

The Martineau Society
(Registered Charity No. 1064092)

Minutes of the 28th Annual General Meeting:
Held at the Merchants House, Norwich, Thursday 29th June, 2023, 11.45–12.45hrs.

1. Present: Sue Brown, Bruce Chilton, Carol Chilton, Sharon Connor, Iain Crawford, Dee Fowles, Keiko Funaki, David Hamilton, Stuart Hobday, John Martineau, Josephine McQuail, Valerie Sanders, John Vint, Gaby Weiner, Ellie Smolenaars, Bob Stillwell, Chris Valeo.

2. Apologies: Jeremy Martineau, Valerie Doulton, Victorine Martineau, Susan Hoeker-Drysdale, Geraldine Locise, Suzie Grogan, Beth Torgerson, Shu-Fang Lai and Julie Donovan.

3. Minutes of the 26th AGM (held at the Channing Unitarian Chapel, Sheffield on Wednesday 20th July, 2022) were ACCEPTED with minor alterations and will be submitted to John Vint (chairperson) for his signature and safe keeping among the Society's records.

4. Chairperson's Remarks: John Vint welcomed everyone, including both longstanding local members and participants from overseas. He also drew attention to the importance of the AGM for the likely reorganisation of the workings of the Society, including the accession of a new generation of officers. Finally, he identified that a critical problem in recent years has been the rising cost of organising the annual conference (i.e. following the Covid pandemic and increases in the cost of living).

5. Secretary's annual report: Sharon Connor shared the following report of the Society's work in 2019-20.

(a) **Membership:** We currently have a total of 67 members. Enquiries and membership applications to the Society are received by the Treasurer, who then sends regular updates to the Secretary and newsletter editors. Particular thanks are due to the Treasurer (Dee Fowles), for smoothing the transfer of these updates.

(b) **Committee and Conference Planning:** The working of the Committee is largely conducted by email. Particular thanks are therefore due to this year's conference organisers, Stuart Hobday and Bob Stillwell who alongside their many other professional and personal commitments this year, have got together an exciting programme, including a high-profile public event at the Octagon Chapel (Norwich).

(c) **Internet Website:** Gaby Weiner who manages the site continues to encourage members to keep her updated on anything relevant to The Martineau Society and its members. Thanks to Gaby and Valerie for their continued editorial work on Elisabeth Arbuckle's biography of Harriet Martineau which, chapter by chapter, is being added to the Martineau Society's website.

(d) **Links with other Societies:** The Martineau Society is a member of the Alliance of Literary Societies (their newsletter is distributed to members via email) and the Friends of Key Hill Cemetery. Further electronic links exist with English Heritage, Unitarian Historical Society, Friends of Highgate Cemetery, the Huguenot Society, the Gaskell Society, the Bronte Society, the Carlyle Society, the Wordsworth Trust, the British Association for Victorian Studies, the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals, the Huguenots of Spitalfields Society, the Blake Society and the Browning Society. Sharon also raised the question: Should the Martineau Society seek stronger links with the Alliance of Literary societies (e.g. by being represented at its annual conference in May 2024?).

(e) **Events and Publications:**

* In September 2022 Stuart Hobday gave a public talk on the history of the Martineau family during one of Norwich's 'Heritage Open Days'.

* The Society financially supported The Annual Harriet Martineau Lecture in Norwich in May 2023 delivered by journalist and author Charlotte Higgins.

* An online link with the Annual James Martineau Lecture (13th July 2023), at the University of Tasmania has been publicised on the Society's website.

* A chapter on Harriet Martineau is included in Alison Stone's *Women Philosophers in 19th century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

* In May 2023, the Alliance of Literary Societies celebrated the Martineau Society as its 'Society of the Month'.

* Ellie Smolenaars article 'The Heart Works of a Polymath Social Writer' was published on The Women for Women website.

(f) Martineau Society Journal (formerly Newsletter): The latest issue (No. 48) was distributed at the beginning of 2023. Our thanks go to the Editors, Bruce Chilton and Valerie Sanders who have ensured a continually high standard of publication. Nevertheless, they are always short of copy and welcome fresh contributions. Besides material which originally began as conference papers, the editors are also interested in general topics (e.g. use of the website) which might be of general interest to members.

(g) Public Benefit: The Society continues to provide an important information source, particularly through its website, annual meeting and newsletters, for students, scholars and members of the public in general, interested in the history, culture, and social movements and campaigns of the nineteenth century.

6. Treasurer's Report: Dee Fowles tabled the Society's account for 2021 and 2022. The report indicates that the Society's capital has been reduced by just over £2000. This arose because, as already noted, the fixed costs conferences have increased substantially and that, to overcome this shortcoming it was AGREED (a) that annual subscriptions should be raised to £25 in 2024 and (b) that subscriptions in the form of life membership should be suspended for at least a year (i.e. until the 2024 AGM). In the meantime, it was also AGREED that John Vint should write to existing life members inviting them to augment their current financial support for the Martineau Society. In addition, the website should be updated by Gaby Weiner to include the new subscription rates.

7. Newsletter editor and administrator's report: Bruce Chilton and Valerie Sanders reported delays in the publication of issue 48, largely due to a shortage of articles and the reluctance of academic authors to publish via the Journal of the Martineau Society. Given such difficulties, it was accepted that the Journal might only appear once in 2023 (despite the high quality of the year's conference papers). Materials suitable for publication in the Journal should be sent, jointly, to Bruce and Valerie. The question of Martineau Society publicity leaflets and posters was also raised. It was AGREED that John Vint would send copies of recent pamphlets and posters to Carole Chilton and that, wherever possible, leaflet and poster templates should be available on the website for members to download and use to publicise the workings of the Society. John Martineau also offered to support this activity.

8. Society's Administrator's Report: Gaby Weiner reported that her work embraces: (1) maintaining contact with the Charity Commission; (b) keeping the list of Trustees up to date; (c) submitting the Society's Gift Aid claim; (d) maintaining the 'living' status of the Society's website (with the technical help of Brian Homer) and keeping track of website

usage. Submission of the current Gift Aid claim has been delayed but will be renewed in the remainder of 2023. Gaby also indicated that she would like to step down from this office 'within a couple of years'.

9. Election of officers and committee: As noted, the election and re-election of officers was more complicated than in previous years since both the Chair (John Vince) and Treasurer had indicated that they would like to step down (after about 10 years in post). For the same reason, David Hamilton offered to continue as minute secretary for a couple of years. In some cases, too, newer members offered to support the work of specific office-holders (and their names have been added in brackets).

President: John Vint

Chairperson: Valerie Sanders

Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Dee Fowles (in consultation with Max Wild)

Secretary: Sharon Connor

Administrator: Gaby Weiner (supported by Ellie Smolenaars)

Newsletter Editor: Bruce Chilton

Newsletter Administrator: Valerie Sanders (with John Martineau's support).

Minute Secretary: David Hamilton.

Other Committee members: Beth Torgerson, Josie McQuail and Stuart Hobday.

10. Annual Conferences: It was AGREED that the 2024 annual conference be held at the Westgate chapel Lewes and organised by Gaby Weiner and David Hamilton. Ambleside was also suggested for the 2025 conference and, to that end, Pamela Woof, be consulted.

(11). Any other business: None that hadn't been tackled earlier in the meeting.

Signature of Chair:

date:

ACTION CHECK LIST

Item	Responsibility	Task
5	Gaby Weiner & Valerie Sanders	Editing the last third of Elisabeth Sanders Arbuckle's biography of Harriet Martineau with each edited chapter posted on the Society's website.
6,7	John Vint	Appeal to life members; send posters/leaflets to Carole Chilton.
8	Gaby Weiner & Dee Fowles	Submission of gift aid claim
10	Gaby Weiner & David Hamilton	Preparation for 2024 annual conference (Lewes)
	Valerie Sanders	Contact Pamela Woof re Lakeland conference.
6,8	Gaby Weiner	Update subscription details on website. Report website statistics.

[end of minute]