

**MINUTES OF THE 44TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON ZOOM
ON TUESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The meeting started at 19.00. Those online were:

Graham Mottram, **Chairman**
Malcolm Smith, **Secretary**
Attendees as listed at Annex A.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Ivan Childs, Chris Penney, Peter Cowlan, Nikolaos Diakidis, Jonathon Gibson

**2. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE 43RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2022**

The minutes were approved by the meeting and will be later signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The General Manager, Marc Farrance, reported as follows:

The Museum has enjoyed a busy year, with business nearly up to pre-Covid levels. The poor weather during the summer helped and trading performance has been good. The Museum had placed more emphasis on family programming. We have recently started to re-brand the Barracuda Project as 'Barracuda Live: The Big Rebuild' as work on Barracuda DP872 continues in our new Arthur Kimberley Viewing Gallery. Work on associated interpretation is nearing completion, albeit the physical arena itself has been in place now for a few weeks. Works planning continues and we intend to instal solar panels on the roof of Cobham Hall. The popular Christmas carol concert under the wings of Concorde returns this year at Yeovilton's Fleet Air Arm Museum on Friday 15th December 2023. Visitors can join the HMS Heron Royal Navy Volunteer Band under Concorde 002 in Hall Four of the Yeovilton museum.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Society's Chairman, Graham Mottram, reported as follows:

This is not so much a chairman's report this year as a haul down report. When I was asked to become Vice Chairman, I had no expectations of becoming chairman. But Richard Hufton's circumstances changed and he stood down from Chairman and I filled the gap. He said to me that it didn't require much more than a couple of emails each week but then we had a pandemic.

I would like to think that we have modernised the society a bit during my time. Some of that was due to the pandemic and some to initiatives of the council and its members. For instance, we have updated the Society website; we have digitised all copies of Jabberwock; We have added digital banking via PayPal and we have adopted, if not totally embraced just yet, video meetings and conferencing.

One of the aspects of the society that we have spent quite some time on without fully resolving on a new strategy, is that of having younger members. We have all had an ambition to see real youth within the society, but I think that we must be realistic and accept that the society as we know it does not provide much of real interest to people much younger than 50. We have tried to engage with the Sea Cadet Corps and there is an outstanding action which I'm handing on, to present a family membership to the two most aviation-minded sea cadets in Portland, and it would be nice if we can further nurture a relationship with the regional SCC. The reality is that members of the SCC are very dependent upon their parents for transport. Although a family membership helps to make that bit more practical it is my opinion that that's no longer a particularly smart area in which to hunt for new members. We also don't really have much of a digital offering that is so necessary these days to grab the attention of people under 30 or 40 years of age. Going forward I do think that the society needs to review the range of outputs and products that it offers to members. Only then can we really expect to drive down the average age of the membership.

That said the excellent work of our membership secretaries over the last few years supported by other council members in a bit of recruiting has seen our membership remain pretty healthy. It fluctuates a bit but it's quite close to 1000 and that's not a bad thing. Obviously, we lose people due to the effects of time, but we backfill at the other end of the age scale and we maintain a sound membership. That generates a reasonable level of income that enables the society to view the future with reasonable optimism, provided that that is not mistaken for complacency. I must also mention here that one of the victims of time has sadly been Admiral Ray Rawbone, variously President and Patron since the establishing meeting of SOFFAAM. The position of Patron is under review by the council, although it is not a critically important appointment in a modern world.

Post-pandemic we have managed to reinstate our key products of lecture evenings and away days. Serious thanks are due to Richard McCauley and Roseanne Crowther for continuing to work on these and to develop a successful programme. We have seen a slow growth in attendance at lecture evenings but have been a bit disappointed at the relatively small numbers of members, particularly from a long distance away, taking advantage of the Zoom offer. The Council might need also to consider the possibility of monetising the lecture evenings via Zoom for non -members, generating extra revenue and possibly adding a few members along the way. The finances are healthy though and credit is due to Martin Turner who has been a very conscientious and careful treasurer for a long time and is also intending now to step down.

I want to show you a piece of work which Martin has done and that is the list of donations to FAAM over about the last 12 years. The first chunk of those was in my time as Director and the second batch is my time as Chairman. That takes our numbers to over £120,000 in the last 12 years. I know that we caused concern in NMRN when we refused to subsidise salaries at the start of the pandemic. The reasoning behind that was that we did not feel that we should support operating costs of an organisation which may not be supported by its parent. If an organisation is not capable of being a going concern, its associated society should not be throwing good money after bad. Once NMRN had shown that FAAM would be continuing in business we did help to fund the electrical equipment upgrade in 2022 the tune of £10,000. That is an unusual

donation because most of the rest have been associated with Collections work, either by buying items for the collection and or supporting their display and interpretation. And I hope that the society will continue to do that going forwards.

I could ramble on some more but if I'm leaving I ought to get off and not overstay my welcome. I would just like to thank all the officers who have supported me this last seven years and have put significant efforts into keeping SOFFAAM going through the most difficult time in its history. This is the AGM of an organisation that is healthy and which has a future. Good Luck everyone.

6. PUBLICITY AND RECRUITMENT

Chris Penney had provided the following report:

After the restrictions of the pandemic and no Air Day locally efforts this year have gone into ensuring a society presence at aviation & military events throughout Somerset. Trustees have taken the promotional gazebo to Weston Zoyland, Henstridge and Dunkeswell fly-ins as well as Somerset Armed Forces Day and will also attend Yeovil's autumn model show.

This has allowed a wider audience to view the benefits of joining and for trustees to engage with members who don't necessarily attend functions at FAAM. All events attended yielded new members. Another benefit has been the recruitment of speakers for talk nights. Branded polo shirts have been acquired for stand helpers. The gazebo is now starting to show signs of fatigue and will be considered for replacement in the next financial year.

Our membership leaflet was placed in an issue of Warships International Magazine that went to all to UK subscribers. It piggybacked the title's coverage of Hall 2's Carrier reopening. Several members were obtained as a result.

Talk nights continue to be promoted through various media including local radio, social media and event websites and thanks go to FAAM for giving these coverage. Members with email are automatically sent details and members are reminded to check their spam folder for notifications of weblinks. Audience feedback needs obtaining to pinpoint the marketing methods yielding results.

Our Facebook social networking page continues to grow with over 700 followers, over 100 of which are overseas. The company has redesigned its portal seemingly making it less user friendly. There is now a noticeable time-lag between placing information on the webpage and the phone app. Targeted paid advertising of events is an option allowed although to date has not been pursued. Facebook has many facets and can become time unlimited if allowed. It is particularly used by organisations that don't have a membership scheme. More has to be done to look at ways of converting our Facebook followers into members in conjunction with the society's website.

The Marketing & Recruitment Sub-committee did not meet during the year and needs to reform in 2024 to allow more detailed discussions on membership promotion. Discussions within the council will take place with FAAM about a possible members day to be held in 2024, comprising a full day of activities centred on the museum.

7. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer, Martin Turner, reported as follows:

He tabled the annual accounts and these were approved by the meeting.

Post meeting note: The full accounts will be uploaded to the website, together with a copy of these minutes.

Election of independent examiner. The Treasurer proposed that Malvern Carvell should continue to act as the Independent Examiner. The proposal was carried without dissent.

8. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

David Merrett reported as follows:

As of this month, paying membership stands at 930, which is a reduction of 26 over the past 12 months despite having 62 new joiners. This reduction has been through the demise of members, subscriptions lapsing and a purging of the membership database system to remove duplicate records.

Of the 62 new members 17 came from events (Middlezoy 10, Dunkeswell 3, Henstridge 2 and other events 2), 14 came from member referrals, 11 came from FAAM visits, 4 came from the SoFFAAM website, 3 came from external publications, 3 were members re-joining, 1 was from attending a talk and 9 remain indeterminate.

Current Membership Statistics:

Gift Aid Declarations	702 (75.5%)
Lifetime Members	232 (24.9%)
Family Membership	12 (1.3%)
Junior Membership	3 (0.32%)
Overseas Membership (8 Individual, 17 Lifetime)	25 (2.7%)
Members taking e-Jabberwock	254 (27.3%)
Members with a valid email address	661 (71.1%)
Paying annually by standing order	570 (61.3%)
Paying annually by cheque/cash	69 (7.4%)
Paying annually by BACS/PayPal	87 (9.3%)
Lapsed (no current address held, member still paying) 10 (1%)	

This year has seen the end of membership cards. This has been piloted since January, with admission to FAAM being through the membership list which is currently submitted to them every 2 weeks. New members therefore have a maximum of 2 weeks before they can enjoy the benefits of membership. Work continues to develop a "live" link to FAAM which will make the process almost instantaneous.

9. TALKS AND VISITS REPORT

Rosanne Crowther had provided the following report on visits:

The New Year started well with a lunch at the Long Sutton Golf club. There were 36 members and guests in attendance, after a hearty meal a "very difficult" Aviation quiz was undertaken by all. This was followed by a brief speech from our Chairman Mr Graham Mottram, who started the raffle.

Please note we are already booked for the same venue for Saturday 13th January 2024

Thursday 1st June 2023

23 members and friends visited the Helicopter Museum at Weston Super Mare. We were given a first class tour of the museum by three of the museum guides, who were a font of knowledge. A number of aircraft were opened for us to see inside the cockpits. A once in a lifetime opportunity for some of our senior members!

After lunch we had time to look around the museum in more detail and to visit their shop. A very enjoyable day out – regrettably no time for a paddle!

Regrettably, due to other commitments I have not undertaken as many visits as I had hoped to for 2024. There will be more in 2024, including RAF Cosford and the Naval Dockyard.

Richard Macauley provided the following report on talks:

The talks programme continues to see the audience numbers gently grow but not quite to the figures we enjoyed pre Covid Pandemic. The Zoom audience likewise also maintains a steady audience but we would dearly like to see numbers increase as this would see a healthier income stream, especially in light of the increased costs to the Society in this past year. We continue to refine the Zoom offering with the intention of having a best possible product.

The Saturday Talk feature had two very good speakers in the Spring with mixed results audience wise. The business model of the Saturday Talk series is indisputable and worth continuing for 2024. Unfortunately, I will not be able to do this myself due to workloads in other areas. If a new team could be constituted to undertake the Saturday Series of Talks and enable this to continue, I will happily assist anyone who could lead and continue this initiative. Otherwise, the Saturday Series will unfortunately lapse.

Many thanks to all those who have assisted with the talks programme this past year. It is a considerable commitment and very much appreciated for the funds this generates for the Society.

10. EDITOR'S REPORT

Richard Macauley reported as follows:

Jabberwock. Another smooth production year between Malcolm Smith, Robert Heath and myself which has seen some new contributors. Also, thanks to David Merrett for supplying the distribution databases each quarter. The cost of the printed version was reviewed again this year to ensure we are getting a competitive price, as this is still the preferred option, though we continue to see a rise in new subscribers taking the e-Jabberwock PDF option.

Membership Leaflet. We have had just one re-print this year in order to make the necessary amendments due to the change of the Membership Secretary. This continues to be distributed around the museum, mainly by Chris Adams who we thank wholeheartedly as he continues to 'top up' the distribution points. Can other Council members do the same, as I do, if they happen to be in the Museum and they see a low or empty leaflet dispenser.

If anyone is able to place Membership Leaflets at any other distribution points such as theatres, churches, community halls etc., please advise and I can supply a batch of leaflets for this purpose.

Website. The revised design continues to work well in attracting a large number of visitors. Do not forget we have a Members Area with the back catalogue of the entire series of Jabberwock magazines (352 visitors in the last 60 days). I continue to look at

ways of adding more pages and thank you to those members that assist in supplying information and assisting in the build of this on-going exercise. Visitor numbers to the website continues to amaze (me at least). 60,940 visitors in the last 12 months.

Instagram. Further to Chris Penney's Social Media report, our Instagram account has been resurrected as another strand to our Social Media stream to try and attract a younger audience and membership. This has been taken up by our new young protege Jozef Newton, initially under my guidance.

Advertising around the Museum. We continue to work with the Museum in increasing the SoFFAAM presence. I am just embarking on a large panel to replace the SoFFAAM exhibit in Hall 2.

Posters displaying our Talks programme around the Museum have proved positive with attendees advising that is how they have seen who is speaking and how to obtain tickets.

11. ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

The General Manager took the Chair.

The Chairman stated that Admiral Tom Cunningham had agreed to continue in the role of President.

12. ELECTION OF COUNCIL

Malcolm Smith was elected as Chairman.

All those who had agreed to stand as Council members were elected unanimously.

A list of the elected members of the Council is at Annex B.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Graham Mottram resumed as Chairman.

None of note.

Approval of the Minutes given above.

Position :

Signature :

Date :

ANNEX A

SOFFAAM AGM, 26 SEPTEMBER 2023 – LIST OF ATTENDEES

General Manager:

Mark Farrance

Council Members:

Graham Mottram
Malcolm Smith
Tim Brandt
Richard Macauley
Martin Turner
Simon Websper
Chris Adams
Richard Deubert
David Lunson
David Merrett
Rosanne Crowther
Richard Hufton

Members:

Mike Palmer
Robert Heath
Mark Norbury
David N Lowe
Laurence Whitlock
Keith Richards
Gil Johnston
Tim Smith
Roy Sims
Joe Newton
Steve Robson
Mike Rawlinson

ANNEX B

ELECTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

President:

Admiral Tom Cunningham

Chairman:

Malcolm Smith

Vice-Chairman:

Tim Brandt

Members

Laurence Whitlock

Robert Heath

David Merrett

Richard Macauley

Chris Penney

Rosanne Crowther

Chris Adams

Richard Hufton

Peter Cowlan

David Lunson

Richard Deubert