

# LETCWORTH ARTS AND LEISURE GROUP

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

Tuesday 26 November 2019 at 7.30pm

In Kincaid Hall, The Settlement, Letchworth Garden City SG6 4UB

### Committee members present:

George Barnes (Chair), Elaine Fox (Vice Chair), Alan Higbey (Treasurer), Marian Adams (Secretary), Julie Bolter (Membership Secretary), William Armitage, Astrid Hansen, Val Quieros, Jackie Sayers, Maureen Strutt

### LALG Members present:

Barry Arends, Bernard Bailey, Glenn and Christina Butterworth, Anne Carter, Margaret Charlton, John Cox, Andrew Dear, Sheila George, John Gregory, Uschi Groves, Jackie Harber, Simon and Georgette Harrison, Maureen Higbey, Nigel and Diane Jury, Celia Lord, Ian and Angie Lockyer, Diana Marshall, Tony and Katie Maynard-Smith, Peter Moore, Phil Mortiboy, Lynne Peck, Ann Pegrum, Praful Soneji, Harold and Carol Stokes, Kate Thompson

#### **1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced that the LALG Ukelele Group would be performing after the formal business of the AGM.

The Chair informed the meeting of the sudden death of Brian Nicholson. Brian had been an active member of LALG for a number of years and was the Group Contact for several groups. His funeral would take place on 28 November 2019 at 2pm at Harwood Park Crematorium.

Ann Pegrum informed the meeting that there were some places left on Visiting Churches' tour of the East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre on 27 November if anyone was interested in going.

#### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Steve Green (Committee member) and it was noted that Val Quieros (Committee member) would be late.

#### **3. Approval of minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 20 November 2018**

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. Matters arising not covered under other agenda items**

There were none.

## 5. Chair's Report

The Chair reported as follows:

### **“Review of the past year**

I would describe this year as largely a year of consolidation, that is to say, one in which we progressed those initiatives which were already underway rather than one in which new initiatives were started.

One of the most significant of these was the review of the website. An enormous effort has been made by the team set up last year for this purpose. This work is now nearly complete and the result is a significantly improved site which is much easier to use. This is particularly important at a time when we see the website as becoming more and more important for our Members.

The other major development is the work carried out on the LALG membership system. The first step has been the introduction of a rolling membership which means that the renewal date of membership will be the anniversary of the date of the joining rather than there being one date for all renewals. The next stage, which is well underway, will be the implementation of a system which will allow new Members to join, existing Members to renew membership, and to make payments on line. So this is a similar system which operates for organisations such as the National Trust. It is expected that this system will be operable in the early part of the new year.

Last year, I mentioned that we had employed a consultant to provide support to our in-house team on the implementation of the new membership system. While the in-house team has used this resource, by far the bulk of the work for this project has been carried out by them, and in particular by Tony Maynard-Smith, who has also played a significant role in providing general IT support to LALG for many years.

No doubt this work has gone largely unrecognised by our membership but many people who are actively involved with LALG will know of the work carried out by Tony and his wife Katie in other areas of our organisation over many years, including as coordinating editor of the Newsletter. I mentioned Tony's contribution last year but now we feel that a more significant gesture should be made. So we decided that this year we would offer life membership of LALG to Tony and Katie. We recognise that this is a small token of appreciation but it is only the second time that such a gesture has been made.

In mentioning the newsletter I must touch upon the recent difficulties experienced by our team of editors. They have been trying stoically to maintain the production of a monthly newsletter but the number in the team had dropped to three and was inadequate for the task. We faced the real possibility of having to reduce the production of the newsletter to one every two months.

This led us to appeal to our Members for volunteers to join the team. The response was extremely heartening and a number of people came forward. Jackie Sayers, who has taken over the coordinating role of the Newsletter Team, is currently undertaking the induction process with the volunteers. At this stage we believe that we will end up with an adequate number of editors to maintain the monthly production. So we are tremendously grateful to those who stepped up to help and to Jackie for her role in helping to resolve the crisis.

## Committee

The Committee continues to work extremely hard and I am grateful to them for their contribution to the smooth operation of LALG.

The most significant change to the Committee concerned the post of treasurer. As I announced last year Val Quieros was standing down from this role after her second three year period although she continued in the role on an interim basis pending the appointment of her successor. After a few months we were very fortunate that Alan Higbey came forward and in March was appointed to the Committee to take on the role. Alan is currently the finance director of a company in North London following a long career with Lloyds bank, and has been a school governor. The Committee has already had the benefit of his expertise. Alan's formal appointment to the Committee is one of those to be confirmed tonight.

As part of our determination to provide more support to Group Contacts we identified a need for someone to support them over safety issues. They would give advice and where necessary offer direct assistance in the event of an incident. While this could be relevant to any group it is more likely to be of interest to those organising trips. Therefore the Committee agreed to nominate one of its number as a safeguarding officer. Steve Green offered himself for this role and we are grateful to him for that.

We have three members of the Committee who are standing for re-election tonight but Di Jury has decided not to stand after her three year term has expired and I would like to thank her for her contribution which included over two years as vice chair of LALG. Additionally, during the year, Jane Webb decided to stand down and her contribution will be missed. This will leave three vacancies including the Publicity Officer.

While there is a general shortage of personnel in a number of our teams they continue to cope with their work. However, of particular concern is the Publicity Team. As I mentioned Jackie Sayers is now acting as coordinating editor for the Newsletter Team which required her to give up her role as Publicity Officer. The Publicity Team continued to function as best it could but the lack of a dedicated co-ordinator has had an impact on its effectiveness. We have been advertising for a replacement for Jackie for some time until now without success. However, I am delighted to be able to report that John Cox, who is well known to many in LALG as the organiser of the Opera Group, has stepped forward to take on the role of Publicity Officer. We hope to confirm John's nomination onto the Committee tonight and formally appoint him as Publicity Officer at the next Committee meeting.

In general, I feel that LALG is in a very good state. Our financial position is healthy and, as I pointed out in the latest newsletter, currently we have over 100 groups whereas 25 years ago we had only 17. At that time membership was below 500 households and now it is above 1500.

There is still an enormous well of enthusiasm and a willingness from our Members to support LALG as evidenced by the response to our appeal for additional newsletter editors.

I believe that LALG will continue to go from strength to strength and that the future of this unique organisation is very bright."

Tony Maynard-Smith thanked everyone for the gift of life membership for himself and Katie.

## **6. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer presented the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2019. He reported as follows:

“The year has been a neutral one from a cash flow point of view, with the amount held in LALG’s bank account remaining at around £28,500, despite spending of just under £8,000 to date on the new website. Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation made a grant of £10,000 towards the work, for which we are very grateful, and we have committed a further £3,000 to complete it.

Excluding this commitment, LALG’s cash position was £23,500 as at year-end.

As the Chair mentioned, during the year, the Committee decided to change the way in which we manage membership, so that anyone joining LALG would have their membership renewed one year from the date of joining, rather than at the previously fixed point of 1st August. To simplify matters from an accounting viewpoint, we decided to recognise membership monies on a cash basis, bringing them into the accounts on the date of receipt and not accruing payments to the annual renewal date, as had been the case in the past. The effect is to increase the amount of membership monies shown in the figures for the year ended 31st July 2019, and there will be a corresponding reduction in the current year to 31st July 2020.

During the year, the Committee also decided to close the investment account held with Nationwide as it was paying less than 0.5% per annum interest. Instead we opened an investment account with locally based Redwood Bank presently paying 1.34% per annum. This new account operates on a 30-day notice basis and we will deposit a larger proportion of LALG’s cash in it to maximise income without compromising LALG’s ability to meet its cash commitments.

Overall income for the year ended 31st July 2019 totalled £28,345, excluding the grant from the Heritage Foundation. Membership monies of £23,017 formed the bulk of our income. Advertising in the newsletters raised a further £1,805 and Social Team events raised £2,240, and £1,150 after expenses.

Expenditure totalled £28,384, of which £15,594 was the cost of printing and mailing the monthly newsletters. The cost of insurance to cover LALG activities was £1,771 and is now shown as a discrete item in the accounts.

Overall, this has been a good year for LALG and I commend this report, and the accounts for the year ended 31st July 2019, to the meeting.”

In response to a question, the Treasurer confirmed that Redwood Bank was covered by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

## **7. Formal approval of accounts for year ended 31 July 2019**

The motion to formally agree the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2019 was proposed by Kate Thompson and seconded by Diane Jury. It was unanimously agreed.

## **8. Membership Secretary's Report**

The Membership Secretary reported as follows:

“Our membership numbers continue to be relatively stable. At the date of writing this report (11 November) we have 1,419 households as LALG members, and as of today

1,427. About 26% of our membership opt to have their newsletter delivered by email which is slightly up on last year's percentage of 24.5%. The number of households renewing their membership by online bank transfer was also up this year with over 500 paying in this way. I think that the least favourite job of any of the Membership Team is taking payments into the bank so we hope that this number will continue to increase.

David's Bookshop continues to act as a depository for membership forms and payments. We continue to be grateful to the staff for their assistance and for dealing with the odd query, especially around peak renewal time.

As mentioned by the Chair, the main focus for the Membership Team this year, apart from processing new memberships, renewals and requests for replacement cards has been testing the new membership system. A great deal of work has gone into crafting the new system and I would like to thank Tony Maynard-Smith in particular for all his help, all his responses to my many queries and his patience when changes were requested.

I am pleased to say that I am writing this report after having now used the new membership database for a little while. When you renew your membership next year you will see the difference between the new system and the old system. No longer will you receive a card on which a carefully 'cut to size' label has been stuck, posted in an envelope on which another label has been stuck but, instead, you will receive a letter with an integrated membership card. I do have some samples with me if anyone would like to have a look at our new membership cards. The card is laminated and can be easily detached from the letter. Provided we have the information, all members of a household will now automatically get their own card in their own name, more details of which will appear in the newsletter in due course. Following a change to the Constitution agreed at last year's AGM, membership is now for a calendar year from the time of joining (or from your renewal date). But as the bulk of renewals will still be on 31 August, expiry dates will be staggered around this date with the addition of a few days.

The next phase to be rolled out for membership is to enable new members to both join and pay online. By the time next August comes around we very much hope that many current members will also register and renew their membership online. Information on how to do this will appear in the newsletter nearer the time. However paper renewals will still be possible."

In response to a question about households there were in Letchworth Garden City, the actual number was unknown but it was noted that three years' ago there were 14-15,000 residential postal addresses. However there were also Members who lived outside of the town.

**9. Election of Committee members (including members retiring by rotation and offering themselves for re-election and members appointed by the Committee during the year and offering themselves for election)**

Nominations were as follows:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Secunder</b>
Marian Adams*	Sandra Scott	George Barnes
John Cox	George Barnes	Jackie Sayers
Steve Green*	Elaine Fox	Maureen Strutt
Alan Higbey**	Marian Adams	Jackie Sayers
Maureen Strutt*	Elaine Fox	Steve Green

\* Retiring by rotation and standing for re-election

\*\* Appointed by Committee during year

The nominations were read out and the motion to elect them on bloc, proposed by Tony Maynard-Smith and seconded by Jackie Harber, was unanimously agreed.

There were vacancies for three more members to be co-opted on to the Committee at a later date.

## **10. Any Other Business**

The Vice Chair informed the meeting that George Barnes was going to stand down as Chair after the AGM although he would remain a Committee member. She noted that a lot of things had been achieved during the three years that he had been Chair, and on behalf of LALG thanked him for his contribution.

## **11. Date of 2020 Annual General Meeting**

Confirmed as Tuesday 20 October 2020.

The meeting closed at 7.57pm.

### **Post meeting**

There was entertainment from the LALG Ukulele Group which was greatly enjoyed by all present.

**These minutes were approved at the 2020 Annual General Meeting, and signed  
by the Chair, on 20 October 2020**