

Bicester Local History Society

Annual General Meeting, Monday 19 September 2016, 19:30

Venue: The Clifton Centre, Ashdene Road, Bicester
Present: c. 30 members

1. Welcome/Format of Meeting

Bob Hessian opened the AGM at 19:40. He welcomed members and outlined the format of the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from: Mick and Wendy Wall, Geoff Orman, Hazel Thatcher.

3. Minutes of AGM held on 15 September 2015

In the absence of a copy of the Minutes of the last AGM, this item was not discussed.

4. Chairman's Report

Bob Hessian then gave his 2015/16 Chairman's Report:

2015/16 had proved another good year of interesting talks with some excellent speakers. Two speakers in particular, Stephen Barker and John Leighfield, were highlighted as outstanding. Thanks were given to John Roberts and Sally James for organising the year's programme of talks.

This year's village and countryside walks had been based around Adderbury and Middle Barton. Thanks were given to John Roberts and Bob Hessian for organising these walks.

BLHS had participated in the 2015 St Edburg's Church Xmas Tree event, this time the BLHS Xmas Tree theme was local churches and bells. The BLHS stand at The Big Lunch event on 12 June 2016 had featured a quiz to identify pictures of Bicester's buildings (the pictures had been taken from the forthcoming DVD, but unfortunately the quiz had proved a little too taxing for many people).

April 2016 saw the long-awaited opening of the new impressive Bicester library. BLHS have been allocated two display cabinets in the local history area of the library, with the purpose of mounting local history exhibitions throughout the year. In June, as part of the formal events to mark the opening of the library, BLHS offered a 'Backyards of Bicester' walk around the town. The walk was organised and led by Bob Hessian, and proved very popular with over 20 people attending.

BLHS are still looking for a permanent home for their archive items: suggestions include the Chapel of Rest and the old Dovecote. In the meantime, items are being temporarily stored at The Garth and at the Chairman's house. The future of the old Dovecote is still being discussed. Funding is available from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with the proviso that any future use of the building must be 'for community use'. One suggestion had been to use the Dovecote as a showcase for the site of the Old Priory, featuring the story of the building/plans, together with artefacts from the site. There is uncertainty regarding the plans for Old Place Yard, so BLHS need to watch developments with interest, over the coming year.

The 'Oxfordshire in 50 Objects' exhibition was being held at The Oxfordshire Museum in Woodstock. BLHS had been asked to select an item from the archives at the Oxfordshire County Museums

Service at Standlake. The item chosen was the wedding ring of Mary Dew, grandmother of George James Dew (1846-1928), Relieving Officer for the Bletchington District of the Bicester Poor Law Union, renowned for his fascinating diaries. A visit to this exhibition was being offered as this year's BLHS outing.

BLHS are still very much in need of a 'Secretary'. A plea was made to anyone interested in this post which would greatly help the Society carry out its day-to-day activities, as well as take on new projects and activities.

The BLHS newsletter, *The Bicester Historian*, continues to be a real success story, and the Committee are very grateful to Matthew Hathaway for his tireless efforts in producing this excellent newsletter every month. Thanks were also given to regular contributor, Marj Dean. *The Bicester Historian* is for all members, so please feel free to contribute articles to Matthew.

The highlight project of the year has undoubtedly been the production of the *Bicester's Buildings* DVD. The key person involved with this project was Pat Snelson. Pat selected the buildings to be featured, wrote all the scripts, and then presented all the commentary (from memory!). Pat has done an absolutely remarkable job, and devoted a vast number of hours to this DVD. A round of applause was requested from members in recognition of this notable contribution. In addition, huge thanks were given to Matthew Hathaway, who filmed and edited the DVD single-handedly, devoting many, many hours to ensure that the production of the DVD was to such a professional standard.

To close the Chairman's report, an extract of the *Bicester's Buildings* DVD was shown to members for the first time.

5. Treasurer's Report

A draft copy of the BLHS Income & Expenditure Accounts for the year ending September 2016 had been distributed to members prior to the start of the meeting. The Treasurer, Sally James, then gave her Treasurer's Report:

Entering its 30th anniversary year, the Society found itself in a very good financial situation, with total assets of £7,717.95. A grant of £600 had been received from BTC to finance the *Bicester's Buildings* DVD (however it was noted that in future years BLHS may have to fund similar projects themselves).

The Adderbury village walk had been hosted and funded (teas) by Adderbury local history society. It had been agreed that BLHS would offer a reciprocal arrangement to the Adderbury local history society. Sales of the 30th Anniversary Calendars had generated £810 of revenue. A copy of this calendar had been given gratis to each member of the Society, at a cost of £994 (this amount appeared in last year's accounts i.e. year ending September 2015).

Membership numbers remain very similar to last year: 94 members. A decision not to raise the annual subscriptions in 2016/17 had been recommended by the Committee, and this now needed to be ratified at the AGM. A vote was therefore taken to maintain the annual subscription at £12 for single membership, and £18 for joint membership. The result of the vote was: all members were in favour, and there were no objections.

John Roberts was thanked for booking speakers for the monthly talks; Mick and Wendy Wall for their sterling assistance with organising and running the monthly raffles; and all the 'behind the scenes people' who had helped with meetings: putting out chairs, sorting out refreshments, and clearing up afterwards.

Finally, a plea was made to let the Committee know if members come across any new/good speakers. The Society is always looking for new interesting speakers, and any suggestions from members would be greatly welcomed.

The Treasurer then asked members whether they had any questions concerning the annual accounts – there were no questions.

6. Election of BLHS Committee

Bob Hessian stated that in order to adhere to constitutional rules, all existing Committee members were now asked to stand down. Bob Hessian then asked members if they were in agreement for him to take the role of Acting Chairman whilst the voting for the new Committee members took place. Members agreed to this request. Bob Hessian advised members that no new volunteers for the Committee had come forward, and that all Committee members who had served in 2015/16 would be happy to carry on in 2016/17. Members were then asked to vote on accepting the following BLHS Committee for 2016/17 'en bloc':

Bob Hessian, Chairman

Sally James, Treasurer

Sally Dexter, Minutes Secretary

John Roberts, Membership Officer

Matthew Hathaway

Peter Crook

This vote was then put to members: all members were in favour, and there were no objections. Bob Hessian thanked all the Committee members for their work throughout the year, and thanked all the members for their support throughout the year.

The AGM closed at 20:10, and was followed by the raffle. After refreshments, Rowena Archer gave a talk on Mediaeval Women.

Note-taker: Sally Dexter

Circulation of AGM minutes: 2016/17 Committee members and publication on the BLHS website