

English Ceramic Circle - Charity No. 1097063

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the English Ceramic Circle

held Saturday 12th April 2025 at the Hilton Doubletree Gloucester Road and on-line

1 Opening remarks – Jonathan Gray (JG) welcomed members to the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Over the last year, JG explained:

- Busy year, with an excellent programme, Transactions and events – the Wedgwood and Society of Dilettanti seminar in MAR25 was very popular
- The Circle's work was very much a team effort – great that the Committee all have roles which contribute to the Circle – we are always looking for more Trustees
- There are increasing headwinds – costs up (especially overseas postage) and printing generally, and its harder to find volunteers to do some of work as before
- Some of our processes, notably how we onboard new members, have not worked as well as we would have liked/expect
- Big thank you to our members, including the new ones and those who pay additional subscriptions – we will rerun the grants programme in 2025
- We have received a generous publication grant from Ceramica-Stiftung, Basel and will be printing the papers from the Thomas Baxter Jnr study day in 2022
- We have also had our first bequest – from the estate of Diana Edwards – from the sale of her ceramic library in Washington DC
- We are working on plans for 2027 (100th anniversary of the ECC)

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 2024 Annual General Meeting were approved unanimously by those in the room and on-line.

3 Membership Secretary's Report – JG explained that Total membership as at 31st October 2024 was 521, 29 lower than the preceding year. 129 (25%) of our members are overseas, with 112 in the USA and Canada. During the year, the main decrease in membership occurred in Europe, down 43%. No growth was seen in any market – the USA and Canada was flat. JG explained that the trend for 2024/25 shows a further reduction in membership.

4. Treasurer's report and approval of accounts – Barbara Jotham (BHJ) outlined the key points on the financial results for 2023/24 as follows:

Total income of £36,928, including £2,172 restricted income from Friends, Sponsors and Benefactors and a £500 restricted donation for the Thomas Baxter publication, was £621 higher than 2022/23. Membership income had reduced by a relatively small figure of £276, while membership numbers at 31st October 2024 were 5% less than at 31st October 2023. Friends, Sponsors and Benefactors income, which is used for research, publishing and projects to increase

access to British ceramics, was similar to 2022/23. The Chelsea seminar generated £1,600 (£181 net of costs) compared to £1,689 (£183 net of costs) for the Bowes Museum and Temple Newsam visit in 2023. We continued to benefit from higher interest rates on bank deposits to earn £3,972 compared to £2,072 in 2022/23.

Unrestricted expenditure of £29,823 was £2,535 lower than 2022/23. Transaction v34 (248 pages) cost £3,185 less than v33 (276 pages), which had increased £3,304, partly due to higher costs of postage and paper but also due to the increase in number of pages. Meetings costs increased from £3,951 to £5,556 due to the November meeting being brought forward in 2024 to October.

Overall, there was a surplus of £4,433 on unrestricted funds, compared to £269 in 2022/23, which has been credited to the fund initiated in 2020/21 to celebrate ECC's Centenary in 2027, bringing the balance to £9,588 at 31st October 2024.

£3,000 of the £4,237 Research reserve at 31st October 2023 was spent on grants early in 2023/24; including the £2,172 donations received in 2023/24 the balance at 31st October 2024 was £3,409. With £2,000 designated in 2022/23 and £2,000 restricted donations received, there was a total of £4,000 available at 31st October 2024 for the Thomas Baxter publication due to be published later in 2025, with £6,000 pledged from Ceramica-Stiftung and further donations received in 2024/25.

On the balance sheet, creditors of £21,176 included the printing and postage costs of Transactions v34. We have continued to place 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) the forward programme. She also announced that Programme was being taken over by Neil Ewins as she was stepping down from Committee to start a family.

6 Editor's Report – Jacqui Pearce (JP) advised that volume 34 was published in Autumn 2024. Volume Work on Volume 35 is progressing. JP explained the plan to scale back on shorter papers and notes to focus on the main articles. JP explained that the editors are grateful 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 and our intention is to continue using them going forward.

- a) **Meeting recordings** - where possible, continue to be added to the members Videos page – now totalling 57.
- b) **Website improvements** - we have also engaged outside help to improve the usability of the website (e.g. ticket sales).
- c) **Marketing** – we are using social media has been utilised to maximise our online presence, and have used Instagram to live-stream lectures (with mixed results). Social media enable us to advertise ECC talks and important ceramic related events – including other society events. Regarding Instagram - 1,746 followers, up 393 on last year (up 29%). We added more posts advertising upcoming auction sales of members and/or past members pots and general activity (posts/stories) in Instagram. Regarding Facebook - 570 followers, up 140 on last year (32%)

8 Retirement of Committee Members - Rosemary Pemberton has retired as a Trustee/Committee Member. The meeting thanked her for her significant contribution.

9 Election of Committee Members - Barbara Jotham and Jim Peake we both available for re-election, and were approved unanimously. Neil Ewins, Irina Zigar and Oliver Towers, all having been co-opted, had their membership confirmed. All candidates were unanimously supported by the Membership in the room and on-line.

10 Confirmation of Jonathan Gray for a second term as President - BHJ sought approval from the membership for the Committee's decision to ask JG to serve a final three-year term as President. This was supported unanimously.

11 Any Other Business – JG outlined that the Committee was looking for help with Membership, New Membership and Secretarial roles.

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

Jonathan Gray
President, ECC