

## OXFORDSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST (2016)

### Minutes of the Second Annual Meeting of General Members of the Trust, held at St Andrew's Church, Chinnor, OX39 4PG, at 2.00 pm on 28 July 2018

The President, the Rt. Rev Bishop Colin Fletcher, took the chair; there were 36 members present. The Vicar of St Andrew's, the Rev. Maggie Thorne, welcomed those present on behalf of the Benefice. The President also welcomed members, thanking OHCT's Trustees and Council members, other donors and Ride and Stride participants for their contribution to the grants made to churches. He drew attention to the recent works completed at Towersey, where a grant from the Trust – although relatively small, had triggered other grants and enthusiasm in the local communities. He also drew attention to other churches in the area that had received grants – Chinnor Methodist Church, where he had made a pilgrimage together with Maggie Thorne, and Lewknor, which had a unique relationship to the local school, which they were hoping to strengthen through development of the building.

The President then led an opening prayer.

**1. Apologies:** Apologies had been received from Lord Saye and Sele, Sir Tony Baldry, Patrick Boyd Maunsell, Sir Hugo Brunner, Norman Dawson, Judy French, Maurice Humphris, Colin and Holly Kilpatrick, H Juniper, Liz Kitch, Elizabeth MacLeod, David Meara, Michael Sibly and Ann Spokes Symonds.

**2. Minutes of the First Annual Meeting of General Members of the Trust, on 29 July 2017:** These were approved without amendment, on the proposal of Chris Walton, seconded by Julia Twynam.

**3. Chair's Report:** The Chair, speaking at his first Annual Meeting in that capacity, drew attention to the 2018 Annual review, as well as to the Trust's Statutory Report to the Charity Commission. These gave the context for what he hoped would be a stimulating discussion later in the meeting on Plans for the Future.

This had been a year of two Chairs; he urged members to attribute all continuing success to the work of Basil Eastwood, and any mistakes to himself. As planned, Basil had now stood down as a Trustee to take up the role of Development Officer, with Hilary Cakebread Hall taking on the role of Vice-Chair.

The Trust had awarded grants in the previous year to the sum of £194,000, down on the 2016/17 level of £217,000, but to which should be added £23,000 in Roof Alarm grants. Lead thefts continued, although alarms did scare away thieves, and the Scheme would remain open until the end of 2019. The Trust had generally increased the level of grants as well as to take into account professional fees in calculating the maximum level; this reflected a desire to ensure successful projects. Some grants had also been added to through the National Churches Trust's Partnership Scheme, but this would be the last year for this facility. More generally, in the national context, the NCT grant schemes were being modified to make them easier to apply for, but more focused on poorer parts of the country and not to cover regular maintenance – a possible conflict with reality? The Heritage Lottery Fund had also closed its scheme for Listed Places of Worship, as Basil had foreshadowed last year; the HLF had undertaken to ensure a constant share of the cake for churches, but the cake itself was diminishing. Nor was government funding likely to be maintained, either.

As regards the Trust itself, income was up, and the Heritage Fund acted in any case as a buffer. Legacies would constitute a significant income stream in the future; he encouraged Members to take copies of the newly available leaflet, prepared with support, both financial and for content, from Freeth's, and hand them to their friends. Freeth's maintained the offer of free consultation.

Ride and Stride had raised £250,000 in 2017 – a tribute to all involved. Much thought was going into maintaining and increasing this source of income. In this respect OHCT was streets ahead of many

other Trusts, but the situation remained precarious. One year of failure of Ride & Stride had led to the collapse of the Derbyshire Trust.

A successful programme of Events had been organised, with the stained-glass event just having been repeated from the previous year, due to high demand. He thanked all those involved in organising these events, especially David Warr, Michael Sibly and Holly Kilpatrick; they had been fun, and every attendee left better informed. The Lectures had attracted large audiences; thanks were due to David Meara, Julia Twynam and Holly Kilpatrick for their work behind the scenes. Later this year, visits to Appleton and Dorchester were planned, as well as A N Wilson giving the Blenheim Lecture. He drew attention to the 2018 Christmas Cards, which were on sale at today's meeting.

Finally, there had been some changes among the Officers of the Trust, with Sue Tyser standing down after sterling service as an Area Rep, replaced in Wantage by Alison Trowell, and Tony Lynch taking on that role in Henley; Nicola Coldstream had agreed to act as Alternate Area Rep in Chipping Norton. There had been some changes among the Ride & Stride Area Coordinators, while we all mourned the death of Hubert Beaumont in Chipping Norton South. Finally, Jonathan Scheele planned to stand down as Secretary at the end of 2018; ideas for his replacement would be very welcome.

**4. Treasurer's Report:** The Treasurer referred to his Report contained in the Annual Review, preferring to give a less formal financial commentary. The Trust was in solid financial shape, with three stable sources of income: Ride & Stride, investment income and donations. This had allowed the Trust to maintain its level of grant giving, and a similar budget had been set for the year to come. As regards investments, the majority were placed in charity funds, yielding income untaxed; most were placed through Cazenoves, with some property investment through Savills. He thanked the members of the Finance Committee, who had made a valuable contribution to the Trust's situation. In response to a question from Anthony Pugh-Thomas, he explained the background to the establishment of the Roof Fund and how the payments had subsequently been managed.

**5. Trustees' Statutory Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2018:** The Statutory Annual Report was received by Members.

**6. Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2018:** The accounts were received by members. The Chair thanked the Treasurer and Secretary for their work.

**7. Plans for the Future:** Hilary Cakebread Hall outlined plans for *Ride & Stride*; this constituted one of the largest single sources of income for most Trusts – some of which were facing serious financial difficulties. OHCT was nowhere near that situation, but it was a salutary lesson about the need to encourage new audiences – families and communities, linking it to the exercise trend (a departure from the original idea). Thought was being given to generate new sources of income: tapping into the business community, following Basil Eastwood's success in persuading Bernard Taylor to sponsor the Taylor Trophy for the best-performing company team entering online; and raising community awareness through a display of banners by churches with a main road aspect.

Basil Eastwood explained the role of the *Development Committee*. While its main function was fundraising, such as through the new legacies leaflet, it was also broadening its remit, beginning with the "roadshow" which would trial its first edition at Towersey on 16 September, entitled "Can we help your Church?". The aim was to allow potential beneficiaries to use OHCT better – for contacts as well as for funding. This first session, aimed at churches anywhere from Cowley eastwards, would be followed by further sessions two or three times a year across the county.

The Chair reported on action in response to the suggestion made by Sir Tony Baldry at the 2017 Annual Meeting, for a *Forum for Friends of Churches*. Following contacts with Dorchester Abbey, this would be held there in September 2019, with financial support from the Diocese and matching funding from OHCT, thereby allowing nationally-known speakers to participate, and the organisation of specialist workshops. Active publicity would be launched after the summer.

The Chair also commented on the outcome of the *Taylor Report* on the sustainability of churches; its key conclusion was that this required them to become buildings for the whole community. Some pilot actions were now being set up in Suffolk and Manchester, through the appointment of advisors; the impact would be closely studied.

Chris Walton recalled that, for many years from 1999, OHCT had organised *Cathedral Tours*; these had been difficult to organise, but he wondered whether they could be revived, as part of an expanded Events programme. The Chair noted that this had been discussed and there was considerable support. Nicola Coldstream said that she was investigating a rather simpler approach, using members' own cars, rather than hiring a coach. She envisaged a modest beginning, with a visit to a nearby cathedral, but other ideas could be discussed. In response to a question from Anthony Pugh-Thomas, the Chair noted that coach costs were essentially determined by market forces.

In response to a question from Sarah Scheele, Hilary Cakebread Hall confirmed that, while all funds raised through *Ride and Stride* were collected through OHCT, it was up to those involved to determine whether they were allocated to one church or another.

Basil Eastwood recalled that it was a joint responsibility of all Members to attract new ones, not just of the officers; ideas for lecture themes were also welcome.

**9. Election of President:** *Richard Lethbridge, Former President, took the chair for this item.* On the proposal of Stephen Goss, seconded by Jonathan Scheele, members unanimously re-elected, by acclaim, Bishop Colin Fletcher as President. Richard Lethbridge remarked that the consecration of Colin Fletcher as Bishop of Dorchester had been a good day for Oxfordshire.

**10. Close of the Meeting:** The meeting concluded at 3.04 pm, with thanks to Malcolm Airs for organising the event, including the visit to neighbouring churches.

**Signed as a true record,**

**The Rt. Rev. Bishop Colin Fletcher**  
**President**  
**JS, SJG, BE: 8.2.2019**