

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association

Held at St Cadoc's Church, Caerleon on Saturday June 7th 2025

Presided over the President Jeremy Knight

Apologies for absence were received from: Moira and John Dearney, Jean Hancock, Steve Clarke, Lindsay Prosser, Joyce Compton, Simon Maddison, Jack Hanbury Tenison, Sue Miles, Adrian Babbage, David Leron, Christina Evans, Alan and Katrin Aberg, Dave Bassett, Simon Rutherford, Amelia Schafer-Rutherford.

Remembrance of Members who have passed away in 2024/2025: Burton, Annie Bish, Christabel L Hutchings, Karl Martin, Rosie Humphries, Roger Hancock. Members stood in a minute's remembrance.

1. Minutes of the last Meeting: these had been circulated in advance. They were proposed as a true record by Arthur Edwards, seconded by Chris Sullivan. Agreed without dissent.
2. Matters arising: None.
3. Words from the President: Jeremy Knight drew attention to the presence today of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association in the place where it, and the Roman Museum, had been founded in 1847. He was delighted today to be able to see the marvellous restoration of St Cadoc's church, some of the pillars of which are built on stones robbed from the Roman amphitheatre when it was rebuilt in the 1860s. Some Roman inscriptions had been presented at the first meeting of the Association and today we would hear more of the work exploring the Roman history of this area. He paid tribute to those members who had passed away during the year, particularly mentioning the hard work of Christabel Hutchings as a pillar of the Society. He also paid tribute to Rosemary Humphreys who worked tirelessly to make Usk castle and gardens what they are today. She ran a sheep farm on the Sugar Loaf while organising a vast variety of events and entertainments at Usk castle. He welcomed the members of the Association to the meeting today.
4. Introduction by the Chairman, Ray Howell, Professor Emeritus, University of South Wales who welcomed the members to the meeting. He said that it would not be most people's first choice to attend an AGM on a Saturday afternoon and he was very pleased to welcome so many people here today. He was pleased to report that the Association was continuing to thrive. The journal has many interesting articles, and the promotion of archaeological research continues. He was particularly pleased that we had been able

to support financially the investigations at the Roman Bridge Crossing of the Wye at Piercefield. The track above the crossing is currently being investigated and we had provided a grant towards the costs of OSL dating of the buried surface. He thanked the secretary and other members of the committee for their hard work in keeping the MAA running and prospering.

5. Secretary's report, from Janet Bailey. It has been a roller coaster year, with some spectacular ups and the occasional down. The 2024 AGM was poorly attended and gave rise to calling an Emergency General Meeting to resolve the issue of increasing the membership fees. As you know from the agenda for this meeting, we are considering how to resolve this dilemma caused by low attendance at meetings, and the difficulty in capturing the opinion of members when introducing changes.

In July we gathered at Tintern for our study day. This proved very popular with over 90 people attending to hear about the ongoing work at Tintern Abbey. After lunch most delegates toured the Abbey to see the work first hand. Afterwards it was suggested that MAA be trusted with the upcoming 800 year celebrations at the site.

The summer walk had a handful of ardent walkers. We walked from Goldcliff common along the coast path to Redwick and back via an inland route. On the way we were privileged to visit two cottages of some antiquity, as well as Redwick Church. We were treated to beautiful apples at one stop along the way, reminiscent of the many orchards that were found on the Gwent Levels in past centuries.

After the summer break a small but intrepid party visited Exmoor as guests of the Exmoor Society. We were hosted by the park archaeologist Rob Wilson-North And Exmoor Society chair Kate O'Sullivan. I was surprised to find that a railway had been constructed by Victorian mineral speculators with Welsh connections, and was introduced to stone rows and prehistoric features known as "miniliths".

Later in the year we had a brilliant talk about shipping in Newport. As the daughter of a stevedore I was enthralled by the depth of knowledge shared by Peter Brown. He is responsible for the maritime section of the Newport Past website, which is well worth a look for local historians.

The end of the year was tinged with sadness at the sudden death of my predecessor Christabel Hutchings. Christabel had served as secretary from the death of Gwenllian Jones in 2009 until 2021. She was devoted to MAA and the many other groups she worked with, including FONMAG and Friends of National Museum to mention just 2. I know we miss her and I am sure we will continue to be affected by her legacy for years to come.

We started the year with snow, which led to the postponement of our epiphany carol service. Again, attendance was small but greatly appreciated by the congregation at St Teilo's Church at Llantilio Pertholey. I am indebted to Andrew and Valerie Willie for organising this. In the spring we had a talk from Peter Foden entitled "Bessy and the Baronet" a talk about Sir John Willims of Llangybi castle and his mistress. This was held at Llangybi hall and was well attended by members and the local community. More recently another talk by Will Davies of Cadw about Newport Castle held at Stow Park Community centre was less well attended, but it was good to see some new faces, and to meet some members who I had not met before.

As it does not appear on the agenda , I would like to pay tribute to Dr Sian King who has been working hard this year on our behalf. Sian has overseen the digitisation of the journal and is one of the people who keeps our website up to date. We secured a grant from Marc Fitch Fund to pay for this work, and Sian is now working to upload all the journals to the Archaeological Data Service so they will be publicly available for researcher to access. I would also like to thank Adrian Smith for taking over the Facebook posts and keeping the world up to date with goings on at MAA. And a word for member Steffan Ellis, who has for many years looked after the X (formerly known as Twitter) account. We have decided to close this account.

There has been a small but steady increase in membership numbers over the year, with some peaks at the Tintern and Newport meetings. Administering the change in membership fees dominated the start of the year, however over half of members made the change without a problem, and only a small number now with outstanding money owing. I am hoping that the role of membership secretary might be separated off from the secretaries role this year. Thank you to everybody for your support and forbearance over a very busy period.

We continue to support archaeological work around the county, and we have received reports from Blaenau Gwent, Chepstow and Buckholt Bryngaer. We have recently agreed a grant for OSL dating for Chepstow Archaeological Society, who held a well-supported study day last autumn to share the new knowledge they have added to the local historical record. I would like to commend the work done by the many local history and archaeological societies who continue to bring history to life in their communities. I hope that MAA can act as a supporting body to bring the good work of all these groups together. Recently it has been my pleasure to nominate the community archaeology project at Buckholt Bryngaer for a CBA Marsh Award. We eagerly await the result of that award panel.

I would like to thank each and every member of the committee for their work over the last year, and to thank you, the members for your continued support and encouragement. Without you there would be no Association.

Thanks are also due to the Church here and the volunteers who had stepped into the breach to assist the hosting of the meeting.

8. Treasurer's Report (attached to the minutes), by Simon Tee. He said how pleased he was that following the increase in subscriptions, the success of the Tintern study day (which produced £1,200 surplus), and the reduction in the cost of the journal, the financial state of the MAA was much improved. There were still challenges ahead and he was hoping that the situation with gift aid would be progressed soon. It was important to provide a surplus so that archaeological projects could be supported.

There were no queries.

The Accounts were Proposed by Arthur Edwards and Seconded by Rod Hough. There was no dissent, and the Accounts were accepted.

9. Editorial Report from the Editors, Tony Hopkins and Arthur Edwards: We were pleased to publish last year's journal vol 39 on time and well within budget. This is especially satisfying since the publication marked a change of printer. The change was

forced on us owing to the retirement of John Roost and the close of his business 4word who had printed the journal for many years. We are indebted to 4word for their great service to us.

Having to change printer gave us an opportunity to make a virtue of necessity of necessity and the choice of a new printer has enabled us to reduce costs with no reduction in the quality of the journal. The lower costs come directly from greater production input from the editors. Zenith operate differently from our previous printers but having got used to new ways of working the editors felt we ought to stay with them for this year's journal.

I am pleased to say that we are on target to publish vol 40 in the early autumn. It will contain at least six articles, four book reviews and one obituary.

10. Library & Archives report by Sian King: As you know, Christabel Hutchings did substantial work in the MAA Library over several years under Mark Lewis' leadership, and was ably assisted by Anne Dunton. Following the very sad loss of Christabel, I offered to help, as I am a Chartered Librarian with considerable academic library experience. Kristine Chapman continues to be our Honorary Librarian and is always willing to give advice when needed.

The small "Library Committee" (Mark, Anne & I) met in the library in January 2025 and we agreed an outline for a medium-term plan of action to include:

- Devise a draft collection policy i.e. what material should the library contain
- Sort and organise the stock, identifying items for potential disposal, such as long runs of print journals which are readily available digitally, and books which are widely available elsewhere. This should free up much needed space.
- Record the number of visitors to the library, and what type of material they are consulting
- Identify the archival material, and seek advice from an archivist regarding its future
- Create a bibliography of material published by the association between 1854 and 1960, building on work already done by others

We hope to start on this work as soon as the digitisation project has been completed.

11. Election of Officers.

A) Dr Cherry Lewis has agreed to become Membership Secretary. Proposed by Janet Bailey, seconded Gill Wakley. All agreed. B) It was proposed that all existing committee members should be re-elected en bloc. This was agreed by the meeting with all voting in favour.

12. Motion in consideration of a change in the constitution rules to allow members to vote in person or by remote electronic methods:
Voting at the AGM requires amendment to avoid any situation when it is not quorate.

The constitution states: ① Meetings

①7. An Annual General Meeting shall be held between March and May at least four weeks' notice being given in writing to all Members of the Association; The quorum at the Annual General Meeting shall be thirty Members of the Association or 86% of the Membership whichever is lower;

①8. The Annual General Meeting shall receive the reports of the Committee and the accounts for the preceding year and such other items as the Committee determine;

①9. The Annual General Meeting shall elect Officers and Members of the Committee;

①0. Special General Meetings may be convened at any time by the Committee or by six members of the Association signing a paper containing the motion to be decided duly proposed and seconded and delivered to the Secretary; The notice provisions and the quorum shall be as for an Annual General Meeting;

Addendum proposed

5.5 Meetings may be held in person and/or by electronic means.

5.6 Members can carry out the business of the association in person or by post.

5.6 Voting can take place in person, by post, or by electronic voting during a virtual meeting.

Proposed: Jan Bailey Seconded Gill Wakley. Passed unanimously with one abstention.

(It has been established with the Charity Commission that this amendment of the rules for voting does not require their approval.)

13. There was no other business. The formal meeting was closed. The meeting was quorate with 41 members present.

The meeting was followed after refreshments by a talk on the work done with the schoolchildren from Charles Williams Church in Wales Primary School High Street Caerleon examining the school field for archaeological remains by Dr Mark Lewis Amgueddfa Cymru; New information was obtained and some of this modifies the plan of the Roman Barracks adjacent to the school;

