



# THE BEACONSFIELD SOCIETY

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**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting for the year 2013-2014 held in Borlase Hall, St Teresa's Parish Centre, Warwick Road on Tuesday 4 November 2014 starting at 7.00 pm**

**Present:** the following Committee members and twenty-four members and guests were present.

**Officers:** President: Les Davies, Chairman, Mike Elliott, Treasurer: Graeme Richards, Secretary: Laurence Smaje.

**Other Committee members:** Tony Bristow, Kari Dorme, Nanu Hodson, Debbie Marsden and Colin Mitchell.

**1. Apologies for absence:** John Burton, Jess McEvoy, Michael and Sheila Newland, John Page, Shirley and Brian Scrivener, James and Liz Shaw, Deirdre Smaje and Mike Stythe.

## **2. Welcome by the President**

The President welcomed the members and guests present and said that the Society was going from strength to strength but that with more members we could do even more and that the Committee would also welcome more willing to serve.

## **3. Minutes of the 2013 AGM held on 6 November 2013**

These were approved by the membership as a correct record, proposed by Sue Davies and seconded by Nanu Hodson.

## **4. Chairman's Report**

The Chairman began by echoing the President's comment that it had been a very active and successful year. He went on to welcome Mark Gilpin and Max Camplin from *Inland Homes* which had recently received planning approval for the first part of the Relief Road, which was the most frequently cited requirement for the Wilton Park Development mentioned at the two public meetings held by Wilton Park Watch, headed by the Society and BOTRA. He also drew attention to the fact that the High Court challenge by the developer *Jansons* had been withdrawn recently, following an accommodation between the two developers and he welcomed Patrick Gurner, representing *Jansons*.

The Chairman then moved onto our own activities saying that our busy year had been reflected in our bumper Newsletter published recently and thanked our editor Tony Bristow for creating such an interesting edition.

He pointed out that this year we were commemorating the past rather than celebrating it, in that our main Heritage event was a Commemoration of World War One by the historian Linda Hart and actor Gabriel Woolf. They provided a very moving and thoughtful presentation of poetry and readings from those at the Front and those back at Home in an anthology called *Behind the Lines*. This had been organised by Kari Dorme who had also done considerable detective work on the names of those on our war memorial. These included the Grenfell twins, Captain Francis Grenfell, the first officer to win a Victoria Cross, and his brother Riversdale, both of whom were killed in the war. They were cousins of Julian Grenfell, the poet whose work was quoted in the performance. Sadly, Julian and his brother, residents of Taplow Court, which was the venue for our visit this year, were also killed during the dreadful conflict.

Kari's organisation of the successful celebration of Enid Blyton last year did not seem to be sufficient for her and she had organised a commemorative plaque which had been erected in the Town Hall garden and kindly paid for by the Town Council. Furthermore, she had been in contact with a builder who had rescued a sundial that had been on Enid Blyton's house when it was being demolished, and she found a willing Bekonscot to restore and re-erect it in their grounds. Finally, Kari was still in demand for comments in the press on Enid Blyton.

Our main community event Beaconsfield Now! was more fortunate in the weather this year and we attracted some 40 different organisations to showcase their work in another successful morning. Advertising this had become problematic due to the fact that the fixings for the cross-road banner in the New Town had become unsafe and could no longer be used. Initially we had planned to replace them, but it became clear that this would be expensive and it was agreed we should explore the use of lamp-post vertical banners. We had to buy special fixings and have stress tests done on the selected lamp-posts after which we were able to advertise Beaconsfield Now! for a week beforehand. Debbie Marsden and Nanu Hodson were thanked for their splendid organisation of Beaconsfield Now! and also for negotiating the use of the lamp-posts for the banners. We now have a new community resource, which is open to all not-for-profit organisations in the town, their only expense being that of providing the banners, as we have also arranged for them to be erected and removed free of charge. Full details are on our website.

Before finishing, the Chairman wished to thank members of his Committee who do so much to ensure its success - Kari Dorme and her colleagues, on the Events Committee - John Burton and Colin Mitchell; Debbie Marsden, Nanu Hodson and Laurence Smaje for Beaconsfield Now!; Tony Bristow for the Newsletter; Graeme Richards for looking after the Finances and Laurence Smaje for his Secretarial work. He also drew attention to and thanked several Active Supporters – Deirdre Smaje for her design and communication skills, Jess McEvoy for her help with marketing and Sandy Saunders, our ex-Chairman who remains active.

All our events could not take place without financial help and the Chairman expressed the Society's gratitude for the extremely generous support we have been given by the Shanly Foundation and the Frost Partnership.

In summary, the Chairman commented that the Society remains apolitical and that we aim to be a critical friend of our Town, District and County Councils and we hope to continue to work productively with each of them.

## 5. Treasurers Report

Copies of the Accounts were tabled, so the Treasurer confined himself to its main features. He pointed out that, although we had an operating deficit of some £470, we were still in a strong financial position. Moreover, the substantial expenses incurred by the need to purchase special fixings and stress testing of the lamp-posts for the banners, were an investment and would not recur for at least 5 years. However, our subscription income was also slightly reduced and we would welcome more members. In summary he was entirely satisfied with the current financial situation of the Society and commended the report to the Society.

Acceptance was proposed by Sandy Saunders and seconded by Michael Harrison and approved *nem con*.

## 6. Announcement of Society Awards

The Chairman announced that the **Outstanding Citizen of the Year** was awarded to Richard Jones and he invited the President to say a few words about him. Richard had been involved in scouting for more than

50 years, coming to Beaconsfield some 30 years ago and being Group Leader for the past 15 years and retiring 2 years ago. He remains on the District Executive Board, however, and is currently involved in starting a new Scout Group in Gerrards Cross. He has been a Governor of Beaconsfield School since 2008 and is an advisor in the Beaconsfield Advisory Centre. He is an active member of St Mary's Church and involved in GradNet, the organisation helping graduates to find jobs.

Unfortunately, Richard was in New York and, Andy Hodson, Scout Leader of 4<sup>th</sup> Beaconsfield Scouts, collected the Award on his behalf.

The **Community Building of the Year** was awarded to the Swimming Pool at Alfriston School. This replaced the old pool, which could no longer be used because of concerns about health and safety. Designed by the Duggan Morris practice, the 750 sq. metre space provides changing rooms and a 4 lane heated indoor pool with a beautiful timber roof. This acts as an acoustic baffle, which dampens the otherwise noisy environment and makes for a more pleasant experience for the girl pupils. Furthermore, the pool is to be available to others in the community when not being used by the school.

The award was collected by Peter Cullimore, a Governor at the school and Chair of the committee that was responsible for raising the £2 million required.

The **Building of the Year** was awarded to Bakery Court in the Old Town. Housing both commercial developments and the Raymond Blanc Brasserie, it also has apartments to rent together with car parking for residents and visitors to the businesses. It is a scheme very much in sympathy with the Old Town and the architect was able to retain the original walls of the area.

The award was collected by the main architect, Guy Marsden of Bidwells, and the owner, Hall Barn Estate, was represented by Elizabeth Vass.

## 7. Election of Officers and Committee

The President chaired the process for the election of the Chairman. The Committee proposed Mike Elliott and there were no other nominations. Acceptance was proposed by Sue Davies and seconded by Sandy Saunders and he was elected *nem con*.

The Treasurer and Secretary were prepared to continue in their roles if it was the wish of the Society. Their re-election was proposed by Mike Elliott and Keith Bowyer and they were elected *nem con*. The other members of the committee had also indicated their willingness to continue to serve and their election was taken en bloc. It was proposed by Sandy Saunders and seconded by Sue Davies and they were elected *nem con*.

The Chairman was pleased to welcome our speaker **Mrs Ruth Vigor-Hedderly**, Cabinet Member for Transport, Bucks County Council and said that she would be pleased to answer questions after her talk.

Ruth Vigor-Hedderly started by saying that while she was relatively new in her role as Cabinet member for transport, she had spent 10 months as deputy before taking over the role.

Her first task was to address the large number of criticisms received on roads and transport and she realised early on that this was in part due to the transport hub for the whole of Bucks being situated north of Aylesbury. Northern Bucks is much more rural than the south and neither area really understands the problems faced by the other. Accordingly, Mrs Vigor-Hedderly reorganised the service into three transport hubs – the north as before, but also in Wycombe and a third in Amersham. Staff will be re-located to the

area of their responsibility and will thus understand local issues as they arise. So far, the feedback has been much more positive.

The traffic delays on the A355 were the next issue raised. Our Chairman reminded the audience that this was the most common issue raised at the two Open Meetings on the Wilton Park development held by Wilton Park Watch, headed by the Beaconsfield Society and BOTRA, and the speaker addressed this head on. However, whilst some money was forthcoming, it was not enough to fund the preferred option, which is for the relief road to have a separate bridge over the railway and join the A355 beyond the Ledborough Lane- Long Bottom Lane junction. On being pressed to say where any relief road will actually join, she said options were still being considered and careful modelling undertaken to provide information for a consultation. She strongly encouraged the audience to respond and emphasised how important she felt local engagement to be. She will listen she said and if she was unable to accommodate people's wishes she would explain why. Several times members of the audience said that there had already been a consultation on the issue of a relief road but that they were unaware that its results had been published but Mrs Vigor-Hedderly was unable to respond.

The final main part of her talk was on HS2. Bucks County Council was one of the authorities campaigning against it but if it does go ahead despite opposition, they will do their best to ensure it does not go through any Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The County Council will be entering a petitioning process in front of a Select Committee and will be seeking mitigation of the ill effects of the railway on Buckinghamshire as it will not enjoy any of the potential benefits of a high-speed railway.

An open session then followed and questions on the need for a safe crossing of the A40 at the junction with Holtspur Top Lane and the need for a safe crossing of the proposed Relief Road in Wilton Park. If we were unhappy with the current situation, she said we should take to the Local Area Forum, though doubt was expressed as to whether this would be admissible. There was also disappointment that, while a substantial amount of money was spent on cycle paths in the centre of Town, several good proposals from the Cycle Path Action Group were not implemented. The audience appreciated that the money was allocated from Government specifically for improved access to the station, but it was not felt a useful exercise and would be difficult or impossible to undo. Mrs Vigor-Hedderly said that they accepted the money rather than step back and that most of the comments she has received on the scheme have been very positive.

A final comment from the speaker was that the Bucks Transport department was developing an App for smart phones that would allow members of the public to photograph Category 1 and 2 potholes in the road, which would be routed automatically to the Department without the necessity of sending a message. A report on the Council's digital policy can be found at [www.buckscc.gov.uk/digital](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/digital)

At this point Mrs Vigor-Hedderly had to leave to attend another function and the Chairman thanked her warmly for her talk and open stance and the audience responded by an enthusiastic round of applause.

The Chairman then invited Mark Gilpin from Inland Homes to say a few words. He confirmed that Inland Homes and Jansons had agreed to work together on the Wilton Park Development but said that, because SBDC had yet to adopt the final version of their Supplementary Planning Document, he was not in a position to say anything until this had taken place. However, he was expecting it to be adopted within the next few months after which they will hold another consultation with the community. He did not expect to submit a Planning Application until after the Council Elections in May 2015 and anticipated that they would start building the relief road in mid-2015 and start on site in 2016. Finally, he thought it would take 5-7 years to complete the work.