



**MINUTES OF THE  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF  
THE WALLPAPER HISTORY SOCIETY**

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 2pm  
The Art Workers Guild, 6 Queen Square, London, WC1N 3AT

**1. Minutes of the last meeting**

No comments had been received on last meeting minutes, so accepted as an accurate representation.

**2. Report of the Hon. Chair (Rowena Beighton-Dykes)**

Welcomed attendees to the AGM and the following talk by Paul Simmons: 'Toile Tales of Timorous Beasties'.

The Society continues to remain steady, with a loyal core membership and welcoming new members from a widening demographic. Noted the important role of social media channels such as Instagram for raising the profile of the Society, and for directing people to the website for further information. The website is an important resource itself, regularly updated with information about events and activities, news items, and specialist information relating to wallpaper history and identification. Particularly noted the downloadable Index to the Wallpaper History Review, available for a small charge, which will prove an invaluable resource for researchers. Thanks given to committee members Lucy Ellis and Pauline Birdsall for maintaining the website, and to Sid Burgess and Dr Phillippa Mapes for their work compiling the Index.

Recognised an excellent year for events and gave thanks to Dr Wendy Andrews and Dr Zoe Hendon for their work developing a strong programme for members. Additional thanks to those who have contributed to or hosted events, especially David Skinner who organised and led the visit to Ireland.

Noted that the Society continues to fulfil the remit of the constitution, through the promotion, encouragement, and dissemination of information about wallcoverings. The next edition of the Review will be released summer 2024 which, among other content, will highlight contributions to the 'Repeating Patterns' online symposium held in 2023. The Review will also include reports from recent recipients of the Merryl Huxtable award bursary. Noted that future applicants to the bursary will be encouraged to focus on creating digital output which can be made more widely available.



Society Committee meetings continue to be held online, allowing more frequent meetings without the need to travel, and is supported by use of the online platform Slack for discussions and file sharing.

Acknowledged the range of skills and experience across the Committee and gave thanks to all Committee members for their commitment and input. Particular thanks given to Matthew Meadows who is stepping down from the Committee after several years of involvement, and Lucy Aldwinckle who is not on the Committee but provides a lot of editorial support for the Review.

Over it was acknowledged that 2023 has been another successful year, and promises continued improvement going forward.

### **3. Report of the Hon. Treasurer (Pauline Birdsall)**

Referred members to the Hon. Treasurer's Report (circulated) and noted that the annual accounts are ready to be submitted to the Charities Commission.

Highlighted that the Society remains financially buoyant, with events now providing a significant source of income (noted at ten times higher than in previous years), thanks given to the events team for continuing to put together an interesting and varied programme of events.

Noted that strong finances are especially encouraging given that this is a production year for the Review which has a high associated cost for printing etc. Acknowledged that much of the work is done at no cost to the Society by the Chair.

A rise in membership fees is proposed in order to generate further income to support events and the Review, and so provide more for members (see **6. Increase to Membership Fees**).

Overall, it was noted that the Society is in a positive financial position and looks to maintain this over the next year.

### **4. Report of the Events Team (Wendy Andrews & Zoe Hendon)**

Provided a brief overview of events during 2023. In-person events included a visit to the Timorous Beasties studio (Glasgow), a residential visit to Ireland, and a visit to Insole Court (Wales). Online events included numerous talks via Zoom, in addition to the Society's first online Symposium, and are consistently well attended. Since the pandemic the Society has continued to run both online and in-person events in order



to provide as wide a reach as possible for the membership base. A reasonable geographical spread for in-person events is aimed for, while online events enable people across the UK and worldwide to participate - noted that 66 attendees to the online symposium was especially encouraging.

Use of the Eventbrite booking system has helped to lessen the strain on the committee for organising events, and provided a much more seamless process for attendees. The Society continues to use Zoom to host online events. The team are currently looking at how to approach recording online events and making these publicly accessible via the website.

A varied programme is currently being put together for 2024, including a possible visit to the Paper Foundation. Due to the success of the first online Symposium the Society will aim to repeat this (under a changing theme) every two years, with the next scheduled for 2025.

Overall, it was noted that having a team dedicated to organising and running events within the committee has helped to improve this output by the Society – raising a valuable source of income for the Society while also providing an interesting range of events for existing members and hopefully also attracting new members to join.

## **5. Election and Re-Election of Officers**

Three posts required re-election:

Hon. Vice-chair: Phillippa Mapes

Hon. Treasurer & Membership Secretary: Pauline Birdsall

Hon. Secretary: Eleanor Brooke-Peat

Existing post holders were nominated with no objections and approved for re-election by vote.

Two new members to the committee were proposed:

David Skinner

Joanna Banham

No objections were raised, and the appointment of both members was approved by vote.

Noted that the combined positions of Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary is a very large role, and the Society seeks to separate these. Pauline Birdsall is happy to continue as Hon. Treasurer, so it is proposed to seek to appoint a Membership Secretary. Applications for this role are invited.



## 6. Increase to Membership Fees

Fees have not been raised for many years: the Committee considers it prudent to increase charges to ensure the sustainability of the Society. With consideration for current financial pressures this has been kept to a minimum, and the student membership rate remains unchanged.

Proposed to raise membership fees from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024:

Membership type	Current rate	Proposed rate
Individual UK	£20	£25
Joint UK	£30	£35
UK Corporate	£50	£55
Non-UK individual	£30	£35
Non-UK corporate	£60	£65
Student	£12	£12

Proposal voted for and approved.

## 7. Any Other Business

Highlighted that the Index is now available for download and would be a useful tool for anyone researching wallpapers.

Noted the sad closure of MoDA (Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture) which holds an important collection of wallpaper.

## 8. Closing Remarks

Phillippa Mapes closed with thanks to Rowena Beighton-Dykes for her continued leadership of the Society.