

Minutes of the Anglo-German FHS 37th Annual General Meeting

Held on Saturday 14th June 2025
at King's Cross Methodist Church Hall, Crestfield Street, WC1

Welcome

Noële Barnfield welcomed members to the 2025 AGM.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from: Gwen Davis, Peter and Dee Helmore, Sarah and Mike Paterson, Norma Shepherd, Jennifer Taylor, Jenny and Peter Towey.

2. Minutes of last AGM 8th June 2024

The previous minutes had been published on the AGFHS website and were accepted by those Members attending the meeting.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chairperson's Report

As ever your committee has worked tirelessly over the past year for the society, trying to encourage new members and of course more research.

I would like to mention the input of our two most recently joined Committee Members. Firstly, Andrew Güntert for his AGFHS mapping project. For each state Andrew has produced a map plus the names, websites and email addresses of family history societies in Germany, which should greatly help in people's searches for their ancestors in Germany. Andrew is also a Chartered Accountant and has kindly taken on the role of Independent Examiner for the society as John Short, who served us for many years, has had to step down.

Secondly, Chris Arundel who has taken on the role of publicity and has been generally trying to raise the profile of the AGFHS – I hope many of you have seen his Face Book entries of discussions/profiles of interesting people who have a German background e.g. the mathematician and science communicator Professor Christina Pagel, whose parents clearly had a very difficult time as children during and immediately post WW11 – very well worth reading.

As I said last year, if you are not yet a subscriber to our Face Book page can I encourage you to consider joining. This has been up and running over 4 years now, since March 2021, and has been a good 'window' for our society.

In the spring, with the help of a colleague, Chris Wade, Chris also devised a membership survey in the hope of better understanding what you would like from the society, as well as what you might offer. More of that later.

As well as the above, we have had 4 in-person meetings at King's Cross, and two Zoom only meetings in August and February. As always, Ann Gilmore has arranged some extremely

interesting speakers, with a mix of members and outside speakers, giving great variety. Coming up today after the AGM we have Kathy Chater, a very experienced speaker and historian, talking about the repositories in London

All our in-person meetings continue to be made available 'live' via Zoom, so that members who are not able to travel to King's Cross, can log-in. Jeremy also records the talks, so they are available to people who are not able to attend on the day, albeit we do sometimes have WiFi problems over which we have no control, possibly due to the new building going up directly opposite King's Cross Church. I would add though that nothing beats meeting in person, chatting to other members etc. and really do encourage people to attend where possible.

The Blatt, produced three times a year, continues to be a great source of information as well as interesting articles and very helpful advice. We also try to produce Occasional Papers when possible, as well as new book publications.

Our bookshop is available as a postal service via Jenny Towey and on-line from Parish Chest. It is also usually available at meetings, which is a great benefit to members and incurs no postage costs, another good reason to attend meetings.

I think the only negative feature to mention is that, despite the very real benefits of attending in person, numbers at these meetings still remain greatly reduced since Covid. We have therefore slightly reduced the hours we hire this hall, which saves money but make no difference to the talks etc. So if you are in contact with anyone you consider might be interested do please encourage them to come along to a meeting.

Sadly, I also have to report that due to distance and personal circumstances our Vice Presidents, Peter and Jenny Towey will no longer be able to attend in-person meetings. This is very disappointing both for them and for us.

We have also seen the passing of two of our very long serving members Muriel Breschinsky and honorary member Lily Stone.

As mentioned, John Short has had to give up his role as independent examiner and I would like to thank him on behalf of the Society for doing this job for so many years. It is very much appreciated.

My very sincere thanks also go to all the committee members for their work and support 'behind the scenes'.

Jeremy Gilmore, who, as well as being our long-serving treasurer, takes on all the technical responsibility of arranging and setting up the Zoom meetings, liaising with speakers, facilitating the showing of illustrations and dealing with the inevitable technical issues etc. and Ann Gilmore who has continued to source and arrange the varied and interesting speakers.

Peter and Jenny Towey for taking on the majority of the admin for our FaceBook page and answering the queries that are posted, as well as Jenny being Bookshop Manager/running the postal bookshop etc. Thanks to Jennifer Taylor and all the editorial team who continue to produce the excellent Blatt and occasional papers; Betty Anderson our Membership Secretary who also faithfully mans the door, along with Norma Shepherd, and gives out the prize draw tickets.

Thanks to Sue Neale, our Minutes Secretary, Paul Barnfield our Internment Curator, who also runs the bookshop at meetings and Gwen Davis our Secretary, KGL coordinator and Regional Meetings Coordinator. Andrew Güntert for his work on the mapping project and as our

independent examiner; and Chris Arundel for all his work and innovative ideas for raising the profile of the society. Thanks also to the various people who kindly assist me with the refreshments and clearing up. Last but not least thanks to you, the members, for continuing to support the society. Apologies if I have missed anyone out.

Thank you.

Noële Barnfield – Chairperson , June 2025

6. Treasurer's Report for Year Ending 31st March 2025

As you will see from the accompanying accounts, we finished the financial year with an increase in total funds of £1337 with respect to assets at the end of 2023-24; and with the Deposit Account standing at £8998, compared to £7703 at the end of the previous financial year.

With respect to income over the year, the significant differences compared with 2023-24 are:

- 1) I am pleased to report that member subscriptions have remained stable this year after many years of steady decline, and there has been an accompanying significant increase in donations of £607 (approx. 78%). I would like to thank members for their continued generous donations which they include with their subscription payments.
- 2) The level of sales from the bookshop and the bookstall at the bimonthly meetings in London have remained in line with those in 2023-24 after a 19% drop the previous year.
- 3) With the reduction to 4 in-person bimonthly meetings at King's Cross, and the February and August meetings moving to Zoom only, there has been a drop in entry fee receipts of £51 (approx. 20%).

All other items remained approximately in line with last year.

With respect to expenditure, the significant items are:

- 1) The figure of £591 under Fees, significantly down from £3292 in 2023-24. This includes the new reduced Public Liability Insurance that comes with our renewed membership of the Family History Federation. There were no upgrades required for the website's Joomla Content Management software in 2024-25.
- 2) A reduction in printing costs for the 'Blatt from £8601 to £6142, as we have moved to 3 regular editions per year and no Occasional edition.
- 3) The reduced figure for the venue hire at King's Cross Methodist Church, to £1160 which was prepayment for the 4 room rentals in 2025: for the April, June, October and December meetings; and with a reduction to a four hour time slot from 12.30 to 4.30pm. I will again be prepaying for 2026 later in 2025 and hope that there will not be further increases in the hourly rate.
- 4) A reduction in fees for speakers of £115 (approx. 37%) with an increased number of members' talks.

All other items remained approximately in line with the previous year.

The estimate of the value of the Society's assets shows a decrease of £625, due to a decrease in the Bookshop inventory through sales.

In summary, I am pleased to report the first increase in funds for many years, with subscriptions remaining stable and very generous donations from members on renewing their memberships. In addition, we chose to make a number of cost reduction measures this last year, including:

- a) The use of a free Dropbox account by the editorial team for compiling the magazine; and the publishing of only 3 editions each year.
- b) The rejoining of the Family History Federation which provides a more economic Public Liability Insurance.
- c) Holding only four in-person meetings (in April, June, October and December), with those in August and February by Zoom only; and reducing the rental period from 5 to 4 hours. We continue to look for alternative more economic venues within easy reach of King's Cross/St. Pancras station.

Exceptional expenditures which will need to be budgeted for in 2025-26 are:

- 1) The printing of a new edition of Susan Gibbon's very popular 'German Pork Butchers in Britain' book.
- 2) A minor upgrade to the agfhs.com website.

I would like to finish by thanking Andrew Güntert, who has taken over this year as the Society's independent examiner, for his advice and the meticulous examination of the accounts. I would also like to thank John Short for his many years of sterling service as our independent financial examiner.

Jeremy Gilmore – Treasurer, June 2025

The financial statements for 2024 -25 were agreed by those members attending the AGM.

7. Other Reports

a. Secretary

Unfortunately I cannot attend today's AGM but I am always pleased to get emails / letters from members, particularly in response to my "Notes". This year has been quite difficult for me to attend any meetings as I have had a knee operation from which it is taking me a while to recover fully.

I hope 2025 has brought everyone some success in their research. As usual I want to thank the other committee members for all their hard work.

Gwen Davis – Secretary, June 2025

b. Membership Secretary

The Society's membership has only fallen slightly this year and now stands at 438. I sent out 70 renewal reminders, a considerable reduction on last year's 109. We lost 42 members, which was also considerably less than last year. The number of new and re-joining members however, was the same as last year, a total of 30.

There has been two series of WDYTIA shown on BBC during this membership year; hopefully the series, which ended this week, will bring us some new members for 2025/2026. Once again, may I remind members that renewal time is here again and that you should have received the Summer edition of the Blatt, in which you will find the renewal form, together with a Standing Order Mandate. Those who prefer to pay by credit or debit card can renew online at either the Parish Chest or Genfair. We also accept bank transfers. Finally, I would like to thank all those for their very kind donations last year; the Society is most grateful for any donations, however small.

Betty Anderson – Membership Secretary, June 2025

c. Programme Organiser

Over the past year we have had talks from 6 members and from 5 outside speakers. Talks from members are wonderful for several reasons: we hear about how they traced their German ancestors and about the lives of those ancestors, or their talk is about an unrelated German or person of German descent whose story they came across while researching something else. Other members' talks are about an area of family or social history of particular interest to them. An added bonus of having talks given by members is that our Society saves money—outside speakers cost a lot, so please contact me if you would like to help out by giving a talk. Your talk can be the usual 50 minutes with questions afterwards, or you could do a 25 minute talk, sharing the hour with another member's 25 minute talk. If you would like help putting your illustrations into a Powerpoint presentation, Jeremy can help you do that—he has done that for a few of our members in the past. Also, if you know of a speaker or talk which might be of interest to the rest of us, please contact me, and many thanks to those who have done that.

Our members' talks over the last year have covered a variety of subjects: From member Paul Barnfield we heard the stories of two German families who had lived in the Middlesex village where Paul grew up—he came across them by chance when he was looking through some lesser-known sources while researching the 19th century history of the village. From member Norma Shepherd we heard the story of the British Merchant Navy Captain Fryatt who was shot by the Germans for having worked against them during WWI. From member Sarah Paterson we heard about the lives of the families of British military men who were sent to Germany in 1946. Sarah is a WWI Curator at the Imperial War Museum and she has access to the wonderful collections there. From member Lance Pettitt we heard the story of his paternal grandmother and the German man she met in Sussex in 1913 and how their subsequent lives resulted in Lance having an astonishing extended family. Several came along to the meeting and were introduced to previously unknown relatives for the first time, thanks to Lance's research and that of one of his cousins. From member Jeanette R Rosenberg we heard about the assimilation of 18th and 19th century German Jews into Great Britain. From honorary member Karl-Heinz Wuestner we heard another talk about German Pork Butchers in the UK. Several people who had gone on one or more of his guided trips around the Hohenlohe area, from which many of those pork butchers had come, were also at our meeting and some joined the society as well.

Talks from outside speakers over the year included: dating old photographs from Stephen Gill; the story of a British citizen who was put in Ruhleben Internment Camp in WWI and his life there and afterwards from Jackie Depelle; the history of Nuremberg from tour guide and former German teacher Frank Pattison; we heard about the 1939 Register from John Hanson; and from Mike Paterson we heard about Prussia's Military Orphanage in Potsdam—the place where one of our former members, the much missed Rudi Breschinsky and his brother lived for a time.

Today after the break we will have a talk from Kathy Chater about searching for family history information within the huge range of resources available in London.

Many thanks to those of you who have suggested or given a talk and to Jeremy for handling the tech for us and for sending out e-mail reminders before every meeting.

Ann Sternberg Gilmore – Programme Organiser, June 2025

d. Mitteilungsblatt Editorial

In the past year we have maintained the schedule of three issues per annum. For reasons of economy, we did not produce an occasional issue in 2024, and there are no plans to do so this year. However, if you have extensive material on one topic which would be suitable for an occasional issue, the Editorial Team will still like to hear from you so that arrangements for publication can be made.

While we have produced three issues, you may have noticed that they have become thinner and thinner. This shrinkage is not for reasons of economy, but reflects the lack of contributions from members. We need your help in this if you do not want a Blatt written entirely by committee members. While it is appreciated that members may not wish to submit a full-length article with illustrations, shorter contributions, tips learned during your research, or snippets of information would be particularly welcome. Many thanks to our Publicity Officer who has secured promises of contributions from members responding to a questionnaire he circulated. Your articles are eagerly awaited.

It must be stressed that the production of the Blatt is a team effort. In addition to the Editorial Team there is a team of proof-readers who eliminate errors, typists who digitise the hard copy submitted by members and, last but not least, the publishers who give the final manuscript a professional finish. Thanks are due to all these people.

Jennifer Taylor - Editorial Team, June 2025

e. Bookshop and Facebook

This year's book sales have picked up slightly...a mixture of both online and postal sales. Telephone calls, from the public enquiring about the Society and/or research topics, have decreased - possibly because of the availability of the Facebook group.

The Facebook group continues to slowly grow with 539 members to date: I am now adding posts from other Facebook groups which I think might amuse or be of interest.

Unfortunately, our recent Regional meeting - despite several members requesting them in the questionnaire - was extremely poorly attended. Please let us know if you would like us to continue holding them.

Jenny Towey - Vice President and Bookshop Manager, June 2025

f. Website

I would encourage members to visit the Society's website (www.agfhs.com) from time to time as we continue to add useful links and updates.

Looking at the Home page, I have recently added information provided by Chris Arundel, our Publicity Officer. There are links to interviews he has had with a number of public figures

who talk about their German ancestry. Chris has also been in contact with the German Historical Institute and gives a synopsis of the facilities available to visitors.

There is also a link on the Home page to the translated contents pages of various German Language Family History Journals which committee member Andrew Güntert has made available. If you wish to access the full article, he is happy to provide a translation.

Jeremy Gilmore – Website Editor, June 2025

g. Publicity

I took over as publicity officer last summer and I'd like to thank my predecessor Lin Eidmans for her work.

The priority this year has been to try and increase membership of the society and network with organisations that might help us, especially those with lots of resources, who can help spread the word.

We've created a dedicated email address for publicity, which is agfhs-press@outlook.com. The reason for doing this is that, in dealing with big organisations, it often helps to go through their press officer and, if your email address has press in it too, they'll likely respond. We've also produced an A4 information sheet about the society, including how to join, and this can be printed up and displayed by anyone who receives it.

One of the main aims has been to spread word about ourselves, focussing on groups that might contain people with German-speaking heritage.

The first group we selected was the British-German Town Twinning Associations. The British-German Association has a list of them, about two hundred and seventy in all, on its website. These proved to be less productive than expected, as the list of associations seems to be about ten years old, and in the intervening time around a third of the associations have closed or become dormant.

We had more response from the European Movement UK, which has local groups including Leeds for Europe, South-East London for Europe, Glasgow for Europe, and so on. A lot of these said they would circulate our details among their membership, and the Dorset group asked for an article about us for the West Country Voices online newspaper, and this was duly written.

Noële has also spread the word at the German YMCA in London.

Another strategy has been to catch people who find our website, by publishing features about well-known people, talking about their German-speaking heritage. So, we have features about the scientist Professor Christina Pagel, and the political commentator Peter Kellner. This makes what we do relatable, people see the article and think "I've got German or Austrian heritage just like them. Maybe I should look into it more."

It also helps with the branding. If a person or organisation we want to work with visits our website, they see links to the British German Association and that household names have spoken to us, and think "this is a group with some standing and influence, maybe we can collaborate."

Some recent news. The German Historical Institute in London is keen to work with us. Anyone can join their library for free and sign up to their newsletter, and details of how to do so are on our website. We've also got a mention, and a link to our website, in their May

newsletter. They are happy to publicise details of our talks, have put our information sheet on their noticeboard and would be happy to give a group of AGFHS members a guided tour, but it couldn't be before the end of this year as they are about to have some major building work done.

... and the Goethe Institut has agreed to display our information sheet where it might catch students with German or Austrian heritage.

Professor Lance Pettitt, who is a member of this society and has given talks to us, has provided more contacts, in addition to these, and they will be chased up in due course.

If you have ideas of other organisations who we might work with, do let me know or email AGFHS-Press at Outlook dot com.

Chris Arundel - Publicity, June 2025

8. Any Other Business

The viability of continuing to hold in-person meetings in London was raised. This subject will be discussed more fully by the committee at their next committee meeting.

9. Election of Independent Examiner

John Short, who has served as the Society's Independent Examiner for many years, has now stepped down from this role. The Society thanked him for his time and effort, which was much appreciated.

Andrew Güntert, who is a Chartered Accountant, has kindly offered to take on the role of Independent Examiner. This was proposed, seconded and agreed by those members of the Society present at the 2025 AGM.

There being no other business, Noële Barnfield thanked everyone for attending the 2025 Annual General Meeting.

ANGLO GERMAN FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Receipts and Payments for the year to 31st March 2025

<u>2023/2024</u>	Receipts	<u>2024/2025</u>	<u>2023/2024</u>	Payments	<u>2024/2025</u>
7226	Subscriptions	7233	3292	Fees (Insurance, etc)	591
782	Donations	1389		Donations & Presentations	
632	Sales - Bookshop	787	8601	Mitteilungsblatt Printing	6142
253	- Bookstall	105		Other Printing	
	- Fairs			Social Events	
66	Postages	114	84	Bookshop	0
1	Research	2	126	Postage & telephone	389
98	Bank Interest	95	2200	Venue Hire	1120
261	Raffles	210	425	Speakers	310
	Refund	2	10	Stationery	29
				Refund	19
				Equipment	
				Travel	
£9,319	Total Receipts	£9,937	£14,738	Total Payments	£8,600
£5,419	Excess payments over receipts			Excess Receipts over Payments:	£1,337
£14,738	Total	£9,937	£14,738	Total	£9,937

Cash position and Statement of Assets as at 31st March 2025

<u>2023/2024</u>		<u>2024/2025</u>	<u>2023/2024</u>		<u>2024/2025</u>
13437	Opening Balance 1st April	8018	149	Bank Current Account	191
-5419	Excess Payments over Receipts		7703	Bank Deposit Account	8998
	Excess Receipts over Payments	1337	146	Cash items held - Treasurer	146
			20	- Bookshop flo	20
£8,018	Balance in Hand	£9,355	£8,018		£9,355

Hon. Treasurer's estimate of values of Society Assets as at 31st March 2025

<u>2023/2024</u>		<u>2024/2025</u>	<u>2023/2024</u>		<u>2024/2025</u>
0	Computers nominal		582	b/fwd	554
82	Extra Equipment	54	3779	Society Publications	3182
0	Projectors nominal		300	Other Sale Items	300
500	Microfiche/CD Roms	500			
£582	sub-total c/fwd	£554	£4,661	Total	£4,036

I confirm that I have examined the financial records of the Anglo-German Family History Society, and have received such explanations as may have been necessary. The above Receipts & Payments Account gives a fair & true summary of the financial activities of the Society for the year ended 31st March 2025


 (signed)
 Andrew Guentert, Independent Examiner