

AEJ Annual General Meeting
Regent's University, 11am, 29th January 2020

MINUTES

Attendance. Chairman: William Horsley. Secretary: Charles Jenkins. Treasurer David Worsfold. Meetings Secretary: Peter Norman. Website Manager: David Barker. Social Media editor: Firdevs Robinson. There were 17 members present for the AGM. Apologies had been sent by Martyn Bond, Pat Humphreys and Kevin D'Arcy.

Chairman's Report. (Attached). William thanked Margaret Hughes for her 10 years of dedicated service as the section's Secretary. Charles Jenkins had agreed to take over the role. Members gave Margaret a very warm round of applause. Highlighting some points in his report, William noted the sad death of distinguished AEJ member Robert Elphick in 2019. He said the section was in good shape with record membership and excellent guest speakers. He conveyed thanks to Regent's University for hosting the meetings so generously.

Secretary's Report. (Attached). Charles said he was honoured to be able to be the Secretary and that Margaret would be a hard act to follow. 2019 had been a very successful year, notable for the quality of speakers in a momentous year for Britain's relationship with Europe, with fact-based debates. He highlighted the record membership and the illuminating and timely trip to the Scottish Parliament in September.

Treasurer's Report. (Attached). David said 2019 had ended with a surplus for the first time in several years, largely because of the increase in membership fees, the recruitment of more members and discipline in our catering orders for lunch meetings. He distributed 2020 membership cards to those who had paid their annual subs.

In a general discussion about the cost of meetings, he asked members to pay by bank transfer in advance, rather than paying by cash or cheque on the day. Catering had to be ordered in advance based on expected attendance. To avoid damage to the AEJ's bank balance from no-shows it was necessary for members to give at least 48 hours' notice in case they had to cancel after having registered. If they cancelled before noon two full working days in advance he would roll over their payments to the next meeting they came to. William urged members to drink wine in moderation to help to achieve break-even for meetings. David Lennon and David Worsfold thanked the former Treasurer, Mike Springate, for his careful management of the accounts over many years.

There was general agreement that Regent's University was proving to be an excellent venue. Compared with the previous Westminster location, it might be more difficult to attract MPs as speakers; but hopefully MPs would be more willing to make time to speak to us after Brexit day on Jan 31st. Regent's also has many other advantages as a venue and the AEJ looked forward to continuing to meet here for the foreseeable future.

Election of Officers. William Horsley (Chairman), Charles Jenkins (Secretary), and David Worsfold (Treasurer) were all elected unopposed for 2020.

Speakers. Meetings Secretary, Peter Norman, thanked David Lennon for the work he'd done lining-up speakers in previous years, and also William who continued to be active in finding high-quality guests. He urged members to make suggestions for speakers later in the year – with contacts please. High-profile guests would attract more younger journalists. The February speaker would be Ciaran Martin of the Cyber Security Centre; in March it would be Jeff Kingston, Director of Asian Studies at Temple University, Tokyo, and in May Lord Chris Patten. April and June were still vacant slots.

Membership. William said the record high membership – expected to be at least 44 again-- was pleasing. He outlined ongoing efforts to reach out to journalists in leading national media and other journalists' organisations, and urged members to do the same with their contacts. The AEJ stressed that teaching staff and students at Regent's University were welcome to attend our lunch meetings. Exceptionally, at least ten of them were expected to attend the Rory Stewart meeting that would follow the AGM.

The Website www.aej-uk.org . William thanked David Barker for posting news of speakers and reports including audio recordings promptly after each event; and all members who had volunteered to do the write-ups of meetings over the past year. William noted that he also regularly uploads reports of possible interest to UK members to the international AEJ website. David Barker said the UK website was 'tired', text-heavy and needed a redesign. He would look into this in due course. A suggestion that the website's URL should appear as a matter of course on public communications along with our logo was duly noted.

Social Media. Firdevs said it was important to have a presence on social media. She posts notices of meetings and links to reports on Facebook and Twitter. Our Facebook page gets about 100 views per entry. Doros Partasides was thanked for his high-quality photos also used by Firdevs.

AOB. There was no other business and the AGM closed at 12.20pm.

Rick Thompson