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**Minutes of the 117<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Wimbledon Society  
held at Wimbledon Park Hall, 170 Arthur Road, London SW19.8AQ  
on Saturday, 18 September 2021 at 5.00 p.m.**

Jeremy Hudson, Chairman of the Wimbledon Society, opened the AGM and welcomed The Mayor, Councillor Michael Brunt, LBM Councillors, Diane Neil Mills, our speaker, and 39 members. Corinna Edge (Hon.Treasurer) and Maureen Field (Hon.Secretary) were introduced to the meeting.

**Apologies for Absence** were received from Tony Michael, President of the Wimbledon Society, Stephen Hammond, MP, Marcus Beale, Rosemary Bolingbroke, Paul Bonner, Ann Cantrell, Rosemary Evans, Cllr Anthony Fairclough, Cllr Paul Kohler, Ann Hodgson, Ann Markowe, John Myers, Michael Norman Smith, Cllr David Simpson, Diane Sterck, David Webb, Maureen White.

Reports relevant to the Society's AGM meeting had been previously circulated by email or hard copy.

**Minutes of the previous AGM (3 October 2020):**

These had been previously agreed by the Board, signed by the Chairman on 18 November 2020, and circulated to members prior to the meeting. Their acceptance as an accurate record was proposed by John Mays, seconded by Kevin O'Neil and agreed by a show of hands. The Chairman thanked Maureen Field for producing the Minutes.

There were no Matters Arising.

**Chairman's Report:**

Chairman Jeremy Hudson referred to his Report for 2020 which had been circulated, and taken as read. He continued by focussing on events so far during 2021, outlining the prospects and plans for the Society in the coming year. The Chairman thanked Asif Malik for facilitating the Society's Zoom meetings and talks but, with the easing of Covid restrictions, it has been possible in recent weeks to recommence face-to-face meetings.

The Local History Group, led by Michael Norman-Smith, are regular users of Zoom and continue to meet on the first Friday of every month, never failing to come up with a diverse array of artefacts, information gleaned from their research, and queries about Wimbledon's past. Until his sad death in July, Charles Toase was a regular attendee at these meetings and a prolific contributor to the Newsletter. He will be greatly missed.

Another casualty of coronavirus has been the Society's Activities & Events programme. In view of Covid restrictions, no visits or walks were possible during the past 18 months. However, a series of talks on Zoom were very well attended and Jane Healey and her Group are planning more talks through the winter months. These will include a talk by renowned auctioneer and TV personality Charles Hanson in December, and next year a visit to Rochester and possibilities for visits and walks are being researched.

At last year's AGM the decision was announced to bring forward the planned refurbishment of the Museum. Eleven months on the project is progressing well, with plans to re-open the Museum in June next year. All of the exhibits and cabinets have been removed, and work can now start on improving the fabric of the Museum room. The design of the refurbished Museum has been approved, storylines are being refined, and objects and images are being selected for display. A firm of PR consultants is working with us to devise a strategy for promoting the Museum

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The refurbishment is expensive but the Society is delighted to report fundraising for this project has exceeded its target thanks to many very generous donations, as well as a successful crowdfunding appeal. Jeremy Hudson thanked all who supported the appeal.

Much appreciation is due to the Museum Refurbishment Committee, ably led by our Museum Director Jacqueline Laurence. The Society is so fortunate to have the experience and guidance of Jane Allen, former Head of Heritage at Sutton Council, and who was responsible for refurbishing the excellent Whitehall Historic House. Charlotte Peacock has done a superb job on fundraising, and Pamela Greenwood has worked extraordinarily hard (with help from her family members) to clear the Museum, and to source images and objects for display in the new Museum.

Communication is paramount, and never more so than in times like this when our lives are so restricted. In the Chairman's 2020 Report the overhaul of the Society's and Museum's respective websites was reported, plus the creation of an entirely new joint website. The objective now is to keep it refreshed, with continual updating of content. Since its launch, the website has been visited by over 11,000 users. The Society's thanks are due to the website team, ably led by Asif Malik and Kevin O'Neil, for their work on keeping the website up to date.

With the new website came a new membership system, and thanks are due to our Membership Secretary Simon Ingall for making the system work well. The Society has email addresses for 91% of its membership, reducing the number of communications sent post. The new website has also proved to be a helpful means of advertising and selling our publications, run very capably by Kevin O'Neil. Today the Society has 1,624 Twitter followers, and the number is steadily increasing. As ever, our most popular tweets relate to planning and environmental issues. Christine Goodair looks after our Twitter account and thanks are due to her for continually refreshing the Twitter feed.

Another important communication is the Society's quarterly Newsletter, which remains a source of great interest to our members. The Society's appreciation is due to Sally Gibbons and her team for their very professional approach to producing a high-quality publication. Monica Ellison has decided to retire from its editorial team after many years of excellent service, and our thanks go to her for all she has done to maintain the highest standards. Christine Goodair has agreed to join the editorial team from this Autumn.

Among the hardest working people in the Society are the numerous members of our Planning & Environment Committee, chaired by Chris Goodair. Its core activity is the review of all planning applications in our area of benefit. Last year they reviewed a total of 223 applications and objected or commented to the Council on 112 of them. So far this year, the PEC has looked at 185 applications and responded to 87 of those.

Additionally, the PEC concerns itself with strategic and environmental issues. So far this year, we have responded to a number of public consultations, highlighting issues that are of paramount significance to our community. They have included the Council's new Local Plan (covering the whole of our area of benefit), and consultations about air quality, school streets, low traffic neighbourhoods, and cycle lanes along Parkside.

Currently, a major preoccupation of the PEC is the All England Lawn Tennis Club's (AELTC) proposed development on the Wimbledon Park Golf Course land, for which a planning application has been submitted. The proposed development comprises 38 new grass tennis courts, 10 ancillary buildings and associated infrastructure, plus an 8,000-seater stadium. From the beginning our Society's charitable objectives have included protecting the natural beauty of the area. The land in question is Metropolitan Open Land (akin to Green Belt) and a grade II\* listed Registered Park, originally landscaped by 'Capability' Brown. The AELTC's development will transform this historic parkland into a major tennis complex. As a Society we find this loss of open space deeply problematic. We are currently formulating a detailed response to the application, as well as working

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with local Residents' Associations and also national bodies including Historic England, CPRE, and the Gardens Trust.

There is another reason why we have grave concerns about the proposed development. When the AELTC acquired the freehold of the land from the Council in 1993, both gave public assurances that the land would never be built on. More than that, the AELTC entered into restrictive covenants against building. We have written to the Council to ask whether or not they intend to oblige the AELTC to honour these covenants but, apart from an acknowledgment we have heard nothing. Our Society asks the Mayor, and the other Councillors present, to remain vigilant to this situation and urge your colleagues to respond.

The Chairman concluded by thanking fellow Board members for all their hard work over the past 18 months, most performing multiple tasks for the Society. The Society does not overlook the excellent work done by our Treasurer Corinna Edge in managing our finances and our Secretary, Maureen Field, deserves special praise for her work keeping an accurate record of our meetings, despite the added difficulty of staring at a computer screen during a Zoom meeting. Jeremy Hudson recorded his appreciation to his distinguished predecessors Iain Simpson, Asif Malik and John Mays for all the work they do on several of our committees, and for their sage advice and encouragement.

There were no questions from the floor.

#### **Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the year ended 31/12/20:**

Introducing the accounts for the year ended 31 December 2020, Treasurer Corinna Edge confirmed the accounts for 2020 have been submitted to Companies House and the Charity Commission.

The Society's finances and investments enjoyed a reasonably good year, but Covid-19 has curtailed monies received from the Museum and events. Donations have been received for the Museum Refurbishment Fund held in a separate bank account.

The accounts for 2020 had been certified by the Independent Examiners, approved by the Board and signed by the Treasurer. Copies have been distributed to members and were available on the website. There were no Questions from the floor. The Chairman thanked Corinna Edge for preparing the Society's accounts. Their acceptance was proposed by Iain Simpson, seconded by Asif Malik and agreed by a show of hands.

#### **Election of President and Vice President:**

John Mays proposed, and Pamela Greenwood seconded, the election of Tony Michael as President, and Jeremy Hudson proposed and Iain Simpson seconded the election of John Mays as Vice President. Members approved both elections by a show of hands.

#### **Election of Officers and Directors of the Society:**

Under the Society's Article 32, at every AGM one-third of the Directors retire and stand for re-election. Jeremy Hudson was proposed by John Mays and seconded by Asif Malik, Asif Malik was proposed by John Mays and seconded by Kevin O'Neil, Iain Simpson was proposed by Kevin O'Neil and seconded by Jacqueline Laurence. Their re-elections were confirmed by a show of hands. Gillian Darlington was proposed by Jeremy Hudson and seconded by Tony Michael, Simon Hood was proposed by Jeremy Hudson and seconded by Iain Simpson, Simon Ingall was proposed by Maureen Field and seconded by Jeremy Hudson, and they were elected to the Board by a show of hands.

Vice President John Mays took the Chair to propose Jeremy Hudson as Chairman of the Society, seconded by Asif Malik, and expressed the Society's appreciation of his work as Chairman. This was approved by a show of hands. Deputy Chairman Kevin O'Neil was proposed by Jacqueline Laurence and seconded by Asif Malik, Honorary Treasurer Corinna Edge was proposed by Jacqueline Laurence and seconded by Gillian Darlington, and Honorary Secretary Maureen Field was proposed by Jacqueline Laurence and seconded by Jeremy Hudson. Their elections were confirmed by a show of hands.

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The Chairman requested that his appreciation of the valued and varied works carried out by all the Directors and Officers of the Wimbledon Society be recorded in the Minutes.

**To Re-appoint the Independent Examiners – Hartley Fowler:**

Hartley Fowler were proposed by John Mays and seconded by Iain Simpson, and duly re-appointed by a show of hands.

**Wimbledon Society's Draft Strategy Document:**

At the start of this year the Board decided to conduct a strategic review, the results of which are contained in the draft document, which was previously circulated with the AGM Notice. The document had been discussed at length by the Board and was approved at an ad hoc Board meeting on 15 July 2021. The Chair now requested members' approval of the Strategy document, which was formally presented by Asif Malik.

The draft Strategy Statement outlined the Society's priorities, including improvement of our communications and refurbishing the Museum, and we had largely achieved the former, with the new website in particular, and are well on the way to achieving the latter. We also correctly identified the need to engage more on issues relating to the environment. In 2018 we planned to increase and widen our membership and identified the need to improve our finances. In neither area have we done as well as we had hoped. Annex 2 of the document listed the SWOT analysis on the Society's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Questions were requested from the floor on the content of the Strategy document:

Christine Goodair regretted the omission of discussion on targets and inclusion of Social Media in the document, and offered assistance in rectifying this in the final report. This was agreed.

David Hurst referred to item (3) Planning & Environment and asked the frequency of meetings planned with LBM Planning & Environment committees. Chris Goodair responded that 2 meetings a year were regularly targeted with their Heads of Planning and Environment respectively. However because of current LBM Covid restrictions these had not been possible during the last 18 months.

Asif Malik asked for approval of the draft Strategy document, with the caveat of including the Social Media contribution from Christine Goodair. It was proposed by Gillian Darlington and seconded by Kevin O'Neil, and confirmed by a show of hands.

**Any Other Business:**

Jeremy Hudson invited questions raising issues of concern or interest with Board members.

Ewa Cobham suggested more visible sign-posting is needed for the Museum. Jacqueline Laurence agreed and reported the Museum Committee will press for directional signage at the Wimbledon Hill/Ridgway junction on the re-opening of the Museum.

David Hurst, an events organiser, re-introduced a proposal to revive the Wimbledon Village Fair, formerly organised by the Wimbledon Guild and sought the Society's support, which was given. This would initially be a smaller event, David Hurst having already spoken with, and received encouragement from, the AELTC, Wimbledon Business Association and Wimbledon Guild.

At the AGM's conclusion, the Chairman expressed his appreciation to all those attending and introduced our speaker, Diane Neil Mills, Chair of the Commons' Conservators. At the conclusion of her talk Jeremy Hudson thanked Diane and asked for comments/questions from the floor. Members raised issues including the danger to wildlife on the Common from dogs, the donations box at the Windmill car park and possible misuse, and the very successful "Countryfile" tv programme recently broadcast from the Common.



Jeremy Hudson, Chairman

18 November 2020 (via Zoom)

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