



The British Society of Russian Philately
Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting
of the Society held
online on Sunday 20 November 2022

1. Confirmation of minutes of the previous AGM 2021 and
2. The Secretary/Treasurer's Report Nov 2021- Nov 2022 (both attached)
(Proposed by John D Myke and seconded by Neil Ritchie)
3. Election and re-election of Society Officers and Committee Members

All serving members have been re-elected as follows:

1. President - Robin Joseph
 - proposed Terry Page, seconded Neil Ritchie
2. Secretary/Treasurer/Journal Production - Caroline Lee
 - proposed Philip Robinson, seconded John D Myke
3. Journal Editor - Neil Ritchie
 - proposed Norman Banfield, seconded Terry Page
4. Journal Proof-reader - Philip Robinson
 - proposed John McMahon, seconded Gilbert Rios
5. Committee member 1 - Terry Page
 - proposed Gilbert Rios, seconded Philip Robinson
6. Committee member 2 - John D Myke
 - proposed Neil Ritchie, seconded John McMahan
7. Committee member 3 - Gilbert Rios
 - proposed John D Myke, seconded Norman Banfield
8. North America Representative - David Skipton*
9. Russian Representative - Valentin Levandovskiy**

*David Skipton has accepted Society's request to stand as BSRP North American Representative for 2023.

**Valentin Levandovskiy has accepted Society's request to stand as BSRP Russian Representative for 2023.

"The existing officers have done a good job - I support their re-election." - **Norman Banfield**

All members standing for re-election have been re-elected, thank you. - CL

4. Any other business

Item 1 BSRP Zoom meetings: Proposal from Gilbert Rios "Having shorter on-line meetings (less than 40 minutes) should allow zoom to be used for free. With a well-prepared program this should be possible."

From Neil Ritchie – Zoom host, “Currently on Plan type: Zoom One Pro - up to 100 attendees, unlimited time, 5Gb of cloud storage, Zoom team chat, Zoom whiteboard. Cost: £119.90/year. Personally, I think we should afford the cost of the subscription as I think the alternative of 40 minutes is rather constrictive for conducting a relaxed meeting, discussing new finds/queries, we would only be able to have one speaker per meeting and they would be pushed to stay within the time limit. If we hold 8 meetings a year that only equates to £15/meeting.”

Your Comments

“None attended yet but 40 minutes too short. Subscription for longer meetings is essential.” - **Chris Harman**

“I have attended several Zoom meetings and find them an excellent means of staying in active touch, and exchanging information and questions on items, among a membership spread out from California to France to Ukraine... How else could we do this? I think a limit of 40 minutes would only be possible with tight chairing (I have experience from other fora) which may not be in the spirit of the members. 75 minutes, [November meeting], is also a maximum for most attention spans. Pay £15!” - **Matthew Kahane**

“I have joined approx. 8-10 meetings. Stamp collecting & belonging to a society, in my opinion, has a social component associated with it. The pandemic wiped that element of philately out for almost two plus years. For our society, being international & with a pandemic to deal with, we migrated to online meetings via the ZOOM platform, which has proved quite useful in our case. It is a connection for members who want to participate in the society & be active as is possible in these times. For the sake of saving a few £'s by restricting our meetings to 40 minutes, it is not worth it, since this is the only social interaction some BSRP members have with each other, especially international members like myself. Neil has broken down the cost/year, £119 & the cost/meeting & it is peanuts. I would endorse Neil's proposal to continue with this long meeting format.” - **John D Myke (Committee member)**

“I have attended a few Zoom meetings (apologies, I could not make the last one). I am strongly in favour of keeping the existing meeting format and duration and paying for the Zoom subscription.” - **Jim Fitzharris**

“To limit zoom meeting time means pressure on presentation and discussion. I propose not to change.” - **H-D Grigoleit**

“I have not attended any of the Society's Zoom meetings yet. One reason is the time of the Zoom call. Where I have attended other philatelic society's Zoom calls, the presentations are shorter, allowing a range of subjects to be shown. Some people may be put off participating by the obvious quality of displays. A Zoom display does not allow the considered examination of particular items, as a room display would allow, so the Zoom display needs to be more limited in its scope, I think” - **Peter Williams**

“Commenting on observation made by Peter Williams. I really could not disagree more. As a regular participant in our Zoom meetings, both as a presenter and a spectator, I have found the ability to display, exhibit and study items in great detail to be unsurpassable. The simple use of a scanner in combination with the functionality of PowerPoint offers the possibility of showing any item alongside selected detail under high magnification. No more squinting at static frames, often in poor light to examine a postmark or tiny detail of a stamp. In fact, I would argue that whilst the traditional philatelic society display has the one advantage of enabling the collector to see the item "in the flesh" as it were, the possibility of detailed examination in such circumstances is extremely limited. Regarding the timing of Zoom meetings, as they are recorded, they

can of course be viewed later offline (and also kept for posterity!)” - **Terry Page (Committee member)**

The Society Officers, Committee Members, and members responding are all in favour of continuing our Zoom meetings without time restrictions. Our first meeting in 2023 will be on 8 January 2023 at 7.30pm GMT. - CL

Item 2 BSRP website: Proposal from Gilbert Rios “Reducing the website to the essentials as already proposed.” On several occasions this year we have received notifications from our provider Siteground stating that our Hosting Plan reached 90% of the allowed storage space, and indeed our website was offline for about a week as a result.

Action was needed to be taken without delay, most of it expensive to maintain the website in its existing format. Neil Ritchie kindly explored several options, and the proposal to reduce the website to the essentials was agreed and website software maintenance has been undertaken at a cost of £240+VAT. - CL

Your comments

“Either a website needs to the basics only - but still up to date - or it needs to be really useful. This needs a dedicated person to manage it - see the GBPS website for an example of what is probably the finest of any society (only Large Gold Medal at London 2022) and generates memberships from collectors who do not even collect GB due to the information contained on it.” - **Chris Harman**

“It would appear that Neil Ritchie is already on top of this problem & explored the options for the BSRP going forward. We are going to have a very basic stripped-down website, since past use has been rather, to put it kindly, non-existent for the most part. My question is, what are we going to be able to do on the site once it has been repaired? It was rarely used in the past, what happens if it is used even less than previously? Neil, you will probably have to monitor this & let us know what the status is after a year. It may very well come to the point that we abandon it all together if members do not see any benefits to having a site & make use of it.” - **John D Myke (Committee Member)**

“That’s sounds very good to me – well done.” - **Jim Fitzharris**

“Was there any particular reason why the website was close to its storage capacity? One of the reasons that we are all encouraged to go online is to use the "limitless" capacity of the cloud.” - **Peter Williams**

We received a massive amount of unwanted traffic our providers Siteground suggested could have been hacking attempts, which we reported. Our hosting plan does have a CPU seconds monthly quota which has always been quite adequate in the past. Increasing the capacity (and therefore cost) would not have solved the problem so it was decided to engage a software engineer to rebuild/streamline the content freeing up enough space to be able to deal with any traffic problems. This urgent action was taken in Q3 as our website ‘crashed’ and was taken offline by our providers. Member usage and comments from users will be monitored and status update given at 2023 AGM. - CL

Item 3 Advertising in the British Journal of Russian Philately. One revenue source that needs to be explored, and that needs your input where possible, is to attract more organisations to place advertisements in our journal. We are extremely grateful to have David Feldman and Cherrystones as our regular advertisers, but we need more.

"I am aware that Rossica is pushing to increase its advertising base to defray costs. A bit of competition for the same audience." - **John Iacovino**

"With respect to advertising, Raritan Stamp auctions normally have a substantial number of Russian items and would seem to be a good match" - **John McMahon**

"A good idea, but I do not have any contacts. One thought - I do see UK societies in Stanley Gibbons catalogues. Have we approached European companies such as Michel?" - **Peter Williams**

"By all means seek further advertisements. What about Le Timbre Classique, now run by Anders Thorell and Gaël Caron, formerly of David Feldman (contact@letimbreclassique.com 03 +33.1.42.46.63.72)" - **Matthew Kahane**

"Did you try to contact Delcampe which is probably today one of the most important platforms for on-line selling in the world. Presently 500,000 items on sale just for Russia & USSR! Another idea: le Timbre Classique SA in Geneva, the sister company of Le Timbre Classique located at Drouot in Paris. The new owners worked for a long time for David Feldman. In their auctions they used to propose very beautiful and rare pieces of Imperial Russia or zemstvo collections (see notably the one of December 2020)." - **Gilbert Rios (Committee member)**

"Re: Soliciting auction firms for advertising funds 2022. The response was both surprising & depressing. I contacted eight well known auction firms (Heinrich-Koehler & Corinphila, Raritan, Loral Stamps, Kaj Hellman, Ulrich Felzmann Old Louis and Christoph Gartner) whom I have in the past had strong offerings in the Russian area of collecting. I pointed out that they have a vested interest in making sure Russian philately is vibrant & strong by supporting the BSRP's publication of their yearly journal. There may be other firms that could be approached, but these are the main players in our field of collecting that I know of, since I have been a client of most of these. Only one firm, OldBid.com made a commitment to place an ad. Andre Schneider representing both Heinrich-Koehler & Corinphila declined since they have no auctions upcoming with Russian material. I did not even get the courtesy of a reply from the others. David Feldman & Cherrystone in NY have always been keen supporters of the BSRP & place a full-page ad yearly." - **John D Myke (Committee member)**

"I propose to contact Koehler in Wiesbaden. They are quite active in the "Russia field". If needed I could contact them." - **H-D Grigoleit**

Thank you everyone for your suggestions above; some having already been approached (see John D Myke comments) will be approached again and new suggestions will be actioned. Thank you Hans Grigoleit, we would be most grateful if you would consider approaching Koehler on behalf of the Society and indeed would welcome any personal approaches by members to potential advertisers with referrals to the secretary for further details - CL

Item 4 Decisions made by Society Officers and Committee during 2022. With a declining membership in 2022, certain financial decisions needed to be addresses to ensure the continued survival of the British Society of Russian Philately

An extraordinary Zoom meeting was held for Society Officers and Committee members on 29 September it was decided;

1. To maintain a subscription-based society.

2. To raise the subscription level to £30 for the coming year.

3. Review the subscription rate each year.

"I look forward to the journal and support the dues increase." - **John Iacovino**

"I have no problem with raising the subscription rate & review of such yearly. We have to have the funds to publish." - **John D Myke**

"What other options are there to a subscription-based society?" - **Jim Fitzharris**

"Happy with an increased subscription - many societies charge too little. The alternative is an electronic only subscription, but this really meshes in with how good the website is." - **Chris Harman**

"A number of my other philatelic societies have considered fees in the upcoming year. Most have taken the view that the cost-of-living crisis would discourage any increase. On the other hand, I have heard of societies that never raised their subscriptions for many years. When they did, members did ask why it had taken so long. The increase to £30 will make this society the most expensive one for me. What do I get for £30? Other societies provide a range of benefits, such as room meetings (both regional and using a regular base), Zoom calls, information on their websites, a stand at Midpex, libraries, packets, auctions, quarterly journals, monographs and the occasional overseas trip to the source of our collecting interest. All this for much less. What value do I get for £30 from this Society? - **Peter Williams**

"In response to comment above from Peter Williams. Firstly, and most importantly, you get a superbly supported and produced journal with important articles from the world's most respected authors covering the whole range of Russian Area Philately. You also get members' access to all sections of the website which includes the journal archive -all 112 issues dating back to 1946 - an essential reference for the collector and researcher.

I organised annual room meetings at the Union Jack Club for many years, but attendance dwindled to a trickle despite excellent talks and displays from core members. After the restrictions of Covid and the greatly increased venue costs it was decided to move to Zoom meetings. Interestingly the last Zoom meeting attracted more members than the most recent two room meetings.

Packets and auctions, in my opinion, have been superseded by on-line marketplaces, especially eBay. Representation at regional meetings in the past has been tried but generated little interest as Russian philately is a rarefied interest in Britain in comparison with GB and other popular areas. Of course, if volunteers come forward to organise such activities, then the committee would be delighted to support them. Unfortunately, though, many of those who make feasible suggestions invariably expect someone else to carry them out. And there just aren't enough labourers in the vineyard! As a non-profit making organisation with a depleting membership, we depend entirely on the voluntary efforts of those of our members who embrace the idea of looking at what they can contribute to the society rather than simply what they can take out of it.

My final comment is to ask members to reflect upon whether our great hobby, Russian Philately, would be in a poorer state without the BSRP. I believe it would be and therefore urge members to continue to offer their support despite the economic difficulties we are facing." - Terry Page (Committee member)

The majority are in favour of the increase in annual subscriptions from £25 to £30 per annum from January 2023. Many members have already paid their 2023 subscriptions, thank you. Subscriptions are due by 1 January 2023, payable via PayPal to treasurer@bsrp.org or via bank transfer to BRITISH SOCIETY OF RUSSIAN PHILATELY, Sort Code 20-00-85, Account No 20294314, SWIFTBIC BARCGB22, IBAN GB38 BARC 2000 8520 29

Acting President, now our newly elected President for 2023 Robin Joseph would like to thank Society Officers, Committee and members of the BSRP for your participation and interest in the 2022 AGM.

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