



THE DEVON AND EXETER INSTITUTION
7 Cathedral Close, Exeter, EX1 1EZ
Charitable Incorporated Organisation
No 1172445

**Annual General Meeting 24 October 2020 at 2.30pm
HELD AT THE GUILDHALL**

Minutes of the 4th Annual General Meeting of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation known as the Devon and Exeter Institution and the 301st Annual General Meeting of the Charitable Association (being also the 207th annual meeting of the Institution since its formation).

- 1. Present:** Because of the coronavirus restrictions, the meeting was held by a Zoom webinar. 46 members registered to attend
- 2. Apologies:** Apologies were received from 14 members
- 3. Introductory remarks: Margaret Knight, Chair of the Board of Trustees**
Margaret welcomed members and noted that this was the first time that our AGM had been held online. She declared that the meeting was quorate.

The last year has been a year unlike any other, a year of two halves. During the first half we were building our membership, we submitted a very well-prepared funding bid to the National Lottery and were restructuring our excellent staff team to fully reflect their responsibilities. Following on from a strategic planning day for trustees and staff we had formulated a Strategic Vision to lead us into the future. In early March we heard we had been awarded a substantial funding grant from the National Lottery and two weeks later the national lockdown meant that we closed our doors.

However, we were in a strong position to weather the storm of COVID-19. Our finances were healthy and we were able to continue our plans for the Next Chapter Project. I am pleased to say that we did not furlough our staff and their work during this period has been of great benefit to our project, building and collection. Our staff have elaborated on this in their Director's reports. Our operating costs during this time have been carefully monitored and our building and collection are well cared for. I would like to thank the Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary for their efforts in all these areas, ably assisted by our bookkeeper.

Thanks to our dedicated membership secretaries, our income from subscriptions has been kept up to date and accurately reflects our membership numbers. A membership report will be presented by Hon. Secretary.

- 3. Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 24th October 2019.**
A typographical error on the 2nd paragraph, line 3 on p 5 of the minutes was corrected. 'man' should read 'many'. With this correction the minutes of the 2019 AGM were agreed as a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.
- 4. Matters Arising.**
There were no matters arising from these minutes.
- 5. Hon Secretary: Derek Knight - Annual Report and Review**
DK noted that the Annual Report lays out our broad achievements during the last financial year and it has been available online to members.

The last year at the Institution has been dominated by two events – our successful lottery bid

and the coronavirus pandemic. Our two Directors have provided a written report on how we are successfully progressing with the first and dealing with the challenges of the second. I do want to take time however to thank the entire staff team for their professionalism and dedication during these difficult last months. Not only have they maintained a service to members throughout but they have developed new and innovative ways of doing so. Without a doubt it has been one of the most challenging periods in the long history of the Institution and our staff have risen to the challenge.

We have of course now partially re-opened on a COVID-secure basis and our phased recovery will continue to be informed by the ever-changing government advice and regulations.

While the Institution has been closed the Board of Trustees and staff have continued to meet regularly and we have kept in touch with each other, occasionally in person, but mainly by zoom meetings

I must also mention that we said goodbye to Mary Noon, our Housekeeper, in January when she took up a new position as a chef in Sidmouth. We obviously miss the lunch service at the Institution and, when the pandemic restrictions allow, we will investigate alternative catering arrangements.

Despite all the current challenges, the Institution is a strong and resilient organisation and I believe we can look forward to the future with optimism. Last year, trustees set out their vision for the development of the future of the Institution and we are very much still on course to achieve these aims. There is much to look forward to in the future and I hope that you will continue to share this journey with us.

6. Report of the Membership Secretary: Derek Knight

DK presented the report for the Joint membership secretaries, Jeremy Lawford and Clare Radstone. He thanked Clare and Jeremy for their work over the last twelve months and for compiling this report. The impact of the virus has considerably affected their work in keeping our membership records and subscriptions up to date and they have dealt with this in a sensitive and thoughtful way.

At the end of the financial year in June 2020, our total membership stood at 698, made up of 444 individual, 214 joint and 32 junior memberships. This is a total decrease of 59 (or 8%) from the same period in 2019. While some members felt unable to renew their subscriptions because of the effect of the virus, we were also unable to join new members from April to June. Many members, while wishing to continue supporting the Institution, have been unwilling or unable to travel into Exeter at the present time.

Our current membership total has continued to be affected by the virus and membership now stands at 642. This is a 15% decrease on members compared to October 2019. However, I am pleased to report that we have recruited four new members this month, the first to join since March.

Jeremy Lawford is standing down as Membership Secretary. He has served the Institution in a variety of roles since 2006, as a trustee, as newsletter editor and for the last three years as Membership Secretary. He has brought efficiency, forethought and good humour to all of the tasks that he has tackled. As a trustee, he was instrumental in changing the Institution to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation but he has contributed to Institution life in many other ways during this time. In recognition of his long and outstanding service, the trustees have granted Jeremy and Paula life membership of the Institution which I am pleased to say that he has accepted. The meeting joined DK in thanking Jeremy for his work.

Jen Jousiffe has agreed to act with Clare Radstone as joint Membership Secretary from now on and she will be taking over the reins after the AGM.

7. Hon Treasurer : John Reeves

Report and presentation of the accounts for 2018-19

JR stated that Trustees are not proposing to increase subscriptions for 01/01/21. They have not gone up since 01/01/17. This should encourage retention and new members. He then presented the reports which were shared on the webinar screen and noted the following points:

Subscription income was down £3500 on last year due to the impact of coronavirus. Other trading income was also down for the same reason e.g. room hire & events down £11000

Restricted funds were up at £66540 due to Next Chapter/NLHF & digitisation grants from Pilgrim Trust and Friends of Devon Archives. There was also a good performance on investments with CCLA funds increasing by £40,000

Overall total funds up from YE June 2019 by around £35000. This includes £10000 Government Covid 19 support received. Since 01/07/20 further NLHF support has been received

Trustees had DEI building, book collection & fine art assets valued in 2018 and it was decided that there was no need to revise these valuations again this year.

Prepayment & accrued income shows £19500. This was spending for new NLHF project not yet drawn down as of 30th June 2020. This has been received since 1st July 2020

John Reeves proposed and Derek Knight seconded the following two proposals

- 7.1 **Resolution 1:** *That they Independent Examiner's Report and Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 30th June 2020 be accepted.*
- 7.2 **Resolution 2:** *That the Devon & Exeter Institution appoint Griffin Chartered Accountants as Independent Examiners of the accounts for the 2020-21 financial year.*

Both proposals were approved by members using the polling function on Zoom Webinar.

Margaret Knight noted that JR will stand down as Treasurer following the AGM but will continue to stand as a Trustee. She thanked John for his sterling work as treasurer over the last three years which has been instrumental in regaining stability for the DEI finances

8. Report from the Director of Collections & Research and the Director of Programmes and Project

2019-2020 has been an extraordinary year. Like many heritage organisations, we had to close our doors in March and adapt quickly to a locked-down world. At the same time, we also received notification of our successful application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for our exciting new project, *The Next Chapter*. Needless to say, there have been ups and downs but we have faced challenges in the spirit of the 19th century scientists who founded the Institution in 1813, adapting and innovating our programme and services so that we have continued to flourish and connect with our members and supporters.

The Next Chapter project: With a major grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we look forward to working with our appointed architect, Marcus Chantrey, to create a welcome area, better access and upgraded facilities and to open up our front rooms and our garden space for events, reading and study. A conservation management plan and detailed survey drawings are currently in process, to aid us in our understanding of the site as a whole and plan for its ongoing conservation needs. Archaeologists will soon be appointed to dig a test pit in the side passage and we hope to replace the 20th Century lean-to structure with a new development, which will house new lavatories, workspaces, a lift and an environmentally controlled strong room for the most fragile and rare items in our collection. Repurposing all

four front rooms in the 'south range' will enable us to offer an enhanced programme of activities for all ages and abilities, including events to promote Exeter's new status as a UNESCO City of Literature. In the Library we are planning a collection review to help us learn more about our heritage collections and to develop a long-term research strategy.

We are also committed to opening up our collections for new interpretation. This month we have welcomed our first Artist in Residence, Dr Ingrid Pollard. Ingrid is an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and her work has been exhibited widely, including Tate Britain, Victoria & Albert Museum and Photographers Gallery, London; NGBK, Berlin; the Caribbean Cultural Centre, New York; the National Art Gallery of Barbados; and Camerawork, San Francisco. In 2019, she received the BALTIC Artist Award and was a recipient of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award. We are working in partnership with a new curating and producing practice *Talking on Corners*, and partners Libraries Unlimited, The Thelma Hulburt Gallery and the University of Exeter. Ingrid will be taking inspiration from our collection and site to create new works and a series of wide-ranging partnership events.

Collections Explorer: During lockdown, we launched our online Collections Explorer (18 months ahead of schedule) so that we could offer online access to collections during our temporary closure. Collections Explorer features prints and drawings from our digitisation project, 'Our Region Revealed: unlocking the treasures of the Devon and Exeter Institution Illustration Collection'. With the help of a new graphic arts scanner we are cataloguing and digitising our prints, drawings, photographs, and paintings, many of them unpublished, while preserving fragile collections for generations to come. We are looking to develop new ways of engaging with the collections and have exciting plans to encourage participation in the collection through research and learning and engagement activities. The images on Collections Explorer are available for purchase and download and all funds help the Institution to continue to deliver outstanding public education and essential collection care. The project has been generously supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, The Pilgrim Trust and Friends of Devon's Archives.

Fundraising: We have been able to access the Heritage Emergency Fund to underwrite our loss of income from room hire and events over the past six months. This holds us in a relatively stable position this year but we are especially grateful to those members who are able to continue to support us with their membership, which is vital for maintaining the day-to-day operation of the Institution. We are now able to take contactless payments via the office and 'card not present' payments by phone.

During lockdown we also launched a suite of new fundraising initiatives which aim to create community around collection care. Our revised Adopt a book scheme encourages all members to participate in the history of the Institution by adopting their favourite book, print or drawing, while our new Rescue a book scheme supports the conservation of 'endangered' books. This year we are prioritising important works of science and technology to support STEM learning and engagement. We also now offer adoption gift packages which include a free private tour of the Institution. More recently we have launched a stunning range of graphic art merchandise featuring artworks from our prints and drawings collection, including packs of Christmas cards, notecards and postcards. More details are available on our website and all cards can be purchased from the office. Designs include West Country watercolours by Edward Ashworth, stained-glass from Devon churches and Victorian trade cards of local businesses.

Facing the challenges of Covid-19: As we closed our doors in March, we began to think more creatively about how to continue to provide access to our historic collections and to deliver our learning and engagement programme. Plans to revitalise our website accelerated as we considered ways to divert our members and the wider public in online activities while our building was closed. Our programme of Isolation Creations included a broad range of at-home activities, including making activities and science experiments for Bookworms (our youngest members), online Read-a-longs, a research call-out, weekly virtual tours, and 'Books in isolation', a weekly blog highlighting treasures from across the collections. We continued our offer of daily newspapers and magazines to all members via a three-month complimentary access to PressReader. We also continued to offer a remote enquiry service, including searching Ancestry and the British Newspaper Archive on behalf of members. Our new-look monthly newsletter has enabled us to keep in touch with members and volunteers more regularly. We also continued our schools' outreach, live-streaming sessions to children still in education settings.

Welcoming our members back to the Institution: Our phased reopening began in July with two 'recharge days' a week. At the beginning of September, we opened five days a week, including Saturdays. Our small staff team have worked incredibly hard to ensure that the Institution is as safe as possible while remaining the familiar home-from-home that our members enjoy. We are fully compliant with the latest government guidelines for 'hands, face and space', and we continue to monitor the situation.

Our programme follows the rule-of-six; our collections and research facilities continue to be available two days a week by appointment; we have spaces for quiet study and reading, including the return of newspapers and magazines in the Outer Library, and the Courtenay Room has been reconfigured to offer refreshments. We have been able to hold socially distanced workshops over the summer in the safety of our garden and our new external public tours have proved extremely popular. We have resumed small-scale live programming on Saturdays and our Autumn Lecture Programme begins online soon.

Heritage Open Days: We celebrated our reopening during Heritage Open Days week (11 – 20 September) with a programme of creative activities for adults and children, including nature-themed activities in our garden, external tours of the site and workshops on botanical drawing. The West Quarter Research Group, which includes many of our volunteers, also published *A Snapshot in Time* – the fascinating story of two 15th century timber-framed houses and the families that occupied them. These events were fully booked and it was a joy to see participants and volunteers enjoying the September sun in our outdoor spaces. The Lord Mayor made a special visit to congratulate us on our project funding and to observe a children's workshop in the garden.

University Partnership: We continue to work closely with the University of Exeter and have partnered in the Global Lives module for the fifth year running. This module is an introduction to postcolonial theory and its application in heritage collections and a sample of the alternative blue plaques created will be shown in the forthcoming exhibition *In Plain Sight* at RAMM. We have welcomed several new student volunteers and interns and been supported by colleagues from across the university, in our response to the pandemic. Our current exhibition, *Eyes Wide Shut: German Dreams and Dreamers*, features prints by Caspar Walter Rauh (1912-1983), a post-war graphic artist and illustrator, and paintings by contemporary artist Steven Bramble, and is a collaborative partnership with the School of Languages. A conference on the early 19th century German literature which inspired these artworks is planned for next year.

Professional networks: We have coordinated our response to the pandemic and the ongoing recovery of our sector by working with our partners in the Independent Libraries Association, The Museums Association, Exeter Heritage Partnership, Exeter Culture, The Visitor Economy Recovery Group and the Cultural Recovery Group. We are grateful for

this support and pleased to make an active contribution to the ongoing recovery of our city and region.

Finally, during this difficult time, we are grateful for the encouragement and support of our staff team, our members and volunteers and our trustees. We have proved to be a resilient and strong-knitted community, even during a global pandemic.

8. Election of Trustees

As there were five nominees standing for five vacant trustee posts their individual election was not contested. The nominees were:

Derek Knight	<i>Standing for re-election to a second term of three years</i>
John Reeves	<i>Standing for re-election to a second term of three years</i>
Max Goodison	<i>Standing for election to a three-year term</i>
Ruth O'Neal	<i>Standing for election to a three-year term</i>
Imogen Dudley	<i>Standing for election to a one-year term</i>

On the proposal of Sandra Bond, seconded by Geoff Roberts, all the above nominees were approved by members using the polling function on zoom webinar

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business raised.

The meeting closed at 3.20pm.

Signed by the Chair:

Date: