



MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020

Tuesday 19 October 2021 at 7.30pm

**In Kincaid Hall, Letchworth Educational Settlement,
Letchworth Garden City SG6 4UB**

Committee members present:

Elaine Fox (Chair), George Barnes (Vice Chair), Alan Higbey (Treasurer), Marian Adams (Secretary), William Armitage, Amandeep Dhillon, Emma Rowe, Emma van der Veen

LALG Members present:

Derek Blyth, John Gregory, Maureen Higbey, Malcolm King, Ann Pegrum, Praful Soneji, Robert Slater, Harold and Carol Stokes, Veronica Tomkins

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting how good it was to be able to meet again in person.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Jackie Harber (Membership Secretary) and Kate Thompson.

3. Approval of minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 20 October 2020

The minutes were unanimously 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:

“Since our last AGM it seems the world has been dominated by COVID and its repercussions. I would like to start by saying a very big thank you to everyone who has kept us going through difficult and changing times. As I commented on many occasions my crystal ball seemed to be perpetually misted up requiring numerous changes to our plans and new ways of working as we went along.

It is worth reviewing the new things and thanking the people who made it all happen:

- Zoom (where would we have been without it! – thanks to those who administered it for us.
- Centrally organized virtual events (COVE), weekly online talks about anything and everything.
- Monthly quiz – once an annual event which became a monthly one
- Health and wellbeing sessions
- Online games – not quite so popular
- A buddy system for those without technology
- The Christmas Spectacular!
- Monthly concerts with the Settlement, supported by Making Music, compelling recitals by young musicians. Events in the Settlement when that was practicable.

We encouraged our groups to meet when it was safe to do so; some were able to, others stayed in contact on Zoom or by email. And our Group Support Team were there with the Group Contacts all the way. Sadly, some groups have closed but more are starting up – so we are still able to say that we have 120 groups. Thank you to everyone who runs our groups which are the bedrock of LALG.

To make all this happen we have to recognise in the background: the Website Technical Team who worked through ever-changing specifications, for example introducing our online booking system; the Newsletter and Web Editor Teams who kept on top of what was happening – and that was not easy – so that people could find out what was going on; our health expert who provided guidance on what was and was not permissible as the rules changed.

Alongside all this we increased our presence on social media – thanks to Emma van den Veen - and found a new audience so that more people could find out about us and what we offer.

We have a new coordinator for our discount suppliers – many of them have been through the mill sadly some have ceased trading, but we are signing up new businesses too. Do give them your support.

We have redefined our relationship with linked organizations' so we can connect with even more like-minded groups who share our values and provide activities of interest to our members.

We have appointed a new Diversity Officer, Amandeep Dhillon, and will continue to build links across our local community.

And along the way we picked up 100 bags of litter to smarten up our neighbourhoods – thanks to our Blitz an Open Space group!

Some organisations are having to restart almost from scratch. But LALG has come through strong and vibrant with even more on offer to our Members. We have proven we are flexible and accomplished. For an organisation consisting entirely of volunteers we delivered a lot and when it mattered.

My vision for the future is that LALG continues to provide well run, stimulating and fun things for our Members. That we welcome new Members from across the local community. That we find partners we can work with when that is beneficial – like David's and the Settlement. That we recognise other organisations also provide things that our Members might enjoy so we signpost them via our network of linked organisations and other contacts

I am not yet convinced we are completely out of the COVID woods. I know many people are still unsure about large gatherings, public transport and being in enclosed spaces with strangers. Each of us has a level of risk we are willing to tolerate and we manage our lives accordingly.

But we have proven that LALG has the resilience and strength to cope with what life throws at us so thank you to everyone who has made that a reality. I hope you will all be with us in 2022 and beyond as LALG grows and thrives.

A particular thank you to the Committee which has soldiered on through our Zoom meetings and kept the show on the road!

Another new Committee member, Emma Rowe, will be helping with some of our events. A non LALG event which she is organising is the Baldock Community Fireworks, hosted by St Mary's Schools PTA, on 7 November. The evening will feature the London Show Choir and a Diwali element.

Finally, to recognise that the last 18 months have not been normal and LALG couldn't offer its usual full range of activities we extended last year's membership by 3 months. The majority of renewals now happen in December. To enable our Membership Team to enjoy the Christmas festivities we have decided this year to use a fulfillment company to produce and mail the new cards. The cost is about £1 per household which we will meet from our reserves. We have also decided that to avoid this problem in future we will spread out future renewals from December 2022 through January to August 2023. This will distribute the workload through the year and the members who have been with us longest will be rewarded for their loyalty by getting the longest renewal date. Look out for your new membership card, which will arrive in December, where next year's renewal date will be printed. Membership remains a bargain at £10 per household per year, with an additional £4 for the printed newsletter."

In response to a question from Malcolm King, it was confirmed that the only income LALG had received from external sources was:

- In a previous year, a grant from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation towards the website upgrade (which had met the cost of some professional technical advice to support the Website Technical Team); and
- A subsidy from Making Music towards the cost of some of the monthly concerts featuring young musicians.

Further details were provided about the Baldock Community Fireworks event and volunteers requested to run a LALG stand at it.

6. Award of life membership to Malcolm King

The Chair noted that Malcolm had been with LALG from its beginning. During that time he had served on the Committee, produced the newsletter by himself and had worked on the website. However, he was best known for running trips, of which there had been over 500, plus an annual Warner holiday and some additional ones.

Both the Chair and Malcolm shared a number of anecdotes.

On behalf of the Committee and Members, the Chair thanked Malcolm for his contribution and presented him with a certificate of life membership.

7. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer presented the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2021. He reported as follows:

“The year ended 31 July 2021 has again been negative from a cash flow point of view, with the amount held in LALG's bank account reducing from £24,500 to £23,100.

Membership income reduced by just over £5,000 with some of this probably being due to the inability of groups to meet because of Covid, and some due to our decision to extend membership for everyone by three months, because of the effects of the pandemic on LALG activities. This will mean higher income in the current year.

During the year, we continued to earn interest on deposits held with Redwood Bank. This bank is FSCS protected so our funds are completely safe.

Overall income for the year totalled £20,233. Membership monies of £17,913 still formed the bulk of our income. Because of the impact of COVID, our newsletters were not produced in some months and advertising income fell from £890 in 2019/20 to only £40 this year.

Social Team events raised only £148 because of our decision to provide free Zoom-based talks (COVE). However, the less frequent production of our printed newsletter kept printing and fulfilment costs at £12,657, down on last year's £15,498, with this saving covering the cost of the talks.

During the year we introduced a series of concerts in partnership with the Letchworth Educational Settlement. These proved popular and we were able to move them online as lockdown stopped us from providing the planned live performances.

COVID has, to some extent, run its course and with the vaccination programme we have been able to once again live outside of the confines of our own four walls. Hopefully there will be no need for future lockdowns and we are again reintroducing our face to face events, including the monthly Monday morning Members' meetings and several more concerts.

We continue to hold a reserve towards likely costs for future IT development including a necessary update in the software.

Overall, this has been another mixed year for LALG but one where we have been able to weather the storm and are now well placed to move forward.

I commend this report, and the accounts for the year ended 31st July 2021, to the Meeting.”

There were no questions.

8. Formal approval of accounts for year ended 31 July 2021

The accounts were unanimously approved. Thanks were noted to Val Quieros for examining them.

9. Membership Secretary's Report

In the Membership Secretary's absence, the Chair reported as follows on her behalf:

"I took over the reins from Julie Bolter last October and there have been a few changes to the Membership Team. Kathrynne Maher and Paul Ansbro have left the Team and Fran Sly has joined us. I have made a few changes to the membership system including introducing the ability to pay for membership over the phone.

We currently have 1,147 household memberships and approximately 1,800 household members. 1,100 households are due to renew in December this year, quite a challenge for my small team. Renewal reminders will go out at the beginning of November. Please renew online if you can, by bank transfer or over the phone.

To help mitigate this for future years we will be changing the time you renew in 2022/3 for many of you. We will calculate the new renewal date based on your loyalty and we will print your new renewal date on your membership card.

Our membership remains a real bargain at £10 per household, or £14 if you would like the newsletter delivered to your home. There are over 50 shops and retailers in the local area where Members can receive a discount too.

I have enjoyed my first year as Membership Secretary and I am sorry that I am unable to attend the AGM this year. I look forward to meeting you in the future."

There were no questions.

10. 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:

Name	Proposer	Seconder
George Barnes*	Mark Adams	Alan Higbey
Elaine Fox*	Derek Blyth	Christina Butterworth
Amandeep Dhillon**	Emma Rowe	Elaine Fox
Emma Rowe**	Marian Adams	Elaine Fox

* Retiring by rotation and standing for re-election

** Appointed by Committee during year

The nominations were read out and their election on bloc was unanimously approved.

There were vacancies for six more members to be co-opted on to the Committee at a later date. The Chair noted that the Committee would welcome some more members, and there was a particular need to find a new Publicity Officer.

11. Any Other Business

None previously advised.

On behalf of the Members, William Armitage thanked Elaine for her work over the last year.

Ann Pegrum thanked the Website Technical Team for implementing the new online booking system which had been a real benefit, especially as the tourist information office had closed, and to the Treasurer in sorting out the payments made via the system.

Emma Rowe invited Members to let her have any ideas for events, either successful ones from the past or suggestions for new ones. She had a couple of ideas and would welcome feedback on these as well.

12. Date of 2022 Annual General Meeting

Confirmed as Tuesday 25 October 2022.

The Chair thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. The meeting closed at 8.17pm.

These minutes will be approved at the 2022 Annual General Meeting on 25 October 2022