

Horncastle History and Heritage Society Annual General Meeting

Held at the Community Centre, Manor House Street, Horncastle

On Wednesday 21st May 2025

- Present:** **Executive Committee:** Ian Marshman, Chairman, Nick Fox, Vice-Chairman, Mary Silverton, Treasurer, Kev Woodward, Secretary, Adam Cartwright, Michael Hieatt, Helena Burman.
- Members:** Graham Silverton, Mel Walker, Patricia Paige, Shelia Garner, Samia Frith, Jonathan Read, Eileen Jackson, Mary Read, Pam Crisp-Beard, Peter Irons, Peter Wilkinson, Michelle Cartwright, Lee Burman, Angela Griffin, Lydia Strawson, Priscilla Burbidge, Brian Burbidge, Robert Bell, Chris Wells, Jane Wells, Chris Bates.
- Apologies:** Gail Dymoke, Gillian Morgan, Fiona Martin, Mike Martin (Minutes Secretary), Leslie Harper-Smith, Pearl Wheatley, Alison Morrison, Jenn Woodward.

1. **Apologies for absence.**

Ian Marshman accepted apologies from those members named above.

2. **Approval of the minutes from the previous AGM held on 15 May 2024**

The minutes were approved without comment. Proposed by Mary Silverton, seconded by Nick Fox.

3. **Matters arising**

Gail Dymoke has received our invitation to become our new Patron and would be delighted to accept. Proposed by Mary Read, seconded by Ian Marshman.

4. **Chairman's report**

Ian Marshman said that as many would know, this was his final report as Chairman of the Society, and he wanted to thank everyone who had supported him over the past six and a half years: the committee, past and present, as well as members and supporters from other local groups and organisations.

This past year had been another busy one, with a very full calendar of talks, walks and events, which continued to attract both locals and visitors wanting to explore Horncastle's history.

In March last year we opened a new exhibition at the Joseph Banks Centre, marking 100 years since the dedication of the War Memorial Hospital as Horncastle's official war memorial. We were fortunate to have many items of medical equipment and uniforms loaned to us and even a model of one of the wards. The exhibition brought back memories for many visitors, and for those who only arrived after it had closed, helped us realise just what we have lost. It was inspiring to read how hard local people had fought to save it, and when that failed, to give it a new lease of life as the War Memorial Centre, where it continues to provide NHS services to this day. We held a special even at the Hospital in the summer, attended by many former staff, and the Secretary of State for Health, Victoria Atkins who still had a couple of days

in post prior to the election.

In May we supported Horncastle Library taking part in Local History Month, with a talk on Roman Horncastle, the Heritage Trail guided tour and displays from our archive, including video footage from the Horncastle to Skegness Walking Race. The same month volunteers represented the Society at the Woodhall Spa Show, and we were thrilled to win the award for the best display in the Heritage Tent.

August saw the return for the second year of the revived Horncastle Horse Fair as an arts and heritage celebration. This time the Mane Event on Saturday was even bigger and better, with performances and activities in the grounds of Banovallum House, and the Community Centre, as well as the Teenage Market filling the Market Place. The Society led two guided tours, and a display about the fair's history, and we republished a lost poem about the fair from our Archive first printed in 1846. Sessions Arts visited the town's schools and care homes with Harri the puppet horse and local actor Joseph Richardson. With the help of volunteers we decorated over 40 horseshoes and hid them around town, and local groups and artists decorated 10 painted wooden horses to create a Horse Fair Trail in shop windows.

Between July and September we worked with the Joseph Banks Society on a joint exhibition on flooding in Horncastle and around the world. This was part of the Horncastle Riverscape Project, led by East Mercia Rivers which many of our members also support as volunteers.

In September the Society took part in Heritage Open Days, with a display and a guided walk about Horncastle's Inns and the carriers' carts that once linked them to surrounding villages.

October saw the installation of 18 interpretation boards spread across town along the Heritage Trail. This is the culmination of many years of work by members of the Society, working with Horncastle Walkers Are Welcome, the Town Council and ELDC. Special thanks go to Kate Giffen at ELDC who was responsible for arranging all the permissions. In March the final 2 boards were installed in St Mary's Churchyard after they received permission from the Diocese and all 20 are now in place and are already proving popular.

It was also in October that our packed programme of talks broke all records with an astounding turnout for to hear the talk on the Battle of Winceby by Dr Johnathan Fitzgibbon, attracting over 100 people. There was standing room only and despite using every available chair we had to turn some people away as there simply was not enough to space. Several talks since have been almost as popular and I'm pleased to say that many attendees decided to join the Society, with membership now at record levels.

In November we were concerned, but not surprised, to hear that Historic England had added Horncastle's Conservation Area to their Heritage At Risk Register. Although some businesses look after their premises it has been clear for some time that others are being left to rot. We have expressed our concerns to ELDC many times but unfortunately it appears that our pleas to do something is still falling on deaf ears. They have ignored our repeated requests for a meeting. There have been announcements about funding for repairs in the future, but six months later nothing has happened. It has been a relatively quiet year in terms of planning applications, which the Society is consulted on, but we have continued to provide comments to encourage good design and to report derelict buildings.

Winter also saw the Rivers Trust install a series of new wooden sculptures along the riverbank and in Millenium Woods as part of the Riverscape project. There is also a

metal dragonfly sculpture near the Victoria Mill weir, which forms part of a new Flyway Trail linking greenspaces in the Wolds and nature reserves around the Wash. The Society has also helped the Trust with a new Horncastle Riverscape Walk celebrating the nature and history of the town's rivers, with new waymarkers just starting to go up.

In December we held another popular Christmas Party at the Horncastle Freemasons premises on Banks Street. At the Joseph Banks Centre we took part in Horncastle Window Wanderland with local artist Joanna Pass designing a winter window inspired by the town's rivers. On another window I projected William Lindley's Horse Fair animated film originally commissioned for the 75th anniversary of the last fair in 2023.

The start of 2025 saw lots of effort developing a bid to a new ELDC grant scheme for a project to create a sculpture of a pair of Lincoln Red Cattle on the old Cattle Market at the Wong. This idea came from one of our members and has been on the backburner for several years, but with the backing of the Town Council who own the land we decided to grasp the opportunity before it was too late. Unfortunately, we heard in April that our bid was not successful so we'll have to wait for another pot to come along.

Finally in March another project we had talked about for years did become a reality, with the ghost sign on the old Cross Keys pub restored back to its former glory. This was kindly funded with a contribution from Batemans Brewery and made possible by the permission of the building's current owners who run the town's Boots opticians.

Ian finished by saying that all of this has only been possible because of our members and hard-working volunteers. The range of things they do is immense, from caring for planters around town, to baking cakes, washing up and stacking chairs, leading guided walks, welcoming visitors at the Joseph Banks Centre, representing the Society at events, organising projects, as well as looking after our archive and creating exhibitions.

5. Treasurer's report and approval of annual accounts

Mary Silverton said that membership has increased considerably again this year from 133 at the end of last financial year to 161 at 31/3/2025. This is an excellent reflection on the variety provided by the Society by way of speakers, walks, exhibitions etc. Most of our new members are also subscribing to Gift Aid which allows us to claim tax relief from HMRC. MS thanked Ruth Addison for her assistance with HMRC forms and claims. Members appeared to be renewing their memberships quite quickly, probably due to direct bank payments and card payments, although we still receive a lot of cash payments.

We have also lost some of our long term members again this year – Bob Pendell, a former Secretary and Chairman, and June Benton who gave so much to the Society. The Stanhope Hall committee and the War Memorial Hospital committee also wanted to remember June Benton and donated £200, which together with some donations from our members and the Society itself has been put towards a new display cabinet. We also note that Sheila and Karel Jonkers have health issues which prevent them from continuing as members. They were also stalwarts of the Society – Karel as Treasurer and a Trustee for many years and Sheila for her sterling work on the Roman Wall.

Honorary membership has been given to Pearl Wheatley, one of the founders of the Society and who continues to be a great supporter.

Mary thanked Helena Burman who delivers the Welcome Packs to new members. Helena and her husband Lee have the often-difficult task of finding some of our members 'out of the way' addresses.

Turning to the Treasurers Report, Mary said that unfortunately it had not been possible to pass the annual accounts for 2024/25 to the independent reviewer before the meeting. A small charity such as ours is not required to have its accounts reviewed, but we prefer it to be done. They will be examined shortly by Gillian Mauger and reported to the Executive Committee.

As well as the Annual Report, Mary provides the Committee with management reports including a breakdown of payments to the bank, a list of Cardnet transactions, a report on spending from Funds provided by outside bodies, a list of items owned by us for insurance and also the value of books and artefacts in the Society's care.

Mary said that the Society's account with Barclays had been closed during the year, and the balance of £1244.16 transferred to the Lloyds account this year after giving member's the opportunity to cancel Standing Orders etc. Income from meetings was £2057.08, reflecting how successful the talks programme has been...

Although our Expenditure is more than our Income this year, much of the spending has come from direct funding (£2430). We still have available some funds given to us by the Photographic Society for our archive and museum and which have provided an additional display cabinet, metal display frames for pictures and additional shelving for our growing collection of artefacts.

The Town Council and District Council provided £500 each towards the War Memorial Hospital exhibition, all of which was spent on that project.

When we received a quotation for our insurance renewal that was nearly £100 more than the previous year, we looked elsewhere and on the recommendation of one of our members we found an insurer which caters particularly for history and museum groups. Next year will show a considerable saving.

It was a tragedy that the Xmas Market had to be cancelled this year after all the work done by Jenn Woodward and other helpers. It is one of our best sources of funding, as the deficit on this year's accounts suggests, but we did manage to use the chocolate for some funding and the rest was donated to a good cause. Hope you will support it again next year.

The Committee is aware that it has a healthy bank balance, which it regards as prudent at the moment. Nonetheless, we continue to provide blue plaques and contribute to many of the events in the town.

No comments or questions were received. Those present agreed that once the accounts have been examined, the acceptance of them would be carried out by the Executive Committee.

6. Election of Chairman, Vice-chairman, Treasurer and Secretary

Adam Cartwright had offered to replace Ian Marshman as Chairman. All other officers were happy to continue in post. There being no other candidates for these roles, the following officers were proposed, seconded and agreed by all members present:

Chairman: Adam Cartwright

Vice-Chairman: Nick Fox

Treasurer: Mary Silverton

Secretary: Kev Woodward

Adam Cartwright took the chair from this point in the meeting.

Ian Marshman will continue as an Executive Committee member and will handle the Society's publicity.

Kev Woodward also undertakes the role of Talks Organiser and indicated that he would like to stand down from the role after organising the 2026 talks program. Therefore a volunteer will be required at the 2026 AGM to take over the role. Kev will give assistance and advice to the person taking on the role.

Mary Silverton stated that she wished to stand down as Treasurer in the next two years (by the 2027 AGM).

Adam Cartwright asked any members who are interested in taking on these roles to speak to him or any Committee member to find out more.

7. Election of Executive Committee

Adam was very pleased to say that Chris and Jane Wells has offered to join the Executive Committee. All other members were happy to continue. There is room for two further EC members if anyone is interested. Please speak to Adam about this.

7a. Award of life memberships

Adam said that the EC would like to award life membership to Ian Marshman and Mary Silverton, if they were prepared to accept, in recognition of all they had achieved for the Society over many years of service. Both were delighted to accept the honour.

8 Special resolution

Adam Cartwright explained that the Executive Committee was recommending the Society become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

Ian Marshman outlined why the Executive Committee felt this change was needed and what the steps were to achieve this. It is a step that many similar local Societies have taken in recent years. As the Society is presently structured it was not allowed to own property and all the financial risk is held by the Trustees. Becoming a CIO allows us to own property and removes any financial risk for the trustees. This is quite an important consideration for new trustees.

A more detailed written explanation had been provided at the meeting as well as the proposed new Constitution and Rules.

Michael Hieatt asked for a summary of the benefits offered by becoming a CIO. Ian Marshman said that it provides a better operating structure which is more appropriate to our current circumstances. Our old Constitution was quite out of date and would not meet the Charity Commission's current requirements.

It was realised that the proposed new rules (labelled "Appendix B") had not been circulated prior to the meeting and this would be rectified by email, but Adam Cartwright was of the view that this should not preclude voting on the Special Resolution. The process of moving to become a CIO would take some time.

This proposal was carried unanimously by the members present.

9. **Comments and questions from members**

- a. Robert Bell stated that he wished to see a commemorative sculpture at the old cattle market for the Lincolnshire Red Cattle. We will try and source new funding to aid this project as we were not successful in this year's funding round. Mary Read suggested rather than a sculpture we could have a painted mural similar to that on the wall of the public toilets.
- b. Michael Hieatt requested volunteers to take over the planters on West Street and High Street as he wished to pass this task on to others as his wife and he are now finding it difficult to continue. Ian Marshman's wife has contacted the Care Home near the West Street planters and is hopeful that they would be willing to water the plants; hopefully they will also take on looking after the plants too. Volunteers are still required for the High Street planters, watering and weeding duties.
- c. Mary Silverton informed those present about the archive that has grown enormously over the year and reminded all members that it is free for members to view and to please make use of it.
- d. Adam Cartwright announced that he will collate a list and photo record of the old business painted 'ghost' signs that are still visible around the town. It is intended to upload these images onto the new website as soon as possible to ensure they are not lost forever. All members are requested to seek out these 'ghost' signs and inform Adam or any committee member of the location.
- e. Adam requested ideas on future exhibitions from those present. Ideas forthcoming were: A history of Woodhall Spa, or possibly just the Kinema, Horncastle Scooter Club, Henry Lunn, and Horncastle in old postcards.
- f. Adam said that members' views were always welcome and they can contact him or any committee member at any time to discuss issues. The Executive Committee would be particularly interested in ideas for walks and talks.

There being no further matters to discuss, Adam thanked those present for their active participation and the meeting was closed at 8.40pm, followed by refreshments kindly donated by some of the members.

Minutes by Kev Woodward.