

Annual General Meeting of the British Agricultural History Society, 12 April 2021, item 10.

The AGM is asked to consider the following motions:

From Mr B. Kennedy.

**‘That the name of the Society be changed from “British Agricultural History Society” to “British Society for Agricultural History”’.**

Mr Kennedy has supplied the following statement:

‘The Society’s name, “British Agricultural History Society”, implies that the Society exists to reflect British agriculture. However, the Society covers the agricultural history of Britain and, it appears increasingly, the rest of the world. A change of name to the “British Society for Agricultural History” dispels any misunderstanding as to the intentions or remit of the Society and would not imply that the Society exists for the study of British Agriculture alone.

The *Agricultural History Review*, being the principal publication of the Society, would support the worldwide take on agricultural history as against the history of agriculture in Britain.’

The following motion is moved by the Society’s Executive Committee

**‘That consideration of the motion moved by Mr B. Kennedy be deferred to the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held in 2022.’**

*This motion will be taken first.*

The EC’s primary reason for moving this motion is as follows.

Whilst Mr Kennedy sent in his motion in good time, it was not received (due to the dislocation caused by COVID-19) until *after* the notice of the AGM had been sent out to members. At Mr Kennedy’s request the motion has been added to this agenda but it has not been circulated to the membership of the Society in accordance with clause 15 of the Society’s constitution. The Executive Committee is more than aware that the terms of the constitution have not been followed – *could not be followed* – in the case of either motion. Any decision to change the name of the Society would be liable to challenge because proper notice of the resolution in Mr Kennedy’s name has not been given to the membership. The text of clause 15 follows at the end.

If it is the decision of those members of the Society present at the AGM that *contrary to the constitution* Mr Kennedy’s motion should be put to the meeting, the Executive Committee will oppose the motion on the following grounds.

First, Mr Kennedy is concerned to make a point about the proportion of the *Review* devoted to non-British articles. He has expressed his concern at an earlier AGM and in writing. The Executive Committee wishes to emphasis on this occasion, as it has done on others, that there is no prejudice against British articles but that there is a shortage of articles on British agricultural and rural history being offered to the *Review* (and other journals). Changing the name of the Society will do nothing to increase the flow of articles.

Second, changing the name of the Society will have to be negotiated with the Charity Commission who will require a resolution of the Annual General Meeting or a meeting

convened for the purpose. For the reasons outlined before, it is unlikely that a resolution passed at this present AGM will satisfy the Commission.

Third, the name of the Society and the initials by which it is known are now familiar. Implementing any change of name of the Society will lose the reputation that the name has acquired. Moreover, it will involve incur substantial costs, starting with seeking the approval of the Charity Commission, altering the Society's bank account and other financial arrangements; amending the website etc. The Executive Committee cannot see that any advantage will follow from this.

The Executive Committee also wishes to make the point that the name of the Society was chosen to distinguish this Society from the Agricultural History Society, the American society with a similar purpose and remit to ours. It is usual in naming academic organisations that the second and subsequent societies take the name of the country in which they are founded. The AHS was founded in 1919 and the BAHS in 1953/4. The 'British' in BAHS should be understood as indicating that the Society was founded in and draws its membership from Britain, which is its main area of activity. The qualification 'British' has never been intended to place a limitation on the activities of the Society.

In 1927 the American society launched a journal called *Agricultural History*: our journal was named *Agricultural History Review* to distinguish our journal from the existing American one (and to echo the name of existing British journals, so *English Historical Review*, *Economic History Review* etc.). Both journals have international remits whilst maintaining a primary focus on their home nations.

*The AGM will be asked to consider the motion deferring Mr Kennedy's motion first, and only if the Executive Committee's motion fails will Mr Kennedy's motion be put to the meeting. Mr Kennedy has undertaken to speak to his motion.*

R. W. Hoyle  
Acting Secretary  
10 April 2021

#### Clause 15 of the Society's constitution

No amendments of this constitution shall be made except by an Annual General Meeting. All proposals for the amendment of the Constitution shall be submitted in the form of a written notice of motion in time to be circulated to the members with the notice of the Annual General Meeting. No amendment shall be made except by the Annual General Meeting and members unable to attend such a meeting may vote by proxy.