

Minutes of the Anglo-German FHS 31st Annual General Meeting

Held on Saturday 8th June 2019
At King's Cross Methodist Church, Crestfield Street, London.

1. Welcome

In the absence of Peter Towey, Jeremy Gilmore welcomed members to the 2019 AGM.

2. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from: Gwen Davis; Jenny Towey; Peter Towey; Irene Short; Rose Mint.

3. Minutes of last AGM 9th June 2018.

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

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

5. Chairperson's Report

Our society has once again enjoyed another successful year. Our bi-monthly meetings, here at King's Cross, continue to have a good attendance, although membership overall is slightly down.

As always, we have enjoyed interesting and varied talks, from both members and outside speakers, including subjects such as Jacob Bobart, the first keeper of Oxford's botanical garden, Forest Hill's German community, and the composer J C Bach (with accompanying music). This year we have to some extent still focused on various aspects of WW1, including the talk last October about Life in Germany in WW1. We have also started to look at WW1, such as in our last occasional issue of the 'Blatt. Particular thanks, as always, go to Ann Gilmore for arranging such excellent speakers, on both German and non-German topics.

Our bookshop is also usually available at meetings, and this year we have had 3 new publications. The excellent bi-lingual recipe and family history book, **Tastes of Hohenlohe**, in conjunction with Karl-Heinz Wüstner and Carol Woodhouse, as well as two books in the series on internment, **The Tailor of Ongar** and **Interned in Alexandra Palace**, both of which tell very personal and moving stories.

Unfortunately, we no longer have the services of our German caterers, but we continue to enjoy a social and quiz after the meetings in both June & December. These are always enjoyable and a great way to get to know people better too.

Our hard-working Vice-Presidents, Peter & Jenny Towey, have now attended their final Family History Fair, which was very appropriately held at Alexandra Palace in April. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude for the enormous amount of effort and travelling they have put in over so many years. As I mentioned last year, these family history fairs have previously been an important platform to help advertise the society, make our presence known, and encourage new members. Therefore, I really do urge any members interested in this aspect of the society to seriously consider taking over the book and information stall at some of these events, perhaps with several other members (or interested friends). If no one comes forward then we will have to cease attending any family history events, meaning we will no longer have a presence outside our meetings, or be able to promote the society as we have in the past, which is likely to have a considerable effect on the society. Peter and Jenny are not here

today but if you feel you can take the bookstall to a FH fair local to you, or can offer to help at any of the fairs, then do please email them for further information.

Peter and Jenny are also planning to hold a regional meeting on 5th October, at their home in Weston-Super-Mare. This is another area where your committee would like to encourage other members to host meetings for members in their area. If you think you would like to arrange/host such an event, the committee would be very happy to assist with suggestions on how to plan a meeting, give advice and assistance finding speakers etc. (possibly one of the committee or other members) and help meet extra costs. The success of such events is largely down to you as members to instigate and host them, but of course your committee will fully support such meetings in any way we can.

Even if the FH fairs are not for you, we would strongly encourage and actively welcome and value more volunteers, especially on the committee.

I personally have now completed 11 years as your chairperson and I am sure it would be beneficial for someone new to take on this role and bring some fresh ideas. It is not an onerous job and I will happily talk it through with anyone who has an interest.

Although we have yet been unable to set up a Facebook page, someone has come forward with an expression of interest in overseeing this for us, so watch this space

Finally, I want to mention and thank all your dedicated and hard-working committee members, as well as all the other regular helpers, who do so much for the society, not forgetting all of you, the members, for regularly attending meetings and supporting the society. I hope you enjoy today and will continue to be part of the AGFHS.

Thank you. **Noële Barnfield** – Chairperson June 2019

6. Treasurer's Report for Year Ending 31st March 2019

As you will see from your copy of the accounts, we finished the financial year with a decrease in total funds of £3 547 with respect to assets at the end of 2017-18; and with the Deposit Account standing at £17 942 after taking into consideration the modest interest applied and the transfer of £2 000 to the Current Account.

With respect to income over the year, the significant differences compared with 2017-18 are:

- 1) A £493 (or approximately 5%) decrease in membership subscriptions. This unfortunately continues the downward trend in membership that we have experienced since 2010, a problem experienced by many family history societies with the increased availability of resources *via* the internet. I would like to thank members for their continued generous donations which they include on making their subscription payments.
- 2) On the positive side, there has been a significant increase in sales of books of £427 or 25% w.r.t. 2017-18 through the Bookshop and from the Bookstall at meetings; the decrease in sales at Fairs was due to a decline in the number attended. The overall increase in sales reflects the number of new publications that were added to the Society's book list over the course of the year. Hopefully these and additional

publications planned for the coming year will maintain this level of book sales, as this is a key source of income for the Society.

- 3) Raffle receipts at the bimonthly meetings showed a marked increase of £102 (or 50%), partly reflecting an increase in the number of attendees. I would like to thank members who buy raffle tickets and also those who donate prizes – the money helps offset the significant costs of renting the venue.

All other items remained approximately in line with last year.

With respect to expenditure, the significant items are:

- 1) The figure of £1388 for Fees, which reflects the costs incurred in employing a web designer to update both the main AGFHS website and the site used by the Editorial team in producing the 'Blatt. I will go into further details of this later in the AGM. The overall cost of Fees for the 2018-19 period was kept down by being able to delay the payment of the Society's Liability Insurance for 2019-20 until April of this year.
- 2) The slight decrease in costs of printing the 'Blatt reflects the decreased membership and therefore numbers of magazines to be printed each issue; but also we should thank our printers, Roger Chouler and Associates, for keeping costs under tight control.
- 3) Other Printing costs have risen significantly this year, with the publication of a number of new books. In fact the 'Tastes of Hohenlohe' has sold so well that we have had to order a reprint.
- 4) The charge for attendance of Fairs remained high, even though Peter and Jenny attended far fewer fairs in 2018-19. This is because of prepayment for the attendance of the Family Tree Live fair at Alexandra Palace in April of this year, Peter and Jenny's swan song. As they will no longer be able to support major fairs such as this, we should expect future expenses for these events to be significantly reduced.

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

The estimate of the value of the Society's assets shows an increase, due to the new publications increasing the Bookshop inventory.

In summary, it has been a year where we have seen a further and significant reduction in funds, but much of this has been due to extraordinary expenditures which should not be incurred this coming year. However, it can clearly be seen that the Society remains in a sound overall position and we can continue to regularly produce new publications. It also follows that we intend to maintain subscription rates at the current level for the foreseeable future.

As always, 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.

Jeremy Gilmore – Treasurer, June 2019

It was proposed that the 2018-19 accounts be accepted and this proposal was overwhelmingly accepted by those members present at the AGM meeting.

7. Other Reports

7.1 Secretary's Report

Apologies for my absence but I am away in the Forest of Dean attending an 80th birthday weekend.

As well as the usual German family history queries, this year has seen quite a few email offers to our society for marketing. People seem to be under the impression that we are a huge group as recently I have been offered society discounts for over 5,000 members – I wish. However, most correspondence deals with AGFHS business, including interest in my “Notes” column.

In the latest 'Blatt I have requested updates from overseas members on their research so soon I am hoping to be able to publish their results.

Best wishes with your research!

Gwen Davis – Secretary, June 2019

7.2 Membership Secretary's Report

The Society membership continues to fall and now stands at 587.

There have been 59 new members joining since the last AGM, including 11 re-joining, which is a reduction on last year's total. August and May were the best months for recruitment.

“Family Tree Live” was held at Alexandra Palace in April and disappointingly only two joint members and a re-joining member joined at the event. However, this was probably the reason why the following month was the best for recruitment, when a total of 12 members joined.

Now that the Standing Order option has been introduced and more members joining between May and July opting for Enhanced Membership, I am hoping that there will not be a repeat of last year, when I had to send out almost 200 e-mail reminders.

Finally, I must remind members that is once again time to renew your membership and that you will find both the renewal form and standing order application in the summer edition of the “Blatt”.

Thank you all for your kind donations.

Betty Anderson – Membership Secretary, June 2019

7.3 Programme Organiser's Report

In the past year we have had talks on a variety of topics—the talk after the AGM last year was done by Vice Presidents (and two of our society's founder members) Peter and Jenny Towey on the subject of *Using DNA in Family History*. They cannot be here today but if you would like to have your DNA done, they can tell you the pros and cons of various companies. In August, the first talk was by London Blue Guide David Williams about *Spittalfields*. Over time this area has become home to many immigrants—Huguenots and Jews among others, and now Bangladeshis. The second August talk was *The Austro-Prussian War of 1866* given by Dr. Stephen Summerfield. This war has been overshadowed in history by the Franco-

Prussian War of 1870-71. But if your ancestors were Prussian, especially Pomeranian, they might have fled after this war, particularly to avoid future military service for their younger sons. October's first talk was by Oxford Guide and speaker, Mark Davies. His talk was about the *German Prince of Plants: Jacob Bobart: First Keeper of Oxford's Botanical Garden, and His Colourful Descendants*. Jacob Bobart became Keeper in about 1641 and his son, also Jacob, took the job after him. The second talk in October was given by Helen Boak (retired from the University of Hertfordshire) on the topic of *Life in Germany in WWI as Seen in the Photographs of Käthe Buchler*. Her photographs show daily life as well as soldiers boarding trains to go to war. In December, professional genealogist and lecturer, Celia Heritage, talked about *How Far Did Your Ancestor Travel?* She concentrated on travel in and around the UK and included several maps showing various routes taken by sea, and by rail and road in the past. Celia waived her fee, asking only for her travel costs if we would give her fee to MIND to help raise awareness of mental health issues. The second December talk was *Heimat in South London: Forest Hill's German Community* given by Michael Paterson. Michael took us on a bus and walking tour of places in Forest Hill and surrounding villages which were once thriving German communities, which held regular concerts by a prominent German conductor and musicians and other events on that sort of scale. In February we heard about *Charles Booth and the London Poverty Map* in a talk by Bob Reeves. The map covers a large area but the talk concentrated on poverty in East London since that is where many Germans lived after arriving in the UK. February's second talk was by member Malcolm Sieler about a couple of his ancestors and entitled *Emil and Albert Sieler—London Hairdressers: Father and Son from Theissen, Germany and North London*. The story was tragic but Malcolm now possesses more certificates, medals and other objects from his ancestors than many of us will ever have! In April we heard a talk by Dr. Claudia Sternberg, from the University of Leeds, entitled *Time Stood Still: Civilian and Military Prisoners at Lofthouse Park Camp, 1914 – 1919*. It held nearly 3000 people at its height. In a delightful change from our usual talk, for the second April talk member Paul Barnfield told us about *Johann Christian Bach—the London Bach: A not so famous German Immigrant* (with music!). After this AGM today, the talk after the tea break will be by Dr. Colin Chapman about *WWI POW Camps in Britain: An Update on German, Swiss and UK Archival Materials*.

I would like to say a special thank you to those members who gave talks in the past year. Please contact me if you would like to give a talk. I would also like to thank those of you who have suggested speakers in the past. Please let me know if there is a speaker you would like to hear or a topic of particular interest to you. If you have suggested a talk or speaker in the past and nothing has yet happened about it, please remind me. And of course, Jeremy is happy to help you with putting your illustrations into a PowerPoint presentation.

Ann Sternberg Gilmore – Programme Organiser, June 2019.

7.4 Editorial Report on Mitteilungsblatt

This year we have continued the pattern of three issues – spring, summer and autumn, plus an occasional issue which was sent out in September.

We hope you have all received your summer issue in good time for this meeting so that you can hand in your membership renewal form. The Treasurer and the Committee have responded to the suggestion for subscriptions to be paid by standing order, and if you would prefer this method of payment you will find an appropriate form in your summer issue of the Blatt.

The website we use for compiling each issue of the Blatt has been upgraded and is working more efficiently than previously. We are grateful to the website editor, Jeremy Gilmore, for

his hard work in arranging this upgrade, and for his assistance in finding solutions to any technical issues which may occur.

The occasional issue planned for September 2019 is a specially updated version of Names of Interest compiled by our Vice-President Jenny Towey. The Editorial Committee hopes members will find this reference work useful when undertaking their research.

We have now succeeded in clearing our backlog, so would ask you to keep those articles coming – they do not have to be any particular length and so while extensive articles with copious illustrations are always welcome, shorter contributions are always welcome. Please send to the g-mail address to be found on p.1 of the 'Blatt. You will receive an automatic acknowledgement so you will know it has arrived safely.

The 'Blatt is nothing if not a team effort, and it could not appear without the assistance of many people. In addition to the editorial team, thanks are also due to 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.

Jennifer Taylor - Editorial Team, June 2019.

7.5 Publications Report

Each year we produce new books to benefit our members. This year there have been several publications:

- Re-educating German Prisoners of war after WWII
- Hermann Korf the Tailor of Ongar
- Tastes of Hohenlohe
- Interned in Alexandra Palace – Wilhelm Reinhold Teuchert

The occasional issue this year is a compilation of the Names & Places of interest to AGFHS members.

Also in the pipeline is a reprint of Peter Towey's book 'How to Research your German Ancestors'.

Irene Cowan – Book Production Team Organiser, June 2019

7.6 Bookshop and Fairs

Bookshop sales were boosted last year by several new publications – especially the pork butchers' recipe book (the first edition of which sold out before it was advertised in the 'Blatt!).

Peter & I attended the launch of the Knockaloe Internment Camp Database and Internment Centre, on the Isle of Man, this year and sold a few of our books there.

We also temporarily came out of our retirement, of organising for our stand to be at national Family History Fairs, to have a presence at the recent fair at Alexandra Palace. As the Society erected a plaque, some years ago) onto the outside of the building, to acknowledge the WWI internment of German civilians inside, we felt it appropriate that we should be there.

If anyone is interested in taking over the organisation of booking our stall at national FH Fairs then please contact Jenny Towey (details in the 'Blatt) as we are quite happy to attend and help out.

Jenny Towey, Vice-President – Bookshop & Fairs Manager, June 2019

7.7 Website Editor

As mentioned in the Treasurer's Report the Society's websites have undergone major updates in the last few months. To give some background: the sites were originally designed by Ian Meyers, a member of the AGFHS, but several years ago, when he ceased to be a member, I took over the everyday maintenance of the sites. However, the background software (or so-called Content Management System) underwent a number of major upgrades during that time which I did not have the technical knowledge to be able to implement. In fact, the website hosting company we used was charging us higher fees to support the outdated software. So, I had to bite the bullet and find a contract web designer to do the necessary upgrades, though it turned out the software was so outdated that it was cheaper for him to start from scratch and totally redesign the main website. Hopefully you will have had an opportunity to view this site since it went live early in the new year and see the excellent job he has done. Also, if you use a smart phone, you will see it is now optimised for viewing on a mobile device. For me in future, having access to a capable web designer who can solve any issues but also make any required software upgrades, will be a great help and mean although we pay ongoing fees there should not be unexpected major outlays as we saw last year.

I would like to remind members about the useful information to be found on the Society's website: in particular, newsflashes about new publications or changes to meetings; information about other events, a calendar of relevant events, etc. There are also links to other useful genealogy resources. Finally, I would ask that you let me know if you find any errors so that I can correct them.

Jeremy Gilmore - Website Editor, June 2019

8. Any Other Business

Two members queried why we do not have Gift Aid on our membership.

Jeremy Gilmore explained that the committee had investigated the matter and found the process had become more complicated in recent years. Due to the fact that it would involve considerable work for our small committee, it had been decided that Gift Aid was not feasible at this time. Of course, if anyone felt that they would like to be responsible for this role, we always welcome new volunteers to the committee. Jeremy also pointed out that we had a large overseas membership and these non-UK tax payers were not eligible to Gift Aid.

There being no other business, Jeremy Gilmore thanked everyone for attending the 2019 Annual General Meeting.