



Friends of York Art Gallery

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the York Medical Society Rooms on Saturday 22nd March 2025 at 10am

Attendance: 50

Apologies were received from Tony Baker, Helena Cox, Lizzie Darbishire, Vivien Flynn, Rod and Sue Greenhow, Mais-Lis Hainsworth, Pat Hill, Robin and Paula Linklater, Anne McLean, Margaret and Tony May, Veronica Pearson, Laura Potts, Janette Ray, Christine Roe

- 1. The Chair**, Charles Martindale, welcomed everyone and declared the meeting open.
- The minutes of the meeting of 23rd March 2024 were approved.

The Chair recommended that members read his and Kathryn Blacker's addresses to that meeting.

He thanked two members of the Committee who were stepping down, Jeanne Nuechterlein, who had served for six years, and John Roe, who had been the Secretary for three years. He drew attention to their contributions, and the meeting applauded them.

He made a number of observations:

First, the Monet Exhibition had been an outstanding success, and had drawn an unprecedented 70,000 visitors. He thanked the organisers for their extraordinary efforts. He noted that the subscription to membership had finally been increased after remaining static for 10 years, and introduced without any drop in overall membership numbers. He specially commended the good work done by Paul McLean (Treasurer), Anne McLean (Website and Online Communications Officer), and Susan Smallpage (Membership Secretary).

Turning to the subject of the Gallery, he noted that the Burton had been relit and the Stairs relit and painted, all to very good effect. The Friends (Gallery) and the YMT (Stairs) between them had paid for the work.

On Events, he thanked the indefatigable Moira Fulton (Events Organiser) for all she had done. Similarly, Ron Clayton for organising the entertaining Artwork of the Month talks. More details can be found in his "Letter from the Chair" contained in the Annual Report. Various works of Conservation had been funded by the Friends. These included the Balthasar painting and Nuremberg panels currently in the Upper North Gallery. Jeanne Nuechterlein had advised on both of these, as well as earlier on the 'Making a Masterpiece: Bouts and Beyond' exhibition. Also funded was a newly acquired watercolour by Mary Ellen Best.

Private charity funding. He felt obliged to end his address by once more appealing to the Friends to draw on their generosity in these straitened times. As has been noticed before, funding from bodies such as the Arts Council and the City Council has been severely reduced. Much more funding was needed from private charities such as our own.

3. The President's Address

Peter Miller referred to points in his contribution to the Annual report. In addition he noted that attendance to the Gallery had been impressive, bucking the national trend whereby numbers were down on the whole. He particularly commended the Chair's efforts for the refurbishment of the Burton Gallery and the Stairwell.

He mentioned the Bookstall which had produced a healthy amount of money for the Gallery. He commended the work of the various Committee members, and included Dorothy Nott, who had been extremely diligent on the Events Sub-Committee. He expressed his personal sorrow at the deaths of Jim Sharpe (who had been the Editor of the E-Bulletin) in 2024, and more recently Alan Hitchcock. He declared his enthusiasm for the current exhibition, which celebrated the work of Harland Miller. Like the Chair, the President emphasised the importance of private donations to the Friends' funding of the Gallery.

4. Proposal to Amend the Constitution

The Chair spoke to this item. The proposed amendment was to make the Chair an officer rather than a member of the Committee. A link to the proposed new version of the Constitution had been included in the AGM email. The proposal was in line with the Charity Commission's recommendation. At present the Committee had three officers, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and the Membership Secretary. Each was elected for a period of three years, whereas the Chair was an ordinary member of the Committee, and had to be re-elected by the Committee annually. Charles Martindale pointed out that the work of the Chair was considerably more than just chairing meetings, and that the Chair performed a strategic and organisational role and had overall responsibility for the delivery of the society's charitable goals in addition to other business. **The proposal was carried nem. con.**

5. The Election of Officers and Members to the Executive Committee

Each candidate addressed the meeting briefly with an account of themselves, and giving reasons for wishing to serve.

- i) Anne McLean (absent on account of illness), proposed by Paul McLean, seconded by Moira Fulton, was re-elected to the Committee as a member, Nem. Con.
- ii) Cynthia Barbor, proposed as Secretary by Charles Martindale, seconded by John Roe. Elected Nem. Con.
- iii) Jessica Richardson, proposed by Moira Fulton, seconded Helena Cox, elected as member, Nem. Con.
- iv) Amanda Hilliam, who was unable to attend because of illness, was proposed by Moira Fulton and seconded by Helena Cox, and elected as a member, Nem. Con.
- v) Finally, Charles Martindale, proposed by Moira Fulton, seconded by Paul McLean, was re-elected as Chair, Nem. Con.

6. The Treasurer's Report and Presentation

Paul McLean spoke to his report, and explained the figures involved. In connection with reserves and expenditure he pointed out that the sum of £55,000 was restricted to paying for acquisitions. The figures could be consulted on the Friends' website. The yearly posting of the Annual Report and other material had become more costly.

7. Approval of the Accounts for the Year ended 31 December 2024

The accounts were approved, Nem. Con.

8. The Appointment of an Independent Examiner

The Independent Examiner's re-appointment was approved, Nem. Con.

9. Any Other Business

Dorothy Nott, from the floor, commended the Monet exhibition and asked if there might be more such collaborations with the National Gallery. Beatrice Bertram (Gallery Senior Curator) replied cautiously that such exhibitions are two to three years in the making. The question of having catalogues for exhibitions was raised: Dr Bertram responded that this could not be done without subsidy from the Friends or others.

10. Senior Curator's Report, York Art Gallery

Beatrice Bertram spoke to her report, published as "The Year in the Gallery" in the Annual Report. She spoke enthusiastically of the 3M recent exhibitions, i.e. Monet, William Morris, and Harland Miller (the latter in progress, as she spoke). She showed some images relating to the preparation of the Monet and Morris exhibitions, and mentioned that the Monet had just won the Visit York Tourism award in its category of cultural activity, and was entered in the Visit England competition. The gardening team has successfully replicated Monet's work in the garden area behind the Gallery, and was attempting to do the same for the Harland Miller exhibition. 98% of the visitors to the Monet had gone into the garden. Harland Miller had visited the Gallery and donated three paintings. She also spoke about the successful repainting of the stairwell, and expressed her relief that a gentle blush tone had replaced the chilly blue. The painting of Lady Stanhope, which at 8 feet high (244 cm) was too tall to hang anywhere else in the Gallery, now looked particularly good in its place. The spotlighting in the Burton had proved very effective. She showed images in illustration.

In CoCA the new exhibition "Not a Pot" had replaced the W. G. Ismay exhibition. We had acquired Sarah Moorhouse's *Ariel Landscapes*.

Various York Gallery paintings were on loan to galleries in Italy and Japan. Richard Keesing asked her if Edward Burra's *Silver Dollar Bar* had been requested by the National Gallery as a loan for its Burra exhibition. No, was the answer.

She ended by thanking the Friends profusely for all their help.

11. A short presentation by Lauren Marohn, FYAG MA Research Scholar, University of York

Lauren Marohn spoke of her research interests and her work on the role of Christianity in modern and contemporary art. She spoke of her interest in Walter Greaves's *Nocturne in Blue* and his *Japanese figures on Chelsea Embankment*. She had given a Gallery talk on Stanley Spencer's *Deposition and Rolling Away of the Stone* (all paintings in our collection). She had found it fruitful to explore the Gallery collection, and to sit in on curatorial meetings. She was grateful for the opportunity to observe the assembling of an exhibition, as well as the checking the condition of paintings that were to be displayed. Her studies also drew on the "Sin" exhibition of 2022-23. She ended by thanking the Friends for their help in making her research possible.

Following the meeting the Chair invited all present to a glass of wine to celebrate the year's achievements and in the hope of continuing success.

John Roe

Honorary Secretary

March 2025