The Anthony Powell Society

Registered Charity No.: 1096873

Minutes of Annual General Meeting
Saturday 19 October 2019

Conference Room, St James's Church, Piccadilly, London, W1

Present: John Blaxter (Trustee), Christine Brownlie, Steve Butters, Robin Bynoe (Chairman), Colin Donald (Trustee), Alfred Ellis, Marshall Hall, Stephen Holden, Keith Marshall (Membership Secretary), Noreen Marshall (Hon. Archivist), Julian Miller, Paul Milliken (Hon. Secretary), Graham Page (Hon. Treasurer), Prue Raper (Trustee), Benjamin Smith, Elwin Taylor, George Warren

Apologies: David Barker, P D Brunning, Jillian Chambers, Patric Dickinson (Vice-President), Eddie Hathaway, J C Horton, Philip Ivory, Neville Keery, David Lowis, Jeffrey Manley (Trustee), Simon McArthur, Derek Miles, Harry Mount (Trustee), Gerald Parsons, Guy Robinson, Christine Roe, John Roe (Trustee), Alison Walker (Publisher), Stephen Walker (Editor), Ronald Wates, Veronica Watts

1. Introduction

1. The Hon. Secretary, Paul Milliken, introduced Robin Bynoe (Chairman) and Graham Page (Hon. Treasurer) and thanked everyone for attending and for struggling through the crowds for the protest march in Piccadilly.
2. He reminded attendees that the AGM Agenda and Annual Report had been sent by e mail this year and had also been posted on the Society's website. The few Members who had not provided an e mail address to the Society would be sent the Annual Report in the post.
3. Paul and Robin were holding 16 proxy votes – mostly in favour of the motions with a few left open.

2. To Confirm the Minutes of the 2018 AGM

1. The Minutes had been previously e mailed to members and published on the Society's website; copies were also available at the meeting.
2. The Minutes of the 2018 AGM were unanimously agreed for Robin to sign.

3. To Receive the 2019 Annual Report

1. Paul presented the Annual Report and ran through the significant events.
2. There had been a decrease in membership (from 292 to 290). Approximately 50% of members have taken advantage of the "5 years for the price of 4" offer.
3. The 2018 Conference in Oxford 31 August to 2 September – 'Anthony Powell and the Visual Arts' - had been very successful with an excellent lecture theatre provided by Merton College. Paul thanked Jeremy Warren and all the speakers and organisers for their hard work. The proceedings had now been published and Keith in particular was to be thanked for pulling together and delivering a first class publication.

4. Other significant events during 2018-19 included the Society's Annual Lecture given by Professor Perry Anderson on 'The Longevity of Anthony Powell'. The Travellers Club as a venue worked well and the event was sold out.
5. The two publishing highlights were the Oxford Conference proceedings and Poetic Dance by Bernard Stacey whose contribution to the Society's publications was much appreciated. The Newsletter remains a quality publication thanks to the effective editorship of Stephen Walker.
6. In terms of our various groups, Paul noted that the New York and London groups remained strong and active.
7. Succession for Officer positions remained an issue for Hon. Treasurer, Publisher and Editor. Discussions were taking place with a potential successor for Keith as Membership Secretary. There was also a urgent need to identify a host for the next conference planned for London at Easter 2021. The theme was 'Anthony Powell and London' but papers would not be restricted to this.
8. The Trustees had agreed that a select number of 5 year honorary memberships should be offered to eminent supporters of AP's work in order to help secure their interests in the Society's work. To date these had been offered and accepted by Hilary Spurling, DJ Taylor, Perry Anderson and Clive James.
9. Progress had been made on the issue of an Anthony Powell commemorative plaque. The Trustees have made a nomination to English Heritage for a Blue Plaque on 1 Chester Gate, London NW1, the property in which the Powell family lived before their move to Somerset. Under their rules, the earliest date English Heritage can consider the Society's nomination is June 2020.
10. Robin added his comments on the year as Chairman. He commended both Paul and John Blaxter for effectively taking on some of Keith's previous activities thus ensuring that the Society's work could continue relatively seamlessly. Keith's support by acting as Shop Manager as well as Membership Secretary had also been invaluable.
11. Robin also paid tribute to the work done by Stephen and Alison Walker particularly with the quarterly Newsletter which stood head and shoulders above most of those produced by other literary societies. It was disappointing therefore that all these efforts had not delivered an increase in membership.
12. Robin also paid tribute to those on the Publications Committee who have helped to secure a pipeline of quality publications. Robin mentioned John Powell's appreciation for the Oxford conference proceedings including the choice of AP's favourite colour for the cover.
13. **Robin and Paul asked members to approve the 2018-9 Annual Report and this was approved unanimously.**
14. Paul and Robin then highlighted a number of activities which had taken place since April 2019 or were in active preparation :
    - Paul confirmed that this year's London AP Birthday Lunch organised by Stephen Walker is on Saturday 7th December at the Queens Head and Artichoke Pub on Albany Street. Details were in the Autumn Newsletter. Our New York group has also arranged their annual lunch.
    - He added that the revamped Society website went live in August and Ivan Hutnik has agreed to take over from Keith as webmaster in due course. There had been some issues when accessing the site from a mobile phone which Keith was following up. Keith was thanked for all his efforts in working with our third party web designers to deliver this project.
    - Robin introduced the Society's latest publication, AP's writings on *King Arthur and Other Personages*, which he had edited, with contributions by John Powell,

Nicholas Birns, Patric Dickinson and Rachel Bynoe. He thanked John Roe, Nick Birns, Graham Page and John Powell for their help with the project.

- Robin then mentioned the success of the recent 'Wessex Weekend' trip in September which followed on from the previous year's trip to the Welsh Marches both organised by John Blaxter and hoped that such trips would become an annual tradition.
- He thanked George Warren for his help with arrangements at the Travellers' Club and reminded members that spaces remained for the annual Birthday Lunch.
- Robin highlighted the need for someone to curate the 2021 conference; in other words to take the lead in supervising the choice of papers and to ensure that we had a balanced and effective programme. Other volunteers would be needed to provide administrative and organisational support. He asked all members to talk to him or Paul if they were interested or had ideas for potential papers.
- Robin concluded by thanking Graham for looking after the Society's finances and handed over to him to take the meeting through the 2018-9 Accounts.

4. To Receive the Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2019

1. Graham gave a commentary on the Accounts the figures for which were shown to the meeting. The Accounts had been circulated by e mail and would be sent by post together with the Annual Report to those who had not provided the Society with an e mail address.
2. 2018-9 had included both a Conference and the Lecture, which were duly reflected in the Accounts but have a slightly distorting effect.
3. The Society had sustained a trading loss of £1077 in this accounting year, due to deliberate decisions by the Trustees such as expenditure on publications and IT, and (in line with previous policy) by subsidising the Conference. The last part of the payment for IT improvements to the website and membership database falls in the accounting year 2019-20 as payment is due in November. The Reserves remain healthy at just under £52,000 and the Society's finances are sound.
4. Graham re-iterated the appeal for a volunteer to come forward as the next Hon. Treasurer.
5. Colin Donald asked about the Society's investment policy. Graham replied that the policy was to hold monies in a deposit account; the Society had chosen Shawbrook which was used by many charities and offered a competitive rate. The Society used HSBC for its current account.
6. The Accounts were formally accepted.

5. Elect up to Two Trustees

1. There are two vacancies : Harry Mount and Colin Donald both retire by rotation after their 3 year period.
2. The current Trustees have nominated both Harry and Colin for re-election as Trustees.
3. The meeting approved the appointment of the above as Trustees for a further 3 year period.

6. Questions from the floor

1. Elwin Taylor asked whether the Trustees would consider marketing the Society more actively by, for example, placing advertisements in the London Review of Books. Other members raised similar concerns that the Society needed to be more imaginative to help capture the attention of potential younger members in particular. Paul commented that the Trustees were conscious that work needed to be done to raise the Society's profile and June Laurenson (focal point for social media) would be asked to prepare

ideas for the Trustees. Keith commented that the costs of advertising had previously been viewed as excessive vs the likely impact of membership. He added that the Society now had new bookmarks and membership leaflets and that these were available to members for handing out at events etc. Members should contact Keith as required. Paul added that perhaps having a Marketing focal point would be helpful and would discuss this with Trustees.

2. Prue Raper asked if chains such as Waterstones have newsletters that we might use; several members replied that they had not seen these being used by book chains. However it was noted that Harry Mount edited the Oldie and this might be an avenue to explore; Paul agreed to follow up.
3. John Blaxter commented that the website was an obvious way of attracting new members and that a membership invitation should be prominent. Keith agreed to follow up. Paul commented that the use of 'celebrity' quotes would also be helpful.
4. Alf Ellis asked whether we were doing enough to attract new members through relevant university courses. It was recognised that AP was relatively unfashionable in English departments and perhaps social media as previously discussed might be a way of engaging students.
5. Elwin asked whether the owners of 1 Chester Gate had agreed to have a Blue Plaque. Paul replied that English Heritage needed to determine whether they would support first before owners could be approached.

There were no further questions and the formal AGM was closed. After a short break for refreshments, members broke into informal teams to compete in an enjoyable 'Pub Quiz' devised and ably run by Stephen Holden. Prizes of AP First Editions sponsored by Paul Milliken were given to the 3 members of the winning team.

Paul Milliken
Hon. Secretary
30 October 2018