



**Bird Stamp Society**  
Founded 1986

# **VIRTUAL Annual General Meeting**

## **Held via WhatsApp Conferencing**

**21<sup>st</sup> October 2020**

### **Attending via WhatsApp video:**

Tony Statham – Chair  
Mel West – General Secretary  
Graham Horsman – Treasurer/Membership Secretary  
Gilly Christmas – Flight Editor

### **1 - Introduction from Chair**

Tony initiated the meeting by noting that it had been a difficult year for most people faced with the Covid19 virus but that whilst this had been an unprecedented situation, many have now adjusted to the "new normal," whatever that might be! He stressed that without wishing to be complacent about the pandemic, life has needed to go on, albeit under changing circumstances.

He continued by saying:

*"I have great respect for the Bird Stamp Society and thus wish to compliment the core committee members in this meeting for their unending and valuable support – Mel West for his ongoing and dedicated administration, Graham Horsman for his governance of the Society's financial affairs and the excellent quarterly production of Flight magazine by Gilly Christmas and especially her development and release of our new website. I have little doubt that the general environment will remain unsettled for many weeks or even months, but I am confident that we have a stable and sound basis for managing the Society."*

### **2 - Minutes of last meeting**

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019 in Edinburgh were noted and agreed as a true record.

2.2 Additionally, it was noted that the minutes for that meeting had also been circulated to all members via the December 2019 edition of *Flight* magazine.

### **3 - Any matters arising**

There was only one matter arising. Gilly advised that the proposal raised at the Edinburgh meeting to organise regional meetings had not yet been set up due to more pressing work on the new website and the need to make it operational this year. It was thought that they could potentially operate in areas where membership was more concentrated. Gilly stressed that this matter had not been forgotten and would be revisited as soon as practicable.

### **4 - Election of Committee**

The Chair proposed that all existing officers continue in post. It was noted that to date, no other members had enquired about supporting or taking on a role within the Society.

4.1 As an addenda issue, it was also noted that Graham Horsman had given advanced notice to Committee that he is proposing to be out of the country in the autumn of next year, although this remains dependent on the situation with the COVID virus and a number of other matters. In the eventuality that things proceed as planned, arrangements have now been agreed on how new membership enquiries and the Society's accounts should be handled in the 4-5 weeks period whilst he was absent. In effect, these would be no different than when a committee member would take an annual vacation.

## 5 - End of Year Accounts & Financial update

The accounts for the financial year 2019/20 were formally presented by our Treasurer, Graham Horsman, and agreed as a true record of our financial situation.

A full statement for the financial year 2019/20 had been presented to members and published in the September edition of *Flight* magazine. Graham reported that there had been no feedback from members following their publication. He confirmed that the bank balance at the date of this meeting stood at £17,082.05.

It was additionally noted that the paid fees of £77.06 for the two remaining years of the old website have now been formally written off.

## 6 - Subscription & Proposed New Rates

Graham Horsman reported on the following concerning subscriptions.

6.1 To date, with the exception of one member who has failed to renew their subscription, the Society has received £1,440 from renewals and new members who have joined since 1<sup>st</sup> August 2020. The payments received/rates breakdown has been as follows:-

2 x £35	£70
5 x £30	£150
62 x £15	£930 *(originally £945 – see note below)
58 x £5	£290

\*Note: £15 was refunded to the widow of one member whose standing order had not been stopped.

6.2 With regard to the proposed subscription changes for 2021, 13 members have responded and supported the proposal to raise the UK hard copy subscriptions to £20. No opposing views have been received. As a consequence, Committee have now formally ratified the proposal and agreed that subscriptions will increase for the UK rate effective from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

6.3 Accordingly, letters and SAE for those who currently pay the £15 rate by Standing Order are now with the Flight Editor and will be inserted in our December edition of *Flight* magazine. Graham advised that there are subtle differences in the letters as two members pay £14 yet are on the £5 rate, and one member had already increased their S/O to £25 on 1<sup>st</sup> August of this year.

6.4 Members have been requested to ensure that their banks are informed that the effective date is the 1<sup>st</sup> August of each year as some members had previously set up their standing orders for other dates. It was noted that there was a risk that members might contact their banks sometime in December/early January and that their banks would then pay across the money on the day they contact the bank unless their instructions were absolutely clear.

## 7 - New website update

7.1 An update report on the new website was presented by Gilly Christmas.

### a) Overview & issues for the future

The new BSS website went live in late July 2020. It took 5 months to build - a substantial amount of time. Work was undertaken on some aspect nearly every day during that period.

After going live, the primary concern for the website will now be the upkeep and maintenance of the site. To address this concern, another large project is now being undertaken to ensure detailed documentation of the entire site. Additionally, detailed notes will be prepared for members on how to use various elements of the site. For example, how to create a User Profile, how to change your password, etc.

Going forward, the main challenge for the website will be ensuring that it stays dynamic and that content is regularly updated. Sites with Blogs need to add new content at least weekly to ensure visitors return. Already it has been observed that although we have a fairly regular number of visitors now using the site, the average page session is decreasing, and that visitors are not staying on the site as long as they used to. This suggests that content is not being renewed as often as it should.

### b) General Statistics

To date there are 92 users who have registered with the website. This breaks down as follows:

- 86 Contributors (i.e. Members – not including the General Secretary and Membership Secretary);
- 1 Administrator (Gilly);
- Editor (Mel);
- Author (Graham);
- 3 Subscribers (who cannot access the Members area) Two of whom are testers and one Spanish user who has registered.

Visitors – To date, we have had visits from 30 different countries. Unsurprisingly, most individual visits have been from the UK.

Referrals - Our website has been referred to from 14 different websites, with referrals from [www.birdstamps.org](http://www.birdstamps.org) and [www.birdtheme](http://www.birdtheme) being the two top referrers.

Pages Visited – The most popular pages being visited are Books & Catalogues, the Blog, Knowledge Base, Join Us and the Members Area.

For the first year of operation, the new website is costing only £2.60 per calendar month.

c) Future Website Development

This was mentioned in the last edition of Flight magazine and includes the following:-

Member area development and facilities for members are a part of the website that now needs require further attention. The following areas have been identified for future development:-

- A Wants List area. (Gilly will initiate with a shortened version of her own wants in order to start this off);
- A Members Directory. This will replace the paper copy we currently have (these are the people who opted IN to having their details and collection interests circulated). Obviously, if there are members on this list who do not access the website, then we would need to retain a reduced paper copy. To action a new directory the process will be as follows:- a) Confirm members are happy to have their details in the Members area (only viewable by similar members who opt in); b) Have the Users create their profiles (a user document to be produced);
- A Forum – content and format are still to be discussed. This might encourage more member participation in topic discussion;
- More 'Member Only' Information – this could include a list of Committee positions since inception; summaries of website statistics; membership statistics and so forth;

d) Other Questions

- Would it be possible to have a facility for people to pay their subscriptions Online via PayPal?
- Do we have a Newsletter (1 page document used for reminders, any interesting news etc)?

e) New content/pages

We need to consider whether there should be any new areas for Additional Content. For example, these might include:-

- New Gallery pages;
- A better News area;
- Building up the Knowledge Base, so it's more like a library;
- Ask users if they have got any articles they have written for other societies/organisations.
- Consider allowing related adverts on our website.

7.2 With a little time allowing, there was some discussion about some of the issues arising from the report. This can be briefly summarised as follows:-

- We discussed the flow of information to the website and agreed the importance of ensuring fresh material so that the website stayed dynamic. It was agreed that we needed more blog material and that more members should be encouraged to make contributions about any topics of interest to them. It was stressed that ideally there should be at least one new blog each week. We agreed that a reminder would be placed in Flight to encourage members to contribute more.
- It was felt that there should be more pieces of news on the front pages of the website and that again members should be sending in any snippets or pieces that they feel should be shared with other members.
- We considered introducing a "New Issues," section not unlike the Cant's "Just In" alerts. It was agreed in principle that this would be a positive step forward.
- Graham advised on the problems involved with introducing subscription payments via Paypal and we decided to leave this option for the time being, whilst accepting that this would be ideal in the future.
- We agreed that in principle we had no problem with taking advertising – free of charge - from dealers. We felt that this should sit only within the Members Area of the website, and that content should first

be approved by the Society. In addition, we felt that there should be a requirement that advertisers renew/refresh their content on a regular basis, perhaps monthly.

- We have received a number of spam-like enquiries via our Contact Form. This is quite normal, and if the frequency of these contacts becomes unmanageable, we will remove the Contact Form from the General site and place it in the Members Area only.

## **8 - Any other reports**

The following summary reports were presented.

### **8.1 - Membership Secretary Report**

Current membership now stands at 142. This is two higher than in May last year, but still ten less than the Society had in April 2018. Positively, we lost fewer members this year compared to the two previous years. Of those members lost during this financial year, we understand that four have ceased collecting and one member asked to be temporarily suspended whilst he moved house and would then re-join.

Eight new members (including our youngest) have joined since the launch of our new website in July. Indeed, it was observed that all recent new members came as a result of visiting our website.

Sadly we lost three members who died in the last financial year:- Len Davenport, Tom Lloyd and Michael Slade.

### **8.2 - Packet Secretary Report**

Following consultation with members who use the packet, all circuits were suspended following the imposition of the COVID19 lockdown in the early part of the year. The suspension was lifted on 1<sup>st</sup> August and packets have begun to be circulated again. However, with a second wave of COVID hitting the UK, there is a possibility that a further suspension may have to be implemented and the situation is therefore being monitored carefully.

We have asked Philip Cant, as Packet Secretary, to consider a contingency plan that includes advising members who use the packet as well as vendors in the event that a further suspension become necessary.

Payments made to vendors on 16<sup>th</sup> October were £866.79. This will leave a balance (payments due to vendors) on the Packet account of £1333.87. These payments have generated £96 in commission and £32.50 in insurance contributions.

It is noted that the insurance premium has increased from £6.72 to £45.32pa.

## **9 - Bequests/disposals**

Graham Horsman introduced a proposal concerning how the Society would in future respond to bequests of collections to the Society and their subsequent disposal.

Following the recent disposal of the Ashworth donation it was felt that any future bequests should be handled as an auction and not as a first-come-first-served sale. Graham advised that this method of disposal could very much depend on the quantity and quality of the donated collection. It was acknowledged that all collections will inevitably contain stamps that everyone has, used stamps that are damaged/have dire cancellations, etc, etc, and that these factors would affect their value accordingly. As a consequence, any stock selected for auction would need to be those stamps that are deemed collectable and would stand a good chance of being sold.

Graham advised that if the Society was asked to deal with a bequest disposal, he would be more than happy to run an auction, but only as a single event with a number of lots. The collection for disposal would be passed to him for cataloguing up all the stamps. A report would then be provided to the donor or those acting on their behalf, as well as to the Committee for further discussion/recommendations.

It was additionally noted that the packets could also be a conduit for selling off some of the stamps, and Graham advised that he would then take responsibility for making up books for sale.

Finally, Graham advised that the Society had still not heard from the relative of Michael Slade who indicated that his collection might be donated to the Society. We are aware that the probate process can take some time to be completed and therefore it remains possible that this collection could still be received.

## **10 Any other business**

No further business was raised.

Tony Statham  
**Chair**

Mel West  
**General Secretary**