

# **The Church Monuments Society**

## **Minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting held at noon on Saturday 4 October 2025 at St Lawrence, Little Stanmore, Edgware HA8 6QUS**

Mrs Moira Ackers, President welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Ann Adams, Sally Badham, Felicity Brown, David Carrington, Derrick Chivers, Jon Dawson, Val Franklin, Moira and Brian Gittos, Wayne Hart, Norman Hammond, Sophie Oosterwijk, Iona Roberts, Andrew Sargent, Tim Sutton, Elizabeth Tingle, Iris Westerby and Jean Wilson

### **2. Approval of the Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting.**

The Minutes were unanimously approved.

### **3. Matters Arising.**

There were no matters arising.

### **4. Presidential Address – Mrs Moira Ackers**

#### **Dear All thank you for attending our AGM**

Last year I focused on the threats to monuments. Recently I re-read John Weever (1631) where he comments on the 'malignitie of wicked people, and our English profane tenacitie, having quite taken them (church monuments) away for lucre sake.' This rather pulled me up as I realised that monuments have often been threatened.

Yet here we are, the evidence that they still exist and are enjoyed and appreciated by many.

Roger Bowdler's article in Newsletter 40.2 was also reassuring. Yes, there are issues ... contested heritage, closure of churches and existing churches launching into the C21st by installing loos and kitchens.

Although many monuments may be in need a lot of TLC few have actually been removed or destroyed. The Society is active in making representation to the C of E synod and other church bodies. We are in dialogue with other heritage organisations. We give advice to churches when asked and sometimes we politely point out that is not such a good idea storing the flower arranging kit on them.

So, my message is Don't Panic and that we can do much to save these wonderful objects.

#### **The Society itself has had a really great year.**

We have seen a slight increase in membership.

Have had one of our busiest years of live events and online lectures.

Thanks go to Robin who has now taken on the role of organising the live events and to everyone who so generously shared their knowledge.

The Symposium was an absolute runaway success, with 60plus attendees and a weekend pleasantly crammed with visits and talks, for which I want to thank both Moira and Elizabeth for their amazing work.

We still have much more to look forward to with the next set of online lectures organised by Elizabeth. As always there will be details both in the Newsletter and the webpage.

This AGM sees a change of the guard. Several of our officers who have worked so hard for the society are now taking well-earned rests. Hilary Wheeler is standing down as Secretary.

Claire Downing is handing over the role of membership secretary. Jonty is standing down as the Journal editor and Nicola retires as reviews editor. They have all contributed so much to the CMS. It's not until you are the President that you really become aware of how much work goes into running a successful society ... tokens of our appreciation are on their way. We are also saying goodbye to two very important Ordinary Council members: Roger Bowdler & Moira Gittos. I always wonder why we use the term ordinary when they are so very important. These are the people that ensure the officers fulfil their roles and guarantee that the CMS is what the members want, and Roger and Moira have given much to the Society.

We are also losing one of our VPs for after many years being actively involved Jean Wilson is standing down. Personally, she has been such a huge support in helping me to understand my role and how the society works ... much sage advice!!!

It also means welcoming many new faces who I'm sure will bring much to the table ... you'll be meeting them as we proceed through the AGM.

Sadly, each year we have to record the permanent loss of people who have given so much to the Society – I would like to remember Julian Litten who has died since the last AGM.

Last year I also asked members if they could become active in their own communities and maybe do some 'meet your monument' work during The Heritage Week. I know that three such activities occurred and hope there were more. Please let us know of any. We shall be sharing ideas and advice in the Newsletter ... encouraging others to have a go. If people get to love their monuments, they'll protect them.

Finally, I bang on about this at every event ... please ensure we have you're up to date email address and permission to send you occasional emails re pop-up events etc. Once again thank you for being here.

## **5. Hon Treasurer's Report and Approval of the Accounts**

In the absence of Mr Jon Dawson, the former Treasurer Mr Michael Thompson presented the Accounts and said that the Society was in good financial strength with the investments providing a good return. He noted that the Symposium expenditure fell into two years 2024 and 2025 so there would be additional information in next year's Accounts.

Approval of the Accounts was proposed by Robin Draper, seconded by Madeleine Gray and unanimously approved

## **6. Thanks to the Independent Examiner and the Appointment of the Independent Examiner**

Mrs Ackers proposed agreement and this was unanimously agreed.

## **7. Hon Membership Secretary's Report – Mrs Claire Downing & Dr Dirk Visser**

This year currently the total membership stands at 552, a small increase from last year, and divides into 50 corporate, 502 ordinary, family and student memberships.

The membership breakdown is as follows:

EU memberships 30

UK memberships 493

ROW memberships 29

The bank statements at HSBC, CAF and PayPal have been checked for the standing orders and payments, and the databases updated accordingly. This is an ongoing task. It seems that still many of the members have paid the old subscription fee into the old bank account for a second year running although we do also have many members who have amended the standing orders to the new CAF bank. This aspect will need constant monitoring, and we will contact these CMS members accordingly.

We currently stand at 142 unpaid memberships.

A reminder notice of renewal/non-payment along with reminders to set up the standing order to the new bank account with details are again added to the Autumn Newsletter. Reminder letters, or reminder emails will be sent in November 2025.

People often renew at the time of year that they joined the society and not on the 1 June renewal date. Therefore, checking the banks accounts is an ongoing process.

Due to the actions of Donald Trump, no normal post delivery to the USA takes place. Only costly registered post with additional paperwork and import duties can be sent. Therefore, we have to take appropriate action, to be able to deliver the CMS Newsletter and journal to our US members. The situation is being assessed and we will act accordingly.

This is my last AGM report as Membership Secretary for the Church Monuments Society. It has been a privilege, and I wish all the best to my successor who will now take the helm.

I look forward to seeing members old and new at future events as Mark joins council as a Vice President.

Claire hands over the membership secretariat with an upbeat message: the membership of the society seems to be slowly increasing again and that is an excellent positive. In the years that Claire has run as CMS membership secretary, the administration has been streamlined and is now in superb order. Therefore, the switchover should go smoothly. The changes in address, etc., will be communicated in the Autumn Newsletter (DV).

Mrs Ackers reminded everyone that Email addresses were very helpful to speed up communication with members. Mrs Ackers said a huge thank you was due to Claire Downing for all her hard work and thanked Dirk Visser for taking on the role.

## **8. Hon Publicity Officer's Report - Prof Madeleine Gray**

Following discussion at the 2024 AGM, we have moved much of our social media presence from Twitter to Bluesky. We did this with some reluctance as we had worked hard to build the Twitter account to over 7,000 followers. However, it was becoming increasingly apparent that other high-profile history and heritage organisations were making the move, and we felt we should do it sooner rather than later. The Bluesky account is developing with some determined posting and reposting and strategic following and we already have 548 followers with plenty of likes and reposting. We have not completely deleted our Twitter account and we continue to use it to publicise events. I am grateful to all those who send suggestions and links for posting.

We do have other social media outlets: we also have a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/3343925989030017>, a YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYjecKekCismOHg679yY0mg> and a presence on

Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/church-monuments-society-32669221889> for our online lectures. Grateful thanks to Mark Downing, to Elizabeth Blood and to our President Moira Ackers for all their hard work in setting up and running these.

Our Monument of the Month feature remains popular. The blog continues active and we have been able to use it to publicise the activities of other groups as well. The Monument of the Month and the blog have had some significant notice. A television company, Sharkteeth Films, used some of the images of Llanblethian from a virtual study day (<https://churchmonumentsociety.org/2021/02/09/virtual-study-day-in-the-vale-of-glamorgan-part-1-llanblethian>) and the photograph of Anne Lake from <https://churchmonumentsociety.org/monument-of-the-month/the-tomb-and-effigy-of-anne-lake-1630> is the cover image of Johanna Luthman's *Family and Feuding at the Court of James I: The Lake and Cecil Scandals*. We welcome contributions to Monument of the Month and the blog: you can send these to [madeleine.gray@southwales.ac.uk](mailto:madeleine.gray@southwales.ac.uk) – ideally as a document in Word plus a picture as a .jpg file. For Monument of the Month we also need the name of the church so that it can be plotted on the online map.

John Bromilow's great Gazetteer of Church Monuments is now offline. It has been archived by the British Library but the archive copy is currently unavailable as a result of the disastrous cyber-attack two years ago. We will update members on this when we have more news

Prof Gray added that the Society was looking at ways of taking card payments at events. Mrs Ackers thanked Prof Gray for maintain the web site and keeping it up to date.

## **9. Hon Archivist's Report – Dr Ellie Pridgeon**

I am delighted to report that the Society's relationship with the Borthwick Institute continues to be professional and friendly. The Society's records are stored on a secure server.

Dr Pridgeon thanked Miss Wheeler for supplying some records that had been lost in a change of Email address.

## **10. Hon Events Co-ordinator's Report – Dr Elizabeth Blood**

Since the AGM in 2024, an extraordinarily busy events year has ensued. The two Events roles (online / visits) were separated at last year's AGM, with Mr Robin Draper kindly stepping forward to organise in-person visits. As he found his feet (and organised a fantastic coach trip in 2025), I continued in both roles and have had the busiest year ever. The pop-up study day in St David's Cathedral – a joint meeting with The Welsh Stone Forum and organised for us by Prof. Madeleine Gray went well indeed on 5 October 2024 and seemed to be followed rapidly by the sold-out tour of select monuments at Westminster Abbey by Drs Susan Jenkins, Adam White and Roger Bowdler on 7 November. The latter fell amidst the All Hallows' online lecture series, which featured Cólín Ó Drisceoil, Roger Bowdler, and Jean Wilson, and concluded with a joint hybrid event with the Mausolea & Monuments Trust featuring Alexander Stoddart. 2025 opened with a visit on 16 April to All Hallows Church, Twickenham, arranged by Hilary Wheeler, and was followed by a pop-up event at Cheam in May that was led by Andrew Skelton and John Phillips and introduced matters relevant to the Symposium later in the year. Robin Draper's coach tour of churches in Birmingham suburbs on 28 June was a triumph, and led us to the biggest event in years, the Symposium entitled *Tombs of the Aristocracy*, which we have just held at West Dean College in West Sussex, with visits to Chichester and Arundel. As an aside, my year also included designing two new roller banners for the Society, featuring photographs of monuments taken by CB Newham (with permission). My thanks go to all my fellow Council volunteers who have helped to organise the year's programme, to all the speakers and guides who have played such a major part in them, and to everybody who came along to enjoy our events,

whether online or in-person. An extra thank you goes to Moira Gittos (and Brian Gittos), whose sterling and cheerful work towards the organisation of the Symposium deserves very special congratulation, and whose understanding of how much work goes on behind-the-scenes was heartening. Symposium 2025 should be my swansong in terms of in-person event organisation, but I am about to begin the All Hallows 2025 series online (bookings open), and have speakers lined up for the Spring series for 2026 (see the upcoming Newsletter), so I hope to see you throughout those. Please continue to attend as many events as you can. We look forward to seeing you at the next.

Dr Blood thanked everyone who had assisted with the Symposium and reminded the meeting about the on-line lectures.

### **Hon. Visit Coordinator's Report – Mr Robin Draper**

Work is already underway on visit events for 2026, with another coach tour (expected to be on Saturday 27th June) to take place in Worcestershire. A visit to the church of St Michael and All Angels, Great Badminton, is also in advance stages of planning. There are other events being considered, the Events Coordinator (Visits) will give an update at the AGM if possible.

Contact has also been made with officers of the Monumental Brass Society, with a view to discussing the possibility of joint events in the future.

Mr Draper announced that two events had been confirmed for 2026, a visit to Badmington church on 30 May and an excursion on 27 June. It was also hoped to have an event to commemorate Dr Julian Litten later in 2026.

Mrs Ackers thanked Elizabeth and Robin for their hard work. Dr Bowdler said that gratitude was owed to everyone who planned and assisted with events and suggested that there should be a way of recognising such work. Mrs Ackers said that Council would discuss planning expenses.

## **11. Reports on the Society's Publications**

### **Journal**

Mrs Ackers read an update from Dr Ann Adams, who had assisted with the 2025 Journal, that the Journal had been delayed but was now on its way. Mrs Ackers thanked Dr Adams for her help. There are now two Co-editors in place – Elizabeth Tingle and Christopher Williams. In addition Chloe Jade Hill is taking over as Book Review Editor. Mrs Ackers thanked Jonathan Trigg, Nicola Lowe and Peter McGrath. She announced that the winner of the CMS Essay Prize was Elise Philippe.

### **CMS Newsletter - Dr Andrew Sargent Hon Editor**

The Editor would like to thank all who have contributed to the *Newsletter's* success this year. As always, their contributions have made stimulating reading for our membership – it would be dull without them!

Two issues of the *Newsletter* have been published in the last twelve months: 40.1 & 40.2. An Autumn issue (41.1) is due in October. If you live overseas and have experienced difficulties receiving your copy following recent international changes to postal rules, please do contact the editor.

This is your Society and your *Newsletter*. What would you like to see included? Could you contribute? Short pieces (up to 3 pages at 400 words per page plus a good photograph

preferably in JPEG format) are most welcome. They do not need to be the polished results of a major research project! Or if you are researching a topic, try tapping the Society's collective knowledge by asking a question.

Brief reports on Society events are always of interest and may encourage other members to sign up for future activities. Organisers are always delighted if an attendee volunteers to write up an event without being asked, so do consider offering.

Mrs Ackers thanked Dr Sargent for all his hard work and reminded the meeting that items for the Newsletter and web site are always welcome.

## **12. Conservation Cases Recorder Report - Dr David Carrington**

The Society has six new Conservation Cases since the last AGM: slightly fewer than average since I took up the role of Recorder, but an increase on the last few years.

Firstly I have to report on the Norfolk Battle Zone churches. All Saints Stanford, St. Andrew's Tottington, St. Mary's West Tofts and St. Andrew's Langford are the four churches that form what is widely called the Battle Zone Group, on an Army training ground near Thetford in Norfolk. Tottington has good floor ledger slabs as well as at least three 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century marble wall tablets. West Tofts has several good monuments, but the most important is probably that to Dame Mary Elizabeth Sutton (d.1842) and her infant son, designed by Pugin and executed by George Myers of Lambeth. Langford church is perhaps best known for the large standing marble wall monument to Sir Jacob Garrard of circa 1730, by Christopher Horsnaile, complete with three life-size figure sculptures.

I heard late last year that the churches were no longer the responsibility of the MOD; that they are no in serious danger of being stripped of furnishings and left to ruin; and that the Diocese of Norwich is actively seeking somewhere to move the Garrard monument to.

I wrote to the Diocesan Secretary in order to establish the facts, and received a reply on 2 October 2024, confirming our concerns. Rather more has happened since then, with rumours at times encouraging and at times not so, but with both myself and architect Ruth Blackman, with whom I have been campaigning, feeling we have done as much as we can at this stage we continue to keep a watching brief.

A very different case is that of Ysbyty Ifan church in Clywd. Here the Society were approached for advice regarding the medieval alabaster effigies and both myself and Maddy Gray have been proactive in giving advice on possible funding sources. I had the opportunity to visit the church in July, whilst working in west Wales, and arranged to meet Society member and expert monument conservator Kieran Elliott, based in Wales, there with the church's custodians. The Society cannot make direct recommendations of conservators as that could imply bias and possible liability, so this was just an introduction rather than anything more. However, yet again the value of a site visit was demonstrated, as we found that although the alabaster effigies were essentially okay, and care required in dealing with some other medieval grave markers, the real matters of urgency were two monuments in the chancel badly affected by water ingress. This was highlighted by our visit. I have liaised with the MBS about the condition of the important 16<sup>th</sup> century Gethin brass, and I believe that the church is in the process of seeking a professional conservator's report to help them find a way forward.

The last case I will mention is at Sutton cum Lound church in north Nottinghamshire. Here there are wall tablets in poor condition, including one that has fallen and broken into several pieces. I am shortly to visit at my own expense on behalf the Society, to meet the

church's architect and advise on what might be possible, and how funding might be found.

As ever, I am always grateful for information or notification of monuments that are thought to be at risk, and collectively as a Society we will endeavour to promote awareness of the issues, suggest sources of grant aid and of expert advice, and to promote good conservation practice.

Mrs Ackers thanked Dr Carrington for all he did in drawing attention to monuments in need of attention and successful conservation projects.

### **13. Election of the President**

Mr Roger Bowdler proposed the election of Mrs Moira Ackers and this was unanimously agreed.

### **14. Election of Officers and three Ordinary Members of Council**

Mrs Ackers proposed the election of Mr Mark Downing, as Vice President, the officers and Ordinary members of Council:

Mrs Moira Ackers	President
Miss Sally Badham	Vice President
Mr Mark Downing	Vice President
Dr Sophie Oosterwijk	Vice President
Mr Jonathan Dawson	Hon Treasurer
Mr Simon Kirsop	Hon Secretary
Dr Dirk Visser	Hon Membership Secretary
Dr Elizabeth Blood	Hon Events Co-ordinator (On-line)
Mr Robin Draper	Hon Events Co-ordinator (Events)
Dr Elizabeth Tingle	Hon Journal Co-editor
Mr Christopher Williams	Hon Journal Co-editor
Dr Andrew Sargent	Hon Newsletter Editor
Dr David Carrington	Hon Conservation Cases Recorder
Dr Ellie Pridgeon	Hon Archivist
Prof Madeline Gray	Hon Publicity Editor

#### **Ordinary Members**

Ms Sophia Dumoulin  
Mr Wayne Hart  
Mr Torquil McNeilage  
Mr Andrew Skelton  
Mr Michael Thompson  
Dr Adam White

### **17. There was no Any Other Business**

### **18. Announcement of the Date and Venue of the 2026 Annual General Meeting**

3 October 2026, All Saints, Carshalton, Surrey.

Mrs Moira Ackers, President  
3 October 2026

Mr Simon Kirsop, Secretary  
3 October 2026