

**BRITISH INSTITUTE OF VERBATIM REPORTERS**

**PROCEEDINGS**

of the

**122<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Held at

**Cliffords Inn**  
Fetter Lane  
London  
EC4A 1LD

On

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2004**  
at 6.30 p.m.

**In the chair:** Valerie Doyle (President-elect)

**Secretary and Treasurer:** Mary Sorene

**Council:**

Lindsay Bickers (immediate past President), Caroline Booth,  
Elizabetta Cordaro, Frances Dobson,  
Valerie Doyle (President-Elect), Karen Jobson, Ann Lloyd,  
Jean Lukins, Robyn Nott (President),  
Virginia Wason, Julie Whitaker, Elizabeth Willett

**Present:**

Roger Bell, Barbara Bennett, Lindsay Bickers, Diana Burden,  
Frances Dobson, Valerie Doyle, Patricia Frith, Ann Lloyd, Jean Lukins,  
Mark Roberts, Jackie Roper, Mary Sorene, Ivan Trussler,  
Virginia Wason, Miriam Weisinger, Elizabeth Willett

MISS DOYLE: Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Valerie Doyle. I am standing in for our President, Robyn Nott, this evening. Unfortunately, she cannot attend due to professional commitments. I welcome you all here. Thank you very much for attending. I will to ask the Secretary of the Institute, Mary Sorene, to read the notice to open the meeting.

### **Notice convening the meeting**

MRS SORENE: "For 2003 to 2004, British Institute of Verbatim Reporters, notice is hereby given that the annual general meeting of this Institute will be held on Wednesday, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2004 at 6:30 p.m. at Cliffords Inn, Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1LD for the purpose of considering and if thought fit passing resolutions as to the ordinary business of the Company relating to the Council members, accountant and accounts, to receive and adopt the report and accounts, to elect members to serve on the Council for the year 2004-2005, to elect a President-elect for the ensuing year, to elect an accountant for the ensuing year, to appoint the date of the next annual general meeting and for any other business."

That notice was signed by me, Mary Sorene, Secretary, for this registered address of Cliffords Inn, Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1LD, on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2004.

### **Apologies for absence**

MISS DOYLE: I will now ask Mary to give the apologies for absence.

MRS SORENE: The first one is Áine Aughney-MacDonald, and apologies have been received from Caroline Booth, Natalie Bracken, Lynn Briault, Stephen Carter, Jenny Chandler, Naomi Forrest, Jean Gough, Ann Hill, Susan Humphries, Karen Jobson (who is trying to get here for later), Christine Lawton, Julia McGoveney, Heather Morris, Robyn Nott, Mavis Ross, Helen Tennyson-Spelman and Karen Young. Has anybody any more they would like to name?

MRS BENNETT: Joan Webb.

### **Minutes of the 2003 AGM**

MISS DOYLE: I understand that the minutes of the last AGM have been circulated to the members. There are a few spare copies to hand, if anyone would like to have one. Can anyone remember? Are they agreed? (Yes)

MRS SORENE: We will ask Lindsay to sign them.

(The 2003 AGM minutes were then signed)

MISS DOYLE: We will take the last AGM minutes as agreed and being signed. Virginia Wason will now read the President's address.

### **President's address**

MISS WASON: Someone asked recently what was the BIVR's "mission statement", which prompted me to review our memorandum and articles, which, to summarise, states that the objects of the Institute are promoting the more efficient practice of the art of machine and pen shorthand, raising the qualifications and status of its members, and the encouragement and maintenance of adequate training and examination facilities.

Those aims state very clearly what we strive to achieve at the Institute, however inadequate that may be at times. Just because you cannot achieve everything does not mean you cannot achieve anything.

Bearing in mind those aims, we have reviewed our examination procedures in an attempt to adopt a more professional approach, but it must be borne in mind that we are all working reporters on the Council who give their time voluntarily. It would be almost impossible for us to undertake the quite onerous requirements of acquiring any kind of external examining qualifications.

Our exams have always been conducted by people who have had many years of experience on the job. It is a far more useful qualification to be judged by those who are actually doing the job for which you seek qualification and who know, by personal experience, the requirements necessary to perform the job to a standard acceptable to clients. The members of the Council have between them more than 300 years of reporting experience to call upon. After 117 years in existence, I think that is more than adequate to claim that the Institute, being completely independent, is the most appropriate examining body for the profession.

We are still in the process of updating our manual, which will continue, according to our aims, "to promote the more efficient practice of the art of machine and pen shorthand". It is nearly 20 years since the last update. As we are all aware, much has changed since then. It is a long and time-consuming process to update all the various sections of the manual.

I have tried to include as many people as possible in this task to spread the workload and to make sure that we have the expertise of the greatest number of people who work in the various fields within the profession so that we have the

most definitive and comprehensive instruction manual that will serve all of us for many years to come. I was optimistically hoping it may have been ready for this AGM, during my year of presidency but unfortunately due to the many time constraints we all have – particularly myself – it will not be completed until some time later this year.

As to one of our other aims, “the encouragement and maintenance of adequate training”, we are hoping to organise some training this year, perhaps a workshop for users of the Eclipse software for both steno and palantype and also for those pen writers who edit and perhaps something for STT reporters. Anyone with any ideas or who is prepared to offer their time or expertise, please let us know. Events such as this will only be a success with the input of as many reporters as possible. It is only through such further training that we can achieve our personal and professional objectives of a high standard of work, job satisfaction and adequate remuneration, hence raising the status of our members to truly fulfil the aims of the BIVR.

Looking back at the past year, there have been developments in the field of real-time reporting, As you are probably aware, there has been a lot of litigation in the States involving court reporting firms and individual court reporters concerning infringement of patents claimed by Engate in regard to certain processes used in real-time software to provide what I think they refer to as “interactive real-time services”.

Some firms now require payment to obtain a licence to use certain of their software, which they deem to contain these Engate patents. Although judgments have been passed on this matter in the States it seems there may be an appeal process, which still leaves the matter very uncertain for the near future.

As the situation is far from clear, it is extremely difficult for us to advise on what individual reporters should do. We have posted information we are aware of on our website. I urge people to use that forum as a way of obtaining or passing on what information they may have on a purely informal basis. We have a kind of watching brief on the situation and will pass on any information we think may be useful.

One of the consequences of new technology is that now many of us work from home and communicate sometimes only via e-mail or fleeting exchanges with colleagues while on the job. It therefore becomes even more important to stay in touch with fellow reporters in order to keep abreast of what is going on with regard to work, colleagues and friends. This was one of the driving forces behind establishing our website. It can be an enormously useful tool for anyone working in the profession to find out what is going on and how they can make it work for them. It is a service that is only as good as its users. I urge everyone to make use of it as often as they can, as only by members taking an interest and participating will this service be able to grow and fulfil its potential.

Regarding the tenders for the Crown courts, it seems that the status quo is to remain for the time being, so there will be little change for the foreseeable future. The new contracts are scheduled to come into existence on 1<sup>st</sup> August and the tendering process is still at an early stage. As usual, those tendering are barred from divulging whether they are tendering or not, and the contents of the tender documents, so there is very little we can tell you about this. Obviously, as soon as decisions are made by the Department for Constitutional Affairs, we will let you know.

Many of our members are now working full-time providing communication for deafened people via real-time transcripts. With this in mind, the BIVR joined the United Kingdom Council on Deafness (UKCoD). One of our Council members, Betty Willett, attends UKCoD meetings and conferences on behalf of the BIVR. Betty is a member of the project team that aims to increase the provision of language and communication access services for deaf people whose preferred language is English.

A spin-off of the work of the team is that an all-party parliamentary deafness group is to be launched by Malcolm Bruce MP in an exciting development that will lead to all issues relating to deafness having a much higher profile at Westminster. Due to the fact that this is Deaf Awareness Week, three of our new Council members, all of them very professional STT reporters, are unable to be here tonight because they are providing this very valuable service to deafened people.

The Department for Work and Pensions have awarded UKCoD funding for one year for secretarial services to co-ordinate the work of the project team. Betty is being her useful, forceful self, hammering home the need to obtain money for training. Although any such funding obtained will be primarily to train verbatim reporters to work with deafened people, any training that we can carry out will help swell the numbers of professional verbatim reporters in work, and is to be applauded.

Our membership seems to be declining year-on-year, which is not only very disappointing but also extremely shortsighted. We are a small profession. Therefore it is even more important that we seek the support and fellowship of other court reporters in order to promote the work we do, so that we may all benefit from increasing work opportunities, better working practices and higher remuneration. There is strength in numbers. Our membership fee is a small price to pay for the advancement of these objectives. It is up to everyone, both present and potential future members, to get behind and promote the Institute, to make it what they would wish it to be in order for it to work for them and their future.

I end on a sad note by announcing the death of Sue Cooper, who sat on this Council and was a very valuable member of our profession. Sue worked for many years for the Association of Shorthand Writers in the High Court and for Harry Counsell and Co. She was an extremely pleasant and very hard-working reporter, right to the end, who bore her illness with great fortitude. I am sure she will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

I would like to thank Harry Counsell, now Ubiquis, for generously providing the use of a room for our Council meetings during the year and for the AGM tonight, which is very much appreciated, and say a big “thank you” to Mary Sorene, our Secretary, for all her hard work during the year.

That is the end of the speech written by our President, Robyn Nott.

MISS DOYLE: Are there any questions or any remarks on the President’s speech?

MRS WILLETT: The all-party group of MPs who are interested in deafness and UKCoD held a reception last night at which this group was launched, so it is now in being. Apparently, over ninety MPs have put their names down to show their interest in the subject. I was not able to go to the reception last night. Mary Sorene went in my stead, and she might be able to tell you something about it.

MRS SORENE: All I can say is that they announced they were meeting, and had been given £1.5 million for British Sign Language, which has now been recognised as a language. So far, no money for us, and I am sure we are working on that.

MISS DOYLE: Are there any questions or comments? Does anyone want to say anything? No complaints? (No)

### **Treasurer’s report**

MISS DOYLE: Now I call on the Treasurer for the financial report.

MRS SORENE: Copies of the financial statement for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2003 have been sent out, either posted or e-mailed to all members. If you have not brought them with you or would like to quickly refresh your memories, there are copies here. We have a reasonably healthy bank balance. We made a very small loss last year as opposed to previous years. Other than that, it is all in there.

(Copies of the financial report were then circulated to members).

This is only in case you have any questions, if I am able to answer them. Then we ask you to approve them. Barbara Bennett has a question.

MRS BENNETT: Can I ask, looking at page 1, who is the last remaining life member?

MRS SORENE: It is Ron Chartres.

MRS WEISINGER: Why does the membership go down? Is it just that people forget to renew their subscriptions, or is it people leaving the profession, or people staying in the profession who do not want to be members any more?

MRS SORENE: It is both. You have hit the nail on the head. Because we no longer have to have an accreditation and the Lord Chancellor removed the requirement for accreditation, then only those who are keen to be accredited maintain their membership and the others do not feel the need to do so. Sadly, the membership has dropped away for that reason.

Obviously we have had a few people passing on, through what I think used to be called natural wastage, which sounds a dreadful thing to say, especially with people going so young. More to the point, there are still quite a few shorthand writers, both pen and machine, who are out there working and doing valuable work. If they are pretending to be members and signing their transcripts as members, of course, they should not.

MRS WEISINGER: No.

MRS SORENE: It is difficult. We have been getting a few new recruits. We have had a few transfers-in from the Association, which has been defunct for some years. A few people who have been associates for many years have been encouraged to take full membership so that they can vote. There are, of course, members who are doing STT work. As the President reported, we have a new category of STT reporter member because it is a different sort of work. They are required to have BIVR membership. Let us hope that people will come back if their membership has lapsed. Are there any other suggestions?

MISS DOYLE: Are there any more questions or comments on the Treasurer's report?

MRS SORENE: If not, I ask for a proposer and seconder to adopt them. Roger Bell proposes and Miriam Weisinger seconds. Thank you. I do not think we need to sign them. That is all we need to do with those. We will move on, if there are no questions.

## **Council election**

MISS DOYLE: The next matter is election to the Council. Some of the members have retired by rotation. As there are more vacancies than candidates for Council, therefore, there is no election.

## **Election of President-elect**

MISS DOYLE: We come now to the election of the President-elect. There are two candidates: Ann Lloyd and Virginia Wason, who is sitting next to me on my left. Naomi Forrest is not here. Only full members and of course fellows can vote, and not student members. The voting slips will be passed around.

MRS WILLETT: You have to delete Naomi.

MISS DOYLE: Naomi Forrest was a candidate for President-elect but she has resigned since this was printed. She has tendered her resignation to the Council, so she is not a candidate tonight.

(Voting slips were then handed to members)

MRS SORENE: We fill in our slips and then we need to appoint two tellers.

MISS DOYLE: Can I ask for two tellers to count the vote? Roger Bell and Miriam Weisinger.

MRS SORENE: There will be a short pause while we count the votes. (After a pause)

MISS DOYLE: I can announce the result of the vote. The President-elect for next year is Ann Lloyd. (Applause)

## **Appointment of the accountant**

MISS DOYLE: We now come to the appointment of the Accountant, Mr Kypri, trading as Alliance Accountancy. He is willing to continue. He is a Certified Accountant. I would like a proposer, please. Jackie Roper proposes and Barbara Bennett seconds.

## **Date of next AGM**

MISS DOYLE: The date of the next AGM will now be in the second week in May so as to avoid the bank holiday and Deaf Awareness Week.

MRS SORENE: We have clashed this year.



MISS DOYLE: There is a proposal of Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

### **Questions from members**

MISS DOYLE: The business of the AGM is now concluded unless there are any more questions and anyone has been inspired to say something.

MRS BENNETT: I have been cogitating about this accreditation. I had not realised and the fact had passed me by that I no longer needed to be accredited to work in courts.

MISS DOYLE: That is for Government court contracts.

MRS BENNETT: Does accreditation or belonging to the Institute actually count for anything if it is not verifying the standard of members?

MISS DOYLE: I think it does still in other quarters. I do not know why the Department dropped it for court work.

MRS BENNETT: It raises the question whether we call ourselves accredited reporters any longer.

MRS SORENE: Yes, you are.

MISS DOYLE: People who use business cards certainly have it on those cards.

MRS WILLETT: Barbara, it is very necessary for American depositions. The American lawyers definitely want a professional qualification.

MRS BENNETT: My last question is has there been any further lobbying, or it is just whistling in the wind, with the Department for Constitutional Affairs?

MISS DOYLE: No, there has been no lobbying yet, but that that might be considered in the next few months.

MRS BENNETT: Because, as I said to my neighbour, even gas fitters have to have some sort of Corgi registration.

MISS DOYLE: It is something I have very much in mind, so I might be able to tell you something next year.

MRS BENNETT: Point made.

MISS DOYLE: It is a good point. It should not be forgotten. We want to try and get it going again.

MRS WILLETT: There was a lot of lobbying in the past by some less enlightened employers who did not really want their people to be accredited. Virginia and the better employers always insisted that their people were accredited but certainly some people said that they wanted to verify their own standards. Their in-house standards are overseen by nobody independently.

MISS WASON: Of course, as you know, the CAT requirement about halved some years ago and gets less all the time. There are more vacancies than people to fill them in the Crown courts. Very few people have been training for so long because nobody knows more than the odd year ahead. The current contract could be removed within five days, as far as CAT is concerned, but I believe that future ones will be a bit more civilised.

MRS WEISINGER: Can I thank the Council for all the work they do on our behalf. I know I am one of the people who have not been to the AGM for many years, because I do not live in London and I have small children. It is appreciated, certainly by me, and I am sure by other members. You do quite a bit for the profession. Thank you all very much.

MISS DOYLE: Thank you very much. We also have some thanks for our work from Mavis Ross, who has written in.

MRS ROPER: Can I offer a personal "thank you" to Lindsay and to Naomi, both of whom I have known quite well in the past. You could not hope for more encouraging people within the profession, to keep the standards up and to show by example how the job should be done. I am certainly very grateful for the work that they have both put in.

MISS DOYLE: Thank you very much.

MR BELL: Can I tender apologies for absence from Steve Carter, who is in Torquay. He sends you all his best wishes and apologies for absence. He cannot afford the fare really! He has fallen over and broken his arm.

MRS SORENE: Oh dear.

MISS DOYLE: Thank you, Roger. Betty has something to say.

MRS WILLETT: I have a feeling that our attendances have gone down since we started using e-mail. I do not think we get as much reaction and interplay as we did when we used what is very disparagingly called snail-mail, or slow mail. Do those here find receiving everything by e-mail acceptable?

MR BELL: Yes, I am quite happy with that.

MRS WEISINGER: It means that you have to print it off, if you want to take it with you to read on the train. You have to do that little bit extra rather than just picking up your envelope. I printed it all off last night. Sometimes it just stays in your list of e-mails and you look at them when you can, and then forget that you have seen them.

MRS WILLETT: Then they get wiped off. What about the newsletter? Are you happy with that being sent by e-mail?

MRS FRITH: I prefer it, because I can take it with me and read it on the train, whereas, if it comes through the internet, by the time you have done your work, you do not really want to know.

MRS WEISINGER: You do not want to look at the computer any more!

MRS FRITH: No. Exactly.

MRS BENNETT: You always mean to go back and read it.

MRS SORENE: You can print it up, of course.

MRS WILLETT: Sometimes if you do not print it off, my computer cleans things off every month. I tick it "keep as new", but it does not always. After two months, it gets a bit browned-off with being kept as new.

MRS SORENE: But you can just copy and paste it into a web programme, or it comes through in Word and you can save it.

MISS DOYLE: Thank you. I am going to close the meeting on the count of three. The AGM is now concluded.

That being the conclusion of the meeting, I would like to introduce Garry Bratland from Canada, who is in this country to help us with repair and servicing of our Stenograph machines. Tonight, he is going to give us some insight into how we can and should look after our machines. I think that will be very informative and very interesting.

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