



READING CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 16 March 2024 at Watlington House, at 2:00 p.m.

Committee members present: Richard Bennett – Chairman
Penny Kemp - Hon. Treasurer
Amanda Martin
Terry Dixon
Richard Stainthorp

Other members present: Rose Williams, Elaine Proctor, Katrina Parker, Michael Penfold, Sean Duggan, Anne Jessel, Richard Jessel, Judith Westwood, Peter Harding, Jill Dibben (CADRA), Helen Lambert (CADRA), Jo Alexander-Jones, Christabel Winny, Helen Tweedie, Ian Kemp, Sylvia Clarke, Bill Gornall-King, Victoria Gornall-King, Sue McArdle, Chris Widdows, Jean Terry, Susan Hora, John Nixon, Vickie Abel, ANO signature cannot be read, Rosemary Woodman, Sally Ellis, Liz Marshall, Brian Morley, Tomiko Morley, Rodney Oliver, Kevin Hogarth, Michael Brice

Visitors present: Alastair Dick-Cleland, Bettina Kirkham (Chair Berkshire Gardens Trust)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

Apologies had been received from 24 members: Alison Bennett (Committee), Lynette Edwell (Committee), Clare Platts (Committee), Stephen Snook (Committee), Julia Alexander Gordon, Doug Beaumont, Peter Durrant (Deputy Lieutenant), Karen Lloyd, Robin Platts, Virginia Day, David Stevens, Alison Stevens, Ken Brown, Trish Brown, Dr George Nowacki, Margaret Ormonde, Clive Ormonde, Phil Lewis, Marianne Clarke, Fiona Rycraft, Jenny Savage, Fiona Hope, Mike Fellows, John Dearing

2. MINUTES OF 2023 AGM

The minutes of the previous AGM, held on 15 April 2023, had been circulated to all members. A proposal to approve the minutes was proposed by Katrina Parker, seconded by Rodney Oliver and accepted unanimously.

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO DECEMBER 2023

The Chairman's Report had previously been circulated to all members and copies were available at the meeting. Acceptance was proposed by Penny Kemp, seconded by Richard Stainthorp and accepted unanimously.

In addition to his report on the previous year's activities, the Chairman looked forward to events already planned or in planning for 2024:

- 11 April - Visit to Station Hill development
- 11 May – Walk around Katesgrove area (Reading Walks Festival)
- 14 May – Walk around Victoria Park area (Reading Walks Festival)
- 5 and 6 June – Look Draw Build (event in conjunction with Haslams)
- 8 June – Waterfest
- 10 June – Visit to Donnington Hospital and Donnington Castle
- 6 -15 September – Heritage Open Days, will include Hillside House Gardens (confirmed)

as 14 September)

- Dates tbc – Visits to Shinfield Studios and to Waltham Place Gardens, the location of the annual lunch as the Narrowboat has now closed.

Rodney Oliver asked if his previous suggestion of a visit to A F Jones was still planned. RB confirmed that it is, but has to be arranged. Work in progress.

4. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

As at March 2024 there are 178 members, including 3 honorary life members. Since the 2023 AGM ten new members have joined, making 34 since 2020 but there has been a decline in overall membership from 198 in 2019.

Ten members do not have online access and receive notification of the AGM and relevant documents by post, including hard copies of the regular email updates that have recently been used in place of newsletters.

Subscriptions for 2023 totalled £1,190 (2022 - £1,110; 2021 - £1,350; 2020 - £1,305). Gift Aid added £262 (2022 - £234; 2021 - £198; 2020 - £325).

5. REPORT FROM TERRY DIXON (COMMITTEE MEMBER)

Terry reported on the guided walks and talks undertaken by 'Terry's Reading Walkabouts' during 2023-2024. The Walkabouts are run as a not-for-profit concern with proceeds donated to local charities. In the period described, he has raised £5,855; this has been allocated to 'Home-Start Reading', 'Reading Ukraine Community Centre', 'Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity' and 'Tilehurst for Ukraine'. Book sales have raised a further £55 for 'Berkshire Women's Aid'.

The walks programme now covers nine of Reading's fifteen conservation areas, in addition to many other areas and topics. The conservation walks have been developed in collaboration with the Society.

In 2024 the charities Terry's work will support are 'MND Association Reading & West Berkshire' and 'ABC to Read'.

6. HON. TREASURER'S STATEMENT OF THE ACCOUNTS TO 31 DECEMBER 2023

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 end was £10,063 which includes £6,269 of restricted funds not available for general expenses. The balance is lower than that of 2022 because in that year the £6K GWR funding for the 2023 Look Draw Build project was received in advance of the expenditure taking place in 2023. The main expenditure items in 2023 were room hire for events and committee meetings, speaker's fees and the cost of printing and materials.

£940 was to be allocated to the Blue Plaque scheme, £1,188 to Look Draw Build and £401, which had been received in 2020, was held on behalf of the 'Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee' (CAAC).

The loss recorded for the year 2023 (Unrestricted Funds) was £143 (2022 - £209; 2021 - £79). For 2024 there will be a reduction in the expenditure on insurance and for website hosting as these contracts have been adjusted.

The Treasurer's Report was adopted unanimously, proposed by Terry Dixon and seconded by Tomiko Morley.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Richard Stainthorp took the chair for the election of the Chairman. Richard Bennett agreed to continue in the role. He was elected unopposed, proposed by Richard Stainthorp and seconded by Amanda Martin.

Membership Officer: Alison Bennett agreed to continue in the role. She was elected unopposed, proposed by Rodney Oliver and seconded by Michael Penfold.

Treasurer: Penny Kemp agreed to continue in the role. She was elected unopposed, proposed by Richard Bennett, seconded by Katrina Parker.

Committee Members: All current members of the Committee agreed to continue in their role. They were duly elected en bloc; proposed by Rodney Oliver and seconded by Katrina Parker.

Jo Alexander-Jones stood as Newsletter Editor and Minutes Secretary and was elected unopposed, proposed by Richard Bennett and seconded by Richard Stainthorp.

The Society still has a number of roles vacant, in particular someone to focus on planning; volunteers were requested to contact Richard Bennett if they were interested in becoming involved.

Trustees; During 2023 there have been only two trustees for the Society – Richard Bennett and Amanda Martin. The constitution requires a minimum of 3. Queries about the number of Trustees had been raised by our bank (CAF Bank). It was proposed to increase this number by adding current members of the Committee who had expressed willingness to undertake this role.

Penny Kemp, Clare Platts, Terry Dixon and Richard Stainthorp were proposed as Trustees by Richard Bennett and seconded by Katrina Parker.

8. 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 Richard Bennett.

9. CONSTITUTION UPDATES

The Society's constitution has been reviewed by the Committee and a number of minor updates recommended:

- Under Objects (section 2-6) add Talks and Walks to become 'To hold meetings, lectures, talks, walks and exhibitions'
- Under Objects (section 2) add an additional section (13) to specify the Blue Plaque scheme activities
- Amend Subscriptions (section 4) to become Full Members £10, Joint Full Members £15 and no fee for Junior Members

The proposed recommendations were accepted unopposed, proposed by John Nixon and seconded by Katrina Parker.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Member Helen Lambert notified the audience of the Caversham and District Residents'

Association (CADRA) AGM to be held on 20 May at 19.30 in Caversham Baptist Church. All are welcome and there will be two speakers from the Reading Climate Action Network.

Member Vickie Abel notified the audience of the Friends of Caversham Court Gardens AGM to be held 10 April at 19.30 at The Canoe Club on The Warren. All are welcome and there will be a talk on Plant Hunters and Caversham Court by garden history expert Richard Bisgrove.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.45 p.m.

After the formal business was concluded, a presentation was given by Alastair Dick-Cleland, Project Development Manager of The Landmark Trust. He spoke on the history of the Trust and its remit as a building preservation charity that restores, mainly smaller historic buildings, to their former glory and opens them for self-catering breaks. While using examples from the many projects he has been involved with, he outlined some of the challenges that the Trust faces with funding, planning and obtaining heritage craft workers.

His talk was well-received, being entertaining and informative, and it is likely to have inspired many of the audience to visit the Trust's website to investigate holiday options. [The Landmark Trust](#)

The Society had asked those attending to donate at least £5 per head towards the work of the Trust. Total donations were £179, after adding Gift Aid claimable by us under the small donations scheme the total is £224. In addition, the society will make a donation to round the total to £250.