



Registered Charity
No. 313336

AGM 2023

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Business Archives Council held on 10 November 2022 at 11 am virtually via Zoom

Present: Mike Anson (Chair); Anne Archer; Paul Beard; Judy Faraday; Terry Gourvish; Clara Harrow; Kat Harrington; Sara Kinsey; Moira Lovegrove; James Mortlock; Kate Murphy; Margherita Orlando; Robert Osborne; Brian O'Sullivan; Natasha Richards; Jeannette Strickland; Alison Turton; Lorna Williams; Karyn Williamson; Richard Wiltshire

1. Apologies for absence

Alix Green; Edwin Green; Emma Markiewicz; Helen Swinnerton

2. Approval of minutes

Sara Kinsey proposed that the minutes of the AGM of 10 November 2021 be agreed and signed. This was seconded by Richard Wiltshire and approved unanimously.

3. Chair's report

First of all, thank you to everyone for attending this AGM, the third one to be held online. We had envisaged that we might return to an in-person AGM in 2022 but logistics, and notably the timing and format of the BAC conference events, have meant that for convenience we remain online. Maybe we will return to the 'AGM followed by Conference' format in 2023...

In my previous two statements I have started by saying that the Covid pandemic has made it a difficult year for the archive sector in general, and for businesses and business archives in particular. However, things have definitely improved in 2022 - people are back in the office (though maybe not as often as they were pre-February 2020) and corporate archives have reopened their doors again to external researchers.

In the past year we have continued to work to support BAC members and the wider business archives sector. The details about all of these activities can be found in the annual report, and so I won't go through all of that here. However, in the current economic situation I again emphasise the importance of the Crisis Management Team which continues to monitor business records at risk, and the fact that we have our own 'records at risk' fund which can be used in urgent situations.

I said this last year, and I am going to say it again now, the BAC was founded in 1934 to save business records at risk (at that time because of the interwar economic downturn). After the threats of the pandemic, we now face the risks of inflation and an economic downturn - never a good combination for businesses. That part of our mission 'the preservation of business records' remains as important as ever.

Our 'business as usual' work has also carried-on and this year, and for the first time, the announcements of our various grants and prizes were all made in a single evening during the BAC Awards Ceremony which was held at Unilever HQ in London.

First up was the BAC Cataloguing Grant. In a very strong field, this was awarded to Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) for cataloguing the archives of The Thorp Modelmaking Archive.

Next the BAC Research Bursary. Largely because of the pandemic this Bursary had not been awarded since 2018. We took the opportunity to widen the scope and encourage more diversity in the applications. We were also able to make three awards: first to Chris Corker to support the completion of a project on the history of stainless steel; second to Lewis Smith who will use collections held at the National Gas Archive and the History of Advertising Trust; third, to Emma West for her project looking at how brewers made arts and cultural activities available to pub-goers from the 1930s to the 1960s. It is good news to be able to give money towards research in business archives once again, and we look forward to seeing the results in due course.

Finally the BAC Wadsworth Prize. When we held the AGM last year, the winner of the 2021 Prize had not been announced, and so for the record I should say that it was awarded to Thomas Leng for his book *Fellowship and Freedom: The Merchant Adventurers and the Restructuring of English Commerce, 1582-1700* published by Oxford University Press. Turning to the 2022 BAC Wadsworth Prize, this was awarded to Greg Finch for his book *The Blacketts A Northern Dynasty's Rise, Crisis and Redemption*, published by Newcastle Libraries and Information Service. The book tells the story of the first three Sir William Blacketts who, from humble origins, developed a highly lucrative and successful lead and coal business in the area around Newcastle. It's worth noting that both of these winners marked a move away from more traditional periods of business history and ones where the archives are not always so easy to find. Thanks go to Claire Tunstall at Unilever for hosting.

Last year I noted our shock at the death of Michael Moss, and the fact that we were working with our friends at BAC Scotland, The National Archives and the British Records Association to

organise a suitable event to recognise his contribution. This took place over two days in April 2022 and was on the theme of records surveying, something which you will know was very close to Michael's heart. This was followed-up with a practical workshop held in September. Hopefully, some of the papers from the Conference will be published as journal articles in due course.

In addition to this event, we felt that we should also organise something for our members. This 'unconference' took place at Unilever in October and was about businesses dealing with difficult pasts. There were speakers from Unilever, the University of Liverpool, Lloyds of London, and the Bank of England, and there was also a panel session which generated a lively debate. Afterwards we had a social and networking event at which it was great to see familiar faces and to make new contacts. On behalf of the Council I would like to thank Claire Tunstall again for hosting the 'unconference', and to Preservica for sponsoring the networking session.

You will see from the AGM papers that there will be some personnel changes on the Council. Anne Archer is stepping down after a long association with the BAC, and she has been a trustee since 2017. Earlier this year Brian O'Sullivan indicated that he wished to stand down as Treasurer at this AGM to focus on historical research and writing (hopefully in business archives!). We are currently trying to find a replacement, however to ensure a smooth transition to a new Treasurer, Brian has kindly offered to remain in post for the time being. I would like to thank both Anne and Brian for their invaluable contributions to the work of the BAC.

In contrast to last year, we have a number of new trustees to elect, four in fact. We are grateful to Paul Beard, James Mortlock, Robert Osborne, and Helen Swinnerton for agreeing to stand. However, we are also acutely aware of the problems that we face in succession planning, and indeed the difficulties of recruiting volunteers to help with our activities and administration is of great concern to the trustees. Of course, this is an issue that isn't just limited to the BAC, but that doesn't reduce the threat that all this poses to our ability to continue functioning.

One of the people who was closely involved in the organisation of the Michael Moss event was Lesley Richmond. As you will know, Lesley very sadly died at the end of September. This came as a huge shock to us all. Lesley's contribution to business archives both as a practitioner and as an author was immense, in Scotland, in the UK, and internationally. She will be greatly missed and I think it appropriate that we have a moment of silence in her memory.

To end, on behalf of the Council I would like to thank all of our members, our trustees and our volunteers, for their past and continuing support in challenging times. The BAC has achieved a great deal over the last 12 months and we are looking forward to carrying on with our work into 2023. Thank you.

4. Hon. Treasurer's report

Brian O'Sullivan reported that the BAC has a small deficit of just over £2,000. Membership subs are over £1,000 greater than the previous year but once again there was no conference income for the reasons already outlined. The designated fund for records at risk was at £30,000 but £3,000 has been paid to the West Yorkshire Archives Service for the rescue of the Arcadia Group records. £2,000 was spent on website development but this was a one off. Overall results are good and expenditure is well under control being only 3% up from previous year. The total funds are £76,680, which includes £8,482 endowment fund for research bursaries (which was not paid for the past few years but payments have been made this year) and the records at risk fund at £27,000. The balance sheet is strong with cash resources just under £82,000. Independent examiners reviewed the account records and statements and gave a completely clean report.

Brian O'Sullivan proposed that the accounts be accepted, Sara Kinsey seconded and it was passed unanimously.

5. Election of Honorary Officers

Mike Anson stepped down as Chair. His re-election was proposed by Sara Kinsey, seconded by Jeannette Strickland. The Chair proposed the election of Sara Kinsey as Deputy Chair, Brian O'Sullivan as honorary Treasurer, Lorna Williams as honorary Secretary and Natasha Richards as Membership Secretary, seconded by James Mortlock.

All were approved unanimously.

6. Election of members of the Executive Committee

The Chair proposed the election of Paul Beard, Dr Alix Green, Dr Emma Markiewicz, James Mortlock, Dr Kate Murphy, Robert Osborne, Helen Swinnerton, Benjamin White, and Richard Wiltshire. This was seconded by Brian O'Sullivan and approved unanimously.

7. Election of President and Vice Presidents

The Chair proposed the re-election of Terry Gourvish as President, and Edwin Green, Alison Turton and Sam Twining as Vice Presidents. This was seconded by Anne Archer and approved unanimously.

8. Election of auditors

Brian O'Sullivan proposed that RSM UK be re-elected as auditors for the Council. This was seconded by the Chair and approved unanimously.

9. Any other business

There was no other business

The meeting closed at 11.31am.