

MINUTES OF THE RAFHAA AGM HELD AT RAF HALTON
ON 21st SEPTEMBER 2019

Present:

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| Denis O'Brien | Chairman |
| John Styles | Deputy Chairman |
| Tony Whittaker | Treasurer |
| Peter Milner | Branches Secretary |
| Alan Farley | IT |
| Barry Smith | Council Member |
| Les Shardlow | General Secretary |

67 Members present

1. Introduction and Apologies

The Meeting was opened with the Apprentices Prayer. The Chairman welcomed the Members present. Apologies had been received from among others, Sir Michael Armitage, Sir Dusty Miller and AM Cliff Spink and the Station Commander. Peter Brown, Membership Council Member had also tendered his apology. The attendance of 67 Members met the criteria for an AGM quorum.

2. Minutes of the last Meeting

Once again a debate took place on the issue of Members who had not attended a previous AGM seeking Minute Amendments the Chairman clarified the protocol of sustaining the principal that challenging Minute accuracy could only be made by attendance at the meeting in question.

In spite of the fact that historically, Minutes of AGMs were only released about a month before the meeting there was continuing debate on the need for alacrity. The Chairman reminded the meeting that the Trustees were volunteers who already gave up much of their own time to support Members. Even so, he undertook to have the 2019 Minutes placed on the website by March 2020 at the latest.

Acceptance of the Minutes of the 2018 Meeting was proposed by Duncan Grant (99th) and seconded by John Styles (105th)

3. Financial Statement.

The Treasurer gave his Financial Report for the year ending December 2018. This had been published in the July issue of the Haltonian. The report had also been posted in the Sergeants Mess prior to the AGM. As requested at the 2018 AGM fuller explanatory notes had been provided.

A record of the Accounts was published in the Haltonian Issue 79 July 2019.

- a. In accordance with the Constitution Section E2 Geoff Burton(100th) had asked for clarification of the justification for transferring a £100k legacy cash to RAFHAT as shown in the accounts. The Chairman explained that a condition of the legacy was that it

- should be used for bursaries. After consultation with the executors and their solicitors it was confirmed that the transfer was valid. Geoff Burton accepted the explanation.
- b. Nick Kurth took the view that notwithstanding the fact that RAFHAT had an independent Trust status accountable to the Charities Commission for compliance, it should have its spend noted in some way by the RAFHAA as it had provided the core funding for the bursary scheme. He recognised that the inclusion of such activity might usefully be reflected in an annual courtesy report from RAFHAT to the RAFHAA.
 - c. Mike Evans expressed concern that monies were moving to RAFHAT from RAFHAA without due process. The subsequent debate incorporated the views expressed by Nick Kurth. Except for funds associated with the Grove (see relevant agenda item) no significant spend was anticipated.
 - d. The Chairman took the opportunity of reminding the meeting that the Council as Trustees undertook their duties with due diligence. This would be indicated during the subsequent debate regarding the Grove and Legacy matters. However, he would ask the Gen Sec to approach RAFHAT to invite the charity to offer an annual report to the Association.

The Financial Examiner, Fred Crooks, had inspected and approved the accounts and signed the appropriate certificate for the Charities Commission.

The Chairman reminded the meeting that much hard work went into financial affairs by both Fred Crooks and the Treasurer Tony Whittaker. Accordingly, he invited the AGM to record a vote of thanks. It was reflected by loud applause.

The Accounts were proposed for approval by Duncan Grant, (99th) seconded by Peter West (73rd) and agreed by Members present.

Fred Crookes was also unanimously approved as the Financial Examiner for the 2019 Accounts.

4. Membership Report

On behalf of the Membership Trustee, Alan Farley presented a pictorial analysis of the Membership status. The loss of circa 200 Members through natural attrition each year was having an adverse impact on cash flow due to the changing ratio between life members and annual / three year members. This trend was unlikely to change.

5. The Haltonian

Barry Hathaway (100th) Haltonian Editor, enthusiastically offered a resume of the last year of work producing the Haltonian and its continuing success as a key communication mode for Members. Although his involvement was of course voluntary final design work and postage came at a price. He would continue to work closely with Council colleagues-particularly the Chairman and Treasurer to keep any increases to a minimum.

The Chairman reminded the AGM of the importance of the Haltonian and the extensive effort undertaken to produce each edition. He sought and gained extensive appreciation of the work of the Editor over the previous year.

6. Chairman's Report and Legacy Matters.

Prior to the formal start of this Agenda item Mike Evans and Min Larkin apologised for their direct involvement in publishing what had been regarded in some circles as inappropriate Association related defamation correspondence on the FaceBook site managed by Rob Rodham.

The Chairman offered his report in two sections; routine activity and that associated with Legacy issues arising from the closure of RAF Halton and the Association. In certain instances, they were intertwined.

Much of the routine activity such as the Tribute Service, attendance at the National Cenotaph Remembrance Parade in Whitehall, representation at the Westminster Abbey Battle of Britain Service and the April St Clements Dane service took place as normal. A highlight of the Cenotaph event was the live interview on BBC TV of Jeff Watkins of the 37th Entry who had travelled from the USA as in previous years. CAS had kindly accepted the invitation to join us at the Tribute Service as reported in the Haltonian

As far as Legacy matters were concerned, the Chairman continued to be directly involved in ensuring that our Legacy and Heritage would remain in the public domain.

RAFHAT had confirmed the plan to accept responsibility for the Grove and the transfer had been concluded. With the passage of time, in due course the NMA would have to take full responsibility for the Grove. This necessitated the ring fencing of certain of the Association transferred funds within RAFHAT. After consultation with the NMA it had been determined that the sum involved to ensure the life of the Grove for the NMA full maintenance task over the foreseeable future amounted to £25000. The sum agreed at the 2018 AGM for replacement of the white wheel stones by a vulcanite material had risen to £8000 while it was likely that an upgrade to the interactive Information Board would cost in the region of £4000. These amounts had been reflected in a submission by the Grove Volunteer Team Leader Dave Squires towards the end of 2018. The meeting expressed the strong view that the future of the Grove- our sole truly public legacy site- had to be sustained. The AGM was invited to endorse the long term financial impact of the Grove and fund transfer to RAFHAT in this FY. It did so unanimously. Proposed by Duncan Grant (99th)
Seconded by Barry Smith (50th)

In concluding the Grove debate the Chairman wished to place on record the Association appreciation for the often unseen work by the Deputy Chairman and on site Volunteers

Progress on other Legacy matters, a number already updated in the Haltonian, was summarised by the Chairman as follows:

- a. The St Clement Danes "laying up service" in August 2020 on the Triennial weekend had been agreed with the church and notified in the Haltonian
- b. It was still planned to have the Tribute located at an appropriate point on the Halton estate post closure.
- c. The future for St George's remained uncertain
- d. MoD had accepted they had responsibility for finding an appropriate home for the Windows (possibly as part of an information centre close to the WW1 Trenches)
- e. Work continued with Bucks CC regarding transfer of the No 1 S of TT archives to them (RAFHAT to monitor if timescales required it)
- f. The Chairman sits representing our Legacy on the Wendover and Halton villages transformation committee

- g. The Chairman continues to work closely with Station Executives to ensure that our Heritage and Legacy is not overlooked in the run down and closure plans.
- h. The RAF Museum Cosford display for 2020 is planned for conclusion in mid-2020 to mark the Centenary of the start of the Trenchard. Apprentice Scheme. Funding support for this activity is being provided by RAFHAT.

7. 2019 Membership Survey

Due to ill health, Charles Challinger and John Shelley, the Survey authors, were unable to attend the AGM. The Deputy Chairman briefed the meeting on the outcome of the valid elements of the survey undertaken during the first half of 2019.

The survey work had been carried out to specific Terms of Reference agreed between the authors and Council's F&GP. Sub Committee The outcome had been discussed in depth with the survey authors at a minuted meeting with the F&GP on 25th June. The results had then been summarised in the July Haltonian. They had been received with little comment from Members. The Deputy Chairman's brief on the main Legacy topics covered the following subjects:

- a. 2254 Members had been invited to participate
- b. Only 246 responded (10.9%)
 - a. None volunteered to be Trustees
 - b. The professionally recognised % response rate for validity rests at 30-40 %
- c. 203 of the respondents were in favour of continuing the Association post 2020
- d. 82% of those respondents were aged between 75 and 97.

The briefing resulted in an extensive discussion on the impact of the outcome of the Survey and previous extensive consultations. through the mediums of AGMs, the Haltonian, web site and Newsletters the Chairman reminded the meeting that the survey itself had largely been initiated by Charles Challinger as a results of representation at VP level following the 2018 AGM. The Council regarded the survey outcome as the final milestone to ensure that there was no doubt on the level of consultation with Members regarding the way ahead for the Association. The outcome had validated the Council decision to run down the Association in 2020 as notified in earlier Haltonians and endorsed at the 2017 and 2018 AGMs.

Duncan Grant invited discussion of an alternative non Charitable Members "co-operative" perhaps by extension of the Branch system. However, the meeting discussion proved minimal.

Notwithstanding the clear consultation process, as well as the previous AGM and Council decisions on behalf of members, Geoff Burton, without invitation by the Chairman, made a simple yet significant proposition.

He proposed cancellation of the agreed existing run down and closure plans and thus continuance of the Association ad infinitum. He offered no definitive detail on the impact of such a reversion or ability to name Trustees. Even so, this proposition was seconded enthusiastically by Mike Evans. To avoid an accusation of manipulation and meeting turmoil the Chairman permitted a vote.

The outcome showed that 35 attendees endorsed the proposal, 25 objected and 7 abstained. It was therefore deemed to have been carried. The impact of this proposed reversion of the 2017 and 2018 AGM closure decisions was such that it required Council to take forward the AGM direction. On behalf of the Council the Chairman took due note of the new circumstances for

implementation consideration. The Membership would be advised of developments in due course.

The meeting closed without further business at 1650hrs

Denis O'Brien
Chairman RAFHAA

Note

Immediately after the meeting an attendee questioned the validity of this significant matter as it had not apparently been pre advised by post to Council as a requested Agenda item in accordance with the Constitution Guidelines After due consideration the Council agreed and sought formal advice from the Charity Commission on 25 Sep 2019.