



The Society for the Study of French History

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**Minutes of the Meeting of the SSFH Committee,
Salon, Institut Français, 17 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DT
Wednesday 14 January 2015
2.00 p.m.**

Present: Máire Cross (Chair), David Hopkin, Andrew Smith (Minutes), Claire Eldridge, Joanna Warson, Tim Baycroft, Penny Roberts, Malcolm Crook, Dan Power, Joseph Bergin, Chris Warne, David Andress, Karine Varley, Lori Oates, Ellen Crabtree, Mark Greengrass.

Before the start of the meeting Máire Cross (MFC) invited the committee to pause for a moment's reflection on the passing of colleagues Roger Magraw and Gwynne Lewis.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Sandy Wilkinson, Stephen Tyre, Jessica Wardhaugh, Noelle Plack, and Julian Wright.

2. Minutes of previous committee meeting

The minutes of 10 July 2014 were approved by the committee.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising from previous minutes not tabled elsewhere.

4. Report from the Secretary

4 (i) MFC reported that since the Secretary Sandy Wilkinson (SW) was absent Andrew Smith (AS) would stand in as Acting Secretary for the duration of the meeting and thanked him.

4 (ii) Colleagues were reminded of the deadlines for upcoming funding schemes for the Society:

Research Grant Scheme - 27 March 2015

Ralph Gibson Bursary - 24 April 2015

Conference Grant Scheme - 2 March 2015

Conference Bursary Scheme - 2 March 2015

Postgraduate Conference Panel Scheme - 2 March 2015

Visiting Scholar Scheme - 27 March 2015

ACTION: all committee members

5. Committee Posts - Treasurer, Conference Officer, and Secretary

5 (i) The Committee ratified MFC's proposal to nominate Karine Varley (KV) as Treasurer. The vacancy had arisen since Noelle Plack was unable to adopt the role of Treasurer as previously agreed owing to visa restrictions. The incumbent Chris Warne (CW) stood down after two terms of office. KV's appointment would have immediate effect as soon as the paperwork was completed by CW. ACTION CW & KV

5 (ii) MFC proposed that Joanna Warson (JW) should fill the role of Conference Officer with immediate effect as KV steps down as Conference Officer. As JW currently serves as Social Media Editor, names of suitable candidates were sought. The Chair thanked JW who may be duplicating roles while a replacement is sought. ACTION: MFC/SW to write to suggested nominees.

5 (iii) As SW's term of office ends in summer 2015, MFC proposed AS fill the role of Secretary subject to approval at the AGM. This was approved by the Committee who agreed that key committee roles should come from serving committee members where possible.

5 (iv) Since AS currently serves as Web Editor, and that will leave this role to be filled from 2015 AGM onwards.

6. Proposed new procedures for filling committee roles

6 (i) Given the changes in personnel at present, MFC proposed that it was an opportunity to seek new blood for the Committee and to look at procedures for selection.

6 (ii) Job descriptions could be produced to help define the responsibilities of the roles and help continuity when transfers take place. ACTION job descriptions to be written by existing committee officers (Secretary, Treasurer, Conference Officer)

6 (iii) The committee agreed with Malcom Crook (MC) that it would be a good idea to advertise future roles in the committee. ACTION: SW by May prior to AGM send letter to all members?)

6 (iii) It was proposed that where possible postgraduate reps replacements could be staggered to encourage sharing of expertise. It was noted that two postgraduate representatives are needed as EC and LO are nearing the end of their term. Penny Roberts (PR) suggested that prizewinners and grant recipients may make a good resource from which to recruit Postgraduate Representatives. She also suggested advertising the posts at the upcoming Postgraduate Study Day at Exeter. MFC thanked the committee for their input and resolved to ensure that nominations were sought, and job descriptions should be drawn up.

7. Report from the Treasurer

7 (i) CW, the Society's Treasurer, submitted a statement of the Society's accounts revealing that we are in robust financial health. These appear under Appendix II.

7 (ii) CW stated that income had increased, largely owing to the profit share with OUP relating to the Society journal. Expenditure had also been a little higher than planned last year, though this was not problematic. This was attributed to the exceptional award of two Ralph Gibson bursaries, and a greater number of translated articles appearing in *French History* (owing to translation costs). PR states that this level of translation may continue, and the Committee agreed that it was a positive means of developing the Society's profile amongst French colleagues. CW suggested that spending should be planned at c. £30k p/a to ensure the structured reduction of surplus.

7 (iii) CW also pointed out that as the Society's income was now of a level that warranted greater scrutiny from the Charity Commission, action would have to be taken. In future years, the Society will need to submit accounts (as present), plus a Trustee's report and an independent audit.

7 (iv) MFC said that procedures would need to be established to fulfil these requirements. KV was asked to try and find a suitable accountant locally to her in Glasgow and to inquire about procedures and requirements for scrutiny of the Society's accounts.

7 (v) MFC raised a query about separate accounts being held by the Society (one being the general account and the other the Ralph Gibson Fund), and suggested that as these were used for the same purposes, it may make sense to consolidate them. Views were sought from long-serving Committee members, who agreed that this would be acceptable and sensible.

7 (vi) It was also agreed that the authorised signatories in the current mandate for the account "The Society for the Study of French History" be changed by the removal of Mark Greengrass and Stephen Tyre, the addition of Máire Cross and Karine Varley, and the current mandate will continue as amended.

In accordance with item 7 (v) above, it was also resolved that the account "Society for the Study of French History, Ralph Gibson Fund" be closed, and funds transferred to the account "The Society for the Study of French History".

7 (vii) The committee warmly approved MFC's thanks to CW for his long service to the Society as Treasurer.

8. Report from the Editors of the Journal

8 (i) PR summarised a report recently received from OUP:

- Submissions are up
- The Journal's global spread is improving (with overseas submissions principally from North America and France)
- A recent special issue on Animals has just been published. There are also two upcoming special issues on The Early Modern Mediterranean and Elections)

8 (ii) PR stated that the journal would still welcome a greater flow of Early Modern copy and encouraged any colleagues with ideas for special issues to get in touch.

8 (iii) PR then spoke about the potential for a special issue to commemorate Roger Magraw and Gwynne Lewis. This would arise out of a one-day workshop to be held at Warwick in September or October. The Committee agreed this would be a good idea. AS suggested

asking OUP if it would be possible to construct an additional 'virtual issue' from articles directly pertaining to their work and PR said she would look into this.

8 (iv) PR reported that the Journal Editors had received a list of names of emerging French scholars from Christophe Prochasson that they would approach and invite to submit copy for the journal.

9. Report from the Membership Secretary

9 (i) CE reported that membership has expanded well. It had increased to 193 (up from a recent 92).

9 (ii) CE discussed the need to reform the current membership forms, which seem to duplicate information and also solicit unnecessary detail that is not then used. The Committee discussed options and suggested that it would be prudent to ask OUP to add in extra fields to their online registration form, in order to build up a list of members' research interests. Joseph Bergin stated that a learned society ought to know the interests of its members and trends in academic interests and this was agreed.

10. Report from the Conference Officer

10 (i) KV reported on the progress of the St Andrews conference, stating that the Call for Papers had gone out in November. At present, they have accepted 79 papers, including 27 Postgraduate, and 41 Overseas (25 from the USA and 6 from France).

10 (ii) KV summarised existing plans for future venues:

- 2016 - University of Chichester
- 2017 - University of Strathclyde
- 2018 - Warwick University
- 2019 - Oxford University

The Committee commented that this showed a healthy interest in conferences with a good geographical spread. Also noted was David Hopkins's suggestion of holding the conference in France. The committee recommended that it is preferable to have regular monthly updates from Conference Organisers. ACTION: Conference Officer to seek a report from St Andrews to be circulated by e-mail to committee and Trustees by the end of February. Transfer to new Conference Organiser. Job description for Conference Officer and Conference Guidelines to be reviewed and tabled at future committee/AGM.

11. Report from Website Editor

AS presented a report [included at Appendix ***] which stated the society's presence was healthy. AS noted the positive impact that the French History Network (FHN) had exercised on web traffic, increasing the number of visits to the site substantially. AS thanked the Postgraduate Representatives for their efforts in supporting the French History Network, and particularly Ellen Crabtree whose series of interviews with French historians was popular and excellent.

The committee discussed producing further resources for the website, given the popularity of David Andress's French Revolution podcast for A-Level students. There followed a general discussion about French History in school curricula, and it was resolved that attempts would be made to engage further with schoolteachers to gauge needs and encourage participation in producing resources.

12. Report from Social Media Officer

JW presented a report [included at Appendix ***] which stated the society's social media presence continued to grow. JW also praised the positive impact of the FHN blog, which helped generate much interesting material to keep the society's accounts active.

JW asked the committee to continue to submit any and all copy for circulation by Social Media.

13. Report from the Postgraduate Representatives

Ellen Crabtree and Lori Lee Oates presented a report [included at Appendix ***].

Planning for the Exeter Postgraduate Study Day continues to progress well and a good number of submissions have been received. Several members of the Committee have agreed to present Professional Development papers at the conference and this was seen to be very positive. The committee thanked the Postgraduate Representatives for their hard work.

Nominations are to be sought for new Postgraduate Representatives on that day, as the incumbents are nearing the end of their terms.

14. Douglas Johnson Annual Lecture in French History 2016

Suggestions were sought and received from the committee. (among them Siân Reynolds, Bill Doyle). MFC said she would approach potential speakers informally.

It was noted that next year it would be sensible to ensure that the MUP Series is given due prominence at the beginning of the lecture to advertise the Society's outputs to attendees.

15. Date of next Committee Meeting

This was confirmed as Sunday 28 June 2015. The AGM will take place on 30 June 2015.

16. Any Other Business

Mark Greengrass announced he had stood down as Series Editor of the MUP series, having served his term. MFC has been invited by MUP to become a Series Editor. Pam Pilbeam is also standing down as her term is ending and a replacement will need to be sought. MFC said she is in discussion with MUP about her replacement.

Mark Greengrass also suggested that the Society seek to foster stronger relationships with its sister societies, namely the German History Society and the Royal Historical Society. Given the discussion of French History in school curricula, it was felt that efforts should be made to

ensure there is a strong sense of understanding between learned societies across the disciplines of European History. The committee endorsed this proposal.

The meeting concluded at 4.20 p.m.