

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Suffolk Horse Society  
held at 2.00pm on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2022.  
Holiday Inn – Ipswich & Via Zoom**

**Present:** The President: Mrs Lawrence Hoskins  
Chairman: Mr Mark Donsworth  
Company Secretary: Mrs Gail Sprake  
President Elect: Mrs Fiona Fleming

**In attendance:** Office Co-ordinator Jess Ellis & Admin Assistant Belinda Rudderham

**Members, Friends & Associates** (signed in – 51 in room) Mr P Smith, Mrs C Thompson, Mr A Thompson, Mr C Spalding, Mr L Hoskins, Mrs J Kelleway, Mr B Smith, Mrs M Keeble, Mrs S Walne, Abbe Marshall-Wyer, Michael Sprake, John Latham, Hazel Chapman, Bruce Langley Mckim, Cherry Grover, Gill Evans, Keith Twentyman, Sue Wager, Jonathan Purse, George Pratt, K Juby, Mary Ryder-Davies, Libby Archer, Robert Patchett, Neil Syrett, John Fleming, Alan Hawes, Danielle Lawrence, Fred Barrelet, Andrew Wager, Neil Adams, Robert Lambert, Frank Kinge, George Paul.

**Via Zoom:** Adrian Hoskins, Matthew Burks, Ken Laing, Stephen Smith, Sophie Keene, David Claussen, Adele Claussen, Sally Bates, Toby Bates, Jeff Hallett, Maggie Hallett, Andrew Dunnett, Claire Bartram, Charles Cooke, Julie Turner, Steve Pena, Heather Lander, Emma Louise, Jane Greenwood, Melanie, Tony Baker, Alison Clarke. (two members attended who did not confirm names on the Zoom call)

The President, Mrs Lawrence Hoskins, opened the meeting by welcoming those present and thanking all those that attended in person and via Zoom.

- 1. Apologies for absence were received from:** Stephen Bunting, Daniel Bunting, Mr Bunding, Nicholas Jenkins, Chris Oakley, Nigel Oakley, Daniel Oakley, Mrs Spalding, Richard Dalton, Ben Ryder Davies, Philip Ryder Davies, Mr Steve Ledsham, Mr Showla, Matt Bundock.

Chairman of Council Mark Donsworth read out names of Members, Friends and Associates known to have passed away since the last AGM: John Parker, Bill James, Ernie Smith, Peter Miller, Sarah Hall, Twink Alan, Mr John Thorne, Mrs Jull Whittenbury, Michael Stafford Crane, Trevor Hemmings, Mr Staley, Mr Harris, Mrs S Geller, Mary Moore, Sue Wall, Rvd Mr M Fayden, Mervyn Cater, Richard Charles Martin, Margaret Dinn, Ronald Andrews, Mr George West, Mr R Crispin, Margot Thompson, Peter Bailey, Roger Parckar, June Cooke, David Whittikar.

A minute's silence was observed.

- 2. To confirm the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Society held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2021.**

The Minutes were confirmed as a true and accurate record by all present and were signed by Mark Donsworth. Proposer – John Fleming, Seconder – Paul Smith.

All in Favour (from the room) - 46

Against – 0

Abstained - 1

### **3. Chairman's Report for 2021**

“Welcome! How lovely it is to be speaking to you in person and in a room full of people after all the challenges that Covid has presented to us all over the past two years.

However, I think that as a Society we have risen to these challenges and have made good progress over the past year. The sub-committees of Council have taken the time to focus on their particular areas of expertise; and we continue to pay heed to the Charity Commission's Good Governance Code since good governance helps us all work towards fulfilling the charity's vision. Our review of good practice, and indeed a comprehensive review of our Articles of Association gets underway in the coming months. As members, friends, breeders, stallion owners – we all want to ensure that the Suffolk Horse Society's objects are achieved.

Change has come and will continue to come, but the breed has stood the test of time, and whilst some people want to rush ahead with new ideas, concepts and breeding initiatives, we have to move forward with caution, to ensure mistakes are not made and all views are considered.

During my tenure as Chairman, I have endeavored to be as transparent and progressive as possible, whilst obtaining a consensus from the Council. We have looked at many issues that have simmered for many years. None more provocative than the introduction of animals from overseas. Many deep conversations and discussions have taken place to investigate and identify the advantages and indeed disadvantages. We have opened up dialogue with the North American Suffolk Horse Association and we are looking at the various elements of how they register horses, and particularly stallion selection criteria. Our grading up register has ensured that animals entering the Stud Book can do so safely and with the care the SHS should show. We have also started to discuss a DNA project, that has now been recommended by the Scientific committee, which if approved, could add further weight behind the excellent results we are already beginning to see from the SPARKS Project. Discussions have been as robust and delving as you would expect and I can honestly say it has been an honour to chair those meetings.

Just occasionally we don't get it right all the time, and for that I offer an apology – there are a couple of things that I would like to share with you as Chairman.

I take all matters very seriously and take full responsibility for them and I do not have to reiterate what a period of huge upheaval and disruption we faced and had to cope with. The office was once again closed for some time, with staff working from home and indeed the inability to meet face to face has brought us many challenges. However, I feel I should explain two points:

Firstly, after last year's AGM, I asked Sue Wager to be my Vice Chairman. It was approved by Council and I have to say Sue has worked tirelessly, and by tirelessly, I mean she devotes her whole life to this Society and I could not have asked for a more dedicated and hard-working Vice Chairman. Her knowledge is without doubt immense and her passion for the Suffolk horse amazing. However, the Articles state that a Vice Chairman should only stand for three years. I believe she has added to the Society and not been a detriment, but I hold my hands up to the mistake.

Secondly, I must express my disappointment that it was necessary to spend the Society's money on legal expenses, I did not do this lightly or in a frivolous way. However, we were confronted with a couple of our members who questioned our procedures, our constitution, and the validity of how the Society was being run. The legal expenditure in seeking clarification and ensuring the Society acted appropriately has been nasty, but we have had to take the proper advice and I still believe it was the correct thing to do. I do apologise to all those members who work so tirelessly to generate money and support the good works of the Society, but I am not and will not stand by and put the Suffolk Horse Society's good name at risk or indeed slur its good name.

The Suffolk Horse Society is a wonderful organisation that has stood and protected the breed for generations, and indeed many generations of stalwart members and their families kept this breed alive during those dark years when no one else could see a future, they kept their resolve and perhaps we should ask those that are so keen to criticise and tell us what we are doing wrong, what they are doing to support the Society and the Horse.

Recently our Council members have been criticised for being involved with the Council for too long. I can tell you almost without exception, the trustees dedicate their lives, and I mean dedicate their lives, to the Suffolk horse. Their attendance at meetings is amazing and the fund raising they do is done with no thought to their personal finances or gain, and they commit their spare time to the Society selflessly. Perhaps I could take one Trustee in particular, and probably our longest- service trustee. Cherry Grover has given over 50 years to this Society. She is a fully qualified driving instructor, she has driven, worked, broken Heavies of all

breeds, her knowledge of the breed and the associated aspects of the Suffolk Horse is immense. A renowned judge who has recently completed her final year as a stallion inspector, I ask if this lady and many others don't deserve to be on the Council, then who does? And I firmly believe it would be a retrograde step to not take advantage of this huge pool of knowledge/resource. I wonder if these complaints are centered around self-interest and personal gain more than the good of the Suffolk horse and indeed the inability to accept what the Constitution and Articles of this Society stand for.

The majority of our membership continues to be significantly based in the Eastern counties, but it is pleasing to note that our Council is increasingly representative of the country as a whole.

At this point I should note the wonderful support the trustees and indeed some of the members have given me in the last twelve months, some have gone way beyond expectations and for that I would like to thank you personally and indeed on behalf of the Society.

I would also like to thank our amazing President Mrs Lawrence Hoskins – Andrea - for her unceasing support, passion and energy that she has given the Society in the last two years. We owe you so much.

Our thanks should also go to George Paul our past Chairman who was co-opted onto the Council and who has done so much work on legacies and donations, thank you for all your hard work behind the scenes.

Our Treasurer Alan Hawes who has worked tirelessly again behind the scenes to ensure the finances look as good as they do, I said last year and I will reiterate that behind every strong and well-run organisation is a strong balance sheet and I applaud Alan for how the financial position sits today – thank you.

There is also one lady who up until two years ago I didn't really know, but in the last two years I have grown to respect her intellect, her amazing work rate, her knowledge on Charity and Company law and indeed her humour, I can say it has been not only been a pleasure to work alongside her, but it is an honour to call her a friend. Our Company Secretary Gail Sprake is an inspiration, her knowledge, her balanced consideration. I and the Suffolk Horse Society are tremendously lucky to have her on as trustee and Company Secretary. Gail -thank you for everything this year.

Covid has brought its challenges, but it has brought together work patterns, that have enabled so much. I must also thank our two part time members of staff for their hard work and commitment. Jess who has been with us for some years has now been joined by Belinda, who now alongside running membership and passports has also taken on the role of show and events person. This will mean we will be more visible across the country with our new display vehicle as we go into the show season.

We have made considerable progress on many counts: semen collection from new stallions has been fantastic and we can now boast a bank of over 600 straws from 19 stallions, a great legacy for the future. I believe we must concentrate in the coming year once again to help breeders increase the percentage of conceptions and live foals from our breeding mares. Let us use the science that is out there! The Thoroughbred industry would not be happy with a 50% conception to foal rate, and whilst the Suffolk may not be as valuable in a financial way, it is far more valuable in its rarity value.

If I am lucky enough to be voted in for a further term, indeed if I am voted onto the Council, I can assure all members that my commitment and enthusiasm to uphold the values of this amazing Society will be continue to be as strong.

Thank you all for your support.”

MD asked if anyone had any questions.

Prosper – Sue Wager, Seconder – Paul Smith

All in Favour (from the room) – 47

Against – 0

Abstained - 0

### **3.To receive the Annual Report and Accounts for 2021.**

Mr Alan Hawes, the Society Treasurer presented the accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

Membership subscriptions were showing an increase of £3,000 over the previous year but this was mainly as a result of increasing the annual subscriptions. Investment income had increased by £6,000 to £29,000 and it was hoped that this will increase again in 2022 to over £30,000. Legacies received were over £100,000 which together with the legacies received in 2020 of £100,000 and in 2019 of £200,000, totaling £400,000 in three years. This had improved the financial aspects of the society considerably. The total income of the Society in the year was £277,725.

On the expenditure side, grants paid for breeding were £26,532 and together with other activities of £142,000 resulted in total expenditure of £169,181 resulting in a surplus for the year of £108,544. In addition the Society's investments had increased in value by £132,606. However, the figure at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 was significantly high and during 2022 these investments had fallen by £59,332. If one takes the two figures together these show an overall increase of some £80,000 since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and members must consider that the overall position is good for the society. Investments were still worth over £1m on the previous Friday.

There followed two slides on the split of income and expenditure. Membership subscriptions were only 8% of total income whereas grants were 35% and legacies were 39%. It is the amounts of legacies and grants providing 74% of income which had kept the Society going. Investment income was 11%.

In relation to expenditure, grants paid were 16% of total expenses, employment costs 40%, office cost 19% and professional fees were 10% of expenditure.

The last slide showed a summary of the Balance Sheet with fixed assets at £62,362 and Endowment funds of £63,715 being amounts that the Society cannot spend without getting Charity Commission approval. The restricted funds of £51,538 represent amounts given to the Society for specific purposes and relate to the Breeding Fund. It is the remaining assets and liabilities which are the general funds of the Society.

Over the last two years the investments have been reviewed and changes made which can be seen to have increased investment income and also show capital growth. Some of the cash of the Society has also been placed in short term deposits ranging from instant access (paying little interest) to funds invested for up to one year which provide a better interest rate.

The Treasurer asked in any members had any questions on the accounts but he felt that the decision to change accountants had proved to be the right one as Ensors' charges were about 50% of the fees paid previously and the year-end matters had been dealt with much easier than previously.

Proposer – Sue Wager, Seconder - Fred Barrelet

The President asked if the Accounts could be adopted. 100% Voted yes

##### **5. To appoint Accountants for 2022.**

Alan Hawes the Treasurer proposed the appointment of Ensors.

Proposer – George Paul, Seconder – Gail Sprake

George Paul commented that the Society is extremely fortunate to have Alan Hawes as the Treasurer. The change of accountants and the new format for the accounts have made it so much easier to understand.

AH asked if anyone had any questions.

- How many breeding mares has the Society got? It states that 86 coverings but only 81 mares are breeding? How is this the case?

MD confirmed that this would be answered directly by email after the meeting.

All in favour (In the room) – 47

Against – 0

Abstained - 0

##### **6. To elect Council Members.**

Ten candidates were submitted as possible Council Members for 6 vacancies in 2022.

Neil Adams, Matthew Burks, Mark Donsworth, Clare Euston, Cheryl Grover, Adrian Hoskins, Bruce Langley Mckim, Mrs Abbe Marshall-Wyer, George Paul and Paul Smith.

AJH confirmed that the ballot papers had been sent directly to Ensors who counted and confirmed the results to him only.

277 valid ballot papers were returned out of 703 issued, which is a 39.4% return. 2 ballot papers were rejected but it did not make a difference to the results.

AJH confirmed that Neil Adams, Mark Donsworth, Clare Euston, Cheryl Grover, George Paul and Paul Smith were elected as trustees for the next four years.

MD thanked all those that applied to be a trustee in 2022 and were unsuccessful.

MD thanked Richard Dalton & Nigel Murfitt who retired from Council this year and for all they have done for the Society.

#### **7. To elect a President.**

Mrs Fiona Fleming was chosen by the Council in the absence of the Annual General Meeting in 2020 as President Elect. Mrs Fiona Fleming has confirmed she is happy to serve as president for the Suffolk Horse Society in 2022.

Proposer – Mrs L Hoskins, Seconder – Gail Sprake

In Favour – 46

Against – 0

Abstained – 1

The retiring President Mrs L Hoskins gave a brief address and thanked Council and members for their support during her time in office. She reiterated that it had been a pleasure and privilege to serve as President of the Suffolk Horse Society.

#### **Presentation of the President's Award**

Mrs L Hoskins then awarded the President's award to Bruce Smith on behalf of Matt Bundock as he was unable to attend the meeting.

Mrs L Hoskins passed the Suffolk Horse Society 'chain over to Mrs F Fleming.

Mrs Fiona Fleming addressed the meeting:

"Thank you, it is such an honour and I feel very humble to take this chain especially as I have memories of my father wearing it too. Thank you, Andrea, for all you have done for the Society as President for the last two years.

I will do my best within this role with Shows, and meetings and for the members of the Society."

#### **8. To elect a President Elect.**

SW confirmed that the Council proposed that Mary Ryder Davies be the President Elect for 2022.

Proposer – Sue Wager

Seconder – Jonathan Purse

In Favour – 47

Against – 0

Abstained –

#### **10 Any Other Business**

MD confirmed that the Society had received the following questions before the AGM:

a) Abbe Marshall-Wyer

*"Despite several emails, at least one of which has been presented to the Stud Book and Grants Committee, I remain at a loss to understand the response I have received. I have asked why, when the mating I have chosen shows as Amber/Orange on her SPARKS sheet, it is deemed to be a Red mating simply because she is an Anglo American mare. I have been told that all Anglo American matings are deemed to be Red. I am struggling to understand how all literature in relation to breeding grants advises that they will be based on*

SPARKS data, and nowhere does it mention Anglo American mating being automatically treated as Red. The final response I received from the Stud Book and Grants Committee advises that “they upheld that the decision that grants for 2021 onwards should only be paid out using the SPARKS system.”

Can someone please explain when it was decided that all AA matings would be deemed to be red, and where this decision has been advised to members? I would also like to know how this decision fits with grants being paid out using the SPARKS system. Either grants are awarded using SPARKS or they are not.

JF confirmed that when the 2021 grants were agreed in 2020 when SPARKS had only just been released therefore the decision was made to only pay AA horses as a red mating.

Abbe Marshall-Wyer – that may be the case, however where does it actually state that change? Looking through the magazines and on the website nowhere does it state that would be the case. Please confirm.

JF confirmed that he would look it up and get back to Abbe by email after the AGM.

b) Leanne Schaefer

1. *“As an overseas member (New Zealand) I wish to enquire about the possibility of receiving the Suffolk Society magazine via email instead of via post. It is not uncommon for postage from the UK to take up to six weeks from dispatch to when I receive it. Other Societies and Associations I have belonged to have had the option and I think other members would also find this beneficial. It would save on postage and that money could be redirected elsewhere.*

2. *Merchandising. Is it possible to have a merchandising page on the Suffolk Society website please?*

3. *Breeding reminder. To all members / breeders / interested parties. The Rare Breeds Conservation Society of New Zealand (of which I am a member) has 55 straws of frozen semen available from Capleach Jackson- the last Suffolk Punch stallion in NZ. For further enquiries please contact [info@rarebreeds.co.nz](mailto:info@rarebreeds.co.nz) or myself as I will be happy to pass on any correspondence.*

4. *As a Society member, all but a very isolated one half way around the world, I wish to point out the elephant in the room. That is the future and continuance of the breed. I firmly believe that if we as a collective do not innovate and open ourselves up to new ideas the breed will suffer.*

*With only 500 Suffolks left, critically endangered and a shrinking genetic pool, even with careful management we face a virtual dead end.*

*One very obvious solution is to be more accepting of the input of “Colonial” bloodlines, and by that I mean genetics from USA, Canada, Australia.*

*Another is being more accepting and receptive to “part breeds”, “sport horses”, “cross breeds” that showcase the amazing versatility of the breed.*

*Encouraging businesses such as selective logging companies, companies in conservation or sensitive ecological areas, wedding venues, to use the breed in the way that they were intended, as an eco- friendly alternative to mechanization.*

*I am sure these are not new ideas by a long shot and yes, I probably do need to be corrected on many points but the dialogue needs to be entered into.”*

MD confirmed: We would not be looking to digitalise the magazine as we wouldn’t want to devalue it.

The Society is looking to get a merchandise page on the website and hopes to do this soon, however we are currently having a few issues with the website which we hope to have sorted soon.

Bruce Langley Mckim confirmed that in relation to the semen in New Zealand, he was looking to get some of this but the communications have stopped as it appeared that they wanted double semen stocks from the UK to swap.

MD thanked Leanne for her email and ideas.

MD asked if there were any further questions.

Melanie on Zoom asked if the Society is not having a Spectacular this year what is happening with the Supreme Championship?

MD confirmed that the Society is looking to put on shows around the country on the same weekend and this information will all be released when the finer details confirmed.

**The meeting was then declared officially closed by Mark Donsworth at 15.03pm**

Following the close of the formal business, as President of the Suffolk Horse Society, Mrs Fiona Fleming drew the raffle.

Raffle Prize Winners:

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize - £100 – J Solomans

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize - £200 – Miss Audrey Wood

1<sup>st</sup> Prize - £300 – Rebecca Green

DRAFT