

LETCHWORTH ARTS & LEISURE GROUP

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 7 November 2017 at 7.30pm

In the Main Hall, Mrs Howard Memorial Hall, Norton Way South, Letchworth Garden City SG6 1NX

Committee members present:

George Barnes (Chairman), Val Quieros (Treasurer), Marian Adams (Secretary)*, John Gregory (Membership Secretary)**, William Armitage, Elaine Fox, Steve Green*, Gwynneth Grimwood**, Diane Jury, Jackie Sayers*, Maureen Strutt*, Jane Webb

** denotes Committee members retiring by rotation and offering themselves for re-election and members appointed by the Committee during the year and offering themselves for election*

*** denotes Committee members retiring and not standing for re-election*

LALG members present:

Derek and Sheila Arnold, Julie Bolter, John & Barbara Brogan, Anne Clare, Andrew Dear, Sheila George, Sheila Hogan, Graham Holley, Chris Jones, Malcolm King, Ruth Lewis, Celia Lord, Tony & Katie Maynard-Smith, Peter Moore, Jas Phugura, John Smith, Praful Soneji, Keith Sparrow, Joy Stroud, David Tappin, Kate Thompson, Veronica Tomkins, Kathleen Tuck, Jan Turner, Tony Webb, Chris Weeresinghe

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from John Tomkins.

2. Approval of minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 7 November 2016

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising not covered under other agenda items

There were none.

4. Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported as follows:

"Let's start with a brief review of the past 12 months.

Hopefully it will not have escaped your notice that this has been the 30th anniversary year for LALG. During this year we have marked this momentous landmark with a variety of activities and events.

These were kicked off in November at the 10th anniversary celebration of the London Villages group which was also used to mark the beginning of our 30th year. In February we launched a competition to name a celebration ale at the Garden City Brewery, which was named "Armitage Ale". In July there was the Big Walking Bash in which around 70 walkers, having taken different routes and covered different distances, converged on the unsuspecting village of Weston for a meal. The village has not fully recovered as we speak. In September we participated in a joint 30th celebration with the Letchworth Film Club, courtesy of the Heritage Foundation, with champagne, cake and a showing of the Coen Brothers film, "Raising Arizona". Finally last month we held our grand party at the

Broadway Hotel with over 170 people enjoying live music, dancing, food and at the end a cake made by our multi-talented treasurer and master baker, Val Quieros.

But I suggest that now is the time to declare a formal end to the 30th anniversary. We need to move on and to focus on the future.

The Committee has been considering a number of aspects of its activities and has already identified that our IT systems are vulnerable in a number of ways. We have therefore set up a sub-group to look at how we can make them more robust.

However, we would also like to develop strategies to cover all of our work and to kick start this process we are aiming to run a participative workshop to which all members of our working groups and sub committees will be invited. We hope that this will provide the basis for us to plan and prioritise future activities. Among other things this workshop will help us develop a financial strategy, to consider our approach to growth including membership and group activity, to review the committee structure and to continue looking at our IT systems. We are planning to hold this event in January.

I would now like to look at the Committee and its sub groups. We have a very vibrant and cohesive Committee at the moment and I find that working with its members is very rewarding. I would like to thank them for the support that they have given me over the last 12 months. However, as of tonight we have four vacancies on the committee out of a maximum of 15. John Gregory has announced his intention to stand down after 11 years of service as Membership Secretary, as has our Archivist Gwyneth Grimwood, and Jane Bird who had already relinquished her role as Secretary will also not continue on the committee. David Tappin who has been our Publicity Officer since 2013 finds that he can no longer continue in that role. Also Mady Groot who has been a key member of the Membership Team for five years will be returning to Holland soon. The energy, commitment and talent that they have all put at the disposal of LALG will be greatly missed, so on behalf of LALG I would like to thank all of them and any others I may not have mentioned, for their contribution to our organisation.

We have been fortunate in that Julie Bolter is prepared to take up the role of Membership Secretary and brings her considerable experience of working in the Membership Team to the role. I am also delighted that Jackie Sayers with her professional background in the field of publicity has agreed to become our Publicity Officer. Also during the year Marian Adams took on the role of LALG secretary and has proved to be super-efficient.

But we are short of numbers and I am particularly concerned that the Membership Team has been reduced from three to only one member. In addition the Social Committee which, among its various other activities, has provided refreshments and entertainment for tonight, also needs reinforcement. Unfortunately the Publicity Group and the all of the other many other activity groups that we have are in a similar position. We will be advertising for people to come forward but even if you yourselves cannot help, if you know someone else who can, please urge them to step up.

Of course there are difficulties ahead, but I want to end on a positive note because there is every reason to be positive. After 30 years this organisation is as dynamic and full of energy as ever. New members continue to join and new groups to be set up. Long standing members continue to give their time and experience freely to an organisation in which they believe. And so this unique organisation, which owes everything to its members and nothing to anyone else, will continue to thrive into the future. Maybe for another 30 years. To be honest I'm not anticipating being Chairman by then!"

A member proposed a vote of thanks to the Committee and all helpers and contributors to LALG activities for all their work during the year.

5. Treasurer's Report and appointment of independent examiner

The Treasurer presented the accounts for the year ended 31 August 2017. She noted that the accounts were split into funds held on behalf of groups, and those held centrally. She also noted that having reserves meant that there were funds available for future expenditure, such as IT related items. She reported as follows:

"The balance in Central Funds at 31 August 2017 was £13,983, a reduction of £1,094 from the opening balance of £15,077.

Overall income for the year was £22,798, derived predominantly from membership subscriptions of £19,231. Advertising in the newsletters raised a further £642, and Social Committee events generated income of £1,566.

Expenditure for the year totalled £23,891, of which £17,965 was the cost of printing and mailing the monthly newsletters. Expenditure on Social Committee events totalled £1,477 and the cost of insurance for all the group activities was £1,463.

At the end of August we had total funds of £29,946, £6,684 in our Nationwide account and £23,261 in our account at Lloyds Bank. This included £2,855 held on behalf of seven groups, prepaid membership subscriptions of £11,347, and £1,760 in prepaid ticket sales for the 30th Party in October.

I would like to propose that the financial accounts are in future prepared to the end of July annually, rather than the end of August. This would not affect the annual membership subscriptions as membership would continue to run for the year 1 September to 31 August. The logic for this is that there is very little financial activity during August, apart from membership renewals, which have to be excluded from the current year's accounts (*see item 7*).

This is the period in which LALG celebrated 30 years of an extremely successful organisation with a steady membership of around 1,650 households. The number of groups has increased to over 100 during the year, and there are still suggestions for new groups."

The Treasurer also thanked Jan Turner, her predecessor as Treasurer, for examining the accounts for the year ended 31 August 2017.

The motion to formally agree the accounts for the year ended 31 August 2017 was proposed by Tony Maynard-Smith and seconded by Jane Webb. It was unanimously agreed.

6. Membership Secretary's Report

The Membership Secretary reported as follows:

Membership totals

LALG has a fixed year running from 1 Sep to 31 Aug each year, and there is an annual cycle which is remarkably consistent. Household memberships reach a peak in the late summer, then in early October, before the address lists for the November newsletter go to the printers, we remove from the list all those members who have not yet renewed and should have done so by 31 August. Over 300 members are removed each year – cast into the outer darkness which is the world outside LALG – and 'please come back' emails are immediately sent to over 250 of these members, and 70-80 'please come back' yellow letters posted or hand delivered to the remainder who have not given us email addresses.

This year those '*please come back*' appeals resulted in 80 'late renewers' and more will trickle in before Christmas. But, of course, every year some members do not wish to renew, or have left the area, and, each year, that shortfall is met, and usually exceeded, by new memberships, so that LALG gradually grows.

This October we were at 1,680 members before the cull. Last year we were a little higher at 1,696, in 2014 1,617 and in 2013 1,567.

Payments by bank transfer

From 27 May 2017 to date, 353 member households have paid £4,256 in renewal subscriptions by bank transfer. This compares to our first year of accepting bank transfers when from 22 July to 28 November 2016 310 members paid £3,736 in renewal subscriptions. Processing renewals made by bank transfer is much easier for the Membership Team as no cheques or cash need to be collected from David's and checked at home.

Payments by cash and cheque

In the year ended 31 August 2015 (before we introduced bank transfers) the incoming subscription payments were divided 62% by cheque and 38% cash. In the year ended 31 August 2017 it was more like 44% by cheque, 35% cash, and 21% bank transfer.

David's Bookshop

We are grateful to David's Bookshop for acting as the 'Post Office' for LALG, by collecting the cash and cheques that pour in from a thousand plus members in the course of a year. Some arrive by post but the bulk is still paid in over the counter in person. The Membership Team member carries home a mixed bag of cheques, notes and coins from the Bookshop and, even after eleven years, I always start counting the receipts with a feeling of trepidation, in case the money doesn't correspond to the accompanying application forms, but it nearly always does. Maybe there is a minor question once or twice a year, but this is a miracle considering the hundreds of submissions over the counter.

I like to regard the use of David's as a form of symbiosis – LALG enjoys a very handy and central collecting station but the Bookshop also gains many customers – what LALG member paying his subscription could resist going and looking at the map section while he is in the shop!

Postcodes

Of 1,449 households today:

830 (57.3%) are in SG6 Letchworth

328 (22.6%) are in SG4 /SG5 Hitchin

125 (8.6%) are in SG7 Baldock, Ashwell and Hinxworth.

56 (3.8%) are in SG1 /SG2 /SG3 Stevenage, Aston, Walkern and Knebworth

32 (2.2%) are in SG18 /SG19 Biggleswade, Langford and Sandy.

1 Lake District – one of our long distance walkers!

Delivering by hand

Each year I start counting in mid-June and this year Joy Stroud and I between us had delivered 685 envelopes containing new membership cards on bike and foot, and Mady Groot an unknown quantity beyond that. Certainly between 700 and 800 in total, each one saving a 56p stamp for LALG. By the way, delivering by hand is not a requirement for the role of Membership Team member. It just happened to suit Joy and me – it gave me an excuse to get out on the bike for the sheer pleasure of it – like being twelve again !

Membership Team

The Team comprises the Membership Secretary and two others who share the work of processing membership applications, alternating approximately two months each and accommodating individual holidays of the team members. I am resigning after 11 years and I am pleased, and relieved, to say that Julie Bolter has agreed to take over the important role of Membership Secretary. But the Team will be two short from now on as Mady is moving away from the area after five valiant years of service. Julie will very much need two other people to help with the work of processing membership applications.”

A member noted that as LALG was a group orientated organisation, most members were only aware of the groups they were involved with, and did not appreciate that the administrative central function involved them and needed help. He felt that it was important to get this message over so that more help might be forthcoming.

7. Change of financial year end to 31 July

The motion to change the financial year end from 31 August to 31 July with immediate effect was proposed by the Treasurer and seconded by the Secretary. It was unanimously agreed.

8. 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)

The Secretary clarified that under LALG’s constitution approved at the 2016 AGM, Committee members now retire by rotation every three years.

Kate Thompson conducted the election.

For each named Committee post there was only one nomination and there were four nominations for general Committee positions, the number of vacancies for general posts being eight.

Nominations were as follows:

Post	Name	Proposer	Second
Secretary	Marian Adams	Sandra Scott	George Barnes
Membership Secretary	Julie Bolter	John Gregory	Marian Adams
General	William Armitage	Val Quieros	Jackie Sayers
General	Steve Green	Steve Mellish	Nigel Carrick
General	Jackie Sayers	Val Quieros	William Armitage
General	Maureen Strutt	Jackie Sayers	Val Quieros

The nominations were read out and the motion to elect them on bloc, proposed by Kate Thompson and seconded by Veronica Tomkins, was unanimously agreed.

The Chairman introduced all of the serving Committee members. There were vacancies for four more members to be co-opted on to the Committee at a later date.

9. Any Other Business

A member suggested that it might be useful for photographs of Committee members and other key contacts to be displayed on the website so members could recognise them. The Chairman agreed to discuss this idea with the Committee at its next meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.

**These minutes were approved at the 2018 Annual General Meeting on 20
November 2018 and signed by the Chairman**