

**Minutes of the
55th Annual General Meeting
on Friday, 29th March 2019**

Welcome

Dick Brealey welcomed more than 60 Friends to the meeting and thanked the Chartered Institute of Marketing for hosting our AGM at Moor Hall. He then introduced Dr John Richards, Senior Lecturer in History of Art at the University of Glasgow, where he teaches a course on Stanley Spencer at the School of Culture and Creative Arts. Dr Richards enthralled the Friends with a highly entertaining talk, in which he recalled his childhood memories of Cookham and his eventual career as an art historian, specialising in 14th century Italian art. Seeing connections between Giotto and Spencer led him to focus on Spencer's life and art, and he is now working on a complete critical history of Spencer, as well as a long-term project to develop an online database of Spencer's drawings

The meeting

1. Previous minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2018 were accepted and signed.

2. Chairman's summary

Dick Brealey noted that membership of the Friends currently stands at around 500 people. Approximately a third are from Cookham, a third from the surrounding area, and a third from farther afield. In our drive to recruit more members, we have produced a new leaflet, copies of which were available at the meeting, and Dick asked Friends to pass these on to potential members. Benefits of Friends membership include unlimited visits to the Gallery, the quarterly newsletter and Friends outings, and he thanked committee members for organising these. We are planning other activities exclusively for Friends, including a walk and talk in July and a possible course by Ann Danks. Other suggestions are very welcome.

The aim of the Friends is to support the work of the Stanley Spencer Gallery; in the past year, this has included contributions to the cost of drawings conservation and new retail display units in the Gallery. Friends can also provide support by volunteering. More custodians are always needed, and there are many other opportunities, such as helping with the Learning Team, as featured in the Spring newsletter. We also need new members on the Friends committee. There is no minimum time commitment, but the more you get involved, the more you will appreciate the experience. Dick said that he had learned a lot since becoming Chair of the Friends, and feels honoured to serve the Gallery. As a thank-you to Friends, prints of *Cows at Cookham* were offered as a gift from the Gallery.

3. Treasurer's report

Alan Harding presented the accounts for the 12 months to 31 December 2018. He noted that the Friends had made a good surplus and contribution to the Gallery. However, our membership numbers and hence our subscription income had declined over the past few years. This is partly due to the change from one-year to a minimum of two-year memberships. Our five-year members are very loyal, but those with shorter memberships are less inclined to renew their subscriptions. The Friends outings continue to be very popular; although we do not set out to make a profit, the outings do generate a steady income. The cost of running the Friends is low, as we send more newsletters by email rather than printed copies. As well as our contribution to the drawings conservation and retail display, which has already been mentioned, we also subsidised the cost to Friends of the *Patron Saints* book and paid for shelving in shared storage units. Most Friends' subscriptions were now received directly through the till at the Gallery, and are shown in the accounts as 'contributions to the Gallery.' Alan drew attention to the additional contribution made by Gift Aid on Friends' subscriptions and donations, and thanked Brian Schirn for suggesting this initiative. It was noted that an increase in the personal allowance in the new tax year might mean that some Friends no longer paid tax. The bank balance stands at more than £16,000, which is available to the Gallery when an appropriate need is identified. £12,000 of this is in a deposit account at 1% interest.

The accounts were examined by Nicolas Singeisen, who is prepared to continue with his service next year. The accounts were accepted by the Friends present, and Dick Brealey thanked Alan for producing the financial statements, as well as for his ongoing work as membership secretary.

4. Trustees' report

Scot McKendrick, Chair of Trustees, expressed his gratitude to the Friends for their support, not just in financial terms but in the wider sense, and he looks forward to working with Dick Brealey to find new areas of cooperation. The Friends' support for conservation work on our drawings and prints was critical in helping the Gallery to leverage funding from the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) It's hoped that the new retail display will encourage visitors to spend more, providing an important boost to the Gallery's finances. Over the past year, the Gallery has staged two great exhibitions: *Patron Saints*, with some exceptional loans from Tate and the Fitzwilliam, and *Friends and Family*, which gave us the chance to display our drawings in their newly refreshed state. Our latest exhibition, *Counterpoint*, has just opened, with generous loans from the Ingram Collection. The Trustees are planning well ahead with a five-year programme of exhibitions, with an increased emphasis on our winter shows, and would like to reach out to our broad volunteer base regarding suggestions for future exhibitions. We want to make greater use of the Gallery's collection and share it more widely. In 2018, for the third time, we achieved full accreditation from Arts Council England, which is a tremendous endorsement of the volunteers' work at a professional level. Accreditation gives us access to the Government Indemnity Scheme, which underwrites the cost of insuring artworks. Over the past year, we have acquired several works on long-term loan: a self-portrait by Gilbert Spencer, a portrait of Fred Brooker, a sketch for *Swan Upping* and a drawing of *Child in a High Chair*. David Pinniger retired after 10 years as a Trustee, but will continue to provide specialist advice to the Gallery. Andrew de Mille rejoined, having previously been a Trustee from 2008 to 2015. Scot gave thanks to Michael Johnson for his work as Chair of the Friends, to Dick Brealey for taking on the role – and to everyone who gives their time for free to the Gallery.

5. Committee membership

At last year's AGM, Michael Johnson retired as Chair of the Friends after 10 years in the role. Dick Brealey subsequently volunteered to stand and was co-opted on to the committee as Chair in September 2018. Alan Harding formally proposed Dick Brealey's chairmanship to the meeting, seconded by Dick Hurley, and the Friends present affirmed his appointment. The remaining members of the committee will continue to serve, and new members would always be warmly received.

6. Any other business

Following previous requests by Friends that we should organise outings at weekends, for the benefit of people who are at work, the committee was thanked for arranging the visit to the John Lewis Heritage Centre on Saturday 6 April.

Michael Johnson drew attention to the broadcast on Saturday 30 March on BBC2 of the film *Wooden Horse*. This is based on the true story of his WW2 escape from a German prisoner-of-war camp by Eric Williams, whose much-admired portrait by Stanley Spencer is part of the Gallery's collection.

Appendix

Friends' events 2018

Ravilious & Co exhibition at Compton Verney
Chichester Cathedral and Pallant House Gallery
Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, Richard III exhibition and Lincoln Cathedral

Friends' events 2019

John Lewis Heritage Centre, Cookham
Augustus John exhibition and Salisbury Cathedral
Friends' guided walk around Cookham, pub lunch and Gallery tour
Autumn outing to Charleston Farmhouse and Monk's House, Rodmell (TBC)

Gallery and Spencer-related events 2019

March 28	Summer exhibition opens
April 14	Guided walk around Spencer's Cookham
May 14	Stanley Spencer poetry reading (part of Cookham Festival)
May 15	Cookham Patrons' walk with Ann Danks (part of Cookham Festival)
Summer	Talk by Nicola Upson, author of new novel <i>Stanley and Elsie</i> (date TBC)