

The Beaconsfield Society

NEWSLETTER October 2012

Dates for your Diary

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 8th November 2012 7.30 pm

Council Chamber, Town Hall

Speaker: Councillor Mr Martin Tett

Leader – Buckinghamshire County Council

Refreshments (wine and soft drinks) will be provided

Heritage Event – Holy Trinity Church, Penn

Saturday 17th November 2012 7.00 for 7.30 pm (Presentation)

Chairman's letter

Dear Members,

Our rules prevent me from standing again as your Chairman at the forthcoming AGM, but the good news is that, subject to your approval, Mike Elliott has agreed to take over from me; I am more than confident that the Society could not be in more capable hands. For those of you who may not know him, Mike's background is on the final page. What follows is in effect my valedictory.

I had been in office only a year when Henry Wilson, the then Mayor of Beaconsfield, invited me to chair the committee (which included the Chairman of BOTRA, and the Chairman of the Neighbourhood Action Group), to assess the concerns of more than 60 diverse local organisations. It was published in April 2009 as the Parish Appraisal. The views expressed in the report persuaded me that the community not only needs to preserve the best of the amenities which our Town provides, but also to find innovative and practical proposals which will (i) provide more sensibly priced housing and sufficient school places, (ii) reduce traffic congestion, and (iii) improve recreation facilities for all. It also encouraged me to stand for the Town Council.

This last year has been perhaps the most vibrant I have experienced thanks to the enthusiasm of the committee members. They will be summarising for you in later columns of this newsletter various initiatives that the Society has taken, in particular Beaconsfield Now! 2012 (Jess McEvoy supported by Laurence Smaje), Robert Frost Celebratory Event (Kari Dorme) and the planned visit to Penn Church (Laurence Smaje). Laurence will also be updating you with progress on the revised Website. We have also lent our support to the Beaconsfield Games, and the proposal to adopt cycle paths for the youngsters (both the idea of Councillor Matt Denyer), and Beaconsfield Country Fayre, at which we hope to have a stand next year.

Following the thoughts which I expressed after the Frost Celebration (that Kari's success may well have heralded an annual Festival), we need to recruit extra "hands-on doers" to help co-ordinate and/or stage future promotions, and to organise visits to some of the historic locations in our area. If members of the Society have any ideas, or feel they could contribute in any way, I would be delighted to hear from them. I might now mention that we have already been offered support and cooperation from Bekonscot to promote Enid Blyton in 2013.

In committee we have considered our stance on local developments in Beaconsfield such as Prezzo in the Old Cinema (Zoom), or Martin's Newsagents, and we have formed a sub-committee to review all planning applications and related matters. We believe strongly that the closure by the County Council of the Wooburn

Green Lane picnic area to be a retrograde step and shall consider whether the Society might be able to encourage volunteers to do the work. We shall also ask the Town Council to accelerate the application by residents to have the open space within Hampden Hill designated as a Village Green (formally the application came from the Town Council, the owner of the space, with information provided by the residents there).

Another item discussed by the Committee was whether the Town is making best use of its open spaces, and it has been agreed that the Committee should prepare a policy which should encompass proposals relating to both planning applications for housing and for open spaces and footpaths.

These and other issues have given rise to a policy question as to whether the Society's role in our community should be expanded to ensure the Town Council can use us to be kept informed of opinion on local issues.

At the Town meeting earlier this year, the public expressed a very negative view of the effectiveness of the Council's communication with its electorate. It was also critical of its apparent lack of Strategic planning for the Town. It was agreed that our Society should have a role in lobbying the Council on the outcomes of its surveys. It was accepted, however, that it could not conduct representative surveys without further help from the membership. I shall refer further to this subject at the AGM, including the possibility of some class of corporate membership or perhaps by inviting Beaconsfield Enterprise to nominate a representative to attend committee meetings.

The Government's cuts in funding with the inevitable reductions in grants, which impact particularly heavily on the Curzon Centre, emphasise the need for volunteers to turn Beaconsfield into more of a self-help community. When aged 6, I remember sleeping on a London Underground platform during the 1941 Blitz, with shortages of virtually everything, and we had to rely heavily on volunteers to grow vegetables, to cook in the state equipped kitchens, to take in bombed out victims and to run play groups. Fortunately we don't have to cope with the first three today, but we perhaps we could think of ways to harness the energies of the jobless 16-25 year olds, and make them feel they are wanted by helping them to do something worthwhile in the community until the economy improves.

In recent years we have been fortunate to have Dr Liam Fox, Countess Howe, and Councillor Mrs Lowen Cooper to address our meetings. This year Martin Tett, Leader of the County Council has kindly accepted my invitation for him to speak at our AGM. He will be talking about HS2 and answer any questions anyone may have about the work of Buckinghamshire County Council; he is a superb speaker.

I look forward to seeing as many of you at the AGM as find it convenient to attend. Thank you.

Very sincerely,

Sandy Saunders

sandysaunders@btconnect.com

Stop Press - Wilton Park Development

It has just been announced that work is to start to formulate a detailed development brief for the future of Wilton Park, Beaconsfield. Extensive public consultation will give local people the opportunity to help shape the form of future development on this important site. SBDC will be seeking a high quality mix of residential and employment development, community facilities and open space in an area previously identified within its Core Strategy. The next stage in the process is to prepare a development brief that will establish the more detailed development and design principles to create a very special new community.

This is an exciting opportunity, and we must ensure the development will integrate well with the Town and the surrounding countryside. The committee has thus taken the initiative to resurrect "Wilton Park Watch", set up after the publication of the Parish Appraisal in 2009, and expand its role by working with representatives from BOTRA and other interested parties to attend meetings. We are very keen to have a unified approach to the Agencies involved in the development, so that in addition to both the civil engineering and transport infrastructure, retailing and job opportunities, the schooling, health & leisure aspects for the Town's current and future population are at the forefront of any proposals.

Report on Beaconsfield Now! 2012 (26th May)



Opening Ceremony

Now in its nineteenth year, **Beaconsfield Now! 2012** - the recently renamed Awareness Day - was a resounding success. Due to the impending Jubilee and Olympic celebrations this year, it was held early, on May 26th on the Town Green in front of the Town Hall. Beaconsfield Now! 2012 showcased 40 charities, local sports clubs, interest and support groups from Beaconsfield all run voluntarily by the community and the event was opened by the well-known BBC Science Programmes presenter and local resident, Dr Michael Moseley, together with Mayor Graham Corney and Town Crier Dick Smith on what was one of our few, glorious sunny days this year. Over 400 Beaconsfield residents and visitors turned up to support the event and to find out, not only 'what was on' in the town and what was available for all ages, but why and how they could get involved in supporting their community.

The Fire Brigade, St John's Ambulance and local police invited visitors to climb aboard and offered them a chance to try their skills on 'resuscitating Annie'. Live music was provided for the first time by local schools: Beaconsfield School's Indie Rock Group and the Beaconsfield High School Jazz band. The Beaconsfield Guides fed and watered us and the 4th Beaconsfield Scout Group challenged us with a mini Roman catapult and a treasure hunt. There was also a bouncy castle to keep the kids happy and witches from Macbeth, courtesy of the Chiltern Shakespeare Company, quietened the children excited from their Bouncy Castle and Pirate Slide exploits at the back of the Green. That was just the beginning. There was so much to do and see, the Green was buzzing right up to closing time at 1.00 pm.

The Beaconsfield Society is most grateful to all those who participated in BN!2012, whether as stall holders, entertainers, visitors or sponsors and a special mention must be made of The Frost Partnership, which was our principal sponsor and who helped in many ways beyond the finance involved. We look forward to making **Beaconsfield Now! 2013** even bigger and better on **15th June 2013** and would ask you to put that date in your diaries. Don't miss it next year!

Almost half of the spaces have already been pre-booked. To secure a space for your organisation, activity or charity, please contact us asap at <http://www.beaconsfieldsociety.org.uk/contact-us/> or call: 01494 681165.

Report on our Robert Frost Centenary Event (15th September)



Beaconsfield Robert Frost Event

Left to right: Mrs Rachel Leary, Tom Leary (Minister Counsellor for Public Affairs, American Embassy), Linda Hart, Mayor Graham Corney, Kari Dorme, Les Davies (President Beaconsfield Society), Gabriel Woolf

The English Years of
Robert Frost

To mark the centenary of Robert Frost's arrival in England, capacity audiences of around 80 filled the Beaconsfield Fitzwilliams Centre for each of the afternoon and evening sessions of "The English Years of Robert Frost", performed by Linda Hart and Gabriel Woolf.

The event - which vividly brought to life the time that Robert Frost and his family lived in Beaconsfield - was a real Anglo-American occasion. Tom Leary (the Minister Counsellor for Public Affairs at the American Embassy) and his wife were among our VIP guests. They enjoyed it so much that they said they wanted to come to the Society's next event in November at Penn church.

In addition to welcoming our American guests, Kari Dorme also welcomed Beaconsfield Mayor Graham Corney and Mrs Corney. Also present were Margaret Mathie (Town Clerk) and Dick Smith (Town Crier). David Wright (Associate Director of The Frost Partnership), was there to represent the firm; they were generous sponsors of the event, and their enthusiastic backing made it all possible.



The performance was both impressive and engaging, and revealed new insights into the origin of some of Frost's poetry. Linda Hart played the part of the narrator with her precisely scripted account of Frost's 18 month residence in the town, alternating with Gabriel Woolf's superb readings of Frost's poems and letters in a wonderful New England accent. The audience found it very moving when Gabriel spoke of the friendship between Robert Frost and Edward Thomas. Even those who had not previously read Frost's work said they were stimulated to do so now. People were impressed with the advertising and the printed programme, and by the arrangements in the hall.

The event was as much about local history as it was about Robert Frost. Linda's well-researched script outlined the Frost Family's time over here. Many of Robert and Elinor Frost's letters that they wrote back to America were read by Gabriel, giving fascinating details of what it was like to live in the town in 1912. We learned the story of how Robert Frost, when he first stepped off the train from London, saw the sign of AC Frost the estate agents, how he rented 'The Bungalow' from Alfred Frost - and as they had children the same age, how they became friends. In particular, it was very obvious that Frost did not like our English weather. Frost complained of the rain and the mud, which was quite different from what he was used to back home! Gabriel read a letter to a New York magazine editor about Beaconsfield's literary connections that Frost wrote from the Bungalow on 15th September 1912, exactly a century to the day before our two performances. We learned about their visit to Jordans to see the resting place of William Penn and about Frost's visit to London to find a publisher and to meet other poets.

One of our attendees was Belinda Avery of High March School, who had heard about the event at Beaconsfield Now! 2012. She was so impressed with the performance that she asked Linda Hart to visit the school in November to talk about Frost. Another member of the audience said it was "as good as the West End."

In his speech of thanks, our Chairman Sandy Saunders said how important it was to recognise and salute Beaconsfield's local history as well as to celebrate the work of the town's famous literary figures. In addition to Robert Frost, many other writers also found inspiration here - notably Edmund Burke, Edmund Waller, GK Chesterton, Terry Pratchett, and the children's authors Alison Uttley and Enid Blyton. He felt that this event might well herald an annual festival. What do you think?

Robert Frost, America's premier poet, is part of the town's rich heritage, and I think we did him proud at this centenary event. It was an important - but sometimes forgotten - part of the town's history and now the story has been told. This event has raised the profile of the Beaconsfield Society and the town. We even recruited some more members! Long may we continue to build on this local interest.

Kari Dorme (Committee member and event organiser)

Society Visit, 17th November 2012

The Society's annual visit will take place this year on Saturday 17 November. It will be to the Holy Trinity Church at Penn and will begin at 7 pm for 7.30 pm.



It will consist of an initial talk followed by light refreshments during which the audience will be able to view the building. The talk will then resume briefly before it will be opened for questions from the audience.

There will be a collection at the end of the talk in aid of Church maintenance.

This will be an open meeting arranged by Miles Green, Clerk to Penn Parish Council and an expert on the History and Architecture of this 12th Century Church. It is likely to be a well-attended event and you are advised to ensure you arrive in good time. All are welcome.

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Annual Awards

Each year, the Society may make an award at the AGM in the two categories described below. If you would like to make a nomination in either category, please make your recommendation to the Secretary, Laurence Smaje on 01494 681165 or email him at laurence@smaje.co.uk no later than **24th October 2012**.

Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award

This award is 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

This award is in recognition of what the Society considers to be the outstanding design for a building erected or modified in Beaconsfield in the past year. It may include any class of building.

Nominations for the Committee and Officers

Nominations for the Officers of the Society and as Committee members are sought and will be voted upon at the AGM. The Officers are: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Current Officers (where appointed) retire annually in accordance with the Society's constitution, and new nominations for each post will be considered alongside any existing Officer standing for re-election. Also in accordance with the constitution, no Officer may serve for a period longer than five years, so Sandy Saunders will not be standing for re-election. Nominations for additional Committee members are also welcomed.

If you would like to make a nomination either as Officer or Committee member, please make your recommendation to the Secretary, Laurence Smaje, on 01494 681165 or email him at laurence@smaje.co.uk no later than **24th October 2012**.

The Society's Committee

Chairman: Sandy Saunders
Vice Chairman: Mike Elliott*
Hon Secretary: Laurence Smaje
Hon Treasurer: Tony Bristow

Members: Kari Dorne
John Meredith
Jess McEvoy
John Page
Graeme Richards

Our President is Les Davies.

** Mike Elliott has lived in Beaconsfield for the last 22 years with his wife Jenny. Their two grown-up children attended and flourished in our excellent local schools, Butlers Court, Beaconsfield High and the RGS. Mike was an active member of Round Table for many years and served as both Chairman and President, before moving on to the local "41 club" where he has also been Chairman.*

Recently retired from his role as CEO of the Clare Foundation, a local charity that helps other charities be a little more effective and efficient, Mike has a portfolio of interests including Trusteeship of the national charity Coeliac UK, he is on the social funding committees of the Buckinghamshire Community Foundation and the Fredericks Foundation, he is on the committee of the Chilterns branch of the rugby charity, the Wooden Spoon Society and continues to find time to do some consultancy work. He has more than 30 years' experience working in large UK and US multi-national companies, specialising in Business Process Management, Property and Facilities Management, Systems and IT, much of the time abroad.

Mike has spent the last three years successfully setting up the Clare Foundation at Saunderton. In doing so he has made many contacts within the county's local Government, charity and business communities.

The Society's Website www.beaconsfieldsociety.org.uk

The Society's new website went live in June and can be accessed using the same name as previously.

Further development work is progressing and we plan two further sections in addition to those already in place. These are Beaconsfield Now!, containing details of those who presented stalls this year and, in due course, news about next year's event, which will be held on Saturday 15 June 2013 on the Council Green. The other section is one on the history of the Society. The Secretary would be delighted if any member who has any information, particularly written documentation, could contact him.

One point that may not be obvious at first glance is that in order to view several sections of the site - *News and Events, About Us and Archives* - it is necessary to use the mouse cursor to hover over the Menu item and then click on the specific subsection you wish to visit. Any suggestions or criticisms members may have will be gratefully received by the Secretary who may be contacted via the website or directly by phone, 01494 681165, or by email to laurence@smaje.co.uk.

A note from the Treasurer

This year has seen a marked increase in the Society's profile through a well-publicised **Beaconsfield Now! 2012** day and the innovation of a Performance promoted by the Society which this year celebrated the local heritage of Robert Frost. None of this has been possible without much effort by particular Committee members, very generous local sponsorship and the support of members of the Society in attending them, bringing along their friends who also have an interest in the town. It has however involved considerable additional expenditure and investment for the Society, which your Committee felt was well justified in your interest as members. As a result, the Society's accounts, which I shall be presenting at the AGM, will show a small deficit for the year although our finances remain sound with continuing reserves.

We do seek members' ideas for future such events, your active assistance to the Committee in organising and delivering them and all possible help in recruiting new members, whose subscriptions will enable us to increase these activities for the benefit of all in the Town and provide particular enjoyment for attendees. Please speak to any member of the Committee at the AGM - the Society needs you!

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a flyer about the Society. Please give it to a friend who may be interested in joining to keep Beaconsfield as we would like it, building a growing voice on our community's behalf.

We hope to see you at our AGM.

Do bring your friends.