



BRITISH-LITHUANIAN SOCIETY

MINUTES of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held on 24th May 2017

at the Embassy of Lithuania, 2 Bessborough Gardens, London SW1V 2JE

Prior to the commencement of the formal business the Michael J Peart Memorial Lecture was delivered by Marius Raugalas, President, Lithuanian City of London Club. He gave an extremely interesting and informative presentation about the range of activities undertaken by the Club, and responded to questions covering a wide variety of topics.

The Meeting was attended by 22 members, also one guest. The required quorum was 15.
Simon Butt Chaired.

1.0 Approval of agenda

The Agenda was approved.

2.0 Minutes of 2016 Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the 2016 AGM had been sent in advance of the Meeting to those requesting them.
The Meeting accepted them as written.

3.0 Matters arising

None.

4.0 Chairman's report

- The Chairman expressed his gratitude to fellow Committee members for all their work over the past year, especially Secretary Aleksas Vilčinskas.
- Thanks were also extended to Ambassador, HE Asta Skaisgirytė, and her staff, for their consistent support for the Society, including through regularly making the Embassy available to host our events. Ambassador Skaisgirytė will be completing her assignment in the UK in the summer, and B-LS were organising a farewell event for her on 6th June.
- The past year had also seen the arrival in Vilnius of a new British Ambassador, Clare Lawrence - the first female to occupy that position. We were pleased to have her as a speaker last October.
- Professor Alan Mayhew had resigned from our Committee due to pressure of other commitments and the difficulty of getting from his home/work to meetings in London. The Committee was grateful for his contribution over a long period, and hoped that he would continue to feed in his views from time to time by e-mail.
- The Committee recently awarded an Honorary Corporate Membership of the B-LS to St Ann's Hospice, Greater Manchester. The award was in recognition of the work the Hospice has done to help develop palliative care in Lithuania.
- The Chairman reported that the Committee had decided, with some reluctance, to increase membership fees from January next year. Fees had been constant since 2008, but our expenses had not stood still. The increases were modest in absolute terms: £5 for Ordinary Members, on top of

- the existing £15; £10 for Sustaining Members, on top of the current £35; and £15 for Corporate Members, on top of the existing £75. The Committee hoped that the increase would not deter anyone from renewing their Memberships next year.
- Our journal *Tiltas* had continued to appear regularly and thanks were due to Aleksas and all contributors for that. The Editor sought an interesting mix of articles for every edition and contributions from Members were always welcome.
 - Our activities over the past year had included support for a fascinating seminar at the British Library on the Chylinski Bible; a most enjoyable talk on the music of Čiurlionis incorporating live performances by some very talented musicians; a talk about the history of multi-ethnic Vilnius; and one by the British author Stephan Collishaw on Laura Sintija Černiauskaitė's recently translated novel 'Breathing into Marble'. We also had our traditional Christmas party in a London restaurant.
 - The Committee would like to have more talks on political themes, but it can be difficult to agree mutually convenient timings with potential Speakers, who are usually busy people. Remigijus Šimašius, the Mayor of Vilnius, agreed in principle last year to speak at one of our meetings, and he actually offered a time when he would be in London. Unfortunately it was during the daytime on a Saturday which we thought would not have suited most of our members.
 - We would continue to aim to offer a balanced programme of Speaker events for members, and were following up on a number of ideas, including something on the implications of Brexit.

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

5.1 Membership

- Current total (Ordinary, Sustaining, Corporate, Student and Honorary) membership was 132, which was 14 fewer than at the end of 2016. It was pleasing to note that the number of Sustaining members remained constant, ensuring that B-LS's annual contribution to The Tiltas Trust (TTT) was maintained.
- The Secretary had little idea about the reasons for people not renewing membership. Most of them just dropped out without any explanation. In a few cases they wrote that they have gone abroad, or that they had no free time to come.
- The Society's aging and dwindling membership was a concern which needed to be addressed urgently. We had received a few expressions of interest from some potential members and hoped they would join before long. Members' ideas for attracting younger members were requested. Anybody wishing to join the Committee was invited to offer themselves for election that evening.
- It was hoped that more younger members would help improve our social media presence, ie *Facebook* and the website.

5.2 "*Tiltas*" journal

- B-LS continued to publish two issues every year, the Journal's content being quite diverse. The Editor tried to please every reader by offering at least one article of interest to them.
- The Editor's greatest challenge was to find contributors. Anyone wishing to write or knowing of someone who could was requested to advise the Editor without delay, as he was still short of articles for the Autumn issue.

6.0 Treasurer's report for year ended 31st December 2016

- In 2016, our deficit was nearly £500 leaving us with £5760 to carry forward into this year.
- Subscription income fell by £200 with no new Life members but three new Corporate members.
- Expenditure grew by £300 because B-LS sponsored the Chylinski Bible Seminar at the British Library, at a cost of £450.
- Our main annual expenditure was the publication of *Tiltas*, which cost about £1300 per annum for the two issues.
- The Society maintained funding of its charity, The Tiltas Trust, at £980.

- We carried forward reserves of nearly £6000 to the current year – this was more than two years worth of total income and with a continuation of annual deficits of about £500 a year could keep B-LS going for about 10 years. To reduce the annual deficit, the Committee was proposing a modest increase in membership fees from 2018 (see Chairman’s report above).
- In response to a question about the desirability of maintaining a balance of some £6000 in the bank, the treasurer explained that this was a fund which had been accumulated over the past 23 years. It represented about 2 years worth of total income and provided a reserve to enable the Society to meet, and withstand, unforeseeable changes to normal cash flow in the future - whether by significant reductions in income or significant increases in unavoidable or discretionary costs. It provided a degree of assurance of ongoing financial stability.
- However, the Treasurer reminded us that we were dependent on an aging membership and an aging committee. The Society had flourished for 23 years and, in many ways, has been very successful in promoting links between our two countries. The establishment of its charity has been a master-stroke – that was 10 years ago. Now The Tiltas Trust was facing similar challenges . Both the Trust and B-LS needed new blood to carry us forward.
- On B-LS’s behalf, the Treasurer thanked James Bathurst and Gražina Thompson for their work as Accounts Examiners.

7.0 The Tiltas Trust (TTT) report by Chairman Tom Macan

Since TTT’s last report of a year ago, the Trustees met in October and planned to meet next in Lithuania in September. They had of course transacted a considerable amount of business by email and telephone. The Trustees were grateful to the Embassy of Lithuania for allowing us to hold our physical meetings on their premises.

7.1 Palliative care: St Ann’s Hospice and the Lithuanian Palliative Medicine Association

- Work in support of palliative care in Lithuania continued to take the lion’s share of our resources and TTT were hugely grateful to St Ann’s Hospice, Manchester who had been principal UK partners. The Trustees were grateful to B-LS for recognising this support by giving St Ann’s Honorary Membership of the Society.
- In October 2016, the Trust funded a week-long visit to Lithuania by Dr Philip Lomax (Medical Director) and Ms Sian Burgess (Clinical Manager), timed to coincide with the annual meeting of the Lithuanian Palliative Medicine Association. Both presented very well-received papers at the meeting, and the Trust supported the translation of these. They also visited care providers in Klaipėda, Kaunas and Vilnius. An abbreviated version of Dr Lomax’s most detailed report had appeared in *Tiltas*.
- St Ann’s on-going readiness to work with Lithuanian counterparts was hugely encouraging, and was rewarded in March when HE Asta Skaisgirytė visited Manchester and was able to combine a lecture at the University, and a call at City Hall with a visit to St Ann’s. She was briefed by Trustees, the CEO and senior staff, and then given a tour of the hospice. She subsequently wrote expressing her gratitude for the knowledge and expertise St Ann’s brought to Lithuania to improve the standards of end of life.
- St Ann’s also hosted at the end of April a visit from the Franciscan brothers at Klaipėda who were keen to extend their existing facilities to include a hospice. The team which included technical staff were able to look at practical building and staffing matters, as well as the wider issues of providing palliative care. At the same time, Dr Rasa Degutienė, who runs a palliative care service in Klaipėda, enjoyed a week’s study visit at St Ann’s. TTT met travel and subsistence costs for this visit.

7.2 Arts in Health

- SMP ("Socialiniai Meno Projektai" - Social Arts Projects) were the key movers behind a hugely successful exhibition “Sing me to sleep” at the National Gallery of Art in Vilnius in September 2016. This widely-praised exhibition was the outcome of a collaborative programme with two Lancashire artists known as “arthur + martha”, a direct outcome of SMP’s TTT-funded visit to the

- UK a year earlier. The exhibition focussed around creative activity – art, photography, poetry, and quilt-making - by homeless/marginalised people in Vilnius and Bury. The Trust contributed €1,000 towards the cost of printing material for the exhibition and HM Ambassador in Vilnius, as a TTT Patron, was able to attend one of the events.
- “The Homeless Library and Sing me to Sleep” Exhibition at the Bury Arts Museum in December formed a counterpart to the Vilnius event and the Trust were represented at the opening. The main focus was a book of stories set down by homeless people in Manchester but it included one exhibit from the earlier Vilnius exhibition and the quilt conceived in both Manchester and Vilnius. Both events had been reported in *Tiltas*.
 - The Arts and Health Dept. at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) had been a tower of strength in supporting this cooperation and the Trust were considering with the Dept.’s Director, Clive Parkinson, whether there was scope for TTT to support further work with the marginalised, particularly homelessness and the hugely challenging issue of suicide.
- 7.3 POLA (the Lithuanian Cancer Support Association)
- TTT had continued to work with POLA and Chairman Tom Macan had been able to have a good meeting in July 2016 with POLA’s president, Šarūnas Narbutas.
 - POLA’s 2016 policy conference in the Seimas building addressed the issue of corruption in the health service which remains a serious problem at many levels. Speakers came from a variety of countries, including the UK. TTT was not involved with the organisation but was pleased to fund interpretation costs of around £500.
 - TTT continued to hope that POLA might organise a conference to develop fund-raising skills and capacity for organisations in the cancer support and palliative care sectors (for which we had in-principle agreement from Macmillan and St Margaret’s Hospice, Yeovil, to provide speakers), but this had not yet proved possible.
- 7.4 Disabled riding at Rumšiškės
- TTT had continued to provide advice and support to the Rumšiškės Open Air Museum in the use of their herd of Žemaitukai horses for riding experiences for the disabled and others in need of therapeutic support. £ 200 in donations had been received from TTT supporters, the money to be used to facilitate riding experiences for a group of blind and partially-sighted young people from Kaunas.
- 7.5 Poetry competition
- Following 2015’s successful event, the Trust funded again in 2016 a Poetry Competition for medical/carer professionals and trainees organised by our partners Vita Digna who were now also seeking to work alongside SMP. They have also been able to produce a small booklet of the best poems (on the lines of the Scottish Poetry Library’s booklet which was what inspired us to get involved). The winners were announced at a gathering in late April.
- 7.6 Cancer radiotherapy
- Contacts with the Rosemere Cancer Centre in Lancashire, and in particular its former director, the Rev Dr Mike Kirby, led to the Trust supporting a brief scoping visit to Lithuania by Dr Kirby and Ms Helen Clements of Rosemere. They established a range of interesting contacts in Kaunas and Klaipėda (including a visit to the Franciscans, of obvious interest to Dr Kirby as an ordained Anglican) and TTT were hopeful that these would develop further. Thanks were extended to Trustee Mida Babilienė whose efforts before and during the visit were the key to its success.
- 7.7 Trustees and the future of the Trust
- At its November meeting, the Trust re-appointed Kastytis Baublys as a Trustee. In the absence of an indication from Chris Butler that he was able to continue, his appointment lapsed at the end of his term of office.
 - Last year, Tom Macan recorded Trustees’ views about the need to recruit newer (and younger) members to their ranks, both in the UK and Lithuania - individuals with an interest in the Trust’s

work and a readiness to develop projects. Our efforts had not yet met with success and, if they do not, we shall need to consider for how much longer the Trust can remain viable.

7.8 Thanks

- The Trustees acknowledged with thanks the ongoing support from B-LS members, without which the Trust's work would not be possible, and also the goodwill and support from TTT's patrons, the two Ambassadors, which continued to be a source of great encouragement.

8.0 Election of Committee for 2017-2018

Re-elected *nem con*: Kastytis Baublys, Simon Butt, Prof Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski, Jeremy Hill, Peter Howe, Neil Taylor, Aleksas Vilčinskas, Aurelija Zamauskaitė.

9.0 Appointment of Accounts Examiners for 2017

Re-appointed *nem con*: James Bathurst, Gražina Thompson.

10.0 Any other business/discussion

B-LS member Lt Col Peter Swanson was compiling information about Lithuanians who had served in the British Armed Forces. He asked Members to contact him should they have relevant data.

Noted by *Aleksas Vilčinskas*
26th May 2017