

**Minutes of the  
52<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting  
on Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

**Introductory talk**

Dr James Fox, the new President of the Friends, gave an excellent talk, which was very well received by the 60 or so people who attended the meeting. James began by paying tribute to Duncan Robinson, who was not only his predecessor as our President but also his academic mentor, colleague and friend. He then recalled his first visit to the Stanley Spencer Gallery as a young boy, explaining how *The Scarecrow* had a profound effect on him and inspired his career as an art historian.

The main focus of Dr Fox's talk was the impact of World War 1 on Britain and its artists. While doing research for his recent book, *British Art and the First World War 1914 – 1924*, he discovered that there was widespread paranoia about artists, who were suspected of being enemy spies and frequently arrested. After a reminder of some of the most famous war paintings, he went on to give numerous fascinating examples of artists' lesser-known contributions to the war effort, including ingenious methods of camouflage, 'dazzle' ships and bespoke masks for servicemen with disfiguring facial injuries. He ended his talk with a reference to Spencer's paintings in the Sandham Chapel, which show how beauty and peace can be created by a great artist out of the ugliness and destruction of war.

**The meeting**

**1. Previous minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2015 were accepted and signed.

**2. Chairman's summary**

Michael Johnson reviewed the previous year and the plans for events in 2016. He thanked committee members for their continuing support and acknowledged the invaluable contribution of Andy de Mille, who has retired after six years with the Gallery.

The highlights of last year were a four-day trip to Merseyside in June, as well as visits to the Sandham Chapel in April, the Government Collection in July and Southampton City Art Gallery in September. Several of the Friends and Trustees were privileged to attend the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in November of Shirin Spencer, Stanley's elder daughter. A visit to the Queen's Gallery in January 2016 was a great success. The next outing, to a large Spencer exhibition at the Hepworth Gallery in Wakefield in July, is already sold out. Other Friends events planned for 2016 include a walk around Hampstead led by Carolyn Leder, and a trip to a Spencer exhibition at the Jerwood Gallery in Hastings. There is a possibility that Dr Fox will host a Friends visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum and other venues in Cambridge in 2017. An appendix to these minutes lists past and future events organised by the Friends and the Gallery.

**3. Treasurer's report**

Alan Harding presented the accounts for the 12 months to 31 December 2015. Income from membership subscriptions was significantly reduced, with membership numbers now down to approximately 600. Although five-year members are very loyal, there is a low level of renewals by those who take out one-year memberships. He explained that the committee was considering replacing one-year memberships with a minimum two-year subscription. The timing of this change would be linked to adjustments to the new till at the Gallery. In order for it to come into effect in January 2017 (before the next Friends AGM), Alan proposed that the Friends delegate the decision to the Committee. By a show of hands, the majority of the meeting agreed to this proposal.

At the end of 2015 there was a healthy bank balance of more than £10,000, available to provide support to the Stanley Spencer Gallery as needed. Last year the Friends purchased audio guides, which are about to be installed in the Gallery, and the wallhanging which is on display at the current AGM. The Friends continue to run oversubscribed and very popular outings. Overall running costs are low, as most of our newsletters are now sent out by email, which saves money on printing and postage. More than £2,500 in Gift Aid was recovered by the Gallery in the past year.

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 Michael Johnson thanked Alan for producing the financial statements, as well as for carrying out the ongoing membership administration.

#### **4. View from the Trustees**

Stuart Conlin, Chairman of the Gallery Trustees, welcomed Dr James Fox as President of the Friends, and summarised the past year. *The Creative Genius of Stanley Spencer* exhibition has been very successful, with visitor numbers higher than 2014. The paintings on loan from Leeds and Aberdeen will be with us for at least another year. This means we can continue to vary our displays, using the loans as a framework. There will be eight new works in the forthcoming summer exhibition, *Stanley Spencer: Visionary Painter of the Natural World*. Catalogues of the new exhibition were on sale to Friends at the reduced price of £5.

The high number of loaned paintings means that we can afford to lend our own works to other galleries, thus reaching an extended audience. This year we will be lending 17 works to the Hepworth Gallery, and several to the Jerwood. *The Last Supper* recently returned from an exhibition in Florence that was seen by 170,000 visitors in four months.

There are so many initiatives currently under way that Gallery volunteer Shez Courtenay-Smith has put together a paper entitled *The Year of Stanley Spencer, April 2016 – April 2017*. In addition to our own summer exhibition and those at the Hepworth and the Jerwood, there will be a major Spencer exhibition in Adelaide, Australia, the publication of some significant new books, a Spencer-themed poetry competition and the ongoing World War 1 centenary events. The paper will shortly be available on the Gallery's website.

Stuart concluded by acknowledging the invaluable work of the many Gallery volunteers; in particular, he paid tribute to Andy de Mille, who has retired after six years as a Trustee and four years as Chair of the Management Committee.

#### **5. Committee membership**

There are no changes to the existing membership of the committee this year, although new members would always be warmly welcomed.

### **Appendix**

#### **Friends' events 2015**

Turner exhibition, Tate Britain  
Sandham Memorial Chapel  
Merseyside cathedrals and art galleries  
Government Collection  
Southampton City Art Gallery and Mottisfont

#### **Friends' events 2016**

Queen's Gallery, London  
The Hepworth, Wakefield, and Nostell Priory  
Hampstead walk with Carolyn Leder  
The Jerwood Gallery, Hastings, and Tudeley Church

#### **Gallery events 2016**

March 9	Talk by art historian James Rawlin
May 12	Talk by Richard Heathcote of Carrick Hill Gallery, Adelaide
June 15	Talk by Professor Nigel Rapport