The Martineau Society

(Registered Charity No. 1064092)

**Minutes of the 20th Annual General Meeting,
24 July 2015, George Hotel, Norwich**

The meeting commenced at 11.30 and was chaired by John Vint,
with about 25 members in attendance.

1. **Apologies for absence:**

Pamela Woof, John Warren, Jane Bancroft, Margaret Marks. Greetings were also received from Janet Middleton.

1. **Approval of Minutes of 19th Annual General Meeting, 26 July 2013, 11.30-12.30, Alicia Hotel, Liverpool.** The Minutes were approved by the meeting, following identification and correction of minor errors. The corrected minutes were duly signed by the Chair.
2. **Matters arising from the Minutes not otherwise on the agenda:**

*Highgate Cemetery, London – state of James Martineau’s grave*

Rod Voegeli reported that since there is no corporate membership of Highgate Cemetery and that the cemetery is currently well maintained, no further action by the Society is warranted.

1. **Chair's remarks – John Vint:**

*Miscellanies*: The Harris Manchester College (Oxford) librarian has approached the Society regarding the dispersal of the Harriet and James’ *Miscellanies,* produced by the Society and currently stored in the college library. It was AGREED that they be collected by John Vint and dispersed to publicise the work of the society. Besides giving free copies to new members, the following dispersal sites were also suggested: University of Birmingham (Martineau archives), Octagon Chapel (Norwich), Dr Williams’ Library (London), and the Huguenot Library (London). It was also AGREED that copies should be sold in pairs at a discount of 50% (i.e. £10).

*Duties of Committee members:* A list of the responsibilities of the executive committee members was circulated – an initiative warmly appreciated by members. It was also AGREED that the role of conference organiser(s) be included and that a North American member should also be included in the communication among the executive committee.

1. **Secretary’s Annual report – Sharon Connor:**

The Secretary’s annual report for 2014 was welcomed and formally accepted. Besides the formalities required by the Charities Commission (e.g. office holders and conference report), Sharon reported that The Martineau Society is a member of the Alliance of Literary Societies and the Friends of Key Hill Cemetery and that contact is also maintained with the Harriet Martineau Sociological Society and the Carlyle, Gaskell and Brontë literary societies. The Society also participates in online networks linking English Heritage, Unitarian Historical Society, Friends of Highgate Cemetery, The Huguenot Society, The Gaskell Society, The Bronte Society, The Carlyle Society, and The Wordsworth Trust. She also reported that The 3rd Harriet Martineau Lecture was held at The Hostry, Norwich Cathedral on 16th May 2015 and delivered by the Russian journalist Masha Gessen supported by Stuart Hobday. The lecture was reprised at the Brighton Festival in May.

It was also AGREED that John Vint & Dee Fowles should collect any Martineau Society archive material retained by Jane Bancroft (the previous secretary).

1. **Treasurer's report – Dee Fowles:**

The accounts for the Calendar year 2014 (with equivalent figures for 2013) were tabled. In addition, Dee noted:

1. that the apparent differences between the two sets of figures were largely illusory since they have arisen from differences in receipt of payments and invoices. Thus, although claims for Gift-Aid were submitted in 2014, payment was received in 2015 (and thus do not appear in the 2014 accounts).
2. The CCLA investment is still flat–lining, due to the low rates of interest. Only £24.33 was added during 2014.
3. A separate line has been created for website and IT-related items. During 2014 the website was refurbished and relaunched but, in future, its costs will largely be limited to rental costs (for internet space) and a small annual retainer (c£50) for the website designer.
4. *Membership (to date):**Life membership* 20; *Annual Membership* 42 (paid), 12 (unpaid); institutional membership 5. Overall there is a small increase in membership. Dee continues to chase a few 2014 subscriptions.
5. *Membership fees:* Dee flagged questions about the long-term value of life *vs* yearly membership – particularly at a time of low interest rates.This issue may be returned to at future AGMs.
6. *Audit:* thanks were extended to Max Wild for validating the 2014 accounts.
7. **Newsletter Editor's report – Bruce Chilton:**

It was reported that the Spring 2015 Newsletter had been mailed to members; and that the 2nd 2015 Newsletter would be circulated towards the end of the year. Bruce also called for contributions on Martineau family networks, beyond those discussed at the conference.

Members of the Society warmly thanked Bruce for the improved quality of the paper used in the Newsletter and for the creative use of coloured illustrations. Thanks were also conveyed to Valerie Sanders for her work in printing and distributing the Newsletter, thus assuring its continued success.

1. **Election of officers and committee:**

 By popular acclaim, the 2014 committee was re-elected as follows:

Chairperson: John Vint

Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Dee Fowles

Secretary: Sharon Connor

Administrator: Gaby Weiner

Newsletter Editor: Bruce Chilton

Minute Secretary: David Hamilton

Other Committee members: Elisabeth Arbuckle, Valerie Sanders, Beth Torgerson (North America), plus Ruth Watts (in her capacity as President).

1. **Administrator – Gaby Weiner:**

*Website:* Following the upgrading of the society’s website, Gaby reported that it seemed to be well used (at least by members) and had even attracted outside attention, including the recruitment of at least one new member.

*Gift-Aid:* After extensive grapplingwith the HM Revenue and Customs system for the online assessment of gift aid, Gaby and Dee have now familiarised themselves with the procedure.

*2014 Report to Charities Commission:* This was submitted at the beginning of 2015.

*Trustees:* in the light of the resignation of Jane Bancroft, Gaby proposed that Dee Fowles become a trustee of the Society and, therefore, be included in future reports to the Charities commission, a proposal that wasAGREED unanimously*.*

**10.** **Future venues of Martineau Society conference:**

It was AGREED that the 2016 meeting should take place in July, be held in Birmingham, should include a ‘public event’ and be organised by Stuart Hobday and Ruth Watts; and that venues for future conferences might include Dublin, London and Manchester.

1. **Any Other Business**

*Conference ‘public event’:* Stuart Hobday proposed, as indicated above, that the annual conference should include an embedded event that would be attractive to a local audience (e.g. graduate students). It would also raise the society’s profile and raise funds for the society. This proposal was warmly welcomed and will be attempted in the 2016 conference.

*Conference Photographic Record:* David Hamilton asked for help in finding an appropriate way to circulate conference photographs among members. It was AGREED that this issue should be followed up. Suggestions included that conference applicants might sign a release form; that *Dropbox* might be suitable, or that the photos be incorporated in a restricted segment of the website.

*Raising the Society’s profile:* three suggestions were made:

1. The Duchess of Cambridge (a distant relative of Harriet Martineau) be invited to become a patron of the society. This proposal proved controversial since a similar idea had been rejected at an earlier AGM.
2. That, in association with the 2016 publication of *Harriet Martineau and the Birth of Disciplines,* The BBCbe approached to include Harriet’s work as a theme for Melvin Bragg’s radio programme *In Our Time.*
3. That the Society underwrite the production and installation of a blue plaque (cost c£500) to be placed at the entrance of Harriet Martineau’s birthplace (Gurney Court, Norwich).

Harriet

The Chair closed the meeting at 12.30 pm.

Signature of Chair: date:

ACTION CHECKLIST

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| **Item**  | **Responsibility** | **Task** |
| 4 | John Vint & Dee Fowles | Collect and redistribute *Miscellanies* |
| 5 | John Vint & Dee Fowles | Collect archive material from Jane Bancroft |
| 11 | David Hamilton & Gaby Weiner | Investigate making conference photographs accessible to members (e.g. via website) |
| 11 | Ruth Watts & Stuart Hobday | Arrange 2016 conference in Birmingham and notify Gaby (for Society’s website) and Beth Torgerson (for UPENN website) regarding dates and location. |