

BICESTER LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Annual General Meeting

Monday 18th September 2023 7.30pm

Clifton Centre, Ashdene Road, Bicester

MINUTES

Present: 28 members

Apologies: none

Bob Hessian, chairman, welcomed the members to the AGM and outlined the agenda for the evening.

2022 AGM Minutes

These were published in the November 2022 Newsletter. The only outstanding item from these is the timeline for the library, which has yet to come to fruition due to the allotted space becoming unavailable.

Chairman's Report

Talks and events during the year included:

- The River at War - Bill King
Bicester in WW1 - Matthew Hathaway
History of Brewing in Oxford - Liz Woolley
History of Bicester's Manors - Matthew Hathaway
Can Onions Cure Earache? - Melanie King
Archaeology, Artifacts and a Career in Ruins - Anni Byard
19th Century Women Travellers & Explorers - Katherine Bradley
Oxford Botanic Gardens - Mark Davies
The Ascott Martyrs - Carol Anderson
- At the request of the Mayor, Cllr Alex Thrupp, we organised a history walk around the town to support his local charities. This included a small display in the Council Chamber.
- Thirteen members enjoyed a guided walk around Buckingham and a visit to the Old Gaol Museum.
- Our display in the library commemorated coronations from Queen Victoria to Queen Elizabeth II. The next display will be about local railways.

- Bob had given talks to a variety of groups, including Probus, Young Farmers, Bicester Widows, Bicester WI (aka 'The Foxy Ladies!') and Gagle Brook Primary School.
- Sally James had taken a group of Brownies on a history walk around the town centre.
- **Looking to the future**, the question of selling merchandise, e.g. mugs, bags, t-towels, carrying historic photos of Bicester and the BLHS logo was considered. Whilst a number of members stated that they would purchase such items, it was agreed that careful consideration needed to be given to whether this was an effective fundraising strategy. An increase in membership may prove more beneficial and, although new members tended to come through contact with existing members, publicity through advertising, leaflets, our website and social media also need to be pursued. It was suggested that Tesco's scheme to support local organisations, grants from Bicester Village and Bicester Town Council and a charity stall on Bicester Market should be investigated.
- The 2024 calendar would have the theme of transport - further details at next month's meeting.
- The members were canvassed as to their interest in a talk on family history. Previous attempts to secure a speaker that suited members at various stages of family history research had proved unsuccessful. A talk entitled *The Joys of Genealogy* was currently being considered and the members gave a positive response to this suggestion.
- The University of Oxford has launched a project which aims to empower local communities to digitally preserve their stories, memories and artefacts related to WW2. BLHS is hoping to hold a 'Digital Collection Day' in the library in October. Details to follow.
- The next OLHA Study Day will be in Bicester on 18th November 2023. The theme will be shops and shopping. Details to follow.
- We have been advised that we need to vacate our archive storage room at the former St Edburg's School by the end of 2023. We are urgently seeking alternative facilities and will update you when we know more.
- The need for additional committee members was highlighted. With only five members, we are not fulfilling the minimum number stipulated in our constitution, which is six. A brief outline of the principal tasks involved in committee membership was given.
- Bob thanked members and committee members for their support.

Treasurer's Report

Sally James expanded on a few items before inviting questions.

- ❖ Subscriptions - it was proposed that these remain at 2022/23 levels, i.e £20 joint, £13 individual. This was unanimously agreed.
- ❖ Income from subscriptions was stable, as membership had increased by just one member. This was because several former members had not renewed since Covid, but we gained seven new members.
- ❖ Arrangements are in hand to obtain a card reader, so that payment can be made other than by cash, cheque or bank transfer. It is felt that this would be particularly useful when selling books/calendars at meetings and events.
- ❖ Attendance at talks had picked up, but not to pre-Covid levels. This had impacted our income from raffles.
- ❖ Copies of Matthew Hathaway's new book, *Bicester: A Potted History*, had been purchased for sale to members at a discounted price.
- ❖ Speakers' fees were largely in line with those charged over the last few years, except that travel expenses were more commonly added. The average cost was £80.
- ❖ The 2023 calendar, sold through BLHS and Coles, was a success and generated £117.
- ❖ The Buckingham trip was subsidised, as has been our practice in the past.
- ❖ The cost of hire of the Clifton Centre remains very good value at £10 per hour.
- ❖ A discussion on fundraising indicated that members would be happy with an increase in subscriptions next year to £25/£15, or thereabouts.
- ❖ In response to a question, the treasurer stated that the deficit of £29 was largely due to the reduction in raffle revenue.

Election of Committee

The following committee members were elected *en bloc*:

Bob Hessian

Sally James

John Roberts

Matthew Hathaway

Peter Crook

(Proposed: John Wilde, seconded: Tricia Hallam)

The election of Bob Hessian as Chairman and Sally James as Treasurer was unanimously agreed.

Following refreshments and the raffle, the evening closed with a light-hearted look at local epitaphs with Bob Hessian.

SJ 28.9.23