



BRITISH-LITHUANIAN SOCIETY

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held 17th June 2019 at the Embassy of Lithuania 2 Bessborough Gardens, London SW1V 2JE

The Annual General Meeting was attended by 29 members (quorum: 16), also 2 guests. Among the guests was Brian Olley, HM Ambassador Designate to Vilnius.

1.0 Approval of agenda

Approved.

2.0 Minutes of 2018 Annual General Meeting

The Minutes of the 2018 AGM were approved without comment.

3.0 Matters arising

None.

4.0 Chairman's report

The Chairman expressed the Society's gratitude to Ambassador Renatas Norkus and his staff for their continuing support for the Society; and especially for making the Embassy premises available for our events.

We celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Society this year, and it had been an eventful year in both our countries. A new President in Lithuania and soon to be a new Prime Minister in the UK. While Brexit had continued to be the biggest event that was not an event - at least not yet.

The Chairman said that he was indebted to fellow Committee members for their varied contributions to the activities of the Society. Our Secretary, Aleksas Vilčinskas, continued to be indispensable. Sadly, we were saying goodbye to one of our Committee colleagues at this AGM: Neil Taylor had asked to leave the Committee for health reasons, but promised to continue to be informally associated with our work. He had been a great support over many years both in the Committee and at our events. In recognition of Neil's contribution, the Committee thought that it would be appropriate to award him an Honorary Membership of the Society. Neil had all our thanks.

The Chairman named a few others who were present that evening. Brian Olley is here- the next British Ambassador to Vilnius – was there. He would be taking over there in September. We wished him well.

Also present were Helena and Chris Peart, whom it was good to see again. We would be remembering Michael Peart once more when Professor Richard Ennals delivered the Michael J Peart Memorial Lecture after the AGM. Richard was a Founder Member of the Society and we were indeed fortunate to have him to speak in this special anniversary year.

The Committee were of course grateful to all our Members – all of them - for their continuing support, which included renewing their Memberships, and encouraging others to do so! Those who renew as, or

upgrade to, Sustaining Members were particularly appreciated since their subscriptions helped to support the work of the Tiltas Trust.

The Chairman reviewed our Speaker events since the last AGM. The virtuoso pianist Indrė Petrauskaitė, a noted interpreter of Ravel, marked for us the launch of her new CD with a live concert and commentary. Dr Aleks Pluskowski spoke about the Baltic Crusades, informed by the most recent excavations and research. Also in a historical vein, the noted historian Adam Zamoyski spoke about Napoleon's invasion of Russia, and the Emperor's time in Vilnius. A leading Lithuanian lawyer, Robert Juodka, told us about his other life as a member of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union *Šauliai*. And Richard Wildash, a senior official at the Foreign Office, spoke to us on UK European policy after Brexit.

All these meetings took time and trouble to arrange. It was therefore a little disappointing that some were quite poorly attended. Of course, it was understood that many Members lived outside London and could not easily or always get to our Speaker meetings. The chosen topics interested some more than others. But if the Committee could not be confident of reasonable numbers, we could not approach the kind of people - especially politicians - who were accustomed to invest their time into larger audiences. It would help if Members who had told us they were coming to an event, did in fact turn up. Notwithstanding these constraints, the Committee hoped to be able to continue to offer three or four Speaker meetings a year, encompassing political, economic and cultural topics.

We had made modest financial contributions to promote or support events which seemed to be in tune with our aims. Among these had been a recent Symposium at the Cass School of Architecture which covered inter-war Bauhaus architecture in Kaunas, and sponsorship of the artist Robertas Narkus to participate in a UK Residency under the auspices of the Delfina Foundation. Also, fashion designer Morta Nakaitė's participation in the 2019 International Fashion Showcase at Somerset House, and the Baltic Council's 'Young Baltic Talent' concert at the Royal Academy of Music.

Our magazine *Tiltas* continued to appear regularly thanks to the hard work of Aleksas who put it together, and to all those who contributed articles. We aimed for a varied mix, as reflected in the latest, spring edition, and we already had some ideas for the next, autumn one. Aleksas as editor was happy to receive ideas and contributions.

5.0 Secretary's & *Tiltas* Editor's report

At the time of this AGM the Society had 122 members, compared with 123 at last year's AGM, and 127 at the end of last year. A few more members were expected to join later during the year, so our numbers should stay fairly stable.

Of the 122, 51 were Ordinary members, 36 Sustaining, 2 Corporate, 13 Life, and 20 Honorary. 2019 had been unusual in that B-LS gained two Life members, at £300 each. Both had previously been Sustaining members who had decided to 'upgrade'.

More members were desired, especially younger ones. All those present were asked to inform their friends about the Society and asked to write to the Secretary for information and membership forms.

The *Tiltas* journal had continued to be published twice annually, in Spring and Autumn. Preparation of the next issue was in progress. An expanded version of this year's lecture by Prof Richard Ennals was to appear in the Autumn edition. Members were asked to come up with ideas for future articles.

6.0 Treasurer's report for year ended 31st December 2018

In 2018, the Society had a small deficit of £191, following the surplus of £89 in 2017. The number of paying members fell from 109 to 101. However the subscription income for the year increased by nearly £800 mainly as a result of the decision to raise the membership fees for Ordinary, Sustaining and Corporate members.

The impact of the decision to raise fees had been as follows:

- the number of paying Ordinary members remained constant at 62 and the subscription income increased by £310
- the number of Student members reduced from 6 to 2 , the reduction in income, on an unchanged rate of £5, being £20
- the number of Sustaining members reduced from 39 to 34 but the increased fee of £10 (from £35 to £45) resulted in an increase in income of £160.
- the number of Corporate members stayed constant at 2 and the increase in income was £30.
- finally, we had one Life subscription of £300 – which was one more than the year before.

Our total income was further increased by a surplus on events of £406 compared with £124 the year before. Edward Lucas drew an attendance of 66 people for his presentation on 'The Kremlin Threat' in April 2018 (also attended by members of the British Latvian Association and guests).

This improved level of income enabled expenditure on various 'sponsorships' to be increased significantly – from £120 to £1350. This renewed level of support for relevant cultural activities converted our small 2017 surplus into a small 2018 deficit.

On 31st December 2018 we carried forward reserves of £5658 into the current year and, as things currently stand, we are expecting a surplus for 2019 .

Many thanks were extended to Gražina Thompson and James Bathurst for their service as Accounts Examiners – which was much appreciated.

7.0 The Tiltas Trust (TTT) report

The report was presented by Tom Macan, Chairman of the Trust, to the B-LS AGM since the members of the Society were the Trust's principal source of funds. The Trust could not continue to exist without that support and we were most grateful for it.

Much of the Trust's work was done by e-mail and it only met when necessary. The sole meeting during the current year took place on 17th June in the Lithuanian Embassy. Four of the six Trustees were present: two of our number recently become mothers and family responsibilities meant that they could not travel.

Palliative Care

Palliative Care (PC) remained TTT's top priority. The relationship between St Ann's Hospice in Manchester and the Lithuanian Palliative Medicine Association (LPMA) had developed to a stage where it was robust and self-sustaining. One example: in March, Dr Philip Lomax (Medical Director at St Ann's) suggested to a fellow-consultant, Dr Gursaran Purewal, that she might like to attend an LPMA Seminar and make a presentation on use of opioids (a particular problem for Lithuanian PC practitioners). Which she did, at no cost to Trust or LPMA: we learned of it only when she submitted her report. This was the sort of cooperative relationship between UK and Lithuanian partners which we regarded as ideal.

In October 2018, St Ann's hosted an intensive, one-week internship for two Lithuanian PC doctors – a pain specialist and an anaesthetist. It was particularly rewarding that, when Dr Purewal attended the LPMA March Seminar, she was able to report that one of these interns had made a presentation which drew on and shared her experiences at St Ann's. - exactly this sort of cascading of lessons learned which we hoped would be the result of such visits,

St Ann's have generously offered a further internship this autumn, and LPMA have expressed a wish to send two paediatric PC professionals. Dr Lomax and senior colleague will also travel to Lithuania to make presentations at LPMA Annual Conference in October.

Some time ago, the Trust agreed to part-fund a book on pain relief, authored by Prof Šeškevičius, retiring President of the LPMA. This book will be published this autumn in time for LPMA's Annual Conference.

Ministerial Visit

In March 2019, Lithuania's Vice-Minister for Health, Dr Lina Jaruseviciene, was in Manchester for a World Health Conference. One of the conference organisers was Professor Jackie Oldham at Manchester University who chairs the St Ann's Trust. So the Minister and her team paid a visit to visit St Ann's and two TTT Trustees were invited: we hope that we were able to encourage Minister to look positively on some of the ideas that LPMA are putting forward, stemming from their experiences in the UK. The Vice-Minister also raised the twin issues of third-sector funding and voluntary work, both subjects which TTT has tried to take forward. Sadly the LT partner she suggested is one with whom we had already discussed ideas without their bearing fruit but we took encouragement that there was interest and concern at a senior level in these two issues.

Radiation Therapy

In 2017, the Trust initiated a visit to Lithuanian counterparts by two radiation therapy specialists from the Rosemere Cancer Centre in Preston. In October 2018, Rosemere organised a three-day programme for three Lithuanian specialists to gain an insight into radiotherapy practice in North West England. The participants were enthusiastic and reported that they had found the visit useful, though we noted with regret that the anticipated follow-up has not taken place. Nonetheless, we thought that both sides had been able to draw useful lessons from their experiences so far.

Rumšiškės Open Air Museum

Over the last four years, TTT had supported in various ways the development of therapeutic riding at Rumšiškės Open Air Museum - on the lines of Riding for the Disabled (RDA) in the UK. Early in the year, we had some concerns when the instructor we had had trained reported that she was about to go on maternity leave, and that there were to be major changes in the museum's management. Happily the new Director was an internal appointment and someone who knew and was enthusiastic about therapeutic riding. We therefore continued to support the programme, in particular its use by the Kaunas Pranas Daunys School for sight-impaired and autistic children.

Duke of Edinburgh's International Award (DoEIA)

The project at Rumšiškės and Kaunas Pranas Daunys School led our thoughts in another direction: the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award (DoEIA). The Trust and B-LS played a modest part in the establishment of DoEIA in Lithuania some years ago and one of our Trustees was on the board. The DoEIA was a real success story: 170 youngsters will this year gain either Bronze or Silver Awards. The British Embassy generously hosted the ceremony at which the certificates were handed out, but 170 was more than they could manage, so a new venue was required. The DoEIA in Lithuania was unusual in that it was largely funded by the Education Ministry and TTT support was minimal.

The Rumšiškės scheme did spark two ideas: might the Rumšiškės programme be able to reach more disabled youngsters if it were able to recruit able-bodied, volunteer, young supporters to work with the children? And might this volunteer activity be so managed as to count towards the volunteering element of the DoEIA? Which provoked the further thought: what about those disabled young people at the Kaunas Pranas Daunys School being able themselves to participate in the DoEIA? Not too much progress had been made on the first idea, but the second was one where UK had useful experience, in particular at Kentish Town City Farm. So, TT have stimulated links between the DoEIA UK HQ and the Vilnius office which we hope would lead to a visit later this year to learn more about the UK experience and the particular challenges that arise with disabled youngsters participating in the DoEIA.

Arts for Health

The Trust had supported various projects by Socialiniai Meno Projektai (SMP) over the last eight years or so. In recent years, their focus has been on access to the arts for older generations, particularly those suffering from dementia. In April 2019, SMP were invited to present at a series of events at London's Tate Modern entitled "Age/ncy: Art, Ageing and Transition Festival". Their contribution was all about helping those with dementia and age-related problems to relate to exhibits in the Tate Modern. The timing was close to Easter and the traditional (non-chocolate) Easter-egg concept, so important in Lithuania, with its random patterns and colours proved a useful leitmotif. The Trust helped fund this participation: was it possibly the first Lithuanian performance in the Tate Modern?

The bilateral relationship and the future of the Trust

Two final thoughts: first the relevance of the Trust to the UK/Lithuania bilateral relationship. This relationship had changed beyond recognition since Tom Macan had been appointed Ambassador to Vilnius 24 years ago. Many of the problems we were addressing then had been solved. But some "softer issues" such as how one supports those with cancer, how one addresses the challenges of palliative care, how one supports the elderly and confused could be handled better. If the UK had skills and expertise, we thought that it was right to try and share it.

If Brexit did indeed happen, it seemed to us that the UK's bilateral relationships would become more important. And that in respect of the relationship with Lithuania, the Trust had a role, albeit a modest one to play in that. The Vice Minister for Health's visit was perhaps best example over the last twelve months.

The chairman's second point was that none of this could be done without people. Four of TTT's six Trustees, and all of those based in the UK, had been involved since the Trust started 12 years ago. Which meant that we were all 12 years older, and three on the far side of 70! If younger people did not come forward to replace us, the Trust would have to fold and that was perhaps the biggest challenge that The Tiltas Trust and the British-Lithuanian Society faced. The solution was within our control, but we needed to find those people.

8.0 Election of Committee for 2019-2020

The following were re-elected *nem con*: Kastytis Baublys, Simon Butt, Prof. Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski, Peter Howe, Aleksas Vilčinskis, Dr Aurelija Zamauskaitė.

9.0 Appointment of Accounts Examiners for 2019

James Bathurst and Gražina Thompson were reappointed *nem con*.

10.0 Any other business/discussion

Romas Kinka, commenting on the Chairman's observation that poor attendance at some recent talks were a disincentive to attracting more prominent speakers, worried that attendance could fall even more if only seemingly 'uninteresting' speakers were invited. The Chairman reassured him that prominent speakers would continue to be invited.

Tiina Tamman, who lived in Reading, thought that our flyers for upcoming talks were not sufficiently 'catchy', and consequently discouraged some members from coming. The Secretary replied that he always attempted to make the flyers 'tabloidy' but that usually the title and text were provided by the speaker, and the Secretary was reticent to make any radical changes for fear of causing offence.

Brian Holmes thought that the Society should print some brochures or cards with information about B-LS that could be given to potential members. The Chairman agreed to follow up on this idea.

The AGM was followed by the Michael J Peart Memorial Lecture by Professor Richard Ennals, founder member and first Deputy-Chair of the British-Lithuanian Society. His father, Lord Ennals, had been the first Chair.

A reception to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Society followed. (The inaugural meeting of the Society had been on 16th February 1994).

Notes by *Aleksas Vilčinskis*

19th June 2019