

28th Meeting of the Gresham Society
Guildhall Club Monday 11th March 2024

MINUTES

1. Apologies (16)

Professor Victoria Baines, David Ball, Pauline Chakmakjian, Ian Christie, Joan Goldsmith, Professor Tom Cannon, Professor Martin Elliott, Dorothy Leddy, Alderman Professor Michael Mainelli, Elisabeth Mainelli, Wendy Mead, Debby Ounsted, David Owen Norris, Richard Smith, Neville Townsend, Professor Geoffrey Wood.

It is encouraging to note that the above were most apologetic, so morally speaking they were present...

2. Present (45)

Barbara Anderson, Elena Ayliffe, Will Ayliffe, John Bennett, Basil Bezuidenhout, George Brock, Rosanna Celocia, Christopher Claxton Stevens, Roger Cline, Pilar Connell, Tim Connell, Frank Cox, John Crawford, Neil Edington, Chris Haines, Ian Harris, Richard Harvey, Anthony Hodson, Margaret-Anne Hodson, Jeremy Hudson, Paul Kitchener, Roger Kneebone, Lesley Lander, Melissa Lane, Neville Leslie, Jani Levanen, Peter Livock, Bob McDowell, Tim McNally, Carolyn Roberts, Caro Rugman, Bobby Scully, Valerie Shrimplin, Celia Stephens, Howard Stephens, Cathy Steward, Marcel Steward, Robert Stripe, Iain Sutherland, Jack Wigglesworth, Margaret Willes, Robin Wilson, Barbara Woodthorpe Browne, Cristina Worth, Howard Worth

3. Minutes of the AGM held on Monday 13th February 2023

Insurance and Company status: no action deemed to be needed.

4. Events During the Year

Visit to the Real Tennis Court at Hampton Court 14th September 2023 (21 people) There were only 9 bookings for the visit to Titsey Place in June, so it was cancelled.

5. Possible Events

The following visits were mooted:

Science visit to Oxford

Visit to St Albans

Visit to the Speaker's Apartments in the House of Commons

Osterley Park

Kenwood House

Royal College of Music

The Prince Philip Maritime Collections Centre, Greenwich

6. Chairman's Report on the Society

New Members

Professor Victoria Baines

Dr Juergen Behrend

Professor Melissa Lane

Mr Neville Leslie

Mr Jani T Levanen

Mr Edward Lord

The lack of new professors was noted with regret. It was therefore proposed that incoming professors should be offered free membership on entry, with the usual one-off fee of £50 in Year 2.

Deaths

The following were reported with great regret of two longstanding and supportive members:

Mr Trevor Sibbett
Mr Jeff Hayward

Website Issues

Basil Bezuidenhout reported that the on-line booking form requires some attention. The meeting also felt that the current website is unattractive and needs some polishing. In particular it should be revised in order to appeal to new members.

Knowledge Miles: The Lord Mayor's Lectures

These are webinars that are going out around twice a week and are designed to highlight the work of the City of London and to emphasise that its work goes well beyond business and finance. The plan is also to highlight the work of the livery companies, and their forward-looking activities in particular.

Speakers including Professor Christopher Smith, Executive Head of the AHRC; Sir Kenneth Olisa, Lord Lieutenant of Greater London on the Athenaeum and the Clubs of London; and Leadership in Sustainable Finance with Simon Thompson, CEO of the Chartered Banking Institute. Other key speakers include Andrew Tremlett, Dean of St Paul's, Andy Haldane, CEO of the Royal Society of Arts and Sir Adrian Smith, President of the Royal Society, plus Sir Martyn Lewis and Jonathan Porritt, and Society member Bob McDowall, who persuaded us all that Judge Jeffreys was not such a bad chap after all. Numbers are buoyant – and we still have space for more ideas if anyone would like to suggest anything to me.

The Gresham Society website is being used for delivery as the College felt it was too busy to take on an extra 100 lectures, but we do have a goodly range of current and former professors taking part. Professor Carolyn Roberts has attracted the largest audience to date with her lecture on the Thames Barrier.

The Grasshopper

The Grasshopper hops along nicely. Edition no.19 went out in early April. Contributions are always welcome. Thanks are due to Ian Harris and Sasha Davis at Z/Yen for hosting us.

7. Treasurer's Report on the Society's financial affairs

The Treasurer reported on the accounts and confirmed that these had been audited.

8. Election of Officers

Thanks were expressed to all the Committee and Lesley our Treasurer plus Neville our Auditor (who makes our accounts look plausible...)

And thanks were expressed to Basil in particular for his strenuous efforts on our behalf especially with all the electronic aspects of our work. Plus, there was a special thank you to Pilar Connell for supporting the Chairman following his accident in January.

The following were (re-)elected with aplomb:

Professor Tim Connell (Chairman)
Mr Basil Bezuidenhout (Secretary)
Ms Lesley Lander (Treasurer)
Ms Irene Gilchrist
Professor Carolyn Roberts
Professor Robin Wilson

Three new members were elected: Professors Sarah Hart, Richard Harvey and Jeremy Summerly.

Peter Livock
PROPOSER

Carolyn Roberts
SECONDER

9. Any other business

Concern was expressed at the rising costs of a City dinner. Whilst we want to keep the price attractive, we cannot continue with the present subsidy. It was therefore proposed that we opt for a luncheon next year, though we may continue with a dinner on a biennial basis.

The Chairman reported that the College is in the process of producing a new Five-Year Plan. Richard Smith, the new Executive Director, has raised the idea of an expanded role for the Society, perhaps with members taking part in the Meet and Greet procedure before lectures at Barnards Inn Hall or contributing to the planned range of outreach lectures to schools. Other suggestions from members would be welcome.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Professor Will Ayliffe and met with rapturous applause.

10. Date of next AGM

This will depend on the College calendar.

Thanks were expressed to the Guildhall Club Dining Room for their first-class hospitality, the College sponsors - the Mercers Company and the Corporation of the City of London and of course the ghost of Sir Thomas Gresham himself, without whom this evening would not have happened.

Plus, many thanks to Barbara Woodthorpe Browne for the kind supply of table decorations. Note: these were sold off for members to take home and so we raised the sum of £100 in favour of the Tuberous Sclerosis Society. (That was Robert's favourite charity.)

And may I add my thanks to all those who have expressed concern following my accident in January. (The neck brace makes me look like a Spanish grandee in a portrait by El Greco.)

Professor Tim Connell
Chairman

22nd April 2024