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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at BBC Countryfile Live, Blenheim Palace on Saturday 5th August 2017

PRESENT

Monika Jurgens, Darren Male, Peter Faulkner, Carolyn Brown, Terry Kenny, Jude Pilgrim, Shirley Hancock, Ian Harries, Mark Dellar, Euan Raffel and 5 non-members

APOLOGIES

Julie & Malcolm Rees, Wendy Gee, Bruce Watson, Dylan Jones, Dave Purvis, Rod Bowen, Amy Smith, Sophia Fuchs

MEETING CHAIR

In the absence of the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary, the meeting held a vote to propose Euan Raffel chair of the AGM.

Proposed Mark Dellar; Seconded Terry Kenny

Carried unanimously

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Agreed as a correct record. Proposed by Peter Faulkner. Seconded by Mark Dellar

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising

REPORTS

Chairperson

No report

Treasurer

The 2016 accounts were presented for approval. The high expenditure over income was explained – this was due to the final payment being made from the Save Our Heritage Huts Appeal to the Ironbridge Coracle Trust. The coracle ales have finally been disposed of. The insurance premium increased slightly due to the increase in insurance premium tax. Membership refunds were due to either double payments or payments the authenticity of which couldn't be determined.

Proposer: Jude Pilgrim, Seconder: Terry Kenny

Accounts were accepted

There was little to report – the Society is in good financial health. The current account stands at £1456.41 and the deposit account stands at £1245.28. The last committee meeting accepted

a proposal to order some extra banners, mostly to be placed with the Welsh members (Dylan/Teifi coracles) in English and Welsh.

Membership secretary

Nothing report provided. Membership stands at 131 as of date of meeting, comprised of 103 individual members and 28 joint/family/associate members

Secretary & archivist

Fellow members of The Coracle Society,

Many apologies for not being able to attend this year's AGM – on a well-deserved holiday in Majorca! I sincerely hope everything goes well over the weekend.

It was another busy year in the life of the Secretary of the Coracle Society, answering numerous emails and phone calls regarding coracles. As one can imagine we do have many enquiries regarding possible demonstrations at various shows and events. Sadly, we are unable to accept everyone one of these.

Examples of email enquiries received in 2017:

- Jane Smith wanted more information regarding Bernard Thomas especially his great achievement of crossing the channel in the early 1970s.
- Angela Davies from Melbourne, Australia is currently embarking on a coracle project and wanted as much information regarding the different types of coracles. I believe she has contacted Martin Fowler as well.
- Victoria Stanley shortly will be filming (possibly started?) an episode on coracles for a documentary for BBC. Thanks to everyone who were willing to be filmed – Jude Walker, Mark Dellar and possibly a few others as well. Not heard from her for a while so I guess everything is going ok?
- A researcher called John Monger wanted any information regarding the role of the coracle for transporting goods downstream (without human input). Sir Peter Badge also assisted in answering this enquiry.
- A Mechanical Engineer from Germany called Kathan Thakkar was interested in constructing a coracle 'with some modification'. Yet to hear back from him.
- Various emails regarding waterproofing the coracle.

Roland Hess from Maine US, some of you may have been contacted by him, visited Britain a couple of months ago and was hoping to learn more about the coracle. He also wanted to give the Society a presentation on birchbark canoes. He did meet Denzil Davies and Martin in west Wales. He is hoping to come over again soon.

A Teifi coracle (mine) was borrowed by Eglwys Dewi Sant (Church) in Cardiff last month and used as part of the Flower Festival. Euan – pretty sure you passed this church on numerous occasions walking from Cathays into the city centre?

Cardiff University are launching a flagship research Institute on water. The institute brings together researchers across the natural and social sciences to address the challenge of Water for people and ecosystems in a changing world (<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/water-research->

[institute](#)). They are in the process of creating a collaboration space for a new Institute and are looking for a large focus piece of furniture/art that would symbolise in some way the longstanding relationship between people and freshwaters in a Welsh context and of course they thought of the coracle. They have done a lot of research on Welsh rivers and strongly believe a coracle would be a compelling piece around which to build a narrative. If I am not using my coracle in September then they can borrow mine.

Lastly, as most of you are aware I have left St Fagans. All Coracle Society enquiries have been forwarded to me. I have not heard if they intend to have coracles on the water this year.

Apologies again for not being able to attend.

National Coracle Centre

No report

Netsmen's reports

Tywi – It has been another busy year for the Carmarthen Coracle as we have featured in several well-known national publications including a tourism magazine, which saw our coracle article printed proudly next to the Tower of London. The Carmarthen Coracle was also awarded 18th position in The Observers Food annual Top 50.

We continue to welcome many visitors and students to the coracle sheds for an insight into our history. Recently we have assisted two television production teams who have filmed our coracle for BBC's Bargain Hunt and a BBC programme on British river crafts – both to be aired around September time and again putting coracles firmly on the map.

Our big achievement this year was to receive not one, but two PGI awards for our 'West Wales Coracle Caught Sewin' and 'West Wales Coracle Caught Salmon'. This has been a long and dedicated process, which has taken over 4 years to complete with the help of the Welsh Government.

Not forgetting the 'West Wales Coracle Caught Sword', which was pulled out of the river by coracle man Mr Andrew Davies in April. This story has literally hit the social media headlines all over the world! The sword was sent away to Cardiff Museum and has been confirmed as being an 18th century Kris sword of Asian origin – how it got there we'll never know, but it confirms a fascinating history surrounding the River Towy.

Unfortunately, this year's Carmarthen River Festival looked as if it would go without the popular coracle races, but a group from 'Men's Sheds' arrived with their handmade coracles and saved the day. The winner of The Coracle Society Novice Race was 12year old Bethany from a local youth club. This year we introduced prizes so Bethany will be receiving £25 for her youth club at a special ceremony with the Mayor of Carmarthen in October.

However, it's not all good news to report as the River Towy is facing a battle to survive. It is faced with industrial and agricultural pollution which added to the Valero oil leak has meant there has been a frightening decline in the fish stock. We will continue to work with National Resources Wales to protect the River Towy, but like its coracles, it faces a very uncertain future.

Teifi – Pollution on the rivers in West Wales is currently causing huge problems. In particular agricultural run-off (dairy) and biomass. Couple of spills in the past 6-8 months – first spill in Tregaron area caused the death of about 1500 fish. Second incident about 3 months ago – unsure of consequences at this stage, although heavy rain at the time helped with dissipating the spill. Prosecutions are pending. National Resources Wales are not particularly efficient at their job with regards to this. It's very much a wait and see situation

Teifi netsmen have agreed to voluntarily catch and release salmon this year, to try help the ecosystem recover and salmon to spawn and they are doing all they can to inform the public – few media appearances to promote their catch and release policy earlier this year.

Ian Harries added that the Towy netsmen are in a more difficult position as there is more money to be made on the Towy through letting out angling opportunities, and the angling community there are determined to have coracle netsmen shut down.

Fishing bylaws review consultation about to start. Salmon likely to be compulsory catch and release, with further constrictions on fishing methods. Coracle netsmen likely to lose two months of fishing season. If the fishing licences for coracle go completely this will have a knock-on effect on other aspects – net making, coracle making, potentially events like the long-standing Cilgerran regatta. Licence numbers currently stand at 12 on the Teifi, 8 on the Tywi and 1 on the Taf.

Ironbridge Coracle Trust

HLF bid for £350,000 recently rejected at first round. HLF were very positive about the bid, but had to turn it down due to funding not being available. They have provided feedback on how to increase priority of the bid, which will be re-submitted end of August for November decision. Dependant on other bids submitted, but hopeful of a positive outcome. The bid is to stabilise the shed, conserve it, provide interpretation of the shed and its history and education work around the Gorge.

Awareness of ICT has improved recently and are now known/connected for the Ironbridge regatta. Recently joined Facebook.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President: Dr Irving Finkel

Vice Presidents: Rod Bowen, John Davies, Peter Faulkner, Martin Fowler, Terry Kenny

Proposed Jude Pilgrim; Seconded Peter Faulkner

Carried and elected en-bloc

Chairperson: Bruce Watson

Proposed Jude Pilgrim; Seconded Terry Kenny

Carried

Vice chairperson: Malcolm Rees

Proposed Jude Pilgrim; Seconded Mark Dellar

Carried

Secretary: Dylan Jones

Proposed Mark Dellar; Seconded Jude Pilgrim
Carried

Treasurer: Euan Raffel

As the outgoing Treasurer has held office for five years, the meeting voted to permit re-election to the post. The vote passed unanimously

Proposed Jude Pilgrim; Seconded Brian Pearce
Carried

Committee: Mark Dellar, Gerwyn Lewis, June Lewis, Darren Male, Brian Pearce, Jude Pilgrim, Julie Rees

Proposed Monika Jurgens; Seconded Euan Raffel
Carried and elected en-bloc

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

No report provided

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Jude Pilgrim and others asked that the next committee look into putting forward an amendment to the constitution where a President must stand down after their first 3 years in office (but eligible for re-election), following the absence of the current President for some time now. This was unanimously agreed and the next committee will look into this at their first meeting

Mark Dellar suggested that to lessen the turnover from introductory memberships included with coraclemaking courses, a discounted rate be offered to introductory members for their first 'paid' year. The next committee will look in to this at their first meeting

Darren Male suggested that some form of questionnaire be issued to coraclemakers to complete/new memberships received through the website to find out how people are finding themselves on coraclemaking courses/finding the Society

Shirley Hancock asked the possibility of reinstating some form of coracle usage/event at Llangollen, following success of reinstating coracles at Welshpool. It was noted that it is dependent on members/other persons being willing to set something up at Llangollen. Any member/person doing so will be supported by the Society

Darren Male asked if the children's pond can be repeated at other events, following the success of it at Countryfile Live. The response was it is definitely possible, the sticking point is usually getting potable water to fill the tank. Fire and Rescue Services have been asked to do this in the past but may not be as willing any more

Euan Raffel passed on comments from a couple of the Teifi netsmen that the Society needs to provide more information about coracle fishing, both for general information and to dispel myths that circulate from the angling community. He will work with the Towy and Teifi netsmen to produce material for the website and for banners/stands to take to events

Finally, in terms of display material, a question was asked if it would be possible for the Society to purchase a laptop/tablet in order to use for displaying photos, information etc. Euan Raffel responded that in short it is possible, but there are complications from securing the device on stand, powering it, data connections etc. Also issues with locating the equipment due to the spread out nature of members