



WILLIAM BLAKE

SOCIETY

Constitution of the William Blake Society

1. Name and History

The name of the society is the William Blake Society. The society was formally founded on Tuesday 15th March 2011 at St. John's Parish Church, Hampstead, London, and the adoption of this constitution was the first resolution passed by voting members of the inaugural meeting on this date.

2. Mission Statement

We are a fellowship of individuals who share a love of the work, life and pervasive influence of the English poet, painter and mystic William Blake (1757-1827). For many of us, Blake is an integral part of our own artistic voices, a primary spiritual component in our own work. We each have our own relationship with Blake, and have united in his spirit and name to celebrate him, to promote understanding and appreciation of his work.

3. Membership

Membership of the Society is by subscription (see Standing Policy 1 for amount and frequency). Membership is available online via the Society's website and in person at meetings or events. Members wishing to sign up friends and associates can also download and print membership forms from the website, or pick them up from meetings and events. These should be returned to the Secretary at the nearest opportunity, along with the subscription fees.

4. Service Committee Meeting (SCM)

SCMs may be called as required, but should be held at least bi-monthly during the first year. The Society's first AGM should be held on or near to the first anniversary of the first SCM. In order to conduct business, there must be a quorum of eligible voting members present at the SCM.

5. Annual General Meeting (AGM)

An AGM becomes due on the anniversary of the inaugural SCM, and then every subsequent year (on or around 15th March). Major decisions, constitutional amendments and elections of committee members will take place at the AGM. Additionally, the Treasurer and Secretary would file annual written reports with the AGM. The AGM is paid for out of the Society's funds, and there is no "passing of the pot".

6. Meeting Procedures

6.1 Quorum

There must be a quorum of at least ten voting members present at any SCM or AGM in order for any elections to take place or motions to be voted on. A meeting that is not quorate may discuss Society business but may not take any business decisions without first ensuring the membership has an opportunity to ratify said decision at a quorate meeting before implementation.

6.2 Voting

A motion is presented to the meeting. The motion is discussed. If the outcome cannot be decided by consensus, the motion is put to the floor by the Chair. If the motion is seconded, a vote becomes necessary. All members present shall have one vote, except the Chair, who may not vote unless to make a casting vote in the event of a tie. The Chair and the Vice-Chair shall count the votes and agree on the numbers. The total number of votes must correspond with the number of eligible voting members present. An abstention is a "no" vote, and is counted against the motion. This way a motion can only be passed if more than 50% of members present vote for it.

Elections follow the same voting procedure as motions, except that elections are decided by majority vote rather than quorum, i.e. if three candidates stand for one position, whoever polls the most votes wins. Any member can nominate himself or herself or any other member for any service or committee position. A candidate may be required to answer questions from the floor before they are seconded. Once a candidate is seconded, they are entered into the vote. In order to retain voting anonymity, the candidate may be asked to cover their eyes or leave the room while the vote is taken. Committee members must stand for re-election at each AGM. No one can serve in a committee position for more than three consecutive years. After three consecutive years a member is automatically disqualified from standing for that position for a minimum of 12 months. They may, however, stand for another position if they so choose.

6.3 Ratification

No motion, policy or decision ratified by a vote can be overturned except by another vote. In circumstances where an action that is ratified is rendered impossible by unforeseen circumstances, a subsequent motion should be passed to enter the reasons into the minutes as a record of such.

6.4 Minutes

Minutes of SCMs will be kept on file either as audio, audio transcript or written minutes, and made available electronically to all members present and any other members upon request. AGM minutes will be published on the website in a downloadable format. All minutes will need to be approved by a vote at the meeting subsequent to their publication.

6.5 Discussion

Members address the meeting through the Chair. They indicate their desire to address the meeting by raising their hand. The chair will acknowledge them and invite them to speak in turn. If a discussion takes longer than it's allotted time, it will automatically be tabled for the agenda of the next meeting, unless there is a consensus to put current business aside in order to resolve it at the current meeting.

6.6 Agenda

The agenda will be written in advance by the Chair and made available at the start of the meeting. Matters to be entered into "New business" should be given to the chair in advance so that they can be included in the agenda at the earliest opportunity. Any matters given to the chair after completion of the agenda will be entered as "Any other business" if there is time, or otherwise entered into a future agenda as "New business".

7. Society Finances

The SCM must ratify all fundraising activities, including the membership subscription. Funds may be raised in pursuit of the Society's objectives as specified in the Mission Statement. Please see the section on the Fundraising & Entertainments sub-committee.

The day-to-day finances will be the responsibility of the Treasurer. If the bank account requires multiple signatories, it is suggested that these be 1. The Treasurer 2. The Chair 3. The Secretary 4. The Vice-Chair. The Treasurer shall be custodian of the chequebook and debit card facilities. The Society also has a Paypal account linked to the bank account for online subscriptions and transactions. The Treasurer and Secretary shall both have access codes for online banking and Paypal, as Paypal deposits shall also be a secondary record of online membership subscriptions

At each SCM, there should be a tradition of "passing the pot" for small donations to help towards the meeting's expenses. All financial decisions must be ratified at the SCM. Regular expenses can be met if ratified once.

The Treasurer will make a verbal financial report at each SCM, and will provide a full written report once a year at the AGM. The Society's bank is MetroBank, 1 Southampton Row, London WC1B 5HA.

8. Constitutional Amendments

Anything that fundamentally alters the way the Society is run must be adapted into the constitution. While the SCM may make additional policy decisions as the need arises, actual changes to the constitution are not valid until ratified by a vote at the AGM. This can, of course, only happen once a year. Any policy decisions that the SCM would like to adapt into the constitution should be outlined and discussed membership-wide before being put before the AGM for formal ratification.

9. Sub-Committees

Sub-Committees can meet formally or informally as required. Their representative will have to attend SCMs to make the necessary reports, request funds for activities, etc. Activities should adhere to the Society's code of conduct. Sub-Committees, while answerable to the Society at large via the SCM and AGM, retain a certain amount of autonomy in order to conduct their business to the best of their abilities. They are the "trusted servants" of the Society. Whilst all major decisions, including financial decisions and those affecting the wider reputation of the Society, still need to be ratified by a vote at the SCM, the Sub-Committees themselves can decide how best to conduct their affairs. For example, they may choose to adopt the Society's formal procedure for the running of meetings, voting etc. Or they may choose instead to operate less formally, and work with a consensus.

As standard, Sub-Committees are not allowed to raise or spend money without the knowledge and ratification of the Society, or do anything that may bring the Society or its individual members into disrepute. Aside from that, Sub-Committees have a full mandate to carry out the tasks asked of them by the Society. The Society can create new permanent or ad hoc sub-committees to discharge specific responsibilities not already covered as required.

Fundraising & Entertainments

The F&E committee is responsible for imagining, proposing, organising and managing events that entertain, promote and/or raise funds for the Society's activities. Staging an event requires the ratification of the SCM, who will also provide financial floats for the staging of events. The F&E committee has full autonomy to stage an event in the Society's name once ratified, and will receive the full help and support of the Society in order to do so. Any money made by F&E events is given to the Treasurer at the subsequent SCM. The F&E's designated representative will give a verbal report at each SCM, and a written report annually at the AGM.

Public Information

The PI committee is responsible for promoting the Society, including promoting membership. They are also the point of access for the general public. They research current news and non-society events that may of interest to members. They are responsible for the "Blake News" area of the website, whereby they also act as the filter of information to and from the other Sub-Committees, the Society at large. The PI committee reports verbally to the SCM, and submits a written report to the AGM. The PI committee may also recommend non-Society events that may be of interest to members, and may propose such events to the SCM for the Society's full endorsement, if it deems this appropriate. The PI committee is therefore effectively the Society's public liason.

Legacy

The Legacy committee keeps abreast of research, and promotes fuller understanding of Blake and Blakean ideals. The committee is the Society's mine of information on all things Blake. They should also look for ways in which new media may lend itself to the Society's goals.

10. Code of Conduct

No member should engage in any activity that breaches the trust of the Society, or that may bring the Society, it's individual members or, by association, the name of William Blake into disrepute. No member should attempt to misrepresent the Society. The Society does not endorse any political or religious belief, nor will it ever engage in any policy or activity that affects the individual statutory or human rights of its members. Those elected to committee positions are thereby entrusted to serve by the Society's members, and their positions are therefore ones of trust not government. This constitution and the evolving Standing Policies of the Society shall be it's only governing documents.