

## Annual General Meeting is cancelled

The MTPS Board decided in mid-January that the Annual General Meeting which had been re-scheduled for March 1, was no longer viable in view of the then worsening effects of the pandemic.

**ADOPTION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:** The minutes of the 59<sup>th</sup> AGM held on November 25, 2019 and published in Newsletter 204 of February 2020 were proposed for adoption by Brian Caraher and seconded by Terry Martin.

**CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS.** In an address prepared for the cancelled AGM, Terry Martin said the society and museum had been on a real high at end of 2019 that was summed up by our November 2019 newsletter headline of Great Expectations – roll on 2020.

We had just enjoyed a dazzling *Night at the Museum 4* and had lots of exciting events planned for the following 12 months. Plenty of advance bookings were taken for private parties of visitors to the museum. Takings in the café, sales kiosk and on the trams were all rising to their highest levels.

But instead of being bigger and better, 2020 had been an unmitigated disaster for the museum and tramway.

While other museums up and down the country reopened for short periods during relaxations in lockdowns, we stayed shut. The future still looks murky. There are worrying signs on the horizon. Wirral Council is struggling to balance its budgets; the Williamson Art Gallery, whose wing we come under, may never reopen if the doomsters get their way, claiming it is cheaper to keep it shut than to reopen. However, an exciting proposal by National Museums Liverpool, about which we cannot say much at the moment, could transform our fortunes and the area around the transport museum, while Peel's plans to extend the tramway may also be a game changer.

The chairman thanked everyone who volunteered to put time in to keep the society going, and especially thanked Brian Caraher for all his assistance with the newsletters.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT** (covering the period November 26, 2019) This is my 27<sup>th</sup> consecutive report as your secretary, and covers a longer period than normally but paradoxically, has the least content of my previous 26 reports, says Rob Jones.

We are now in our eighth year of running the Transport Museum and the heritage tramway on behalf of Wirral Borough Council.

The covid outbreak caused the closure of the museum and tramway in mid-March 2020 by which time we had had three board meetings. This was followed by a further two email discussion groups via email. And these were minuted as virtual meetings 4 and 5. But since the total closing of the tramway and museum, all the normal on-going subjects such as income and expenditure, sales, grant applications, and museum news has dried up. No further virtual meetings have taken place but any society business has been done as appropriate. It has not been possible to have zoom board meetings.

Since the closure last March, the museum manager has gone into the museum three times a week to check security, roof leaks, and other statutory and regular maintenance work that has to be done. We give our thanks to Tony Cooper.

The heating units, one of which never worked satisfactorily to start with, have been made fully functional during the lockdown by professional engineers. Likewise, professional mechanics have been working on repairs to a number of buses.

The health and safety committee has met twice, the last time being on February 12, 2020. The meeting scheduled for April was cancelled.

The bus and tram show committee met and decided in April to cancel the Bus and Tram Show for 2020, a decision to run the show in 2021 will be made in April but it does seem unlikely for this year.

Despite the pandemic, green shoots of future aspirations still exist and during lockdown I have had zoom meetings with Peel Holdings (Wirral Waters) and Parkinson Inc regarding extensions to the tramway across the area called Four Bridges. In addition to this, NML have involved us in support for an exciting new scheme in the area.

The secretary thanks all volunteers and officers for all services provided to the society and for the stoic acceptance of the frightful pandemic, with the hope that we will eventually get back to some sort of normality.

**SALES OFFICER** Keith Carmichael said that sales at the kiosk were showing a sharp increase when the pandemic lockdown first began in March 2020.

**WEBMASTER'S REPORT:** Brian Caraher reported that we have had 508,953 hits to date, 25,420 in the past year.

"The website is up and running with no problems that I'm aware of. I am in the process of updating the sales page to include the new mugs and model trams. These will most probably go out at £9.99 and £16.99 respectively including p&p. I will confirm the prices after more research," he said.

**Internet Sales:** "With the museum being shut since March 2020, our only source of sales income has been the website. Since May 2020 we have received £122.71 after paypal fees. I am looking to increase this by updating the sales page on the website and using social media," he added

**Sales Kiosk:** While Keith and I tried to build the sales, the closure of the museum put a stop on what we were doing. When we reopen we will be in a strong position to get sales moving very quickly. Our biggest sales aid will be the fact we will be able to accept card payments. The new card machine also has the ability to accept contactless payments up to £45. I feel this will benefit all areas of sales, café, kiosk and tram tickets. I feel positive about our future sales. We will still need to boost our volunteer numbers in the kiosk. I will be holding a refresher course in using the till and will also training to use the card machine.

We look forward to the coming year and hope that we can increase our sales even further," he concluded.

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT:** Ieuan Rayner reported that the years 2107 and 2018 saw membership of around 320. Last year more than likely due to the worry over the coronavirus pandemic, membership reduced to 284, as some may not have renewed as they were missing out on tram rides. The value of membership goes beyond that as tramcars are restored and preserved not only for us but also for generations to come. In the light of this, he thanked all those who have renewed their subs for 2021 and given generous donations. He said we had two new members for 2021 already and 189 have renewed so far.

"May I request two things from our members. Firstly, please remember to put your membership number on the renewal (found on the front of your Newsletter envelope or on your membership card) as there are members with similar names. Secondly please address my envelopes to Mr I Rayner as my son is Mr L Rayner," he said.

**ARCHIVIST REPORT:** David Taylor said: "As I have done very little in the past year, I have nothing to report except for a couple of queries. We have several old glass negatives which we could donate to NML and a collection of old printing blocks which could go to the letterpress printer at Amorini, who was previously at the Bluecoat in Liverpool.



"If anyone has back copies of Manx Transport Review or its predecessor Manx Tram, Steam Railway News or its successor Manx Steam Railway News, Scottish Transport No 53 onwards and Bulletin and Tram Fare 1 to 51, can they donate them to our archive, please," he added.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Ron Martin presented his report in the last newsletter, and not a single query has been received in response to the figures. Consequently, the board has agreed to adopt the accounts. This was proposed by Brian Caraher and seconded by Rob Jones.

**APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:** Mr Neil Cunningham had indicated he was willing to continue for the present financial year. His appointment was proposed by Ieuan Rayner and seconded by Mr David Taylor.

**RE-ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** The three board vacancies retiring by rotation, ie the chairman Terry Martin, webmaster Brian Caraher and archivist David Taylor, are being filled by the present incumbents who have all indicated they wish to serve for a further term. There were no other nominations. It must be pointed out that the worryingly high average age profile of the board needs to be balanced by some younger members. It is hoped that the next Annual General Meeting of the society will actually be able to take place in November this year, and maybe this problem can be addressed.