**English Ceramic Circle - Charity No. 1097063**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the English Ceramic Circle**

**held Saturday 20th April 2024 in person at the Rembrandt Hotel, S. Kensington and Zoom**

**1 Opening remarks** – Jonathan Gray (JG) welcomed members to the meeting and briefly summarised the activities and achievements over the past year. JG explained:

* Busy year, with an excellent programme, Transactions and events
* Still working out what works best in a post-Covid world, but really trying to do things that work for all our members. Haven’t quite landed on how to record some physical meetings
* This AGM is the year to end October 2023 – very much business as usual. The Committee is still looking at the type of Charity status the ECC enjoys - and we may propose changes in the future (while remaining a charity)
* Very much a team effort – great that the Committee all have roles which contribute to the Circle – we are always looking for more Trustees
* Big thank you to our members, including the new ones and those who pay additional subscriptions – we were able to re-run the grants programme in 2023
* We are working on plans for 2027 (100th anniversary of the ECC) – and have not finalised them yet
* This year sees retirement from the Committee of Patricia Macleod – opportunity to express our thanks later

JG reminded members that under the rule changes agreed in 2022, single, joint and institutional members all have one vote each.

**2 Minutes of the previous meeting** - having been proposed and seconded, the minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting were approved unanimously by those in the room and on-line.

**3 Membership Secretary's Report –** Lucy Lead explained that to the year ending 31st October 2023, overall membership was at 550, a reduction of 4. 158 (29%) of our members are overseas, with 112 in the USA and Canada. During the year, the main decrease in membership occurred in the UK, down 3%, nearly offset by a 10% increase in USA and Canada. (*This data counts all membership as 1 – it does not reflect additional joint members.)* LL was thanks for standing in for Rebecca Walker (RW) who was then on maternity leave (RW has since decided to resign from the Committee).

**4. Treasurer's report and approval of accounts** – Barbara Jotham (BHJ) outlined the key points on the financial results for 2022/23 as follows:

Total income of £36,307, including £2,180 restricted income from Friends, Sponsors and Benefactors and a £1,500 restricted donation, was £1,266 higher than 2021/22. Membership income had reduced by £1,758, however membership numbers at 31st October 2023 were similar to the previous year due to a surge of members joining during the final five months which gave them extended membership to 31st October 2024. Friends, Sponsors and Benefactors income, which is used for research, publishing and projects to increase access to British ceramics, increased by £970 from £1,210 in 2021/22. The summer visit to Bowes Museum and Temple Newsam in 2023 generated £1,689 (£183 net of costs) compared to £418 (£168 net of costs) for the Fenton House visit in 2022. We benefited from higher interest rates on bank deposits to earn £2,072 compared to £897 in 2021/22.

Unrestricted expenditure of £32,358 was £3,648 higher than 2021/22. Some cost increases related to increased income e.g. the 2023 summer visit cost £1,506 compared to £250 in 2022. However the main additional cost arose from Transactions v33, which increased by £3,304, partly due to increased costs of postage and paper but also due to the increase in number of pages. Strong control of the costs of Transactions, which is by far the most significant annual cost, is essential because it is charged at the end of the financial year and creates the risk that the overall position becomes a deficit which it is too late in the year to reverse.

As it was, there was a small surplus of £269 on unrestricted funds, compared to £5,121 in 2021/22, which had been split £2,000 to the Printing Reserve for the Thomas Baxter publication arising from the seminar in 2022 and £3,121 to the fund initiated in 2020/21 to celebrate ECC’s Centenary in 2027. The £269 had been credited to the ECC 2027 Centenary Fund and we aim to add a more significant sum in 2023/24. £3,000 of the £4,237 Research reserve at 31st October 2023 was spent on grants early in 2023/24. With £1,500 received in 2022/23 and £500 early in 2023/24 there was a total of £4,000 available for the Thomas Baxter publication.

On the balance sheet, creditors of £27,084 included the printing and postage costs of Transactions v33. We had put our fixed term cash balances into longer term deposits to take advantage of higher interest rates.

**4 Approval of Trustee Report -** having been proposed and seconded, the Trustee Report and Accounts were approved unanimously.

**4a Appointment of the Independent Examiner** - having agreed to stand, John Beetwell, was unanimously re-elected as Independent Examiner for the Report and Accounts.

5 **Programme Secretary’s report** – Amber Turner (AT) explained that we are continuing with the format of monthly zoom lectures and two full day meetings based in London. Zoom lectures take place on either a Thursday or a Saturday at 6pm (UK), although it would be helpful to know if there is a preference for a certain day of the week. The forward programme was discussed. The meeting expressed their thanks to AT for a great forward programme.

**6 Editor's Report** – Jacqui Pearce (JP) advised that work on volume 34 was well advanced with an expected late “summer” publication date and that this is the second year in which the date on Transactions coincides with the year of publication. The contents were expected to include Eight main articles in hand, with three more awaited, together with three short papers/notes, Miscellany of Members’ Pieces and sadly two obituaries. The editors expressed gratitude to all contributors and to peer reviewers throughout the past year. The membership expressed thanks to JP and Anton Gabszewicz for their work on Transactions, which remains the stand-out publication from any ceramic group.

**7 Website and Marketing Report –** Simon Spier (SS) reported that we continue to use Zoom and Social Media tools to keep in contact with our members across the globe reiterated our intention to continue using them going forward. SS outlined a number of key website updates:

**Key Website updates made were as follows**

Meeting recordings (where possible) continue to be added to the members Videos page – now totalling 55 and includes the recordings of the Chelsea study day at the V&A. (Dec23)

Archive software updated to ensure we are current with latest version and features

Social media has been utilised to maximise our online presence, using Instagram to live-stream lectures in December. We continue to use Facebook (570 followers, up 140 / 32% from last year) and Instagram (1,353 followers, up 214 / 15% from last year) as a marketing tool to reach members and non-members alike. These social media tools enable us to advertise ECC talks and important ceramic related events of interest to specific groups such as ceramic collectors, dealers, hobbyists etc.

A recent experiment has been to ‘boost’ posts of upcoming Zoom talks, which appears to increase engagement.

We are looking at improving the website and making it easier to attract new members and sell publications

**8 Retirement of Committee Members**

Patricia Macleod has retired from the Committee – she was thanked for her significant contribution as Treasurer and Secretary. It was noted that the Committee has appointed Patricia as an Hon Vice Presidents.

**9 Election of Committee Members**

Jacqui Pearce, Rosemary Pemberton and Tom Smith offered themselves for re-election; Lucy Lead and Francesca John, having been co-opted to the Committee, were also proposed for election. All candidates were unanimously supported by the Membership in the room and on-line.

**10 Any Other Business** – JG outlined that the Committee was looking for help with Membership, Secretary/Comms and with the 2027 Centenary Committee.

JG also notes that the Committee has changed the notes in the Rules, so we now give new members now qualify for 3 months free membership if they join after 1st August in any given year (reduced from 5 months) – this was supported by members despite technically not needing AGM approval.

Inclusion, JG thanked all the Committee members for their contributions over the last twelve months.

Jonathan Gray, President, ECC