

Berkshire Local History Association

Reports of the Executive Committee: Annual General Meeting 2017

Chairman's Report

Following last year's A.G.M. at Longworth, and most enjoyable visit to Kingston Bagpuize House, the committee has taken note of what was said.

The password has been removed from the latest edition of the newsletter, meaning that anyone can read it on the website. This should mean that more people will read it.

Plans for the next symposium are taking shape. I can't say too much at present, but it looks as though we may host an event just over the border in Oxfordshire, to which members of the Oxfordshire L.H.A. will be invited. I may be able to tell you more at this year's A.G.M. We are also thinking of holding a "workshop" on digitisation, "future-proofing," and what happens to the original material once it has been digitised.

As well as cataloguing and scanning images in the Reading Central Library collection, over the last year I have been dealing with local history images which have arrived via the local societies in which I am involved – the Natural History Society, the Industrial Archaeology Group, and the History of Reading Society, as well as the BLHA. The Central Library was offered the picture collection of the late Gerry Westall, whom I knew from my days working there. At first they thought they'd have to decline, because there was no one on the staff with the time to deal with it, but I offered to take it under my wing. Gradually, the postcards and photographs are being sorted and catalogued, and the first hundred or so are now viewable on the library website. I know that our in-coming President, Brian Boulter, is sorting out the papers of the late Michael Bayley, a long-standing member of our committee and contributor to the journal. There is great satisfaction in being able to save worthwhile documents from destruction, and finding a good home for them.

Returning to Reading Central Library, I'm pleased to be able to report that, following the retirement of Ann Smith, Katie Amos is now looking after the large and varied local studies collection.

Over the year, the Association published edition 33 of the journal, "Berkshire Old and New," three editions of the Newsletter, and sent out a number of e-mail bulletins. All members and member societies can receive these; members of member societies can receive the newsletters and e-mail bulletins electronically at no cost. Please let the secretary know if you're missing out.

We also published and distributed "People, Places and Context," the book containing the three talks we enjoyed at the 2015 symposium. Copies were sent out to members and member societies.

July brought the awarding of the Berkshire History Prize at Reading University, as reported in the Newsletter. The Association and the Record Office fund the prize jointly.

In November, some of our members enjoyed a tour of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, with choral evensong later in the afternoon. This was also reported in the Newsletter, and I, for one, feel privileged to have been there.

Research on the Berkshire Schools Project is complete, and the text is being prepared. Joan Dils and I have served on the management board on behalf of the Association, and read the draft and made comments. The book, a parish-by-parish account of Berkshire schools up to 1833, will be a comprehensive and worthwhile volume when it is published by the Berkshire Record Society next year. The team of volunteer researchers is keen to start a new project. A book on the County Gaols at Abingdon and Reading, using the quarter sessions order books, has been proposed. At our last meeting, the committee agreed to support this project, as we had supported the last one.

It is with sadness that I must here report the recent death of Peter Johnson. As a comparative newcomer to the Association, I never worked with him, but know that for many years he was our Chairman (1997-2005), and then Treasurer (2005-2007). I well remember his beaming face in March 2014, when we were able to give him a 90th birthday card at the Wellington College AGM.

At this year's AGM, Prof. Ted Collins steps down as President after 18 years. We hope that he will remain on the committee as a Vice-President. It has been a great pleasure for me to work with him, and we have many interests in common, so we have got on well right from the start. And we are of course very pleased that Brian Boulter has agreed to become our new President. Brian was a founder member back in 1976, and has been a Chairman, Membership Secretary, and Vice-President.

After the formal part of the A.G.M., Ted, Brian and I will be giving you an over-view of local history in Berkshire during the last forty years. We promise that it will not go on for too long!

It has been a great pleasure to welcome Dr. David Axford to the committee following the last A.G.M., and I hope that at the 2017 meeting, Ann Smith will be formally elected. Ann has already volunteered to take on the Membership Secretary role, following Amanda Harvey's leaving the district. This leaves us with a Secretary now to find. Ann McCormack has done the job for 8 years, and wishes to step down. She has promised to remain on the committee to help her successor get to grips with the job, when one can be found.

I should like to thank all members of the Association for their support, and may I appeal once more to member societies and institutions to let our web designer know about their meetings, for the "diary dates" part of the website. Please also check your details on the pages at the end of the latest Newsletter, to make sure they're still correct.

And, of course, I'm most grateful to all members of the committee for their hard work, help and support. We are a comparatively small band of people who keep the Association running, and considering our numbers and the modest subscription, we seem to achieve rather a

lot. We're getting a bit better at communicating with our member societies, and have made some improvements to the website. We could always do with new committee members who in time will be prepared to take on one of the admin. jobs, or maybe serve as chairman (!) Please have a word if you'd like to help, and the AGM might be a good time to do it.

I hope you will enjoy this year's AGM. Next year, we shall be on the other side of the county, in Maidenhead on March 10.

David Cliffe

Chairman, BLHA.

Secretary's Report:

The executive committee met for three general meetings and one annual general meeting, as required by the constitution. Although I have resigned as secretary at the last AGM, I have continued to do the role, with support from other committee members. However, as I am leaving the committee, a new secretary must now be found. I am happy to liaise with the new secretary and support in any way I can.

Ann McCormack

Treasurer's report for the year ending 31st December 2016

Overall, the financial position of the Association has little changed in the year:

Subscription income is broadly equivalent to 2015, and the expenses of the Association, excluding publication and AGM costs, are in line with prior years.

The two exceptions to this are the tour of Kingston Bagpuize house included as part of the 2015 AGM, which the Association subsidised by £6 per person, and the publication of the booklet 'People, Places and Context', containing the text of three talks given at the Association's 2014 symposium in honour of Joan Dils. The exceptional postage costs of £579 reflects the distribution cost of this publication.

No claims were made in the year on the funds (£3,828) held by the Association for local history research or publication, although the Trustees would welcome applications from members or local history groups. Enquiries should be made to the Association's Treasurer, in the first instance.

Although the Association continues to hold c.£6,970 on deposit with CAF Bank, the interest paid on these funds has declined in the year almost zero. Added to which, the bank has started to charge a monthly fee of £5 for the operation of a current account. In consequence, the Association will be paying to use its banking facilities in 2017 for the first time, taking into account the banking fees charged and the limited interest earned.

The Association recorded a small deficit for the year of £30, which was deducted from Unrestricted Reserves of £6,038. The Trustees consider the Reserves adequate for the continuing activities of the Association.

Dr D G Lewis FCA, FSA

JOURNAL EDITOR'S REPORT

I wish to apologize for my mistake in attributing Brigitte Mitchell's article in the last Berkshire Old and New to a Bridget Williams.

This year's journal is progressing. It is most likely going to feature a couple of Berkshire industries.

Dr Jonathan Brown

ACTING MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

Amanda had been our membership secretary for quite some time and although I had taken on the role in an acting capacity some years ago, a fair bit has changed since and I have felt like the proverbial fish at times. I would therefore like to thank you all for being patient and for your reminders when it appears that the message hasn't got through.

At the present time, we have 148 members in total, made up of 88 individuals, 37 societies and 23 museums etc. We have lost and gained over the year, so membership remains fairly stable. A few more are always welcome if you know of anyone who would like to join us.

There have been quite a number of issues regarding incorrect names and addresses on our lists which we have been diligently trying to resolve to ensure that our information about our members is as up to date as it possibly can be. It is a perennial problem, but it would seem that on occasion one list has been updated and not another which accounts for some of the problem, but we cannot change details if we are not notified. I would therefore ask you to let us know as soon as you can after your AGMs or at other times, realistically it is probably not going to be possible to manage one hundred per cent accuracy, but we can try to get it as current as we possibly can.

One particular issue that I have picked up on during the year is that of standing orders.

According to records and emails from members standing orders are put in place for membership, but for whatever reason the banks do not always activate them or payment stops, perhaps because of a change of account and of course cancellation of membership. Therefore, could I ask that from time to time if you have a standing order set up for the Association check to make sure it is still active. Standing order is by far the easiest method from an administration perspective for ourselves and members, so If you are still paying by cheque, please could I ask you to consider. Thanks to those who have sent me standing order mandates in the past few weeks, they should all now be with your banks.

Finally, I would just like to say thank you for your continued support and I am pleased to say that I will be leaving you in the capable hands of our new Membership Secretary Ann Smith.

My best wishes
Margaret

Report on Bibliography of Publications on Berkshire

The Berks Bibliography is a database available on the BLHA web-site to help users find publications relevant to their research. Most of these will be available in the local studies sections of local libraries (e.g. in Reading) or in the Berks Family History Society's library.

The database currently contains about 2600 titles and includes a range of publications (in various formats) relating to historic Berks, i.e. including that part of South Oxfordshire that was in Berks pre-1974, but only a limited number of them have been fully indexed at the current time. The version currently on the BLHA web-site has 450 publications that are fully indexed and 1700 publications that have partial indexing (based on their titles). The remaining items are not currently indexed.

A few more of these have now been indexed but we desperately need help in completing the indexing of the remainder. If anyone would like to help in this work, please contact the secretary for more information. If you can spare an hour or so to check a few publications in your local library, help would be most appreciated. Volunteers do not need to take a computer to the library, the keyword lists can be printed out for reference. Full instructions on what is needed are available.

Dr Sue Burnay
Berks Bibliography Co-ordinator
Mar 2017

BLHA Newsletter Editor's Report 2016/2017

Three Newsletters have been produced since the last AGM:-

No 115 May 2016

No 116 September 2016

No 117 January 2017

All have been 30 pages, printing done by Reading University and distribution by Margaret Simons.

A web based version has been produced each time and as agreed we no longer password protect the latest version.

I am grateful to our regular contributors to the *Society News* section and also to those who have contributed articles and book reviews. It has been suggested to me that members would prefer more articles and general news with the Society News recording only what the society has been up to and a brief summary of talks and speakers, rather than long reports of the talks..

We would like to hear from a few more of our member societies to know what they are up to. We had 7 societies contribute to all three newsletter, 1 contributed to 2 editions and 6 contributed to 1 edition. We have 37 member societies so 23 sent in no reports.

John Chapman

4/3/2017

Website Report

Over the past year we have included the latest speakers list and diary dates that have been made available to us. Please check to make sure your Society's details are up to date.

The website has been updated to reflect the various changes of personnel that we have been advised of. If your Society has had a change then please do let us know the revised details so we can ensure we have the very latest and correct information

The e-bulletins we send out appear to be getting through to some but not all and there may be the odd occasion where the email does not reach your inbox – so please check it hasn't gone to your junk folder. The 'email open rate' is around 40% which out of 160 email recipients which means almost 100 emails are not being opened. Is this due to lack of interest or maybe the wrong people are receiving them?

If there are any suggestions on how the website can be improved or added to then please send your comments to us at webdesigner@blha.org.uk