

## READING CIVIC SOCIETY

### **Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 15 April 2023 at Watlington House, at 2:00 p.m.**

**Committee members present:** Richard Bennett – Chairman  
Alison Bennett – Membership  
Penny Kemp - Hon. Treasurer  
Lynette Edwell  
Amanda Martin  
Clare Platts  
Terry Dixon  
Richard Stainthorp  
Stephen Snook

**Other members present:** Christabel Winny, Rosemary Woodman, Sean Duggan, Ian Kemp, John Nixon, Elaine Robson, Margaret Marshall, Hazel Alexander, Rodney Oliver, Sylvia Newberry, Roy Burton, Vickie Abel, John Missenden, Adam Sowen & Barbara Morris, Fiona Rycroft, Barbara Nair, Rose Williams, Karen Lloyd, Katrina Parker.

**Visitors present:** Jill Dibben (CADRA), Jennifer Rosser, A.P. Hill

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES**

Apologies had been received from 17 members: Matt Andrews, Douglas Beaumont, Sylvia Clarke, Virginia Day, John Dearing, James Denny, Susan Hora, Phil Lewis, Elisabeth Marshall, Audrey Price, Gemma Solanellas, Peter Trout, Chris Widdows, Evelyn and Paul Williams, Brian and Tomiko Morley

#### **2. MINUTES OF 2022 AGM**

The minutes of the previous AGM held on 6 April 2022 had been circulated to all members. A proposal to approve the minutes was proposed by Katrina Parker, seconded by Lynette Edwell and accepted unanimously.

#### **3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO DECEMBER 2022**

The Chairman's Report had previously been circulated to all members and copies were available at the meeting.

Acceptance was proposed by Amanda Martin, seconded by Clare Platts and accepted unanimously.

In addition to his report on the previous year's activities, the Chairman looked forward to events already planned for 2023:

#### **18 May** Visit to Bucklebury Gardens

Reading Economy & Destination Agency's new Reading Walks Festival **10-14 May**

- RCS& Terry's Reading Walkabouts St-Peters/Caversham CA Walk **10 & 13 May**.
- Terry's 7 Bridges Walk **11 & 14 May**.

White Waltham Airfield with a talk and lunch followed by Waltham Place Gardens at a date to be confirmed.

Heritage Open Days proposed included:

- **10 & 13 September** St Peters/Caversham CA walk will be re-run.

- **14 September** Royal Berkshire Hospital – its History & Today. To be held in the **Old Pathology Library**. 6.30-8.30 pm; Talks to be given by; History Richard Havelock and the future by Lynn Bushell.
- Date to be arranged. Mike Cooper: The **Glorious Revolution 1688**. Agreed to hold at Watlington House Garden Hall.
- Date to be arranged. The new gardens of Hillside House, Allcroft Road will be opened by Lloyd Turner.

Churches Tour - Overton. Freefolk and Newbury **8 October**

Members lunch - Bel and the Dragon restaurant Saturday, **18 November**.

#### **4. MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

As at March 2023 there are 185 members (including 3 honorary life members). Since the 2022 AGM 12 new members have joined, making 24 since 2020 but there has been a decline in overall membership from 198 in 2019.

Subscriptions for 2022 totalled £1110 (2021 - £1350; 2020 - £1305; 2019 -£1620; 2018 - £1483). Gift Aid added £324 (2021 - £198; 2020 - £325).

14 members do not have online access and receive notification of the AGM and the relevant documents by post. They receive hard copies of the regular email updates which are now used in place of printed newsletters.

#### **5. HON. TREASURER'S STATEMENT OF THE ACCOUNTS TO 31 DECEMBER 2022**

The Hon Treasurer (Penny Kemp) reviewed the accounts, copies of which had been previously distributed to members and were available at the meeting. Paul Welch FCA had examined the accounts.

The balance in the bank at year's end was £14,645 but this included £6968 of restricted funds not available for general expenses; £5957 received and allocated for the **Look Draw Build@Reading Station** project which will be delivered again in 2023, £610 donated for the proposed Blue Plaque scheme, and £401 received in 2020 and held on behalf of the CAAC.

The loss recorded for the year (Unrestricted Funds) is £209 (2021 - £79).

The Treasurers Report was adopted unanimously, proposed by Vicky Abel and seconded by Richard Stainthorp.

#### **6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Richard Stainthorp took the chair for the election of the Chairman. Richard Bennett agreed to stand for one further year; he was elected unopposed, proposed by Richard Stainthorp and seconded by Stephen Snook.

**Membership Officer:** Alison Bennett agreed to continue in the role. Proposed by Terry Dixon, Seconded by Amanda Martin and elected unopposed.

**Treasurer:** Penny Kemp was proposed by Richard Stainthorp, seconded by Katrina Parker and elected unopposed.

**Committee Members:** All current members of the Committee were all willing to stand again. They were duly elected en bloc, proposed by John Missenden and seconded by Katrina Parker.

The Society has been unable to attract people to stand for several key roles – Honorary Secretary, Planning Lead, and Website and Social Media Lead. Member James Denny has indicated a willingness to support the group as Communications Officer but further discussions will take place with the Chairman to define and clarify the role. No formal nominations were received at the AGM and these positions will remain vacant. The Committee will continue to search for volunteers from within the membership.

## **7. ELECTION OF EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS**

Paul Welch was willing to continue as examiner of the accounts. He was elected unopposed. Proposed by Penny Kemp, seconded by Stephen Snook.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Member John Nixon gave details of his forthcoming talk on 'The Gentlemen Danes of Reading' which was to take place at the Abbey Baptist Church on Wednesday 17 May, organised by the History of Reading Society.

Committee member Terry Dixon reported on the guided walk activities undertaken in Reading during 2022-23. Terry's Reading Walkabouts is run as a not-for-profit enterprise with proceeds donated to local charities:

*"Despite coming out of Covid 19 and very few overseas visitors it has been an extremely good year, well beyond expectations, and PACT (Parents and Children Together) and The Royal Berkshire Hospital Charity will each receive £2145.86, with £25 the Mayor Charities, which is a 260% increase on the previous year. Book sales have raised a further £65 for Berkshire Women's Aid, making a total of £4381.72 for 2022-23. I'm very grateful for the support of Reading Civic Society and its members, particularly the collaboration with Richard Bennett over Heritage Open Days walks. We are looking forward to Sell out Walks for the new Reading Walking Festival (10-14/5/23) and will be repeating these in HoDs in September 2023 with 2 new walks -- My '6 Bridges and A Bridge Too Far!', and jointly with RCS 'St Peter's Caversham Conservation Area and Beyond' Walkabouts.*

*This incidentally this means 8 out of 15 Reading Conservation areas are now covered by my Walks. Finally, my new 2023-2024 charities are Home-Start Reading, and The Reading Ukrainian Community Centre"*

**There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.35 p.m.**

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After formal business was concluded, a presentation was given by local historian Mike Cooper who reflected on the 80th anniversary, this year, of the bombing of the People's Pantry. The People's Pantry used to be situated at 175 Friar Street, behind Queen Victoria, where the long-closed Bristol and West Arcade is now sited. Mike reflected on the events of 10th February 1943 when a German Bomb was dropped on the People's Pantry killing 41 people. There were two bombs dropped that day. The town was bombed 10 times during the war but this was Reading's only fatal air raid.

<https://www.blha.org.uk/mike-cooper/>