



THE DEVON & EXETER INSTITUTION
LIBRARY & READING ROOMS
(Founded 1813)
Registered Charity No. 1172445

The 5th Annual General Meeting of The Devon and Exeter Institution Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) held Thursday 21st October 2021 at 2:00 p.m at The Guildhall (being also the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Devon and Exeter Charitable Association and 208th Annual Meeting of the Institution since its formation).

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Apologies were received from 30 members. 52 members were in attendance, 8 trustees were in attendance.

2. Introductory remarks from John Reeves, Chair of the Board of Trustees, JR introduced Richard Templeton, Honorary Treasurer and Ruth O'Neale Honorary Secretary. He declared the meeting was quorate.

"A warm welcome to everyone

Great to see so many members here. Long standing friends of the DEI and also so many new faces and I would like to particularly welcome new members joining us for their first DEI AGM

This is my first AGM as Chair, though of course I was Treasurer for 3 years so many of you already know me well.

Margaret Knight stood down as chair and as a trustee in May 2021 along with Derek Knight who had been Honorary Secretary. Both had held these offices since October 2017. On behalf of the Board of Trustees I would like to thank them for all their hard work put in over this period. Also more recently Geoff Roberts has stood down as a Trustee. Geoff had agreed to be Vice Chair for 6 months to help on membership growth. I would also like to thank Geoff for all his work put in during his time as a trustee. All three continue as members of course.

The pandemic had a significant effect upon our operational income during this reporting year. Our building was closed for a number of months, we were unable to hold our normal event programme and we lost all income from room lettings. With the building closed we were unable to attract new members. Fortunately we received financial support from the Heritage Emergency Fund and Exeter City Council. This enabled the DEI to carry on, with our events programme moving online, and also helped us to continue to work on the development phase of our Next Chapter project. These things were done successfully by our dedicated staff team. Also ongoing support from our membership was very much appreciated through this period.

Then just this month we have heard that the National Lottery Heritage Fund has agreed to grant us the further £814,000 to implement the 'Next Chapter' project. This is in addition to the £186,000 received last year, making a grand total of £1million. This is excellent news for the Institution. More on this later from Emma Dunn, but this means our heating can be upgraded and disabled access provided, but also our activity and outreach programmes can be further developed. This is very

exciting news and this success is largely down to the hard work put in by Emma Dunn, Emma Laws and the staff team of the DEI. This will really help to further improve the sustainability of our charity and our lovely heritage building and its important collections, enabling us to carry on into the future for the benefit of successive generations and future members in Exeter.

Since the DEI reopened in May membership recovery has been getting underway, thanks particularly to the sterling efforts of our membership secretaries, Clare Radstone and Jen Jouliffe. In March 2020 our membership was 720, in March this year it had dipped to 520. I am very pleased to say it is now back up to 620, and monthly renewals are now back at very high levels, with new member recruitment also looking healthy. We have had 63 new members join in the last 6 months which is amazing. Thank you to all members, volunteers and staff who have helped to build this back up. Membership and supporter income is very important to our business plan, and it is fantastic to see this recovering right back up.

As we go forward please remember that we need you to continue to be advocates for the DEI. Please keep telling your friends about our library and reading rooms, with its lovely collections and heritage. We all have an important contribution to make.”

3. Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 22nd October 2020. JR noted a correction to these which was the meeting was held via Zoom and not at the Guildhall in 2020. RT proposed the minutes be approved and Sandra Bond seconded the motion and all members present voted to agree.

4. Matters arising. None raised.

5. Hon. Secretary: Annual Report and Review, Ruth O’Neale shared the following update;

"Thanks for coming, we very much appreciate the ongoing support of our members and volunteers, we couldn't do it without you.

Challenges of last year continued and I don't want to steal the thunder of our directors who will summarise the many events and successes of the last year but suffice to say our model of being outward looking partnering with other cultural and heritage institutions has given us support and resilience in this time. I also want to express our thanks to the staff for all of their hard work and endurance during this past year, they have supported each other and us as trustees and members so we are very grateful for that. They have kept up to date with all the guidance changes and enabled us to stay open but to do so in a way that keeps us all safe.

Before John goes through other parts of the agenda I'd like to give some thanks and share some news about our members, staff and volunteers in the past year. This is John's first term as Chair and mine as Honorary Secretary so I'd also like to thank the other trustees for their support and guidance. We also had resignations during the year from Geoff Roberts, Robert Guyver and Max Goodison so our thanks to them. I am pleased to say we have co-opted some new trustees this year with a range of really valuable culture and heritage experience which will be a great help to us.

Now for some member and staff news and it seems right that we as we are all together that we remember members who have died this year. I would say these are the ones we are aware of so I hope we are not missing acknowledging anyone please accept my apologies if so. I'd like us to remember;

- Anthony Bush
- M Harrington
- Jacqueline Hobson
- Francis Luscombe - former Hon Sec 1978 -1993
- Susan Meads
- Julia Sharp

- Robert Sweetland
- ARP Weeks
- Christine Trigger
- John Yonge
- Ian Watt

We shall miss their company and support.

And now some news about our volunteers and staff, who are taking the next step in their careers...

- Student member and volunteer, Sally Yan gained a place on the prestigious Museum Studies MA at the University of Leicester.
- Student member and volunteer Madeleine Young gained a first in History of Art and is now an intern at the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath.
- Student intern Connal Priest gained a graduate curatorial position at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich.
- Billy Thornton, who did work experience with us in 2015 (aged 15) has now returned as an adult member and library volunteer.
- Carol Anderson our Digitisation Coordinator, moved to a full-time permanent post as a manager at Torre Abbey.

Congratulations to all of them and welcome back Billy!

Also we did share recently that our director of Research and Collections Emma Laws is moving on to take up a new role at the Cathedral however I am delighted to say that she will be staying with us on a freelance basis for the Next Chapter project and we are very glad this will be possible. Those were the key bits I felt we should share and note so now I will hand back to Richard."

6. Hon. Treasurer Richard Templeton talked through the report and presentation of the accounts for year ended 30 June 2021.

"The past year has been difficult financially but it could have been worse, we received substantial public funds and the accounts are in much better shape than if we had had no grants and the decrease in membership John mentioned. One of our key sources of income is membership fees and our target is to get back to the number we had in March 2020 pre covid but then to increase it further. We'll also continue to focus on raising income via room hire and applying for other grants, similar to a grant we were fortunate enough to receive this year. The lunch service which we are aiming to restore is not intended to raise income but to break even. The main expenditure the Institution has is staff and the conservation and running of the building and heritage site. We do have reserves, and have invested in funds which have been stable, we did make a drawn down from these last financial year of £25,000. Our reserve policy is to maintain 2-3 years' operating income in case of a scenario where there is a year we have no income, we assume the need for £140,000 to run the institution annually. We should note this year we managed to retrieve/recover two books we thought had been lost from the collection (as previous generations have sadly sold heritage assets to raise funds and the last sale of books was in 2010). To recover these books a small amount of reserves were used and luckily one was donated."

6.1 Resolution: That the Independent Examiner's Report and Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 30 June 2021 is received by members. This was proposed by Sandra Bond and seconded by John Reeves and agreed via a vote from members present.

6.2 Resolution: That the Devon and Exeter Institution appoint Griffin Chartered Accountants as Independent Examiners of the accounts for 2021-22 financial year. This was proposed by Richard Templeton and seconded by John Reeves and agreed via a vote from members present.

7. Reports from the Director of Collections & Research and the Director of Programme and Projects

Emma Laws:

“2020-2021 has been another extraordinary year but we are now experts at adapting to the ongoing challenges of Covid-19. We have withstood two further national lockdowns and used our temporary closures to progress our projects and to reflect on the way we do things. In fact, many of the measures we put in place throughout the year in response to changing government guidelines have improved the way we do things, and we plan to continue them. More on this later. “

Emma Dunn

“Through this reporting period, we took the decision to keep to the ambitious timescales for the development phase the Next Chapter project and submitted our Round Two application, on time and on budget in May this year. This involved adapting our project plan around lockdowns, social distancing, home schooling and navigating the legal, ethical and health and safety requirements of our participants and contractors. We are delighted to be able to let you know that these endeavours were fruitful, and we have secured Round Two funding of £814,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which, with the grant awarded last year, is a total project grant of £1m. Our *project* will take place over the next two-three years and in that time, we will be :

- Creating an enhanced welcome area, making the building fully accessible for the first time and upgrading facilities, including lavatories, heating and Wifi.
- We will be opening-up the Institution's front rooms [the south range] and renovating the garden spaces for reading and events
- We will be offering an enhanced programme of activities, including events for UNESCO City of Literature
- We will be delivering essential – and never ending - conservation work, a collection review and the development of a long-term research strategy.

We are intending to remain open throughout development and will be inviting members to regular 'Project Cafes' in the Courtenay Room and putting up video blogs on the website, to update you.

There are so many ways you can get involved,

I would also like to share some context for this grant. Members may have noted that only one third of our income came from membership in the reporting period and although this has been a particularly tough year, the institution's running costs have not been entirely covered by membership fees since about 1860. There have been many and varied ways of filling this gap over the years, but during the past year, we have implemented a charity business plan which means that we actively seek income from a variety of sources, including grants, donations, sponsorship, appeals, adopt a book, venue hire and merchandise, to name a few and we hope to continue to foster this culture of philanthropy, to support the cause that we all believe in.

This diversity of funding is what has enabled us, not only to survive the pandemic but to thrive within it.”

Emma Laws

“At the end of Phase One of our digitisation project, Our Region Revealed, we have scanned and created inventory records for about 1300 prints and drawings. You can access these images via our online collections explorer – there is a link from the library page on our website. In the pilot for our project last year we sent a selection of artworks to TownsWeb for scanning - during lockdown this year, our digitisation project coordinator, Carol Anderson, continued scanning artworks at the DEI using our new graphic arts scanner funded by the Friends of Devon's Archives. Our volunteers also continued to research artworks at home and create metadata to augment basic inventory records into full descriptive catalogue records that offer more information about the significance of artworks. And we will continue to invite our members and volunteers to participate in the documentation of our collections in phase two of our project.

We were sad to say goodbye to Carol Anderson earlier this year when she moved to a full-time permanent post as a manager at Torre Abbey. However, with further grants we are looking forward

to phase two of our project and we will be recruiting a new member of staff to continue the work that Carol started.”

Emma Dunn

“During the past year, our programming has taken many forms: Online, outdoors, in partnership, ‘rule-of-six’ and in person.

As reported at the last Zoom AGM, we adapted to an entirely online provision during lockdown 1 and quickly became very adaptable at doing so, during lockdowns 2 and 3, this reporting year.

It was a huge challenge to try to capture the energy of our programme remotely and to continue to reach out to members and the wider community with a range of activities and using the limited resources and technology available to us in our own homes. During this time, our family learning programme, which we called Boredom Busters, was longlisted for a From Home Award by National charity, *Kids in Museums*.

We focussed on outdoor activities between lockdowns, to help promote wellbeing and to support our natural environment and our place within it. This included a new ‘exterior tour’ of the institution, which proved popular and I thank our tour guide volunteers for embracing this new format so readily.

We also have a lovely cottage garden and side courtyard at the DEI, so we encouraged our members of all ages to get outside in the fresh air with a range of activities including making terrariums, bird boxes and planters – all inspired by our collections.

Our Members’ Reading Group, led by Margaret Knight, our Cinema Club led by Tony Rhodes and The West Quarter Research Group, led by Julia Neville, continued to hold virtual events online.

And as Emma said earlier, many of our approaches during lockdown continue to have a life beyond the virtual ... Our podcasts were hugely popular and we returned to the idea during Libraries Week last year and at Christmas when we recorded our members reading extracts from poems and novels. Our lecture programme went online on our website and on social media. We filmed podcasts of our speakers in the Outer Library – and, as always, our members and volunteers contributed. We have now brought back our full programme in a live format, including lunchtime lectures, members’ clubs, Wednesday tours, members’ evening lectures and Saturday workshops.

As an educational charity, we are committed to engaging with communities beyond our membership, including people who are underrepresented at the DEI – and this was especially the case during lockdown. We put together activity packs to distribute to community organisations, such as Exeter Food Bank, who were supporting families at this time. For children who remained at school – vulnerable children or children of key workers - we continued to offer ‘virtual school trips’ which were beamed into classrooms in our partner schools.

And finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention the Courtenay Room. Over the summer we have run several test events, including lunches and high teas. We have just released some further dates for lunches, and we continue to work toward the reinstatement of weekday lunches, in a way which fits the needs of the Institution in the 21st century. As part of the Next Chapter project, we have now secured the services of a professional catering consultant, who is helping us to bring back this vital service for our members.”

Emma Laws

“We introduced a bookable research service in the Inner Library as part of our Covid response and we will continue to operate a bookable service going forward. Research appointments mean our members are guaranteed a reserved seat in the Inner Library and staff can consult with members about their research interests and suggest relevant items from the collection. Appointments also make the most of limited staff and volunteer time – we can plan for visits – we can retrieve items in advance and have them ready for members when they arrive for their appointments. So we are able now to offer a truly personal and professional service. Moving to an appointment service also benefits the collection and our collection management – it means we can continue to offer access to the whole collection while also ensuring that our oldest and most fragile books are retrieved and handled carefully by trained staff and volunteers and are protected while they are being used by members – if you use the library you will have spotted our new conservation pillows. Members can make appointments via WebCollect and by phone or email.

In November last year we became a member library of JISC. Our book collections are now searchable on JISC Library Hub Discover – a searchable web interface which brings together the collections of research libraries across the UK. This means that people all over the world can discover the DEI and our collections.

Over the past year, staff and volunteers have been working hard to make the collections more accessible, in particular if you have used the library recently you will have discovered that our modern

browsable collections are now relocated on the ground floor. We finished bringing books down from the Inner Library Gallery just a few weeks ago. Our modern collection is now entirely browsable. We are especially delighted to report the return of the long-term loan of the library's collection of early classics and modern language literature, which was transferred to the university in the 1970s and then formally loaned to the University in 2008. This collection dates from the 16th century and includes many books listed in the earliest catalogue published in 1816. There will be a chance to see a selection on display in the Outer Library following the AGM this afternoon so do come back and take a look.

Members who have visited the library over the last few months will have spotted one of our volunteers, Tony Rhodes, fitting our new security and preservation system to the heritage shelves in the Outer and Inner libraries. In most libraries, special collections materials are housed out of sight to protect and preserve them. We don't want to do that because having our beautiful books on their original shelving is what makes us a historic library. But our heritage collection needs a greater level of care to ensure it is preserved for the future. It's important to say that all books remain accessible to our members; books on wired shelves, and on the galleries, can be requested from staff or library volunteers.

Thank you to all our library volunteers who have helped to tidy and sort the heritage collection over the last year. There is still much to do but the library is looking fabulous – a great team effort! We are, as always, especially grateful to members who continue to support us with their membership, and with additional gifts and donations. The past year's selection of endangered books have now been passed to our conservation bookbinder for repair and we have launched this coming year's endangered books list so do take a look at them – the books are on display in the library this afternoon – they're also on our website. Let us know if there's a particular book you'd like to rescue. We continue our Adopt a book scheme where members can adopt a favourite book from our permanent collection – and if you don't know what to adopt have a look at our website – we have a whole page of suggestions. All donations from Adopt a book go towards our conservation fund. It may be a little early to start thinking about Christmas but today we are launching our 2021 Christmas card. Buy yours today after the AGM."

Emma Dunn

"We celebrated Heritage Open Days week at the beginning of September, which this year was themed *Edible England*. We offered tours to over 120 people, many of whom had not previously know that we existed; the Saturday team provided edible flowers workshops and the library team presented a display of early cookery books in the Outer Library, co-curated by library volunteer Tony Rhodes.

We continue to work closely with the University of Exeter and have contributed to several course modules online this year and presented an exhibition and lectures in collaboration with the School of Modern Languages on the theme of *German Dreams and Dreamers*.

Many of our interns and student volunteers have gone on to great things, as Ruth has mentioned and we have welcomed several new student volunteers, without whom we would not have been able to reopen in May.

And finally, one of our most exciting and uplifting projects this year, was the *Trade and Exchange* project.

Two Devon-based artists, Naomi Hart and Emma Molony, created artworks inspired by our collections to be displayed in and to reanimate empty retail units in the city centre. The project was launched in November last year as part of Exeter's Covid-19 Recovery Plan – Building Exeter Back Better - and artworks were in situ from April -June this year.

This multi-partner project was something wonderful to come out of the pandemic and this model has now become part of the city's forward plan. Our role in inspiring the regeneration of our city centre post-covid, highlights the importance of the Institution within the wider community and the vital role of the cultural heritage sector in the city's recovery programme.

Emma and I have no doubt that the uplifting role of the arts, culture and literary heritage will enable the Institution to continue to flourish as a community in the coming years."

8. Election of Trustees

John Reeves explained as there are six nominees standing for seven vacant trustee posts there will not be a contested

election. Names of the nominees are:

- Moragh Brooksbank standing for election to a two year term

- Judith Morgane standing for election to a three year term
- Colin Higgins standing for election to a two year term
- Charlotte Easton standing for election to a three year term
- Richard Templeton standing for re-election for a second three year term
- Imogen Dudley standing for re-election to a three year term

Their election was proposed by Peter Wingfield-Digby, seconded by Tony Rhodes and agreed via a vote from all members present.

9. Any other business

Jen Jousiffe (volunteer membership secretary) asked all members to check junk and spam email folders as we have been finding Institution emails ending up there and this can cause issues especially when these are membership renewal reminders!

John Reeves asked if there were any member questions or comments:

The following questions/comments were stated by Kate Manley Tucker;

A request for future AGMs for the names of Chair, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer to be added to the agenda.

A comment that KMT welcomed the news that although secure wires were being placed to help protect some books that all books were still accessible to members at all times (although heritage collection books are reserved via the appointments system).

A question to clarify if any books had been sold this year. John Reeves clarified that this hasn't happened recently, Richard Templeton had referred to this happening in the past.

KMT asked if member days out to other libraries could start to happen again. Trustee Sandra Bond who helps to arrange these confirmed that was the intent but due to covid and the impact on public transport the planned trip to Tavistock Library has been postponed for now.

Simon Timms who used to be the National Lottery Heritage Fund Chair in the South West wished to highlight that the recent news about the project funding from NLHF was an outstanding achievement as it is incredibly competitive and challenging to get funding. A key element of our successful bid will have been our activity plan which sets out how we are going to attract new members into the Institution. ST wished to commend the staff and trustees, particularly Emma Dunn who prepared the funding bid. Usually charities commission external consultants to help with these bids but this was prepared by our small inhouse team during lockdown and we have been successful and this should be celebrated.

All present agreed and there was an enthusiastic round of applause.

As there were no further questions or comments John Reeves thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 3pm.