



THE BEACONSFIELD SOCIETY

celebrating the past, promoting the present and influencing the future

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting for the year 2015-2016 held in the Fitzwilliams Centre, Windsor End, HP9 2JW on Friday 4 November 2016 starting at 7.30 pm

Present: the following Committee members and approximately 40 members and guests were present. President, Les Davies; Chairman, Mike Elliott; Treasurer, Graeme Richards; Secretary, Laurence Smaje, Tony Bristow, Kari Dorme, Nanu Hodson, Debbie Marsden, and Alison Wheelhouse. Sandy Saunders, chairman of BOTRA, and committee members Tom Aspinall, Keith Bowyer, Alison Buckle, Peter Foster, Judy McDonnell, Liz Stevens and Will Story.

1. Apologies for absence: John Burton, Jess McEvoy, Jackie Dawes, Rachel Ferguson and Pat Wilson

2. Welcome by the President

The President welcomed the members and guests present and said that an event of major significance to the Society, and indeed Beaconsfield, was the merger of Beaconsfield Old Town Residents Association (BOTRA) with the Beaconsfield Society. Members from both committees had been working hard during the summer to combine the activities of the two organisations and the new Committee to take the Society forwards would be elected later in the AGM.

He then handed over the Chairman, Mike Elliott.

3. Minutes of the 2014 AGM held on 4 November 2014

These were approved by the membership as a correct record, proposed by Deirdre Janson-Smith and seconded by Nanu Hodson.

4. Chairman's Report

The Chairman reiterated the President's welcome and said that the Organising Committee had been a pleasure to work with, as all members had worked together in a positive spirit and there was full agreement on our organisational structure and our programme for the future.

He then highlighted the events of the year starting with the Society's 'Pride in Beaconsfield' campaign when, as part of the 'Clean for the Queen' campaign, we cleaned all the post boxes in the Town. This revealed that many needed painting and, once the relevant person in the Post Office was identified, he agreed to have them all repainted, as has indeed been done. A little later, came the Litter Pick with the Scouts and then our usual removal of illegal and out of date notices. June brought a very successful *Beaconsfield Now* to the Town Hall green, but this year marquees were used for most stalls and there were only a few independent gazebos. This arrangement was judged a better plan by almost all contributors and it was agreed to continue with this next year. The Town Hall green is becoming a little too small to accommodate the numbers of participants and next year we shall experiment with a joint event with the Rugby Club on their land. Here parking is

also easier. An enjoyable Heritage Visit attended by members of both BOTRA and the Beaconsfield Society was to Chenies Manor this year. A fascinating follow-up to the Enid Blyton event we held in 2013, was the unveiling of a sundial, which had been previously on a wall in the author's house, now placed on a specially built plinth in Bekonscot. Finally, in association with the Town Council, members of the Committee and volunteers totalling 31, planted some 1000 spring bulbs in the Town Hall Green and in the lawns of the Old Town.

The Chairman also announced that the remaining members of the Beaconsfield Residents Association had agreed that the Association should be wound up and that the remaining funds be transferred to the Beaconsfield Society with the expectation that they would be used for similar purposes. The Association was formed in order to oppose the building of the Relief Road, but once this had been approved lost its *raison d'être*. The Chairman went on to say that having been granted, the Society would not wish to oppose it but would do its best to lobby to mitigate the negative effects on traffic flow through the town and would naturally continue its work in trying to oppose inappropriate planning applications. He thanked the Chairman of the Group, Patrick Gurner and its Treasurer, Colin Mitchell for their work in bringing this transfer about.

5. Treasurers Report

Copies of the Accounts were tabled, so the Treasurer confined himself to its main features. He emphasised that the Society was in a strong financial situation, as shown by the bank balance at the end of the financial year of £4907.74, which had slightly increased from last year. Subscriptions had increased somewhat, and while income from events and donations was reduced, so had expenses, particularly on marketing. All in all he was satisfied that we were in a strong position to continue and even extend our activities in the coming year.

There were no questions and approval of the Report was proposed by Deirdre Janson-Smith, seconded by Kari Dorme and approved *nem con*.

6. Election of Officers and Committee

The Chairman said that the Society was delighted that Dominic Grieve QC MP had agreed not only to be the Society's Patron, but also to give an address after the AGM. In response Mr Grieve said he was honoured and pleased to accept. He also felt that the merger between BOTRA and the Beaconsfield Society would prove beneficial to the Town and that he would do anything he could to help the Society.

The President then took the Chair and said that the Committee had nominated Mike Elliott as Chairman and asked for any other nominations. There were none and Laurence Smaje proposed that Mike Elliott be elected Chairman. This was seconded by Debbie Marsden and approved by the membership.

The Chairman then took over again and proposed that Sandy Saunders be elected as Vice President. This was seconded by Laurence Smaje and approved by the membership.

The Chairman announced that Graeme Richards and Laurence Smaje had both expressed willingness to continue to serve as Treasurer and Secretary respectively and proposed that they be re-elected. This was seconded by Nanu Hodson and approved by the membership.

The Chairman then announced the proposed membership of the remainder of the Committee and suggested that they be elected en bloc. This was proposed by Deirdre Janson-Smith, seconded by Laurence Smaje and approved by the membership.

The Committee is now constituted as follows:

Patron:	Dominic Grieve
President:	Les Davies
Vice President:	Sandy Saunders
Chairman:	Mike Elliott
Secretary:	Laurence Smaje
Treasurer:	Graeme Richards
Committee members:	Keith Bowyer, Jeanette Buckle, Kari Dorme, Rachel Ferguson, Pete Foster, Nanu Hodson, Debbie Marsden, William Story and Alison Wheelhouse

The Chairman also pointed out that there were several members of the previous two committees who were prepared to work on sub-committees and help in other ways, but did not wish to serve on the main committee. He praised their enormous contribution to their previous societies and thanked them for agreeing to continue to work for the merged Society. These are as follows: Tom Aspinall, Tony Bristow, John Burton, Colin Mitchell, Jackie Dawes, Judy McDonnell and Liz Stevens.

7. Presentation of Society Awards

The Chairman then announced that the winner of the **Outstanding Citizen of the Year for 2016** was **Ann Tennant**. In commenting on the award Sandy Saunders said that over the years Ann had provided refreshment for almost everyone in the town and as for him, she had not only catered for Four Weddings and a Funeral in his garden, but catered for the Mayor's Banquet at Hall Barn during his year as mayor. Not content with this, she had also run 2 cub groups at Davenies School for more than 30 years. He could not think of a better candidate for the award and was delighted to give Ann her certificate.

In response, Ann expressed her pleasure at being thought worthy of the award and commented that when she was told the news was stunned into uncharacteristic silence.

The **Outstanding Building of the Year for 2016** was awarded to **Davenies School** for its new **Jubilee Building**. Unknown to the Awards Committee at the time, it had also won a RIBA National Building Award earlier in the year. Built to a very high standard and modern both inside and out, it nevertheless fitted very well into the surrounding woodland and gardens and complemented the older buildings including the 19th century listed farmhouse, not clashing with them. In accepting the award, the Headmaster, Mr Carl Rycroft claimed no responsibility for the award as the building had been completed before he arrived at the school. He added, however, that it was a pleasure to be able to preside over such an elegant and educationally ideal learning environment and he was pleased that the Building had been recognised locally as well as nationally.

8. Any other Business

There was no other business and the AGM was declared over at 8.10 pm

The Chairman then asked Dominic Grieve to give his talk and said once again how grateful we were to him for taking the time from a very busy day of press interviews in view of the news from the High Court in relation to the parliament's role in the Brexit negotiations.

Mr Grieve said he had been asked to comment on recent events, both national and local, and said that the result of the Referendum of 23 June would have revolutionary consequences as it up-ended 50 years of UK foreign policy without any thought of how to deal with them. He also felt it that the judgement from the High Court was entirely appropriate, as statute law cannot be overturned by government fiat.

Nationally, he saw two major problems, one was that the Brexit negotiations were going to absorb a great amount of energy and time, so much so that other important issues would not get the attention they deserved. The first direct effect would be on the economy and money at all levels of government was going to be tight. Population growth, in part from immigration, will continue to create major issues for housing, particularly in the south east, and there would be continued pressure on the infrastructure. In Beaconsfield for example, 'backyard developments' had absorbed almost all the available land that only left the Greenbelt for development. The other major issue was that of dealing with Vladimir Putin. In the 26 years since the 'iron curtain' came down the west has reduced its armed forces to such an extent that it is no longer able to engage in a significant conflict. Putin does not behave in a rule-based manner and acts in a nationalistic way, to at least restore their previous territory.

More locally, it is generally agreed that the three-tier system of local government is expensive and unworkable. What is not agreed is how to solve it. Mr Grieve's view was that separation of responsibilities for the NHS from other major services would be counter-productive. Moreover, central government is more inclined to listen to larger groups than smaller, so a county-wide authority makes more sense than 3 or 4 smaller district authorities.

Finally, he finished on a positive note. He emphasised that change will continue, like it or not. But successful communities are successful because people become engaged in the community and work together to ensure that change benefits their community rather than damages it.

Mr Grieve then said he would be pleased to answer questions until he had to leave for an interview on Newsnight.

Questions focused on traffic management, dangerous parking in the Old Town, Town Planning – how can we make our voice be heard?, how can we engage with government more generally, the local NHS and should Britain have a written constitution?

There were no simple answers. That to the last question was 'Yes', but it was unlikely any time soon because of the fall out from Brexit. Parking on common land in the Old Town is illegal already, but until the common land is swapped with somewhere else, nothing can be done. As for Town Planning, we could draw up a Neighbourhood Plan and more generally, the only way to get heard, to engineer change is to engage. Engage the community fully with each other and our local authorities.

At this point Sandy Saunders gave a fulsome Vote of Thanks to Mr Grieve for his refreshingly open talk and invited all to continue the discussion over refreshments.