

Minutes of the SDFHS 49th AGM

Held at Yeovil on 28 Sep 2024

1. Welcome

The President opened the meeting at 2.30 pm and welcomed the 18 members present.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: John Boys, Ivan Gould, Patricia Spencer, John Burt, Jennie McGowan, Valerie Boddy, Gloria Passmore, Brian Langer, Diana Cross, Colin & Sue Dean, Laura Lyon, Peter Meech, Jill Denham, Wendy Gardner, Alison Johnson, John & Pam Yallop, Ray & Glen Jennings.

3. Minutes of the 48th AGM

The Minutes of the 48th AGM, held at Weymouth, were accepted as a true record. **Proposer: Heather Brannon, Seconder: David Brown. Carried unanimously.**

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising and no questions.

5. Acting Chairman's Report (Ted Udall)

Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to the 49th AGM of the Somerset & Dorset FHS. At the last AGM, in Weymouth, when I read out the annual report from then Chairman Rita Pettet, I had no inkling that this year, I'd be required to both prepare, and present this report.

The Research Centre continues to flourish and, though the ground floor has not yet produced the membership increase we had originally hoped, it has certainly helped – after a steady decline over several years, membership numbers appear to have reached some kind of stability. The other benefit of the extra floor area is that we have more space available for back-room tasks such as the photographic project, and preparation of publicity material. It has also given us some more options for our bulging library, for which more donations seem to be arriving each week.

While the Research Centre makes our Society visible to the people of Yeovil, it is our journal, The Greenwood Tree, which presents us to the wider membership. Under the Editorship of Paul Radford, the GT has received votes of approval from many members – it's just a pity that the annual Elizabeth Simpson Prize for the best FH journal is no longer awarded – I'm sure the GT would be a front runner.

To the family history community (and indeed the world) in general, the SDFHS website is our representative. It is some time since the website was updated, but a sub-committee is being formed to oversee this task and a budget has been allocated. In the meantime, Webmaster Chris Hall is doing a great job of keeping things running.

The Society's eight "in-county" groups still meet, generally monthly, usually face-to-face, though some meetings are held online. Members will have seen references recently to "Out-of-Counties" (OOC) groups, which have sprung up in different parts of the world. These tend to have a wider geographical spread among their constituents, and so meetings are generally held online using the Zoom software. OOC groups, by their very nature,

operate more informally than the IC groups, and we are currently exploring ways to promote and encourage their operations.

The SDFHS is run entirely by volunteers. Members of the Executive, and various sub-committees meet regularly to keep the Society running. Research Centre staff include experienced researchers, and those who meet, greet & assist visitors. Volunteers run the library, review books, sell books, do transcription, run projects. Sometimes these people come to the Centre to do this, often they work from home. To all you wonderful people, I offer my heartfelt thanks.

Finally, I would like to repeat my plea, which was printed in the current Greenwood Tree: the Society needs more volunteers – if any member would like to get involved in helping to run the SDFHS (in any capacity whatsoever), and can spare the small amount of time required, please get in touch.

Proposal that the Chairman's Report be adopted by Anne Warr, Seconded by John Brooking. Carried unanimously.

6. Treasurer's Report (Ivan Gould, read by Ted Udall)

In 2023 by expanding the Research Centre in Yeovil in occupying the ground floor, giving better access and visibility; there were one-off set-up costs with the purchase of equipment plus the additional rental of £7,500 per annum. These costs mostly account for the net decrease in funds of £12,720.

Encouragingly visitor numbers to the Centre continue to increase.

2023 income from Royalties, Gift Aid, Book Sales & Research was good, also donations were received from Ron Crouch to help with the welcoming of visitors.

The accounting change made in the 2022 accounts inflated that year's income. This has reduced the income in the 2023 accounts by about £5,000. There is no impact upon the Society's finances as the income was and still is credited to our bank account when the funds are received.

In 2023 the Exec. agreed that only significant purchases of £250 or more would be written off over five years; and existing equipment of a lesser value was fully written off in 2023. The impact of these changes on page 10 of the 2023 Society Annual Report.

Proposal to accept the Treasurer's Report and the 2023 Annual Report & Financial Statement by Heather Brannon, Seconded by David Hunt. Carried unanimously.

7. Membership Fees

Proposal, that the SDFHS Membership Fees be increased for 2025 as follows:

UK 1-year subscription to £20

UK Family 1-year subscription to £22

Overseas 1-year subscription to £25

UK 3-year subscription to £56

UK Family 3-year subscription to £62

Overseas 3-year subscription to £71

Electronic Membership subscription to remain unchanged at £18.

Proposer: Ivan Gould, Seconder: David Brown. Carried unanimously.

8. Appointment of Examiners

THE Executive Committee recommended that Mr Malvern Carvell of Yeovil remain the Independent Examiner.

Proper: Ivan Gould, Seconder: Heather Brannon. Carried unanimously.

9. Elections of Officers and Executive Committee

The current Officers and members of the Executive Committee have all agreed to continue for a further year. Heather Brannon has agreed to become the Representative for Taunton group. There were no other nominations.

Current Officers: Jennie McGowan (Vice-Chairman & Dorset group rep.)

Ivan Gould (Treasurer)

Ted Udall (Secretary & Yeovil group rep.)

Group Representatives: Laura Lyon (Blackmore Vale)

John Tanner (East Dorset)

Sue Wilson (West Dorset)

Steve Wilkinson (Mid Somerset)

Heather Brannon (Taunton)

Jane Sharp (West Somerset)

John Burt (Out of Counties)

Additional Members: Paul Radford (Editor of the Greenwood Tree)

John Brooking (Health & Safety rep.)

Chris Hall (Webmaster)

Proposal: that the above-named persons be elected to the SDFHS Executive Committee for the year 2024/5, by Anne Warr, Seconder: David Hunt. Carried unanimously.

10. Nominations for Vice Presidents & Life Members

Vice Presidents: Colin Dean & Bob Steed. There were no other nominations.

Life Members: John Boys, Alan Brown, Rose Figgins, Delia Horsfall, Murial Monk & Brian Webber.

Proposals were received for three further life members: Jane Ferrentzi-Sheppard (Proposed by Sue Wilson, Seconded by David Hunt), John Tanner (Proposed by John Boys, Seconded by Margaret Hunt), and Dorothy Bower (Proposed by Anne Warr, Seconded by Di Braithwaite).

All of the above-named were voted unanimously.

11. Closure of Business

The meeting closed at 3.02 pm. The 50th SDFHS AGM will be held in Sturminster-Newton on Saturday 27th September 2025.