

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION FUND, 14th JUNE 2021

1. MINUTES OF THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Minutes of the Last Annual General Meeting, 6th June 2019, having been previously published in the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, were taken as read, and there being no corrections, the Chairman proposed that the AGM accept them as a true record. The motion being carried, those Minutes were electronically signed by C. Strine, in anticipation of an ink signature being added in the future.

2. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND REPORT

The Chairman of the Fund, Casey Strine, welcomed members to the AGM, which was his third as Chairman, and all of which had been peculiar – the first because of the untimely death of the previous Chairman, Prof. Philip Davies, and the other two because of the ongoing pandemic.

Report

Last year, I was the first ever Chair of the PEF to oversee a virtual AGM. At the time, we all hoped it would be only a temporary change, and that now we would all be gathered together again in person for this meeting. It goes without saying that things have not gone according to that plan—nor various others hatched in the past 12 months—and so I write this report to you as I prepare to oversee a virtual AGM for the second time.

Nevertheless, I am happy to report that the PEF is in good health. Financially, the past year has been unprecedented, and full of uncertainty, but our Walter Morrison Endowment has not only held fast, but grown with the markets. We have also been the beneficiary of a significant legacy, and some of the COVID-19 relief funds. In short, we have weathered this period of unprecedented upheaval without any detriment to our funds thanks to the timing of our move from Hinde Mews to Greenwich and the sensible investment of our proceeds from the property sale.

The timing of the lockdowns has, however, meant a much greater disruption to our events, and to much of the work that was happening on our collections. On the former, we have dearly missed seeing our members and the wider public at lectures, seminars, and in the library. Nonetheless, we took the view that it was better to go slowly, to move into the space of digital events when we had developed both the technical expertise needed to produce high-quality materials and reflected properly on what topics made the most sense for such events. The fruits of that patience are now appearing—and will continue to do so over the next few months, and on into the future. COVID-19 will be an important inflection point after which PEF will be able to offer engaging online and in-person events going forward.

Working on the collections has been, of course, nearly impossible. Still, our dedicated staff have ensured the safety and health of the collection, and made progress on how we can share information about it more widely in the near future. Like all good archaeologists, they've more than made due with what they had available to them in the field—even if that field was their lounge, kitchen, and bedroom, not a dusty tell. Once again, then, I'm very happy to register my deep thanks to our staff for their hard work on behalf of the Fund over the past 12 months.

This year sees two notable retirements from the Board. Doctor Linda Hulin has been with us in various capacities: Honorary Secretary, PEQ Editor, and Grants Chair. One could say many things in praise of Linda, but I have known her best as the PEQ Editor, and her contributions in that role have been significant in putting the journal on strong footing. Its current strong state would not have been possible without her work.

Our other retirement is Prof John MacDermot. Any successful Honorary Secretary would have accomplishments of note to mention, but John's contribution goes far beyond that. Simply said, John masterminded our purchase of 5-6 Dreadnought Walk and our successful move into our new home. I have said before—publicly and privately to John—that the Fund owes him an immense amount for his contribution. I've also told him he could get a job as a construction project manager tomorrow based on his expertise. I hope, however, that he'll enjoy a bit more free time and his renewed status as a valued PEF volunteer knowing our immense gratitude to him.

What, then, might the next 12 months hold? I've never felt less capable of answering that question. For the PEF, we move into the next year on strong footing with our finances, our people, and our facilities. Above all, we move forward with the hope of seeing you all at events and in our library on a regular basis again, debating the particularities of some site or map, not of testing regimes and vaccine programmes. Inshallah.

Casey Strine

3. HONORARY SECRETARY'S REPORT

This is my last annual report to the members of the Palestine Exploration Fund as Honorary Secretary. My term of office (2016 - 2021) included the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and the activities at the PEF have been very restricted during the last year, but I have tried to show in this report some details of what has been possible since the AGM last year.

Membership: There has been a slight reduction in the number of individual members since the 2020 AGM, there being a fall from 270 to 256. It is my hope that when the PEF premises are opened again, it will be possible once again to recruit new members as others are lost to us though age or changing circumstances.

Lectures and Events: It will come as no surprise that closure of the British Museum during the pandemic has greatly affected our lecture programme. It has however been possible to undertake the following activities on line:

1. September 19th 2020 (4pm), joint study day: *Black Desert Neolithic* with CBRL, focusing on the PEF and CBRL sponsored Eastern Badia Pools project.
2. The PEF YouTube channel was launched, featuring:
 - a. an interview with Dr. Sarah Irving on the PEF's excavation foreman, Yusif Cana'an,
 - b. an interview with Dr. Alexandra Ariotti on her PEF sponsored excavations at Umm Tawabeen in Jordan.
 - c. More online material is in preparation.
3. July 10th 2021: A joint webinar is planned with the Egypt Exploration Society to discuss the Sinai Peninsula.

Visitors: Sadly, government directives during the pandemic prevented the PEF from welcoming members of the public to the PEF museum, as well as students and scholars to the library and special collections.

Projects: It has been possible to initiate or progress the following projects, many of which should now move forward more rapidly as restrictions to our activities are lifted:

1. Working from home, Ava Clark and Felicity Cobbing have spent much time and effort up-dating, and in some cases drafting for the first time, essential internal policy documents covering PEF recruitment, safeguarding, and Collections Management and Development. Such documents are essential for us to realise our long-term objective of acquiring Museum Accreditation. It has also been an opportunity to move forward with our access policy and the collections care policy.

2. Shortly before the lock-down in March 2020, new drawers were added by Bruynzeel Storage Systems Ltd to the mobile storage racks, which enabled us to increase their storage capacity very substantially. The consequent reorganisation of the documentary, photographic and objects collections in our store room is an on-going project, which has been significantly interrupted by the pandemic. It is however nearing completion.
3. Our joint project with Google Arts and Culture has been difficult to progress further during the pandemic. A certain amount of useful off-site work has been possible however, particularly in terms of developing and standardising our database nomenclature. This important project has been handled largely by Ava Clark and the PEF volunteers, and we look forward to further progress.
4. The development of the new Collections database has also been stalled to some extent, but it should be possible to re-start the project as a priority in the coming year.
5. Members will, I hope, be aware of the improvements in the PEF Website, which has continued to be developed and expanded during 2020 and 2021. We intend this to be developed as a portal for anyone interested in accessing the PEF and its public documentation (constitution, ethical policy, AGM minutes), details of our grants, publications, events, features and articles on important people in the PEF's history and finally Blogs on field and archival work. Many of these have been written by our volunteers and students on international internships, with the PEF providing digital material and learning support via email and Zoom.
6. The PEF YouTube channel was launched in early 2021. It is hoped that in due course our website will also host online versions of our collection catalogues.
7. In terms of our immediate future plans, several ideas have emerged as part of an anticipated celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Survey of Western Palestine. These might include lectures, seminars or relevant research projects. All being well, these will be taken forward in the coming year.

Loans and Exhibitions: The materials loaned to the Staatliches Museum für Archäologie Chemnitz (SMAC) and the Museum in der Kaiserpfalz in Paderborn for the exhibition “*Life at the Dead Sea*” were returned on the 19th November 2020. They had been loaned for a total period of 18th months.

Donations and Gifts: In the year June 2020 to June 2021, the PEF received donations of £633.50. Further details of legacies, donations and sundry income may be found for the period January to December 2020 in the *Report of the Trustees and Audited Financial Statements for the Year ended 31 December 2020*.

PEF Volunteers:

The PEF acknowledges the following important work undertaken by the volunteers:

1. Penelope Butler (Annuals editor) has seen the following through to publication:
 - a. Annual XVI ‘*The Sisters of Nazareth Convent. A Roman-Period, Byzantine, and Crusader Site in Central Nazareth*’ by Ken Dark,
 - b. Annual XVII ‘*Ancient Landscapes of Zoara I. Surveys and Excavations at the Ghor as-Safi in Jordan, 1997 – 2018*’ by Konstantinos Politis.
 - c. Annual XVIII, Volume 2 of the Zoara publication is in press,
 - d. Work is also progressing on the forthcoming publication of the Turkowski manuscript by Carol Palmer.
2. Rajib Khan (University of Greenwich) has been engaged in the store room reorganisation project, and an introductory film for the PEF website.

3. Alex Worsford (University of Kent) has been engaged in work on the Blogs on photographic material of James Graham, Francis Bedford (Prince of Wales Tour), and Captain Rhodes, and biographies of Elisabeth Finn and Angela Burdette Coutts for the history pages.
4. Rena Maguire has worked on the Google Arts and Culture Spreadsheets.
5. Nne-Amaka Nwokocha (University of Oxford) has worked on the Google Arts & Culture database and a Blog on Claude R. Conder's watercolours.
6. Jade Dang (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) has worked on the Google Arts & Culture database and a Blog on the Survey of Western Palestine in 3 parts.
7. Richard Hills has been engaged in the development of the PEF website and YouTube channel.

We look forward to welcoming back our regular volunteers Maryann Bowen and Gabrielle Fyjis Walker when it is safe to do so, and also to adding new recruits to the team, including Joana Atunes (Birkbeck College) & India Bingham (Institute of Archaeology, UCL).

Closing remarks: On behalf of my fellow members of the PEF Board of Trustees, I would like to acknowledge and thank most warmly our dedicated staff, namely Felicity Cobbing, Avantika (Ava) Clark, Ivona Lloyd-Jones, Yasmeen elKhoudary, and Elisabeth Sawerthal for their hard work and commitment during what has been a most difficult year. I would, at the same time, like to thank the volunteers, to whom the PEF owes so much, and my fellow PEF trustees, whose courtesy and understanding have seen me through any number of confusing and unexpected activities.

Lastly, I consider it a great privilege to have served as the Honorary Secretary of the PEF, an organisation that was first brought to my attention about 60 years ago by Olga Tufnell. I have no specialist knowledge or training in the subjects covered by the PEF, but I have heard much and learnt a little of the ancient history and archaeology of the Middle East in the last few years from both the staff and volunteers. I am most grateful for their generosity and forbearance when filling the gaps in my knowledge. I shall continue to work as a volunteer at the PEF and look forward in the years ahead to meeting once again our many members, friends and supporters at our various cultural and social events.

John MacDermot

4. HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

C. Strine reported that C. Glover had resigned as Honorary Treasurer at the recent Board Meeting. He was serving his second term as Honorary Treasurer, as he stepped into the breach when Tim Clayden resigned in November 2018. Until a new Honorary Treasurer was found, C. Strine would be Acting Honorary Treasurer. He urged those present to consider if they might help identify a suitable individual for this key role. C. Glover's report is copied below

Most years our income and expenditure are broadly in balance. As lectures and talks - the activities most affected by the pandemic—produce little or no income, the lockdown has not fundamentally affected this characteristic of our operation. Admittedly, our investment income will be lower this year—perhaps by as much as five percent—but this should be more than offset by generous government grants, approximately £41,000, and the local authority's partial rates holiday. In fact—and somewhat perversely—we could well show a significant surplus this year.

Thereafter, and without the benefit of grants and help with the rates, we may struggle to break even, particularly if investment income fails to pick up. Since the year end our portfolio of investments—our main source of income—has broadly maintained its value at just under £5 million. Given the uncertainty and turbulence in capital markets this is a creditable outcome.

Christopher Glover

5. HONORARY EDITOR'S REPORT ON THE PALESTINE EXPLORATION QUARTERLY

Individual subscribers were 279 as of 31 December 2019 and this number fell to 270 by 31 December 2020, a decrease of 9. The institutional subscribers have decreased from 187 on 31 December 2019 to 150 as of 31 December 2020. Among the institutional subscriptions 69 were journal exchanges, the same as the previous year.

Although only 150 institutions were subscribing in the traditional manner, Taylor and Francis sells HSS packages that the *PEQ* is included in, to 3,133 institutions. So, the loss of traditional subscribers has been made up with the increase in the sales packages uptake and therefore, contrary to what the figures might suggest institutional subscriptions to the *PEQ* are not suffering adversely in comparison to other journals. Taylor and Francis are confident that the journal is doing well and our royalties are not affected. This 'hidden' increase in institutional subscriptions may in part account for the following statistics: during the first quarter of 2020 there were 4,120 full text downloads from the *PEQ*; during the same quarter of 2021 there were 7,268 full text downloads, an increase of more than 76%.

Submissions continue to arrive at an increased pace and the backlog of accepted articles has not diminished any. The rejection rate has increased to ca 40% (this includes submissions that have been withdrawn). Most submissions are returned for rewrites—minor in most cases, but also major revisions.

The topics covered in the submissions are primarily archaeological in nature, but there are also submissions dealing with historical, anthropological, biblical, linguistic, and geographical topics.

J. Bjørnar Storfjell

6. REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

PEF Annual XVI, *The Sisters of Nazareth Convent. A Roman-period, Byzantine, and Crusader site in central Nazareth*, by Ken Dark and PEF Annual XVII, *Ancient Landscapes of Zoara I. Survey and Excavations at the Ghor as-Safi in Jordan, 1997-2008*, by Konstantinos D. Politis have been published in 2020. A second volume on Zoara excavations and findings will be published in 2021 as PEF Annual XVIII, with the title *Ancient Landscapes of Zoara II. Specialised Studies from Excavations in the Ghor as-Safi in Jordan, 1997-2008*. PEF Annual XIX (2022) will be "The Foreman of the Works": Yusif Kana'an, archaeology and ethnography in Ottoman Palestine", edited by Sarah Irving.

Chiara Fiaccavento

7. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GRANTS COMMITTEE

PEF Research Grants.

The Grants Committee met on 8th March 2021. A Total of £9000 was allocated for this round of grants. After review and discussion of applications, the committee awarded £6694.45.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent impact and limitations on fieldwork, the Research Grants this year were redirected towards post-fieldwork research costs. In total, six applications were received (3 men; 3 women), of which four received funding.

Awards are as follows:

1. Alexandra Arriotti (£2500), Dating the Lost Fortress of Umm Tawabin in Jordan
2. John Green (£1000), Tell es-Sa'idiyeh Cemetery Project
3. Melissa Cradic and Samuel Pfiester (£1000), Digitising the Tell en-Naşbeh Excavations
4. Claudine Dauphin (£2194.45), Towards Final Publication of the Umayyad Syro Jordanian *Hajj* Roads to Mecca and their Pilgrim Camps

Summary posts for the successful projects will be published on the PEF blog when they are received, along with any other updates from our grant recipients. Formal research reports will also be published in the PEQ.

The Joint Albright-PEF Fellowship.

2021 was the second year of our joint fellowship scheme with the Albright Institute in Jerusalem, in which £3000 is awarded to a scholar undertaking research which requires a stay in Jerusalem and London, utilising the collections of both Albright and PEF. This year, four applications were received (2 men; 2 women) despite the restrictions of Covid-19, suggesting strong interest in this award.

Following reviews by both Albright and the PEF Grants Committee, the award was made to Dr. Morag Kersel for her project "Hidden Histories: The Private Lives of Levantine Neolithic Masks."

III. The Routledge Philip Davies Early Career Researcher Publication Award 2020.

This award was established in memory of Prof. Philip Davies and was awarded this year to Dr Joseph Scales (University of Birmingham) for his paper entitled "Bathing Jewish, Bathing Greek: Developing an Approach to De-Categorising Hellenism and Judaism." The winner is awarded £750. The runner up was Dr Assaf Kleiman (Leipzig University), "The Cultural Biography of Two Volute Capitals in Iron Age Hazor," who receives £350, and the second runner up was Dr Marieke Dhont (University of Cambridge/Harvard University), who receives £100. All three prize-winning submissions may have their papers considered for publication in PEQ, pending peer review.

Cat Quine

There were no questions from the Membership regarding the Officer's Reports.

8. ELECTION OF JENNIFER BAIRD AND JAMES FRASER AS ORDINARY BOARD MEMBERS, TO SERVE FROM 2021 TO 2026, ELECTION OF MICHAEL TALBOT AS HONORARY SECRETARY TO REPLACE JOHN MACDERMOT, TO SERVE FROM 2021 TO 2026

J. MacDermot announced the results of the returned ballots. There was 90% approval for all appointments: Jennifer Baird and James Fraser as Ordinary Board Members, and Michael Talbot as Honorary Secretary.

C. Strine welcomed J. Baird and J. Fraser to the Board, and M. Talbot to the post of Honorary Secretary.

C. Strine also gave his formal thanks to John MacDermot at L. Hulin, who were both retiring from the Board at this AGM. Their dedication to the PEF in several roles had made a huge difference to the success of the organisation in recent years.

9. APPROVAL OF ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2020

The outgoing Honorary Secretary announced there had also been overwhelming approval in the returned postal ballots for the 2020 Report and Accounts.

The Chairman referred the members to the Annual Report and Accounts for 2020, copies of which had been sent by email to the membership in advance. This document is also available for consultation at the PEF office.

The members present **Approved** the Report and Accounts for 2020.

C. Strine drew Members' attention in the Accounts to the significant grants which had been received by the PEF from Greenwich Council. These were in the form of pandemic relief, and had been sourced by our administrator, Ivona Lloyd-Jones. He added that the Walter Morrison Investment Fund was currently worth £4.9 million.

10. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR JUNE 2021- JUNE 2022

J. MacDermot again reported the strong vote in the postal ballots in favour of reappointing our auditors, Hartley Fowler LLP for the forthcoming year.

The Chairman proposed the appointment of Messrs Hartley Fowler as Auditors for the year June 2021 – June 2022. The proposal was **Approved** by the Membership.

11: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

C. Strine noted that Cat Quine had been appointed Chair of the Grants Committee in September 2020, and that this appointment should be ratified. Thomas O'Loughlin nominated and Hugh Williamson seconded this appointment, and it was **Approved** by the Membership.

12. DATE OF THE NEXT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Membership would be informed of the date of the next Annual General Meeting when it was known.

Casey Strine
Chairman, PEF