of 500 updated membership packs. We also printed Jenny Towey's new German Genealogical Dictionary.
- 4) The hire charge for the King's Cross venue has risen again, as we are now being charged £30 per hour, with a decreased discount for renting for the 10am to 8pm period required in June and December when we stay for Socials. The committee took the decision to only hold committee meetings at King's Cross twice a year to keep down costs and to hold virtual meetings in the interim periods.
- 5) The charge for attendance of Fairs has dropped very significantly without the large fees involved in attending WDYTYA?
- 6) Fees for speakers have dropped, thanks to the number of members who have volunteered to talk about their own genealogical interests.

All other items remained approximately in line with the previous year.

The estimate of the value of the Society's assets shows a decrease, partly due to the continuing depreciation in the value of electrical equipment but mostly because of a drop in Bookshop inventory.

In summary, it has been another financially stable year for the Society overall, with levels of funds continuing the upward trend reported last year. 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. In fact a reprint of Peter Towey's 'Researching Your German Ancestors' is currently at the printers, the original print run having sold very well in its first year. It is intended that subscription rates should remain at the current level for the foreseeable future.

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.

Peter Helmore proposed that the accounts be accepted and his proposal was overwhelmingly accepted by the members present at the meeting.

7. Other Reports

7.1 Secretary's Report by Gwen Davis (read by Peter Towey).

As I live in Newton Abbot, Devon I am not able to attend all the meetings that I would like to. I had hoped to be at the AGM but I have had a knee replacement recently and am still in some discomfort so find travelling difficult. Anyway I am passing on my apologies for not being with you today.

Having taken over as Secretary for a second time, I am always pleased to hear from members. Hopefully I can answer any queries. This coming year I plan to continue making contact with overseas members, started by Jeanette the previous secretary. It is always interesting to see how overseas members conduct their research.

Anyway I wish everyone good luck in their own research and how about writing it up for the Blatt?

7.2 Editorial Team Report by Jennifer Taylor (read by Peter Towey)

This year, in addition to preparing the Blatt in digital form for the benefit of overseas readers, we have continued with the new pattern of publishing three times a year. In 2014 the Summer issue was enlarged – but this year we are happy to report that the first Occasional Issue is in the final stages of preparation, and should be with you this autumn. This edition will contain the late Bob Fenley's collection of the correspondence of the Mutzke family who were separated during the Second World War; their contact maintained via the Red Cross. This will indeed be a bumper issue, exceeding the normal forty pages.

The Editorial Team would like to thank all those who contributed to the Autumn 2014 issue, which was devoted to the First World War. This summer, we have also commemorated the 200th Anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, in which the Kings's German Legion played such a decisive part. We are still looking for WWI material, so it is not too late to send us your contributions on this theme.

The Blatt is nothing if not a team effort, and it could not appear without the assistance of the typists, who turn hard copy into a form which can be read by a computer, and the proof-readers, who expunge all the typos and other errors that have evaded the vigilance of the editorial team. Many thanks to these teams. Finally, thanks must also go to Jeremy Gilmore, our webmaster, for ironing out any technical difficulties.

The Editorial Team

7.3 Bookshop and Fairs Report by Jenny Towey

Bookshop sales have declined over the past year and are down 47% on the previous year. However, an updated version of 'Pork Butchers in Britain' and a 2nd reprint of 'German Hairdressers in the UK', are both in the pipeline and should help boost book sales.

Whilst I am currently collecting material about clock and watchmakers for a future publication, Peter is gathering material on German Churches in the UK (and their allied schools). If anyone has any information, or photos, relevant to either of these subjects, please contact us.

The Society is still looking for a permanent home for our Library (which has a shelf size of approximately 25 feet). So, if anyone thinks they might be interested in taking on this role and has enough room to house the Library, please contact us!

Although we were unable to attend 'Who Do You Think You Are?' this year, we are intending to have a stand at next year's fair in Birmingham. We are looking for volunteers, so if you think you may be able to help on the stand, please let me know.

7.4 Membership Secretary's Report by Betty Anderson

The Society membership continues to fall and now stands at 735. 61 members joined since the last AGM, 20 less than last year. This may possibly be due to our non-attendance at the WDYTYA? show, which this year was held in Birmingham.

August continues to be the best month for recruitment, possibly influenced by WDYTYA?, which was showing on TV at that time. However, it could also be that more new members are choosing to join at the beginning of the membership year.

On a more positive note, we are continuing to see an increase in previous members re-joining, as well as those from overseas. I am also pleased to report that the majority of members renewed their membership on time and, of the approximate 200 e-mail reminders sent out, about three quarters replied.

Once again a reminder that renewal time is nearly here and you will find the renewal form for next year's membership in the Summer edition of the Blatt, due out later this month.

Finally, thank you all for the kind donations.

7.5 Programme Organiser's Report by Ann Sternberg Gilmore

Again in the past year we have had talks on a range of topics—in June of 2014 I was especially pleased to welcome one of our founder members, Roy Bernard. Roy, with his late wife Margaret, placed an advert in Family History Magazine 28 years ago and this resulted in something like 60 people turning up at their house in May of 1987--all of them also wanted to trace their German ancestry. Roy had known he had German ancestry all his life, but he was prompted to start the Anglo-German Family History Society because he wanted to trace his German ancestors in order to find living relatives in Germany. His talk entitled '*My German Family in England*', gave us a potted history of Germans in Britain and of his own German ancestors who had

travelled to Britain. He still visits his German cousins. In August we heard from member Sarah Patterson who spoke about *'Interrogation, Escape Aids, and Re-Education: Wilton Park, 1940 – 1948'*. The site is due for demolition and Sarah is campaigning for the Shean Block at Wilton Park to be conserved as an important part of Britain's history. The second talk in August was from member Nigel Williams on *'Anglo-German Displacement and Diaspora in the Early Twentieth Century: A Cultural and Personal Haunting'*. This talk was Nigel's analysis of the run-up to WWI and about how his family was affected. In October we heard a fascinating talk from Hildegard Maier about several German folk tales and characters in a talk entitled *'Frau Holle, the Forgotten Goddess and Who is Father Christmas Anyway?'* Hildegard will be familiar to many of you because she is the director of the Islington Meistersingers. October's second talk was by Phoebe Merrick who spoke about *'WWII Prisoners of War in England'* using examples from her home county of Hampshire.

In December, we heard an interesting talk by Anne Carter about *'Queen Victoria'*. The second talk in December was by member Graham Mark who talked about *'Christmas Greetings from the Prisoners in World War One'*. In February this year we heard from AGFHS member Irene Cowan who told us about *'Researching My German-Speaking Family in Europe and Asia'*. Irene's relatives have been extremely widespread and she told us a fascinating story about their travels and adventures spanning most of the continents! We also heard from member Jennifer Taylor who talked about *'A Grass Roots View of Prisoner of War Re-Education'*, using as an example the lecture schedule and commentaries of one instructor, a man whose son was in the audience. In April, the scheduled first speaker, member John Dear, had to cancel the talk on his King's German Legion ancestor, but I hope to re-book him for sometime in 2016. Fortunately, another member, John Strecker, was able to step in and gave us a wonderful summary history of the King's German Legion's activities during the Peninsular War. The second talk in April was from member Ian Mercer who spoke about *'A Tale of Love and War'*. This was the story of his German ancestor who was interned on the Isle of Man during the First World War. Today's talk after the tea break will be by Professor Brendan Simms and it is about how one group of Germans, the Hannoverians, helped to win the battle of Waterloo. I am still looking for someone to talk about the part played by the Prussians at Waterloo, so if you know of a possible speaker on that topic, please let me know. Many Germans who were in the Prussian army were prompted to emigrate as a result of their experiences in war. Whole families left Germany with the goal of saving their younger sons from having to serve in the army as well.

I would like to say a special thank you to those members who gave talks in the past year. Not only am I grateful for this but it also gladdens the heart of our society's treasurer, since it greatly reduces the cost of having speakers at our meetings. Please contact me if you would like to give us a talk.

Also, many thanks to those of you who have suggested speakers in the past. Please let me know if there is a speaker you would especially like to hear or a topic of interest to you—anything with a German connection or some aspect of social history are welcome topics. And of course Jeremy is happy to help you with putting your illustrations into a Powerpoint presentation.

Finally, although it is not related to the programme at our normal meetings, I'd like to thank everyone who helped out at the Concert of German Music at St. George's German Lutheran Church in November.

Ann Sternberg Gilmore

7.6 AGM Book Production Report by Irene Cowan

Each year we produce new books to benefit our members.

This year Peter Towey has kindly taken over the production of a new version of 'The German Churches in the UK'. This is a pretty mammoth task as there is a lot of material but we are all looking forward to its introduction.

We are also in the process of reprinting Peter Towey's book 'How to Research your German Ancestors'. The previous print run has sold very well and new stock needs to be obtained.

Still in the pipe line is a revision and reprint of the 'Pork Butchers in Britain'.

8. Election of Independent Examiner

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

9. Any Other Business

Peter Towey spoke about WDYTIA? 2016 and the need for volunteers to help on the stand. He also said that he was in contact with a couple of societies in Germany who might be interested in joining with us for the fair in Birmingham.

There being no other business, Peter Towey thanked everyone for attending the 2015 AGM.