



**Annual General Meeting held at
The Connection at St Martin in the Fields
on Saturday 30 June 2018 at 2.30pm.**

Present:

Charles Woodd, Chair
Margaret Beels, Deputy Chair
Sheila Batchelor, Volunteer Coordinator
Emily Cecil-Dennett
Pam Orchard, CEO The Connection
Chris Riley, Treasurer
Nigel Thorpe, Secretary
40 members and guests

1. The Chair welcomed everyone, on an especially warm afternoon. He noted that apologies had been received from Richard Carter.

2. **Minutes:** The meeting approved the minutes of the 2017 AGM, held on 1 July last year. There were no matters arising.

3. **Chair's Report:** The Chair noted that at the last AGM he had set out three objectives for the charity: to recruit new members, to raise awareness of homelessness, and to raise more money. He had set out four things to concentrate on:

better communications, the setting up of a Speakers' Panel, increasing local fundraising, and expanding the programme of events in Central London. He was pleased to record that all of these had been accomplished. He also drew attention to the Friends' Annual Review, the first time the charity had produced such a document. The Chair then invited members of the Committee to report on the four areas mentioned.

Communications: Emily Cecil-Dennett said that it had been a busy time: Friends' website had been created, with a quite new look (previously the Friends had a page on the Connection website), and it was up to date with events and news. The website offered much improved registration facilities for events. The Friends' social media presence had also been rebuilt and strengthened. The charity was now on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Linked-in. She and the newly created social media team were able to analyse traffic and see what was working and what was not. She noted that at first the Facebook video had only 50 hits, but the next video had 900. Content was key. The team could use anything they were sent and she appealed to members to send in items that were relevant.

Speakers' Panel: The Deputy Chair said that the Panel had been established partly because the Connection was not able to respond to request from speakers generally as it was not cost effective for them. As a result seven people from the Friends had been trained to take on these engagements and talk knowledgably and accurately about homelessness and the work of the Connection. To date the Panel had undertaken 15 engagements (over one a month). These had all been different: Nigel Thorpe had spoken for a very brief time (two minutes) at a retirement party given by an insurance broker in the City, who had decided he would rather ask his friends to give to charity than buy him a farewell present. The evening raised over £800. She herself had been invited to talk to a group of people with learning

disabilities. She had done this using a few illustrations and asking the audience to draw or write messages to a Connection client. It had been amazingly successful. She asked the meeting to let the Committee know of any opportunities that the Panel could take on.

Local Fundraising: The Secretary thanked all those who had undertaken some local fundraising. He gave the example of Hazel Mason, who had collected her old pound coins and had just handed over a cheque for £120. He noted that the biggest local fundraising event was the Connection Coffee Morning, which the Committee had launched for the first time in October 2017, to mark World Homeless Day. Eleven events had been held and over £2000 raised, including some donations. The Coffee Morning would take place again this year and the Secretary encouraged people to hold one. He showed the audience the new flyer, designed by Jess Rayner and Olivia Gillespie, copies of which were available in the cafeteria at the Fundraising Fair.

Central Fundraising events: The Chair noted that two very successful Connection with Choral Classics events had been held, through the relationship built up with the Brandenburg Choral Festival. A formula had been developed – talk at the Connection, dinner in the Crypt, and the concert – which had worked very well. He hoped to repeat it later this year. The Chair also noted the Winter Art Exhibition, which had featured the Rosa Branson painting, now available as a tea towel and a jigsaw, as well as client art; carol singing, which had raised over £1300, and the Queen Eleanor Cycle Ride, which had raised £11,000 in 2017. This year was the Ride's 10th Anniversary and the target was £25000, He appealed for more riders.

The Spring Appeal: The Chair noted that this was a first for the Friends. The Secretary described the background of low income after January each year and the thought that members might be inspired to fund a discreet activity if

asked to do so. The Committee had, after consulting their Connection colleagues, chosen the laundry. This might seem surprising, but the laundry was a basic step in the rebuilding of dignity and self-respect among service users. The Committee had chosen an ambitious target of £25000, the cost of running the laundry for a year. The Secretary was glad to say that this target had been achieved. There had been lots of donations, large and small – all were appreciated. And he described the contribution of one person, not a Friend, Mari Ajakainan, who worked in Covent Garden and had been moved by the sight of so many homeless people. She sang in a band in her spare time and she put on a gig to raise over £700 for the Laundry Appeal. Emily Cecil-Dennett described the significant role of the social media campaign in support of the Appeal. The team had created a bank of assets, including videoed interviews with clients who used the laundry, which enabled the placing of a trailer and smaller advertisements across the Friends' social media outlets. Donations came from people who were not Friends. The Appeal reached 30,000 people on line. 6000 people watched one of the videos. The importance of campaigning was clear.

The Chair thanked the whole team for the success of the Spring Appeal, and Friends, volunteers, and Committee for contributing to such a successful year. He hoped, in conclusion, that 2018/19 would be an even better year for the Friends. The Appeal would help, and there was the Coffee Morning and the QECR 10th Anniversary Ride too.

4. The Guy Mason Award: The Chair announced that the Committee had decided to make a posthumous award this year, to honour Valerie Margaret Farbridge, who had bequeathed £373,000 to the Friends of the Connection. Miss Farbridge had died in 2014. She had worked as a volunteer in the Social Care Unit for many years. Her career in opinion

polling made her the ideal person to interview service users. Roger Shaljean (former Director of the Unit) very fondly remembered her from that time. The Chair then invited Pat Kensley, a friend of Miss Farbridge, to speak. She gave a warm tribute (attached as an annex).

5.Finance: The Treasurer presented the Friends' accounts for the year 2017/18. The bottom line was that the charity had been able to make grants to the Connection totalling £276,000, about 5% of the Connection's income. On paper the Friends recorded, for technical reasons relating to the accounting for the Farbridge legacy, a deficit, but this was a symptom of the charity's success. The Treasurer noted that the accounts also reflected money owed from Gift Aid, and that there would be another legacy to account for in the present year. Apart from legacies, the bulk of income came from donations and subscriptions, and he pointed out that the downward trend of both in recent years had been reversed. In the light of this performance, the Treasurer was confident that the Fundraising Strategy target of non-legacy income of £150,000 could be achieved, especially in the light of the success of the Spring Appeal. Indeed he hoped to be able to grant over £200,000 to the Connection each year. On costs, he noted that these had increased since the Friends had taken full responsibility for the employment of the Charity Administrator. Established policy was that income from subscriptions should cover costs and so it had been decided to increase the subscription from £10 to £15. The Treasurer asked for formal approval of the accounts and for the authority to the Committee to appoint a suitable independent examiner. The meeting approved these proposals.

6. **Elections:** The meeting re-elected Charles Woodd as Chair and Sheila Batchelor as Committee member for a further three years.

7. **Date of 2019 AGM:** The Chair explained that the 2019 AGM would be held at this time next year but that the Committee needed to fix a date once the date of Pride weekend was known.

8. There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 3.15pm.

Signed

Date.....

Annex: Tribute to Valerie Margaret Farbridge

VALERIE FARBRIDGE

Valerie Farbridge was born in London in 1930 and was brought up with her brother and sister in Blackheath - until they were evacuated during the Second World War.

In the late 1950s, Valerie joined Unilever as a market research interviewer. For several years she travelled all over Britain, interviewing people from all walks of life on a great variety of surveys.

This experience, of communicating and establishing a rapport with all sorts of people, was probably helpful in her subsequent interviewing work at St. Martin's.

In the 1960s, she became the Fieldwork Director for one of the leading market research companies in Britain – and in 1981, in accordance with the respect she had earned across the whole market research industry; Valerie was elected chairman of the industry's main professional body, The Market Research Society.

For around 20 years, from 1970 until her retirement in 1990, she was a volunteer for St. Martin's Social Care Unit (a predecessor of the Connection). This work was I know close to Valerie's heart – and I would like to thank you for giving her the opportunity to help the homeless; something which she valued greatly.

Her busy life continued in retirement. She went to live in Hythe, in Kent, and soon became involved in many community activities there.

To take just one example, she volunteered at the local Primary School to help with the children's reading. The teacher with whom she worked said of her: "She started by helping for 2 hours once a week. Soon she was staying all day, doing anything and everything to help the children. She was invaluable. An absolute gem"

Valerie was a gentle person. Very intelligent and knowledgeable – yet modest and unassuming. She was full of kindness and generosity. Always concerned about others and helping those in need.

She died 4 years ago – and is widely remembered and much missed. The Guy Mason award is indeed a fitting honour - and a very appropriate way for Valerie to be remembered at St. Martin's.

Pat Kensley