

**Bicester Local History Society**

***Annual General Meeting***

**Monday 18 September 2017**

Venue: The Clifton Centre, Ashdene Road, Bicester  
Present: 43 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: Hazel Thatcher, Martin Greenwood, John & Sue Leverton, Marjorie Dean, and Colin Duckworth.

**3. Minutes of AGM held on 19 September 2016**

Bob Hessian briefly re-capped the minutes from last year's AGM.

**4. Chairman's Report/Presentation**

The Chairman, Bob Hessian, then gave his report on the year's activities and highlights.

The year had seen a good selection of talks, some better than others. Liz Woolley was highlighted as a very good speaker. Thanks were given to John Roberts and Sally James for producing and organizing the speaker programme.

Walks had been organized to Chipping Norton, Stanton St John, and Oxford (History of Oxford Railways). Thanks were given to Bob Hessian and John Roberts for organizing and leading these walks, which had proved very successful.

BLHS had participated in the 2016 St Edburg's Church Xmas Tree event. The theme for this year had been the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society, and featured photographs of BLHS members from 30 years ago.

The Society was still working on the forward planning of displays in the library. BLHS's first display was possibly a little too detailed. The two cabinets in the library are for use by the Society, however BLHS are happy to accommodate other local history societies from the area, or other local history collections.

BLHS are still looking for a venue for their archive items. Currently items are being stored at the Garth in the attic rooms, and at the Chairman's house.

There are lots of background discussions currently taking place regarding the future of the town's Dovecote. The current 17<sup>th</sup> Century Dovecote is a grade II listed building which more than likely occupies the site of the original medieval Priory dovecote. The building was developed in the 1960s, when a first floor was added. The Dovecote is now owned by CDC, and is currently being used as a repository for storage items. The preservation and re-purposing of the building is now becoming a priority, particularly because of its location beside Old Place Yard, which is being developed for housing. Plans and ideas for the future of this building would become clearer during the coming year.

Sales of the Bicester's Buildings DVD had proved excellent, and thanks once again were given to Pat Snelson for her marvelous contribution (she wrote, directed, and produced the dvd). Thanks were also given to Matthew Hathaway (for the countless hours he gave to filming and editing the dvd).

*The Bicester Historian*, the Society's monthly newsletter, was mentioned as a major success of the year. The editor Matthew Hathaway was thanked for his great efforts in producing this newsletter to such a good standard, every month. Thanks were also given to regular contributor, Margery Dean. The Bicester Advertiser had proposed that BLHS contribute a regular monthly article. This would give excellent publicity for the Society, however it would require a lot of time and material to fulfill the monthly commitment.

The *Bicester Street Names* project is currently being worked on by Andy Taylor; and the St Edburg's School log books are being considered as a future project. Work to update the website had started, however there was still a huge amount of work to carry out, and anyone interested in assisting was asked to contact Matthew Hathaway, who would very much appreciate any help given.

The Royal British Legion were currently considering a new war memorial. BLHS are keen to keep the existing memorial located in the churchyard. A new memorial may be positioned in a busy area within the town. BLHS will mark the 100-year anniversary of the end of WW1 by mounting a display in the library, and carrying out WW1-specific walks around Bicester.

Onto planning matters, the fight to save Gavray Drive continues, and anyone interested in this campaign should contact Pam Roberts. Phase 1 of the Old Place Yard development was now up to roof level (in terms of building). Phase 2 of the development (the old cloister area) was at the point of platform foundations. These platform foundations had been raised by a few inches in order to protect what's underneath, prior to archeological work being completed.

At each AGM, the same appeal goes out for new Committee members for the Society. Peter Crook is retiring from the Committee, which means that numbers are down to 5 (the BLHS constitution specifies that we need 6 Committee members). A plea to members to join the Committee was made. One or two additional people are needed to ensure the Society carries on. This message was emphasized.

The Society needs volunteers to help with the tasks/activities that Committee are unable to carry out themselves. These tasks include:

- To co-ordinate and organize displays in the library. There are 3 - 4 displays a year, and help is required to produce script/captions for exhibits. In addition, help is required to invite and assist other local history societies with displays in the library.
- To collect newspaper cuttings.
- To assist with indexing books e.g. David Watts book on *Shops of Bicester* (which has no index).
- To assist with the digitizing of archive material.
- To assist with transcribing documents.
- To manage the refreshments rota, and possibly the monthly raffle (if Mick and Wendy Wall are unable to continue).

The Society already has some volunteers, who unfortunately may feel that they have been forgotten. This certainly isn't the case. However, it is clear that the Committee has spent far too long trying to formalize the list of tasks to offer volunteers. Thankfully, this task is now complete, so we appeal once again for more volunteers to help us, as well as new Committee members. Without this help, the Society will not be able to survive.

Thanks were given to the existing Committee members.

At this point, the Chairman asked if there were any questions from members.

Gill King asked what BLHS are going to do re. Old Place Yard?

The Chairman replied that he would contact Heritage England and CDC to ensure that the proper processes have been followed, and that no contravention of the planning laws had taken place. He would also find out whether any archeological work had begun on the cloister site. Gill King asked whether this would be done as a society or individually. The Chairman replied, as a Society.

Brian Clifton asked if BLHS knew what would happen to the Magistrates' Court?

The Chairman confirmed that the Magistrates' Court had now been sold, but it was confidential who had bought it. Also, there was a covenant attached to the building that meant that the land cannot be re-developed.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer, Sally James, then gave her annual report. A draft copy of the BLHS income and expenditure accounts for the year ending September 2017 had already been distributed to members prior to the start of the meeting.

The Society found itself in a very good financial situation with total assets of £8,638.12. The Treasurer stated that the accounts were not as complete as she would have liked, with the costs and subsidies for the programme of walks still outstanding, and the cost of refreshments for the Christmas social not yet included. A grant for £250 had been received from Bicester Town Council to contribute towards the costs of the proposed timeline panel/graphic at

Bicester library. Costs had been incurred for the baubles for the BLHS Xmas Tree, but the baubles had then been sold back to members (money received had been donated to St Edburg's Foundation). Money had also been spent on materials for the library displays. An 'unpresented' cheque for a speaker-talk also featured as an income item (£35.80). The raffle continues to generate good income for the Society, £174.73 in this year. Speaker fees have remained fairly constant for this period, and the hire for the hall for monthly meetings is £10 per hour. Subscriptions to local history organisations had totalled £78 for the year. The Society currently has 89 members, compared to 94 for the previous year.

It had been previously agreed by the Committee that there would be no increase again in the annual subscriptions to members. Therefore, for the year 2017/18, the subscriptions remain at £12 for a single membership, and £18 for a joint membership. The visitor's fee for attending a monthly talk remains at £3.

The Treasurer made a general point regarding grants. When a society/organisation applies for a grant (e.g. from Bicester Town Council), the society/organisation needs to show that it can add (with funds available) to the potential grant amount.

The Treasurer thanked Mick and Wendy Wall for their sterling work with managing and running the monthly raffle which has proved so profitable for the Society. The Treasurer also thanked those people who had helped with organizing the refreshments at the speaker-talks; and also those people who had helped with moving chairs before/after meetings.

The Treasurer asked members if there were any questions concerning the accounts. There were none.

## **6. Election of 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 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 Peter Crook was retiring from the Committee this year. All other Committee members who had served during 2016/17 had said they would be happy to carry on in 2017/18. Members were then asked to vote on accepting the following BLHS Committee for 2017/18 'en bloc':

Bob Hessian, Chairman  
Sally James, Treasurer  
Sally Dexter, Minutes Secretary  
John Roberts, Membership Officer  
Matthew Hathaway

The 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 then thanked the members for their continued support.

The AGM closed at 20:10.

A break for refreshments followed, and then the film *24 Square Miles* was shown.

Note-taker: Sally Dexter