

A C U Eastern
(Affiliated to the Auto Cycle Union)

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held Sunday 13th November 2022 at Gt Blakenham Parish Rooms

President	Mr A Penny
Chairman	Mr P Armes
Vice Chairman	Mr A Foskew
Treasurer	Mr A Hay
Centre Secretary	Ms L Ralph

C Ralph	Woodbridge	P Fenn	Essex & Suffolk
A R Chaplin	Sudbury/VP	K Doherty	ECMC
Mr J Blyth	Woodbridge	Mr D Cordle	Ipswich
A Wright	Halstead	A Kenny	Harwich
R Hearn	Stowmarket	K Weavers	Halstead
Mrs V Hearn	Stowmarket	Mrs D Blyth	Woodbridge
P Sewter	Norwich Vikings	J Read	Woodbridge
C Keeble	Essex and Suffolk	Mrs B Douglas	Norwich Viking
S Harvey	500cc Association	G Brace	Chelmsford
T Steward	500cc Association	Mr P Hubbard	Diss
C Cook	Braintree	E Hood	Triangle

1. Mr Armes opened the meeting and welcomed all present. A minute's silence was observed for Remembrance Day and for the late Queen Elizabeth 2nd. Apologies were accepted from: Mr R Greengrass: Mr A Brace: Mr R Booty: Mr P Nash: Mrs Y Smith: Mr C Dopson: Mr A Waters
2. The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 14th November 2022, were confirmed as a true record. Proposed R Chaplin 2nd A Foskew
3. **Matters Arising** – C Keeble: Have job descriptions been finalised – apologies – they have not.

4. Chairman's report:

It is something of a bitter/sweet moment in time as I sit here giving my last report as Chairman of the Eastern Centre; or ACU Eastern as we are known as these days. I am probably one of the shortest serving Chairmen in the 100 year history of the Centre, and yet it seems like we have, together faced and overcome a never ending set of challenges that would usually be thrown our way in a lot longer timeframe.

As we all know I took the decision earlier this year to step back from all my positions within the Centre due to a combination of health issues and family commitments. Putting together my notes to write this report has given me a chance to reflect on my involvement with motorcycle sport, both as a competitor and like many in this room, moving into the world of organising and officiating. It was inevitable really given the history of the Armes family within the Centre, over 55 years if I've done my homework correctly; and finally, one of our former bastions of the Centre, David Smith will get his wish – when I started to pop my head above the parapet and take on some of the positions undertaken by my father he was heard to say, "I'm not having another bloody Armes on the top table of the board." I think I won him over as it wasn't long before he was putting me forward to chair the Comps Committee and tried to talk me into going to Rugby as the NMC delegate; I took one, but declined the other!!

In point of fact, it will be a big change in my life as I have actually been involved in motorcycle sport in the Centre since my mum was pushing me around Lyng in a pram. Just a few years later dad was teaching me how to ride a bike, his old BSA Bantam at the same venue; and just a few years after that a certain Dennis Slaughter was teaching me the black art of knocking in stakes and putting up ropes to ACU standards – again at the hallowed ground of Cadders Hill. And while I won't be enjoying the comforts of this lovely Village Hall any more, I will still be involved with the Norwich Vikings and all that goes on in that corner of Norfolk.

As we all know, it is the Centenary of the Centre this year, a milestone that was marked with a dinner just a few weeks ago and more of which we will hear about from Alan Penny during the board meeting that follows this AGM. Given that we are living in straightened times, and there have been many challenges over the last few years it is heartening to note that during this calendar year we have organised 108 off road events across four disciplines; 25 Motocross, 15 Enduro; 7 Grasstrack; and no less than 61 Trials. And these include everything from beginners/grassroots club events right through to flagship British Championship meetings – something, as a Centre we should all be very proud of.

Certainly, the Centre Championships have continued to be very well supported, and the motocross discipline has arguably one of the strongest series within the ACU.

When I took on the mantle of Chairman, I was very keen to get the Centre working harder to make organising events, and running clubs a good deal easier and hopefully more efficient financially; this is an area which I feel hasn't gone so well. For example, the introduction of the Eventbrite online ticketing and marketing opportunity hasn't been taken up and utilised to anywhere near its full potential which I feel is a shame, but perhaps not explained and handled as well as it could have been by me.

It has also been a major disappointment to see the end of the Norfolk & Suffolk Group which has succumbed to the changing times in which we live and operate. While there has still been a 'Group' trial championship the parallel organisation within the Norfolk & Suffolk Group, the Snetterton Combine hasn't operated for a number of years mainly due to the major changes within the world of road racing – and the huge costs involved. Again, it is interesting to reflect on the major events that the Combine ran at Snetterton, including the headline Race of Aces which was graced by all the world greats, including Giacomo Agostini who won 50 years ago this year; and of course, the Transatlantic Road Races which saw the likes of Kenny Roberts, Eddie Lawson, Barry Sheene, and Steve Parrish going head-to-head around the old 2.75-mile airfield circuit.

But if history teaches us anything we must always learn from the past and be ready to take on the challenges of the future. The technological timebomb that has been ticking at ACU head office for a few years is now about to go off and with it the potential to breakdown the Centre structure and management model of the ACU itself. The new Sport80 website, which I understand is in the process of going live as we speak, gives all clubs the independence to deal directly with Rugby on every subject of running events and organising off road motorcycle meetings, thereby making the Centre redundant. So, the new Chairman, be it Alan or Chris have an almighty challenge on their hands to restructure the Centre and its services to make it relevant for the current times. It will take a lot of hard work, not just by the new Chair, but by all of you who believe in providing some form of support and cohesion between all the clubs and disciplines that currently operate some of the best events in the UK.

And finally, it would be unforgivable if I didn't say thank you to everyone that has provided me with the support, and at times, good counsel, to steer the Centre in, what I hope has a positive direction through some pretty choppy waters. It is always difficult to name names as you always fall into the trap of missing someone out, but I cannot leave this seat without saying a huge thank you to our Centre Secretary who has kept me on the straight and narrow and provided a level of support above and beyond – so, Lyn, thank you.

In closing, I would like to wish all clubs and organisers the very best for the future, and I look forward to bumping into many of you at one or two events around the Centre in the coming years.

Mr Kenny gave a vote of thanks to Mr Armes commenting that his parents would have been proud.

Secretary's report:

As I also give my final Secretary's Report, it is with mixed feelings. Sadness as an end of something in coming but the time is right for me. My health has been up and down over the last few years and it is time to take care of me, rather than everyone else!

I look back to my involvement which started when my two boys, Ross and Adam started to compete as teenagers, they are now 46 and 42. Briefly, I have been Woodbridge MX Secretary, NGR Organiser, 22 years as MX Secretary,

and Centre Secretary since 2010 – I think I have done my bit. Coming from a family of organisers who ran youth clubs, football clubs, cricket clubs, darts teams and fishing clubs, I had a good grounding. A bit like the Armes family I suggest!

As I watched the remembrance service last night, (my parents were also standard bearers for the British Legion) and ‘service’ was constantly mentioned, it did remind me that most of us here also do that – maybe in a slightly different way, but service to others all the same, whether it is as an official of this Centre or to your own Clubs. Sadly, I do worry where the next generation is to come from. Let’s hope its from those dedicated family members who get roped in from an early age. I can see that here among some family members now.

The role of Centre Secretary, which I am sad to say does not seem an attractive one, as no one has stepped forward, it pivotal to the organisation of the Centre in as much as it is the point of contact for all, from all directions. It does take time to become “the fount of all knowledge”, but whoever takes over (and someone will) I will always be around to ask for help and advice. You just need to be quite organised, computer literate and have the patience of a saint!

Things are definitely on the change, as Phil has said, with a lot of, if not most of the day to day running of events being available direct from Rugby so it is inevitable that the role of Centre’s will change dramatically within the next few years and ACU Eastern must be prepared for this. Whoever the new regime will be next year, things will be different and people will have to work in different ways. There has already been an issue with affiliation to the ACU where the only way clubs can now affiliate is direct to Rugby via Sport 80. Now, I have asked the question of affiliation fees, which always came to the Centre as Clubs affiliated to the Centre, but I am still waiting on an answer from Mr Doctor! Things like this will have a financial effect on Centre Funds.

This year for me has been one of less involvement with events, but I did manage to help out once or twice when needed. Over the years, I have made lots of acquaintances, and many real friends. Had some very funny times and been present as some very tragic times. All part and parcel – I will miss it but I have always been one to know when the time is right to bow out. Thank you to all of you for your friendship and support, even to those of you have ‘challenged me’ over the years. Thanks to my fellow officers for their support. I wish all of you continued success.

Mr Kenny proposed a vote of thanks to Mrs Ralph for her service to ACU Eastern.

5. Centre Treasurer’s Report

Mr A Hay had circulated his report prior to the meetings and ran through the salient points for the members present and invited questions from the floor. Mr Hay was asked to contact Mr N Doctor, General Secretary (and also in his role as Company Secretary) to question why the accounts department had been told not to pay the £50 rebate for permits run during 2020. Mr Foskew that nothing on this subject had been mentioned at yesterday’s NMC meeting.

Recommendation: To approve the audited accounts for 2020. Proposed by A Kenny 2nd P Fenn. Unanimously accepted.

Mr Hay was thanked for his diligence.

6. Centre Officers Election.

The following nominations had been received by the closing date.

Officers	Nominations
President	Mr A Penny
Vice President (Max 12 inc. Life VP’s**)	Mr A Foskew: Mr G Brace: Mr R Chaplin: Mr A Kenny: Mr J Read: Mrs V Hearn:
Chairman	Mr C Keeble Mr A Foskew
Vice Chair	Mr C Keeble Mr A Foskew
Hon. Treasurer	Mr A Hay

**Life Vice President A Brace: Mr R G Hearn
Honorary Life Vice President R Bannister **

The posts of President, Vice Presidents and Hon Treasurer were all approved with no necessity for any election. The post of Chairman was taken by secret vote. Mr Keeble and Mr Foskew left the room for this vote to be taken. The result was as follows: Chairman Mr Keeble 21 votes: Mr Foskew 4 Votes. Mr Keeble accepted the post and Mr Foskew accepted the post of Vice Chairman with no need for a private vote.

7. **Any Other Business:** There was none.

The meeting closed at 2.18pm