

**Minutes of the
53rd Annual General Meeting
on Friday, 17th March 2017**

Welcome

Michael Johnson welcomed Friends to the meeting and thanked Alec of Moor Hall for his assistance in hosting our AGM. He drew attention to the Queen's Award crystal trophy, which was presented to the Gallery volunteers in 2016 in recognition of their outstanding work. Michael also pointed out the wallhanging, produced by Ruth Daniel and a team of talented needlewomen for the Cookham Festival two years ago. Based on several of Spencer's paintings, it has been purchased by the Friends and will be displayed at future meetings.

In addition to various members of the Friends, apologies had been received from our President, Dr James Fox. James had hoped to attend the AGM, but is travelling to Japan today to work on his forthcoming BBC series about Japanese art.

The 40 or so Friends present then enjoyed a screening of a film made to accompany the Carrick Hill exhibition in Adelaide, Australia, last year. Held to celebrate 30 years since Carrick Hill opened to the public, the exhibition brought together a large collection of Stanley Spencer's works from around Australia. The film featured idyllic scenes of Cookham, as well as interviews with Carolyn Leder and Chrissy Rosenthal from the Gallery, and Spencer's daughters Shirin and Unity, and grandson John.

The meeting

1. Previous minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2016 were accepted and signed.

2. Chairman's summary

Michael Johnson reviewed the previous year and the plans for events in 2017. He noted that the Friends share information about Stanley Spencer with a large group of people across the country through our regular newsletters, and thanked the Friends secretary, Sue Mahoney, for her work as editor. The latest newsletter describes the summer exhibition at the Gallery, which opens on 30 March.

The highlights of last year were an overnight trip in July to the Hepworth Gallery, Wakefield, which held an excellent Stanley Spencer exhibition; a walk around Hampstead, organised by Margarette Shore and led by art historian Carolyn Leder; and a day-trip to the Jerwood Gallery, Hastings, with a stop-over at Tudeley Church to see the windows painted by Chagall. Other Friends events planned for 2017 include a visit to the Henry Moore Studios and Gardens in Hertfordshire, and a trip to Cambridge. There our President, Dr James Fox, will be our guide to the 20th century paintings at the Fitzwilliam Museum and also host a dinner at Gonville & Caius College, where the Friends will stay overnight. We are investigating the possibility of a visit in September to the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum in Bournemouth. Details will be published in the July newsletter. 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 2016. He pointed out that in 2015 the Friends paid for audio guides, which have already generated about £800 income for the Gallery. The surplus of £2400 in 2016 reflected the fact that we did not pay for any major items last year. In most years, subscription income averages about £3000, but was lower in 2015 due to the cycle of five-year renewals.

Membership currently stands at about 560, which is around 100 fewer than usual after a number of subscriptions lapsed at the year end. We have now changed the minimum membership period from one to two years, and it remains to be seen whether this will affect the rate of new and renewed subscriptions. Nevertheless, at the end of 2016 there was a healthy bank balance of almost £13,000, available to provide support to the Stanley Spencer Gallery as requested by the Trustees and Management Committee.

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 his ongoing work as membership secretary.

4. View from the Trustees

Stuart Conlin, Chairman of the Gallery Trustees, said that the 'Year of Stanley Spencer' had lived up to its billing, with Gallery visitor numbers and income considerably up on 2015. As well as displaying loans from Aberdeen and Leeds in our exhibition, we had made significant loans from our own collection to the Hepworth and the Jerwood Galleries. Books on Spencer were published by Nigel Rapport and John Spencer; the Cookham Festival Poetry Competition attracted more than 200 entries and most importantly, the Gallery won the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in this country. Two new Trustees have joined us: Shez Courtenay-Smith brings a wealth of management consultancy experience, and Amanda Bradley is a renowned art historian, curator and author. Carolyn Leder has resigned as a Trustee, and we would like to thank her for her enormous contribution to the Gallery over several years.

Stuart had previously announced his intention to retire as Chair of Trustees on 1st August, noting that this was the ninth and final time he has delivered his annual review to the Friends. He leaves the Gallery in the hands of a very talented team, and would like to thank the Friends for their support, which has been of great importance to him.

Scot McKendrick thanked Stuart on behalf of the Trustees for his huge commitment to the Gallery over 18 years. Having started as a custodian in 1999, Stuart used his IT skills on the management committee, becoming its Chair after three years. In 2006 he became a Trustee, and Chair of Trustees in 2008. One of his major achievements, with Dick Hurley, was to manage the Gallery's physical transformation into the superb facility we now enjoy, and he also assured that the Gallery became a fully accredited museum with the Arts Council. Stuart has led us through some 18 exhibitions and facilitated a number of important loans to other galleries in the UK and abroad. He has ensured the growth of the Gallery's collection, with seven permanent additions and 13 long-term loans. He leaves the Gallery in strong financial health and with increasing visitor numbers as a mark of its success.

5. Committee membership

Mary-Lou Kellaway has retired and we have co-opted Pam Roberts in her place. Margarete Shore and Sue Mahoney have agreed to serve for a further three years, and Michael Johnson will remain as Chair for one more year. All these committee members were accepted by the meeting. The remaining members will come up for re-election next year, and new members would always be warmly received. The Friends committee will meet in May to review their future role; we would welcome suggestions from the Friends on what they would like us to do.

Appendix

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

Friends' events 2017

Henry Moore Studios and Gardens
The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, with Dr James Fox
Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth (proposed visit)

Gallery events 2017

January 23	Art workshop with Vivienne Chaikin
March 30	Summer exhibition opens
May 19	Presentation of Festival Poetry Competition awards by Lord Young