



History of AGTO

The Association is born

In 1991, during the Excursions Exhibition at the Wembley Conference Centre, a group of like-minded individuals, with an interest in arranging travel and leisure pursuits for their local clubs and societies, decided to pool their ideas and develop mutual interests. Peter Stonham, Publisher/Editor of the *Group Travel Organiser Magazine*, formed a steering group and from this the name **Group Travel Organisers Association (GTOA)** came into being.



The early years

On 19th October, 1991, GTOA had its first AGM at the Hinckley Island Hotel, Leicester, following which recruitment began with some small educational visits being arranged for members. By 1996, with a category for commercial members to become Associates in being, the National Committee felt it was now time to become a truly independent trade association by managing its own administration, therefore dispensing with the facilities provided by *GTO Magazine* since inception.

Branching out

As membership increased it was apparent that London was too far for members to travel to meetings and that GTOA needed branches for members to meet at more convenient locations. The first branch to be formed was Northern in 1993, followed by Southern 1994 and Eastern in 1996. Three years later Western followed and in 2003 Central opened its doors with the last of the current branches, Kent, forming in 2006. Meridian was a short-lived branch, which was set up to facilitate a few members living in two small postal districts in the south of England. However, as members switched their affiliation to the other branches, it was decided to discontinue the Meridian branch. A Scottish Branch is in the process of being formed, which makes us a truly national organisation.



National Committee & Board of Directors

Up to and including the meeting held on 9th August 2014, GTOA had been governed by a National Committee consisting of representatives of the six branches, two Associate members, plus a General Secretary, Treasurer and others co-opted for different reasons, which had become unwieldy. It was replaced by a Board of Directors as a result of the findings of a working party set up in 2012 and acted upon in 2013 with the arrival of a new Constitution in 2014 in order that GTOA Ltd, as the organisation had become in 2011, could act in a more professional manner. The changes were put before an EGM in June 2014, together with new Articles of Association, and passed overwhelmingly by the members present.

AGTO is unveiled

One of the findings of the working party was the confusion by potential group organiser members between GTOA and *GTO Magazine* and so the Board started to look into changing the name. First of all however they identified that with the rising amount of administration that had been done by volunteers, who were getting difficult to find, the Association needed a management company to undertake these tasks and also to find a part time CEO to effect any changes, as well as modernise GTOA and drive it forward. In May 2015 ASL were appointed as our management company and Mike Bugsgang joined as CEO in February 2015. After completion of much consultation, Mike delivered the **Association of Group Travel Organisers (AGTO)** to members at the AGM in January 2016.

Wendy Hartley-Scarff took over the role of CEO in January 2018 and continues the work to modernise AGTO and drive the organisation forward.

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