

Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 19 May 2025

1. Attendance and Apologies:

In person: Christabel Ames-Lewis, Francis Ames-Lewis, Alison Appleby, David Bright, Colin Campbell-Preston, Edward Campbell-Preston, Lizzie Campbell Preston, Rosemary Campbell-Preston, Emer Cashin, Derek Chambers, Mavis Holt, Dave Lewing, Janet McNamara, James Marshall, John Parker, James Rodgers, David Shailes, Ruth Todd, Keith Whitehouse

Online: Sue Adams, Maggie Anthony, Helen Bargolini, Val Bott, Teresa Ciecierska, Derek Collett, Guy Fairbank, Carolyn Hammond, Ken Hayter, Lynn Hayter, Julie Jakeway, James Wisdom

Apologies: Torin Douglas, Sandra Grant

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 2024

There was a discussion last year about further heritage boards in Brentford more information panels have now been installed. The West London History Conference took place in April, with the theme of *Threads Through Time: textiles and clothing in the history of South & West London*. The committee is looking for further WLHC representatives for future programming. There has been an increase in subscriptions, and we have officially become a charity (further information below in the Hon Treasurer's Report). James Marshall's book on the Great West Road has been completed; walks and cycle rides will be taking place about the GWR to commemorate the centenary, as well as an exhibition in the Potting Shed the last weekend of May 2025.

3. Annual Report

This momentous year saw some very significant developments in the life of the Society.

A publishing venture: We made a formal partnership with Hounslow & District Local History Society to publish James Marshall's important centenary history of the Great West Road. The author has worked tirelessly, handling sales and offering talks and walks. We launched it at Hewson's new bookshop in Brentford where it sold well but, surrounded by empty shop units, business was poor and, sadly, the shop closed. Some sales income came via PayPal which then decided we had become a business and needed our company details for tax purposes. We are still trying to resolve this issue.

Charitable status: At the 2024 AGM members agreed that we should begin the process of becoming a charity. Registration as a charity offered a response to our difficulties with PayPal, as well as other potential benefits such as eligibility for some grants and Gift Aid. The Charity Commission had introduced a new form of charitable body which suited us and they offered a model constitution to help new

applicants. Taking this forward required immense amounts of attention to detail and patience; we owed a huge debt of gratitude to Roger Squire, our Honorary Treasurer, who took on the task of drafting our new constitution and making all the arrangements. The Society was formally registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in March 2025, no 1212667. Roger has now registered the charity with HMRC for tax purposes, enabling it to register for Gift Aid in future.

Subscriptions: With greater understanding of our finances since Roger Squire took over, members approved a major change to our subscription. The fee has risen but began to offer joint membership for the first time. The implementation of the scheme in January 2025 required considerable work as many members' automatic renewals came in at the old price. Special thanks go not only to Roger but also to David Bright, our Membership Secretary, who are still monitoring the process.

Programme: Encouraging interest in and understanding of local history to reach a wide audience has always underpinned our values and charitable objectives; we do this through our talks, our activities and our *Journal*. We have been proud to put on a programme with a very strong local flavour, many of them given by members of the Society. **Howard Simmons** launched our 2024 spring season with a Syon estate story: *Devotion, Lust and an Exploding King*. **Sally Jeffery** revealed her recent research into the gardens of Sir Stephen Fox and Spencer Compton, 1st Earl of Wilmington, next door to Lord Burlington. **Steph Hagan** described the lives of the occupants of Boston Manor House in the 17th and 18th centuries. **James Wisdom** presented a lively account of the historians of Brentford and Chiswick.

Professor Sarah Barber shared recent research into the colonial roles of three generations of the Hawley family of Brentford. Novelist and former soldier **Charles Cordell** entertained us splendidly with his account of researching the Civil War and becoming an author. **Caitlin Stracey**, archivist to Sanderson Design Group, explored links between Sanderson, Voysey and Chiswick; and in the spring of 2025 we were able to arrange two group visits to the Sandersons archive. **Ishwari Giga** presented the successful *Temples of Industry Project* at Gunnersbury Park Museum which she co-ordinated.

Val Bott presented the research she and **James Wisdom** had undertaken into the 1863 photo of Turnham Green and **Janet McNamara** and **David Shailes** led us along Brentford High Street in the past. In an unusual presentation photographer **Peter Hughes** shared his images of the heritage of Brentford and Chiswick taken over many years. **Val Bott** rounded off the spring 2025 programme with a talk about high status servants at Chiswick House.

We persisted with offering our talks in person and on-line, but our technical expertise sometimes failed us and we have had to send summaries of some talks to those who booked places but could not join the events. We will continue to seek technical helpers! Nevertheless our audiences have been healthy, with an average audience of 54 participants.

Journal: the arrival of Hewson's bookshop in Brentford resulted in their purchase of some items we held in our book stock, some of them items they could no longer have obtained from the publishers. They sold plenty of *Journal* 33 and bought back numbers of several past issues, reaching a new local audience. We shall miss them. Mike Paterson, Director of London Historians has been in charge of preparing the layout and images of the *Journal* for production from issues 25 to 33. He has

stepped down from this demanding voluntary role and Dr Julia Phillips of Bristol University has stepped into his shoes. *Journal 34* will be issued at the 2025 AGM. Val Bott, Editor, is looking for an understudy or apprentice who might work on next year's edition with her. The Society continues to play a part in the steering committee that runs the very successful annual West London Local History Conference. Members have also supported other local history projects during the year with advice and information, including the Brentford Heritage Panels project and the celebration of 150 years of Bedford Park

Website: We use our website to promote our talks and activities and to share articles from past *Journals* which have gone out of print. There is great potential to add more material to the site if we could recruit appropriate helpers. We also offer a book shop page. An analysis of the use of our website over the last 12 months shows that it has been visited by nearly 27,000 users, who made almost 50,000 views. The most read articles related to the Great West Road, the West London Tornado, The Glebe Estate and the Chiswick Maternity Hospital. Emma White continues to run our social media including Twitter/X and Facebook

The Committee: The team that runs the Society was strengthened this year by the recruitment of Katie Hinchliffe as Honorary Secretary – we have offered her a warm welcome. Running the Society involves a lot of activity and new members with relevant experience (especially of working in a charity) will be needed. Our long-standing Vice-Chairman, Janet McNamara, was planning to retire from the role at the 2025 AGM having taken it on in 2009! She has been a fount of knowledge of Brentford history, sociable and good at sharing her knowledge with a wide audience

The Chairman especially wishes to thank the Committee members for their sterling work during the early months of 2025 when he was too ill to be able to take an active part in the Society's work. He wants to place on record what a pleasure it was to know that the Society was in such capable hands.

4. Hon Treasurer's Report

Roger gave a presentation on the accounts, and our reserves going forward. As a charity, we are eligible for further grants and sponsorship funding for our work with local history. The reserves are being divided into different pots of money, so that we are able to see where the money is being allocated, and also shows the Charity Commission that we have future planning set out for our work. A new bank account has been opened for the Society, which will be our primary account, as we now have the charity status.

Our financial position as a charity will be presented at the 2026 AGM. (Next year's accounts will be presented as 3 months as a society, 9 months remainder as a registered charity) All members will be able to GiftAid their subscription, which will grant us another £200-300 annually.

Question from the room: Regarding our charitable status, can we apply to other charities to support our work? Roger Squire answered yes - and it will widen the net for the charity funding

5. Reserves Policy

This was approved by the trustees, presented at the AGM to members for information (policy can be reviewed in the Treasurer's reports of Roger Squire)

6. Appointment of inspector of accounts

Margaret Price is happy to continue in this role

7. Election of trustees

Elections are not required as B&CLHS members approved those named in the new constitution (paragraph 12). At the next 3 AGMs of the new Charity (2026-8), trustees will be eligible for re-election for a 3 year term (clause 13). Additional trustees can be appointed by the board but must stand for election at the AGM following their appointment.

8. Any other relevant business

There are openings for interested members to become a part of the committee, please do get in touch with the trustees directly if you would like to join.

The West London Conference 2026 will take place on the 15th September, further information to follow.

Question from the room (Andrew): Is there a marketing budget to promote the Society's name in Chiswick / Brentford? Acknowledged by David Shales, to say that if something comes up, we can discuss this further (ie. if we have additional programming, talks, etc.)

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the committee for their work.