The Victorian Society

Campaigning for Victorian & Edwardian Built Heritage

Minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting

Held on Friday 5 September at 2.00pm at Keble College, Oxford, OX1 3PG

1. Minutes of 2024 Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the 2024 AGM were approved as a true record of proceedings. Proposed by Mark Watson and seconded by Penny Hopkins and carried unanimously.

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

There were no matters arising.

3. Chair's Report

James Grierson welcomed members to Oxford and thanked Kate Davey for organising the weekend's activities. He also paid tribute to her many years of outstanding service to the Society as a Trustee.

The main business of the Society continues to be conducted very successfully by the team at Priory Gardens, Tim Bridges in the West Midlands, and the many volunteers in our regional groups around the country. He noted that the Liverpool Group, under the leadership of Rowena Beighton-Dykes, and the Manchester Group, chaired by Kate Martyn, had both invigorated their respective groups.

He thanked Professor Neil Jackson and the Events Committee for organising an impressive series of events commemorating the centenary of George Edmund Street in 2024.

Special thanks were given to the Society's President, Griff Rhys Jones, who has worked tirelessly throughout the year promoting and supporting the Society's activities, particularly in opposition to the disfiguring redevelopment proposals for Liverpool Street Station. The campaign has been led by the Society as part of the LISSCA coalition. It remains critically important to win this battle in order to prevent a planning precedent that could put listed buildings across the country at risk.

During the year, the Society received more than 11,000 planning notifications, approximately 400 of which became active cases.

The Society was shocked and saddened by the death of Professor Andrew Saint, a long-standing member of the Southern Buildings Committee and Chair of the Publications Committee. Andrew oversaw the Victorian Architects series of monographs, including the Society's latest publication, Matthew Digby Wyatt, by Robert Thorne.

4. Director's Report

James Hughes thanked Kate Davey for her tireless work in organising the AGM weekend's events. He also acknowledged the contributions of the Revd Professor William Whyte and Professor Neil Jackson, who had assisted with the organisation of parts of the programme.

He paid tribute to the late Professor Andrew Saint, whose contribution to the Society over more than forty years had been immense. He also remembered the late Sheila Binns for her work on the Events Committee and as the Society's Honorary Librarian; and Janet Douglas for her many years of service to the WYG. He thanked Richard Seedhouse, the Society's Administrator, who will retire at the end of September after 30 years in the post. And also, again, Kate Davey, for her lengthy and dutiful service as a trustee of the Society.

The Society has been transformed by securing the National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, which has enabled the appointment of Jack Edge as Membership Manager and Anna Tham as Fundraising Manager. With the arrival of new caseworkers Morgan-Ellis Leah and Tom Ollivier, the Society now has the largest staff team in its history.

His priorities for the coming year include challenging the perception that heritage organisations are "blockers" to development and continuing the Society's campaign against the current proposals for Liverpool Street Station, which would result in a scheme more reminiscent of the most damaging redevelopment proposals of the 1970s than a sensitive intervention in a historic station.

5. Election of Trustees:
Resolution A: To re-elect Alan Davies as Trustee of the Society.
The Chair had 44 proxy votes in favour of the resolution and one against. It was proposed by David Low and seconded by Ken Moth. The resolution was passed unanimously, subject to the single proxy vote against.

Resolution B: To re-elect Lynn Pearcy as a Trustee of the Society for one year.
The Chair had 44 proxy votes in favour of the resolution and one against. It was proposed by Mark Watson and seconded by Alan Davies. The resolution was passed unanimously, subject to the single proxy vote against.

Resolution C: To re-elect Kit Wedd as a Trustee of the Society
The Chair had 44 proxy votes in favour of the resolution and one against. It was proposed by Steve Roman and seconded by Priscilla Baines. The resolution was passed unanimously, subject to the single proxy vote against.

6. Finance Review:
Lynn Pearcy, the Society's Finance Trustee, reported on the 2024 Financial Report. The accounts showed that the deficit on a recurring basis had decreased during the year to £77,000. This was partly due to reduced staff costs, lower running costs at Priory Gardens and increased interest income generated from the Society's reserves.
Members were again generous with their donations, assisted by their support for the Liverpool Street Station appeal. Legacy income also increased compared with the previous year. Grant income from Historic England and CADW remained stable and, thanks to the efforts of Ben Sims, the Society benefiting hugely from the grant of £243,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
Although only half of the grant funding was received during 2024, the entire amount was recognised as income in the accounts. As the associated expenditure will be incurred during 2025 and 2026, this has artificially improved the Society's reported surplus for 2024 and will correspondingly affect the results in subsequent years.
Income from events increased during the year, alongside the associated costs of delivering the programme. Sales of publications also rose, largely due to the publication of the George Edmund Street volume.
The Trustees will continue to work towards returning the Society to an underlying surplus but, overall, she considered the Society to be in good financial order.

7. Finance votes:
Resolution D: To Receive the report of the Trusted and Audited accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024.
The Chair had 43 proxy votes in favour of the resolution, one abstention and one against. It was proposed by Lynn Pearcy and seconded by Mark Watson. The resolution was passed unanimously, subject to the one abstention and the single proxy vote against.

Resolution E: To re-appoint Begbies as Auditors to the Society
The Chair had 43 proxy votes in favour of the resolution, one abstention and one against. It was proposed by Lynn Pearcy and seconded by Roy Williams. The resolution was passed unanimously, subject to the one abstention and the single proxy vote against.

8. Any other business
Members asked questions regarding the number of Young Victorian members and ways in which more members could be encouraged to subscribe to the Society's free monthly e-newsletter.

The formal business of the AGM closed at 3.00pm. It was followed by a short speech from Kate Davey, closing remarks from the Society's President, Griff Rhys Jones, and presentations by the Society's caseworkers.