

American Club of Hertfordshire (ACH)

Annual General Meeting

Held at Mary and Ken Gilhooly's home, Welwyn Garden City
16th January, 2024

In attendance

Ann Chappell, Mary and Ken Gilhooly, Sue Druce, Tony Brophy, June Rowlands, Alison Wormleighton, Lauryn Awbrey, Sarah-Jane Nall-Cain, Donna Hepburn and Liz Menorca-Harty

Apologies

James Nall-Cain, Carolyn and John Beecham, David Beem, Samantha and Patrick Target, Sarah and Alfred Gaskin, Amy and Bob Thomson, Raquel Rovick-Arrojo, John Rowlands, Neil McClure, Laura Dolby, Stuart and Bente Radnofsky and Jen Bramley

1. Opening remarks and welcome

Ann Chappel, the president, opened the meeting at approximately 7:30pm and welcomed everyone.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous AGM for 2024 have been circulated and agreed. The minutes are available on the ACH website.

3. Election of Officers for 2025

The following officers were elected for 2025

Website co-ordinator: Mary

Coffee morning leader: Sue

Leaders remaining in their position for 2025

President: Ann Chappell

Vice President: Lauryn Awbrey

Treasurer: Sarah-Jane Nall-Cain

Secretary: Liz Menorca-Harty

Membership Secretary: Carolyn Beecham

Sunshine Leader: Samantha Target

Book Club Leader: Alison Wormleighton

4. Officers' and group leaders' report

Treasurer's Report

Ann went through expenditures. Bank fees were discussed (£5 per month) and it was decided the account should be closed and the Treasurer should hold the funds in a safe/secure cash box. The issue of US IRS requirements to register bank accounts for American citizens abroad was raised as a reason along with the one going charges and banks generally not wishing to maintain social club accounts for the change in procedure.

The number of members was confirmed at about 20-21 families/individuals for the year or 36 member subscriptions.

Budgets for events were discussed. Lauryn questioned the £200 AGM expense (2023). Mary confirmed the expense also included an event she and Ken hosted (St Patrick's Night). It was decided to reduce the budgeted AGM expense going forward. Lauryn suggested better itemisation in future and all present agreed.

Dues in 2024 were £540 compared with expenses of £953.45. Four hundred pounds more was spent than budgeted. This included the £100 Thanksgiving book club turkey. Discussions were held about the nature of the event and whether all would be welcome. The Thanksgiving lunch hosted 16 people this year and the turkey had to be of a considerable size (7.5kg) to feed a dozen assumed at the time or ordering. In theory everyone is welcome to the lunch so long as they bring a poetry reading to share, but in reality the numbers must be limited to how many can be seated in the dining room. When the cost of the turkey was disputed, Liz raised the issue supermarkets do not offer 7.5kg turkey in November, fresh or frozen, so the turkey needed to be ordered from a butcher. Discussions were also held about attendees at events pitching in for the cost so it's not shared among the membership. This will be determined on an ad hoc basis going forward by host(s). The cost of running the website was not budgeted for in 2024 but will be going forward. Christmas is usually carried forward to the next year, however, Sarah-Jane has already reimbursed Donna for hosting in December 2024 so there may be double accounting for Christmas parties in 2023 and 2024 accounts in the calendar year 2024 accounts.

On the date of the AGM the cash box account held £674.08. Sarah-Jane will make bank transfers when required but otherwise, she will hold the cash in a box, locked in her safe and deal out funds as required. Membership dues may be paid in cash or a bank transfer direct to Sarah-Jane and she will withdraw the cash and place it in the cash box.

The Budget for 2025 was set as follows:

Assuming the same number of members as 2024. Jen Bramley and husband and Tony Brophy joined and its yet to be determined if Larisa will formally join.

It was determined membership fees should increase. Pay-as-you-go for parties was discussed and in the past contributions were requested for big events.

If charging, head counts for events should be provided. Another option, as people are drinking less alcohol at events, is to ask attendees to contribute drinks. Host of big, budgeted events, to determine charging for food and drinks. This has been done in the past by those hosting a cocktail party.

Membership fees were increased to £20 for an individual and £40 for a family/joint membership. Members may pay cash to Sarah-Jane or transfer their fees to her account:

Name on (Personal) Account: Sarah-Jane Nall-Cain
Bank of Scotland
Sort code: 12-49-31
Account number: 01012873

Budgeted expenditure was agreed as follows:

Sunshine £200, increased from the previous year.

Cocktail Party – to be confirmed

Walk – no budget

4th July (American Independence Day) Party - £140

Website - £60

Christmas Party - £200

AGM - £80

Book Club (Thanksgiving) - £100

Charitable donation discussed. Could have a fundraising event. Sarah-Jane to confirm if she would hold an open garden event.

Total Budget confirmed at £780 for 2025

Coffee Mornings

Discussions were held about appointing a co-ordinator for the three or four events hosted per year. These events should work around other main events. Sue Druce agreed to be the co-ordinator. Provisional dates were written into the calendar of events.

Book Club

Alison reported. Events are getting bigger and sometimes hosting can be challenging for some people. Holding events outside homes was suggested by Ann. Alison commented hosting home events was very popular and book club members verbally agreed. Sharing food was an essential part of the group ethos. Evening events will be considered although most events will remain as daytime/lunch events. Mary agreed to list the books to read on the website in advance.

Sunshine

Samantha submitted a letter detailing the years events by email. Sarah-Jane reiterated her offer, due to her ability to secure wholesale discounts, to assist in the purchase of flowers. Sarah-Jane to reimburse card expenses highlighted by Samantha in her report.

Samantha volunteered and the group agreed she will remain in the position for 2025.

Special Events

Gourmet dinners were discussed like St Patrick's Day but no date set. Sarah-Jane had to cancel/postpone her autumn event in 2024. A new dates was set in 2025.

June wished to continue with informal, ad hoc, cinema trips which were popular in 2024. Members present agreed. The WhatsApp chat will continue to be used to highlight outings.

Lauryn suggested Sue could host bead making event(s) for others who did not attend the event or who wish to offer to a wider friendship group.

Website Master

Mary to send out reminders to members to consult at the website from time to time.

Sarah-Jane raised concern again about photographs on the website of the interior of people's homes and a desire not to have this on a public forum. Close-ups of people was deemed acceptable.

AGM minutes and treasurer's report to be uploaded to the website. Alison requested members are also emailed minutes directly for them to read if they choose to do so.

WhatsApp Group Chat

Samantha and Ann are administrators. Ann to update the contacts and remove non-members. It was agreed the platform is a useful addition to the Club for updates and keeping in touch with other members.

Facebook

It was agreed the Facebook page/account should be taken down. Alison to liase with Cathy Norris in Michigan who set up the ACH Facebook page/account and should have the codes.

5. New Business

Events for 2025 were discussed and the following was agreed:

February 15th Gourmet Dinner hosted by Sarah-Jane and James, theme to be confirmed
Lauryn and Neil to consider hosting another gourmet evening in the Autumn dependant on travel plans.

12th February Coffee Morning hosted by June

April 23rd Tulip Festival at Chenies Manor near Amersham and Rickmansworth organised by Tony

18th May Excursion - visit to Columbia Road and Spitalfield Markets organised by Sarah-Jane

June on a Thursday (TBC) visit to Hertford Museum hosted by James and organised by Sarah-Jane

July 5th American Independence Day party to be hosted by Mary and Ken

September (date to be confirmed) visit to the National Gallery London in honour of the 250 year anniversary. Donna to organise.

September Coffee Morning (TBC)

October (date to be confirmed) tour of St Pancras and the British Library to be organised by Tony

27th November Book Club Thanksgiving lunch and poetry reading at Waterend House hosted by Sarah-Jane

November Coffee morning (TBC)

6th December Christmas Party to be hosted by Liz and Paul in their new house. If the house renovation is not complete, Lauryn may need to step into the breach as she originally considered hosting and volunteered Liz.

6. Any Other Business

Sarah-Jane to hold an event at Waterend House to showcase her lovely garden to raise funds for charity.

A trip to Stoke-on-Trent to visit the potteries. Emma Bridgewater and Wedgewood mentioned.

7. Date of Next Meeting

15th January, 2026 date of the next AGM (2026)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm

Submitted by Elizabeth Menorca-Harty, ACH Secretary for 2024