

# The Beaconsfield Society

## NEWSLETTER October 2017

### Dates for your Diary

**Patron's Talk and Annual General Meeting**

**Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2017 7.30 pm sharp**

*The Fitzwilliams Centre*

The short AGM will be preceded by a talk by our Patron  
The Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP. ALL ARE WELCOME.  
Details of the Agenda can be found on the final page of this newsletter.

Refreshments will be served at the end.

Enjoy an outstanding speaker and a free glass of wine with nibbles!



### Next year

- **Beaconsfield Now! 2018 at the Rugby Club** **Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2018**
- **Beaconsfield Literary Celebration – Sir Terry Pratchett** **Date TBA**

### Chairman's letter

*Mike Elliott*

There can rarely have been a time when the town has needed the Beaconsfield Society more than now!

We are being challenged on many fronts but particularly with planning. Your committee has continued to fight the good fight against the worst excesses of over development and in-filling, has highlighted the anomalies in the current system that allows affordable housing provision or contributions in lieu to be avoided and continued to point out the pressures on infrastructure.

Meanwhile we await the result of our extensive response to the SBDC consultation on the area local plan 2016-36 that threatens to release large pieces of Green Belt land. Press reports tell us that Inland Homes are finally putting in an application for outline permission on the Wilton Park site and we are eager to review this. I commend the excellent planning article later in this newsletter.

You will be aware that the A355 relief road, running from Pyebush roundabout to Maxwell Road, has been approved, subject to sign-off by the Secretary of State. Work will start next year. There is considerable debate as to the impact on traffic flow and the unintended consequences elsewhere in the town. Insofar as it keeps HS2 traffic out of the town, on balance, we welcome it. If it enables massive new housing development in the longer term, we are not so sure.

Another challenge is the pressure on Local Government budgets and the impact on the town. The roadside weeds, particularly in the Old Town, especially when contrasted with say, Amersham are a concern. Resources for street cleaning, maintenance of open spaces and dare I mention potholes are all example of where services are stretched. The Society is doing its bit with bulb planting and joining with others to collect 369 kilos! of rubbish from the town. We encourage businesses and residents to keep the areas around their property tidy, it may be a long wait before others do so!

We have made great progress in getting our message out on these and other issues via our Facebook page, Beaconsfield Now!; these are explained in more detail later. What is clear is that there are a huge number of people who care about the place where they live, work or play. We are encouraging them to add to our voice, to support our initiatives, perhaps to volunteer and ultimately be the membership of the future. One issue where social media has been particularly effective is to highlight the crass, inconsiderate and in some cases downright dangerous parking. We have made some progress on the central reservation in London End but the random parking on the common land is proving more intractable.

*continued...*

Members enjoyed an excellent heritage visit to Hall Barn in September. On behalf of the Society, our thanks go to The Hon Jenefer Farncombe for hosting us and for a most entertaining and enlightening talk.

You will have seen our excellent new display boards on Maxwell Road. The Society wishes to record its thanks to the Beaconsfield Independent Electors for making this possible. A recent display celebrated the life and work of past resident, the children's author Alison Uttley. There is a piece on the events of the Alison Uttley week later. Look out for more displays in the months ahead, our "Curator" has lots of ideas! Did anyone score 100% on the unusual photographs? I managed 50% and I have lived here 27 years!

I hope you find plenty of interest in this newsletter and it prompts you to think of someone that makes a real difference in our town, or of a new or refurbished building that has impressed. If so, why not nominate them for our annual awards, you can find details of how to do so on the final page. If any has sparked interest or spilled over into engagement and even action, we have specific vacancies on our sub-committees for website/social media editors, a Membership coordinator, a Communications and PR coordinator, and Events coordinators. To find out more in a no-obligations chat over coffee contact us via [thebecsoc@gmail.com](mailto:thebecsoc@gmail.com).

Enjoy the newsletter, share it with friends and neighbours and encourage them to join the Society. See you at the AGM, where elections to the committee need your nominations and votes to shape the Society's future!

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## **Beaconsfield Now! 2017 (6<sup>th</sup> May)**

*Debbie Marsden*

This year the Beaconsfield Society annual showcase event took place at the Beaconsfield Rugby Club in early May. The change in venue, earlier timing in the year and reasonable weather as well as extensive advertising and wonderful support by our invited stallholders resulted in the largest visitor numbers ever attending Beaconsfield Now. The event was well supported by not-for-profit organisations and many organised activities to entertain and encourage visitors to explore their stands and become informed. The Rugby Club also provided touch rugby training for any welcome volunteers.

The side attractions including bouncy castle, ride-on train and petting animal farm were popular attractions. Delicious burgers, cakes and refreshments by the local Scouts and Guides were in great demand and sold out.

Entertainment was provided by Maypole dancing by the Butlers Court School pupils who danced beautifully to music provided by three local Morris dancing instrumentalists. High March School enthralled all with a varied selection of tunes performed by their choir and solo artists. The Beaconsfield High School Wind Band woke everyone up with their tuneful and loud performances. A highlight this year was provided by the Beaconsfield theatres who produced little cameos of plays explaining mock fighting.

Next year we have bigger plans as it is our 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. **Beaconsfield Now 2018 will take place on May 12<sup>th</sup> at the Beaconsfield Rugby Club between 11am and 2pm.** Please keep an eye out for notices and information closer to the time. We look forward to welcoming even more to this fun, informative family day.

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## **Coffee mornings at the Farmers' Market**

*Judy McDonnell*

The last of the Society's seasonal coffee mornings, held in the Old Town Reading Room between April and September, took place on Saturday the 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

Previously run by BOTRA to coincide with the monthly Farmers' Market held on the fourth Saturday of the month, the Committee took on the initiative with the agreement of the Trustees of the Reading Room this Spring. Unfortunately, due to structural damage caused to the supporting pillar at the entrance to the venue in June, it was decided at very short notice *not* to hold the Coffee Morning that month to ensure the protection of all concerned. We would like to apologise to our regulars and the public at large for any inconvenience this may have caused on that occasion.

Since then we are pleased to report that the monthly community get-togethers in the Reading Room have continued to run smoothly, without doubt, due to the efforts of those members of the Committee who joined in staffing the events and so generously gave of their time on the day. Jackie Dawes and I would like to take this opportunity to extend our grateful thanks to each and every one of them for their support throughout the past six months.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017 at the Fitzwilliams Centre, the Beaconsfield Society's celebration of famous writer and one-time resident, Alison Uttley, reached its conclusion with a thoroughly engaging talk on her life and work by her biographer, Professor Denis Judd. As President of the Alison Uttley Society and editor of Alison's letters, he did not disappoint.

Alison Uttley, 'spinner of tales' and creator of the *Little Grey Rabbit* books for children, lived in Beaconsfield from 1938 until her death in 1976. She wrote over 100 books and became a millionaire in the post-war years from the sales of her *Little Grey Rabbit* and *Sam Pig* stories.

It emerged at the start of Professor Judd's talk that Alison arrived in Beaconsfield at exactly the same time as Enid Blyton, another world-famous children's writer. Unfortunately, he confirmed, Alison took a great dislike to her fellow author, whom she called a 'vulgar curled woman'. Relationships remained frosty!

In an hour-long talk that easily held the interest of the 65-strong audience, Professor Judd sympathetically conveyed the very human story of Alison's public success as a children's writer, contrasting with some dark and lonely aspects of her private life. She had been widowed early when her husband committed suicide, and turned to writing to support herself and her young son, John. He, too, suffered from mental health problems and committed suicide after his mother died.

Professor Judd brought Alison's complex character to life. He described how she could be charming and kind to her friends and then abruptly change mood and cut them off, ending her life as a rather lonely woman despite her fame. He also discussed her over-weening love for her son, to whom she became almost unhealthily attached.

It was clear to all that, despite her character flaws, he remained a dedicated fan of Alison's, treating his subject with respect and generosity. He highly recommended that we read her letters and her writing for adults, which he held in high regard. His talk stimulated many questions from the audience, and discussions continued over tea.

This event was the grand finale to more than a week of children's activities to celebrate and raise awareness of this rather neglected author. There were treasure hunts at the Library and Bekonscot Model Village, art and craft competitions in collaboration with High March School, special story times and a prize-giving and a party for all the town's children. The delicious party food was kindly supplied *gratis* by Jungs, our local baker, who baked some special *Little Grey Rabbit* biscuits for the occasion. Our grateful thanks also go to Alison Uttley's publisher, Templar Publishing, for donating all the *Little Grey Rabbit* book prizes for the children's competitions as well as a full set of the stories for Beaconsfield Library. Altogether, it was a very successful and enjoyable celebration of Alison Uttley.

Our thanks go to Deirdre Smaje and her graphic artist for a colourful graphic display on Alison's life, which remained on show over the summer on our display boards at the corner of Maxwell Road and Station Road.

## Celebrating Beaconsfield's Past

The Society has promoted Beaconsfield's rich past and some of its distinguished residents through a series of well-supported commemorative and celebration events in recent years:

2012	Robert Frost
2013	Enid Blyton (and another event in 2016)
2014	A World War One Anthology (including the Grenfell connection)
2015	Wilton Park wartime history (two different events)
2017	Alison Uttley

We are looking into the possibility of an event in 2018 to celebrate the life and works of the late Sir Terry Pratchett, on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth in Beaconsfield. Watch out for details next year. If any member is able to help with this or has any connection, please get in touch with us.

**Is the SBDC planning system broken as far as Affordable Housing is concerned?**

This is a question that we hear raised with increasingly regularity and concern in relation to planning applications in the town. In general terms, South Bucks District Council (SBDC) requires that wherever developments of five dwellings or more are proposed, 40% of the dwellings must meet the definition of Affordable Housing. However, there is also a provision that this obligation may, in some circumstances, be met by the developer making a defined Commuted Sum payment to the council, through what is known as a Section 106 Agreement, which can then be used to enable the affordable housing to be provided elsewhere in the SBDC area. Here are some case studies of situations where developers are seeking to avoid even this commuted sum payment – hold on to your eyebrows!

Our first case is Marchington House, 22-24 Grove Road and where 8 flats were built, 2 to 3 years ago. What is particularly eyebrow-raising is that no affordable housing contribution was paid by the developer of this luxury development. With its planning application, the developer submitted a "Viability Study" showing that the scheme was "financially unviable" and therefore could not afford an affordable housing contribution. In this "Viability Study", the developer put the total capital value of the flats at over £10 million. However, the flats were sold for over £12 million, over £2 million (over 20%) more than stated in the "Viability Study" – and no affordable housing money was paid. Should the system not be changed to allow for changes in sales values and construction costs (upwards or downwards) between construction and sale – and for these to be evidenced on an open book basis? What is certain is that these "Viability Statements" submitted with planning applications need far more scrutiny than as at present.

Our second case is 2 Knottocks Drive – a current application for a block of 12 flats, yet to be decided. Hold on to your eyebrows - the developer is refusing to make public its Viability Statement - on the basis that it contains commercially sensitive information. We pressed the planning officer at Chiltern District Council to provide it, which she did...with every monetary value blanked out. Interestingly, the same firm of surveyors prepared a similar Viability Statement for a block of 8 flats just around the corner from Knottocks Drive at 72 Penn Road – where the developer did make public its Viability Statement and where development was found to be "viable" and affordable housing money payable. What is particularly concerning in Chiltern District is that planning applications are decided by one planning officer and not the planning committee, unless "called in" by a Councillor. We are pleased to report that we requested the calling in of this case and it has indeed been called in by the Councillor for Penn and so it will go before the committee. We remain highly concerned, however, that the applicant's Viability Statement has not been made public – particularly in a district where planning applications are often made by just one planning officer. Public scrutiny is an essential check and balance in the planning system. Should Viability Statements always be made public if a developer is arguing against paying affordable housing money?

Our third case is 40 Penn Road where multiple planning applications have been submitted. The first 2 applications were refused by SBDC and also on appeal, with very good reasons being given. The third application for a block of 6 flats was granted and was accompanied by an obligation to pay affordable housing money (in a S.106 Agreement). The application even included an "Affordable Housing Statement" saying that the applicant agreed that the scheme justified payment. The S.106 Agreement, signed only last year, is still valid and says the affordable housing money is payable once development starts. Hold on to your eyebrows...development has started, but no money has yet been paid. Instead, the current developer applied, for the same scheme as before, but this time saying that it was unviable. Quite rightly, the SBDC planning committee unanimously refused this application. The developer has not only appealed this decision (appeal pending) but has submitted yet another application (for the same scheme again) and is still arguing that it is unviable – even though there is an existing S.106 Agreement in place to pay the affordable housing money and even though development has started. Our view is that the existing S.106 Agreement, which the developer knew about when it bought the site, should be enforced and any new 'get out' tactics refused.

As this newsletter is going to print, we await the Wilton Park planning application which has already made headlines in the local press. It has not yet made the SBDC local list but may do so any day now. We wonder how much affordable housing the Wilton Park scheme will include or fund for the area?

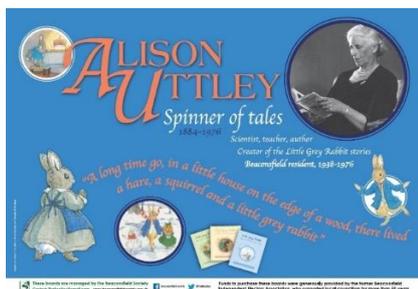
# Photo Gallery Summer 2017



*Beaconsfield Now! photos above thanks to George Mardell*



*Professor Denis Judd*



*Our event on the display boards*



*The Library was a great supporter*



*Top: Beaconsfield Now! 2017  
Lower Left: Litter Pick haul!*



*Middle: Alison Uttley celebrations  
Lower Right: New Display Boards  
(Curator Deirdre Smaje)*

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September saw 25 members of the Society visit the Hall Barn estate home of the Lawson family since 1881. We were hosted by The Hon. Jenefer Farncombe daughter of the late 5th Lord Burnham and the current resident of the Hall Barn Manor House. Having been greeted by our host we assembled in the main entrance hall where numerous paintings were on display, two of which showed two water colour landscapes of Hall Barn which were painted from the same viewpoint but in reverse.

Moving on we entered the staircase hall where a selection of pictures depicting the Scots Guards lined the stairway. On one wall was an elegant painting of Jenefer's grandmother. We next moved to the library where it was noted that many of the books dealt with Africa, some being signed by Stanley the explorer. A large Persian carpet covered virtually the whole floorspace upon which stood a stool with needlework views of the house and other parts of the estate; this had been worked by our host's mother and drew some nice remarks from several of the ladies in the party.

From there we moved into the dining room where the dining table, when extended, could accommodate 22 diners, it contained eight extensions which when fully extended would reach onto the terrace outside. Our visit then took us through a short passageway where a delightful figure of a boy and his dog filled one of the alcoves lining the inner wall. It was made of copper and covered in silver plate. We were told that care is taken when cleaning the figures that the silver plated is not worn away by excessive polishing. A cabinet containing awards and decorations presented to members of the family occupied another alcove.

We then entered the largest room in the house which can best be described as the Banqueting Hall. Many paintings graced the walls and above the fireplace was hung a painting of Hugh Lawson the 5<sup>th</sup> Lord Burnham. Mrs Farncombe had arranged several publications covering the many aspects of the estate. This room had previously been the stables of Hall Barn which was evidenced by the height of the doorway which had since been converted to a window looking out upon the forecourt of the house.

A delightful tea with a selection of cakes was taken after which some of our party enjoyed a short tour of the gardens which rounded off an excellent visit.

**Environment Group***Jeannette Buckle*

This year we are working on **planting trees** in the town and are first focusing on replacing failed trees in our verges, so if you want to get involved, know of a missing or dead tree, would like to donate or sponsor a tree please do get in touch.

We have been responding to concerns about **dangerous parking** in the old town and have been doing our bit on raising the profile of this issue with the police and authorities amongst other things and in particular you may have seen this on our Facebook page Beaconsfield Now!.

Our **annual litter pick** this year took place in June and was bigger and better with the combined activities of the Scouts branded 'The Beaconsfield Spring Clean Week' from Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June. On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June the adult volunteers turned out in force from the Town Council, Scouts, The Beaconsfield Society along with various volunteers who signed up to help or got inspired by our efforts and joined in on the day. An amazing 361kg was collected over the week. There were around 200 Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Leaders helping; the weekend brought a further 22 volunteers on the Saturday and 19 on the Sunday. A fantastic effort - thanks to all those that helped out. We plan to do this team effort every June so sign up now if interested in getting involved.

Every year we continue to **maintain and water the plants** in the trough and the planters on Aylesbury End, both in the Market Garden and on the kerb on the west side, as well as the hanging basket on the Reading Room.

Throughout the year we **remove illegal nuisance signs** in the whole town; this is a continuous process with permission from Bucks CC. Our last organized purge being this August but our team do keep an eye out all year round and get them removed as and when they pop up, with particular focus in the conservation area of the old town.

This newsletter is just one way the Society communicates with our Members and the town. We aim to extend the range and reach of our messages to residents, workers and visitors to encourage support, volunteering and recruitment. One way to find the younger generations is via social media. We have used the brand Beaconsfield Now! because it allows us to promote, celebrate and influence the town 365 days a year, not just one (very enjoyable, social and fun) day in May.

Before you glaze over, suffice it to say our social media presence is growing steadily, allowing us to raise awareness of the challenges we face in Beaconsfield. We are getting the message to persons who perhaps have never heard of the Society but can quickly identify with our objectives. They share a pride in Beaconsfield and wish to keep it an excellent place to live.

For those interested in figures, we have more than 1300 followers and a similar number of likes on Facebook and **regularly have a reach of 10k a week, peaking at 44k** (these are outstanding figures for a community group). Our Twitter account has 800 followers with 1100 likes. Instagram also has a growing following, currently 120. We raise awareness and allow discussion via social media on issues such as Old Town parking and the common land, events in the town, planning excesses, Local Government consultations and local news. We have a small, but enthusiastic, editorial board that monitors the sites within an agreed framework. Politely held opinions on relevant issues are welcome; abuse, personal attacks and negativity are certainly not and are promptly removed.

Some of you may know that the law regarding what data organisations may hold about individuals and how it may be used, is changing next year. The Society holds member lists and emails of people who have asked us to keep them informed about particular issues, events and activities. In preparation for the law change we have consolidated our data and reorganised it. This should enable us to manage this communications channel more effectively. Do we have your email details? To be sure to receive Society news more frequently by email then confirm with us via [thebecsoc@gmail.com](mailto:thebecsoc@gmail.com).

As I write, we are in the final testing stage of a new website that will link all our on-line activity together. It will have far greater functionality than the current site, making it far easier to contact us, join and renew membership, book and attend our events, register for Beaconsfield Now! Find out what is going on, get involved and donate to specific projects. Just Google the Beaconsfield Society and you should find it.

Finally, if you happen to be speaking to any of our Communications sub-committee, please thank them, they have made huge progress since the last newsletter and have really brought the Society up to date and better able to appeal to those of shall we say "less mature years".

The current Committee is as follows:

President: Les Davies	Vice-President: Sandy Saunders
Chairman: Mike Elliott	
Secretary: Laurence Smaje	Treasurer: Graeme Richards

Members: Jeannette Buckle, Douglas Butterfield, Kari Dorme, Rachel Ferguson, Nanu Hodson, Debbie Marsden, Will Story, Alison Wheelhouse. *Newsletter Editor: Tony Bristow*

**Online:** [www.beaconsfieldsociety.org.uk](http://www.beaconsfieldsociety.org.uk)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/BeaconsfieldNow](http://www.facebook.com/BeaconsfieldNow)

**Twitter:** @TheBecSoc

*We hope you found the Newsletter interesting and informative. Feel free to pass this on to interested neighbours and friends and do encourage them to come along to our events and become members.*

# Patron's Address and Annual General Meeting

Friday 10th November 2017 7.30 pm (prompt start)

The Annual General Meeting for the year 2016/2017  
will be held in The Fitzwilliams Centre, Windsor End

## PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE AGM

### THE PATRON'S ADDRESS

The AGM business will follow a talk by  
The Rt Hon Dominic Grieve QC MP

1. Welcome by the President
2. Patron's Address
3. Apologies for absence
4. Minutes of the last AGM and matters arising not covered below
5. Chairman's report
6. Treasurer's report
7. Election of Officers and Committee
8. Presentation of the Society's awards
9. Any other business

Refreshments will be available after the AGM with time to meet the Committee.

*All are welcome and members are encouraged to bring guests!*

## IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS' INPUT

The current Committee is shown on the previous page. **There are vacancies for officers to replace those who have served for their full periods and for new members of the Executive Committee.** If you would like to make any nomination either as Officer or Committee member, or for either of the Society's awards below, please make your recommendation to the Secretary, Laurence Smaje, on 01494 681165, or email him at [laurence@smaje.co.uk](mailto:laurence@smaje.co.uk) or (for the awards) by sending him the tear-off strip below, not later than Monday 23rd October 2017.

**Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award** - in recognition of the work of an individual person who over a number of years has made a significant contribution to the life of the Beaconsfield community as a whole.

**Outstanding Building of the Year Award** - in recognition of what the Society considers to be the outstanding design for a building (of any type) erected or modified in Beaconsfield in the past year.

✂

- Do you have a nomination for an Officer or Committee Member? Please give his/her name and contact details. We will be in touch with you.

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a nomination for Citizen of the Year? Please give his/her name and contact details

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- Do you have a nomination for Outstanding Building? Please give its name and location details

\_\_\_\_\_

Your name.....Address.....Tel.No.....

Please send to the Secretary, Laurence Smaje, 22 Hampden Hill, Beaconsfield HP9 1BP by 23rd October