



BERKSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Registered Charity 1097355

President: Joan Dils

Email: secretary@blha.org.uk

Website: www.blha.org.uk

The 47th Annual General Meeting of the Berkshire Local History Association

Thursday, 17th April 2025
The Biscuit Factory, Reading

Those present: Joan Dils (President), Ted Collins (Vice President), David Cliffe (Chairman), David Lewis (Treasurer), Jo Alexander-Jones (Secretary), Ann Smith (Membership), Margaret Simons, Jonathan Brown (committee members), and twenty-eight other members.

Apologies: Dave Osborne, Peter Delaney, Fiona Hope and Catherine Sampson

1. Welcome by President Joan Dils, who thanked those attending and especially the staff of the Biscuit Factory for facilitating the AGM and film show.
2. The 46th AGM minutes had been circulated to members in advance and were agreed as a true record. The minutes were proposed by Margaret Simons and seconded by David Lewis.
3. There were no matters arising.
4. The report from the Treasurer had been provided to members in advance. David Lewis summarised the year: The association's finances remain in good health at the date of this report. The accumulated unrestricted fund stands at £4,847 and the restricted fund, for research and publication grants, at £3,698. Incoming funds for the year at £1,661 (including interest earned) fell £135 short of total operating costs. The trustees do not consider this sufficiently material to require an increase in the membership subscription. The operating shortfall in 2024 represented a slight deterioration compared with 2023, when the association made a small surplus of £10. The acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Ann Smith, seconded by Ted Collins and unanimously accepted by the meeting.
5. Membership Secretary's report had been provided to members in advance and was summarised. In 2024 we lost two local history groups - Cox Green Local History Group and Pangbourne Heritage Group. However, we gained Hedgerley Historical Society. It was a good year in attracting new individual members, possibly due to our participation in the Berkshire Heritage Online Fair and other events which have helped to raise the BLHA's profile. The report was proposed by Julia Cox and seconded by Jo Alexander-Jones.
6. Chairman's report had been provided to members in advance and was summarised. Our membership remains fairly stable and our finances are sufficient for our purposes. Looking back over the last year, in June some of us had an enjoyable walk from the church at Waltham St. Lawrence to Shottesbrooke and back, led by Ann Smith. At Shottesbrooke, we were guided round

St. John's Church by David Lewis, our Treasurer, and afterwards, those who wanted to walk a little farther could see the outside of the house from which Robert Gibbings had run the Golden Cockerel Press. Then most of us met up again at the Bell Inn for lunch. The Berkshire History Prize was won by Anne Woodhead for a dissertation on the question "Did the Geographical Nature of Reading Influence Suffragette Activity?" The prize is given for an exceptional undergraduate dissertation on some aspect of the history of the county. The University of Reading decides on whether a prize should be awarded in a particular year, and it is funded jointly by the Royal Berkshire Archives and our Association. Work on the "Building Schools for Berkshire" project is proceeding, but more slowly than was hoped. In December the Record Society launched their latest volume, *Greyfriars, Reading: from Prison to Parish Church*, edited by Malcolm Summers. Our members and all the local history societies were invited to meet in Greyfriars Church on a Saturday afternoon, where they could enjoy an illustrated talk by the editor, visit the church, and buy a copy of the book at a reduced price. Over the year, three newsletters have been published, and a journal, and several e-mail bulletins, for which we must thank everyone involved. At the end of the report Joan Dils thanked the Committee for their hard work. The report was proposed by Caroline Piller and seconded by Margaret Simons.

7. Election of the President: Joan Dils was proposed by Audrey Curtis, seconded by Margaret Simons and elected by the meeting.
8. Election of the Vice-President: Ted Collins was proposed by Ann Smith, seconded by David Lewis and elected by the meeting.
9. Election of Officers: David Cliffe as Chairman, Jo Alexander-Jones as Secretary and David Lewis as Treasurer were proposed by Caroline Piller, seconded by Ted Collins and elected by the meeting.
10. Election of Members of the Executive Committee: Jonathan Brown, Dave Osborne, Margaret Simons and Ann Smith were proposed by Julia Cox, seconded by Audrey Curtis and elected by the meeting.
11. Election of the Honorary Examiner of Accounts: Dr Stephanie Hovland was proposed as auditor by David Lewis, seconded by Margaret Simons and elected by the meeting.
12. Any Other Business: Joan Dils suggested that the Committee on behalf of the Association look to how or if current funds could be used to support local history research such as a bursary for someone studying for a Diploma in Local History at Oxford.

John Lovelock of Hedgerley Historical Society suggested a visit to Slough Museum, and also that this might be a potential place for the 2026 AGM.

Margaret Simons notified the group of a walk on 10th / 11th May being run by the Mills Archive.

After the AGM a film show took place showing archive footage of Berkshire between the 1920s and the 1960s that had been curated by the Wessex Film and Sound Archive. David Cliffe provided a commentary to support the pictures.