

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society, 2015.

**The Meeting opened** at the County Museum, Aylesbury, May 9<sup>th</sup> 2015 at 2.00 pm. The President of the Society, Richard Gem, took the chair.

### **1 Apologies for Absence:** Apologies were received from:

Pat Roberts, Bron Lee, Richard Davies, Diana Gulland, Peter Gulland, Valerie Edwards, Don Blake, Richard de Peyer, Roger Bettridge, Barbara Harman, John Sheldon, Warren Whyte, Susan Oswell, Barbara Willis, Betty Hardy, Michael Hardy, Richard Pushman, Maureen Brown, Paul Brown, Jasmin Reeks, Jennifer Bruce-Mitford.

### **2 The Minutes of the AGM** held 10<sup>th</sup> May 2014

These were read and approved with no amendments. Richard Gem signed the minutes as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

### **3 Matters Arising:** No matters were discussed.

### **4 Annual Reports**

- i Hon. Secretary:** The report was published in the Spring Newsletter. There were no questions.
- ii Hon. Treasurer:** The annual report and accounts were published in the Spring Newsletter. An amended version was circulated at the meeting. There were no questions. The accounts were approved by the meeting: proposed by Peter Marsden, seconded by Michael Ghirelli.
- iii Hon. Editor Records of Bucks:** the report was published in the Spring Newsletter. There were no questions.
- iv Hon. Librarian:** the report was published in the Spring Newsletter. There were no questions.
- v Hon. Archivist:** the report was published in the Spring Newsletter. There were no questions.
- vi Hon. Membership Secretary:** the report was published in the Spring Newsletter. There were no questions.

### **5 President's Remarks and Vote of Thanks**

#### **HS2 Rail Line**

At the last AGM I identified the Society's response to the HS2 rail line proposals as two-pronged: the first prong being the identification of the heritage resource that is at risk; the second being the appropriate mitigation of that risk. These themes are now about to be taken up in the one-day conference organised by our Vice President Mike Farley, which is to be held at Weston Turville next Saturday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, entitled 'HS2: Heritage on the Line – a threat or an opportunity?'. An impressive range of speakers has been lined up to provide an overview by period and topic of the archaeological heritage that is under threat. By identifying clearly the importance of this heritage we have two aims. The first is to inform HS2's 'Historic Environment Research and Delivery Strategy'; the second is to press the case for fully adequate funding to be made available within the HS2 budget for the archaeological investigation, post-excavation analysis, publication, dissemination and archiving of those important heritage resources that are threatened. We are all too aware that the archaeological budget will be under pressure if the project goes ahead: so we must continue to make the case for the importance of the heritage resource, and to press for the necessary financial provision.

There are still some places available for the conference and I urge all those interested to book their places, if they have not done so already.

### **The County Museum**

Also at the last AGM I outlined the situation regarding the formation of the new Museum Trust to take over the running of the County Museum, and the implications this would have for the lease of the Society's premises and the agreement concerning the Society's collections that were entered into between ourselves and the County Council in 1995. Through the year discussions have continued somewhat fitfully between the County Council and the Society, advised by our respective solicitors; but final agreement between us has not yet been reached in all areas. One of the contentious issues concerns those parts of the Museum premises that are owned by the Society and which are leased to the County Council on condition that they be used only for museum and educational purposes. Your Council has taken a unanimous view that this condition of the lease should not be removed. Nonetheless we are willing to work with the Museum Trust in the spirit of a reasonable interpretation of the condition, having regard to the Trust's need to raise funding to support the Museum – which we fully appreciate since the secure future of the Museum is also our aim.

While this negotiation with the County Council continues, Richard de Peyer has been getting on with the main task of running the Museum, and in this he likewise has the Society's full backing and support.

### **Planning and the Historic Environment**

In previous 'Remarks' I have touched upon various issues concerning planning and the historic environment, including the proposed re-organisation of English Heritage. The latter has now taken place as from last month, with the organisation being split into two parts. The name of 'English Heritage' has been retained for the non-governmental organisation responsible for maintaining the historic properties in care on behalf of the nation (prehistoric monuments, medieval castles and abbeys, country houses and so forth). A new name, 'Historic England', has been adopted for the government organisation responsible for statutory functions, such as scheduling and listing.

Historic England has immediately issued a series of three Notes (prepared by the former English Heritage) on Good Practice Advice on the implementation of the Government's heritage policy as embodied in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guide (PPG). These Advice Notes do not claim to prescribe the only way to implement these policies, and acknowledge that that there may be alternative approaches that are demonstrably compliant with them.

Note 1 provides advice on the *Historic Environment in Local Plans*. Its thrust very much supports the line that this Society has been taking in commenting to local authorities in Buckinghamshire on their emerging Local Plans, pressing the case for such Plans to adopt a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.

Note 2 addresses *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment*. This is concerned with how local authorities should take the historic environment into account in exercising their planning functions. It strongly emphasises the importance of assessing the significance of the heritage in this context, and lays particular emphasis on the role of Historic Environment Records

(HERs) – an emphasis that has been welcomed very much by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

Note 3 on the *Setting of Heritage Assets* explains the concept of 'setting' and how to go about assessing it.

Despite the provision of such excellent advice from Historic England, our concern remains over the levels of funding and staff resource that are actually in place at the local level to achieve its implementation. This is particularly so in respect of maintaining and enhancing the Historic Environment Record; and in scrutinising planning proposals for their impact on heritage assets, whether those designated as listed buildings, conservation areas &c, or those archaeological sites and historic buildings that have not been formally designated by listing or scheduling. Faced with ever increasing pressures on their resources, local authorities are cutting back on their staff in the heritage area (as in other areas); they are also drawing back from formulating pro-active and holistic policies for the historic environment in local plans. Societies such as ours cannot on our own reverse these trends; but we must continue to make the case for the historic environment until there is a turn in the tide for the funding of local government.

### **The Lenborough Hoard**

Moving on from such general matters to more specific ones, the discovery of the hoard of more than 5,000 Anglo-Saxon coins at Lenborough shortly before Christmas made the national news, and we were fortunate that Julian Hunt was able to persuade the numismatist Gareth Williams from the British Museum to give a lecture on the hoard to the Society on 11<sup>th</sup> April. The importance of such a large hoard lies not in the coins as individual specimens, but on the composition of the hoard as a whole. Potentially it can tell us a great deal about the late Anglo-Saxon economy: but that will be dependent on a detailed academic research project once the initial assessment of the content of the hoard has been completed.

That assessment will inform the committee that makes a recommendation as to the value of the hoard, and depending on that valuation a decision can be taken as to whether our County Museum can launch a realistic appeal to acquire the hoard. If the Museum were to succeed in acquisition, then a research project could be set up based here to carry out the further study – and this would need funding from sources distinct from those for the acquisition.

All this, however, raises questions about the current system under the Treasure Act, which provides for the full market-value compensation of a discovered treasure being paid to the finder and the land owner. This system was introduced on the grounds that it would encourage finders to report their discoveries rather than to conceal them. On the other hand, a senior Irish museum director has made an alternative case to me recently. He takes the view that the system of compensation effectively holds museums to ransom. In Ireland under recent legislation it is illegal to metal-prospect on any archaeological site, and all archaeological items discovered (not just items of treasure) are the property of the state. This he says has cut down significantly on the problem of metal detecting which was rampant previously. Whether the same system would work in England, I do not know. But I do share the view that the current system of compensation holds museums such as ours to ransom. If the Crown is to pay compensation, why should the cost of this be passed on to museums?

## **Quarrendon**

Another specific matter relates to the historic site of Quarrendon which lies to the north-west of Aylesbury. Members may recall that, when the site together with extensive areas of land surrounding it was acquired by property developers for housing, there appeared to be considerable uncertainty as to the future of the scheduled ancient monument at its heart. That monument comprises the deserted medieval village of Quarrendon together with its church and manor, and the extensive Tudor landscape gardens surrounding the latter. The Society organised a successful open day on the site in order to stimulate interest in it and discussion about its future. One upshot of this was that the County Council set up a working party to examine ways forward (Aylesbury Vale District Council having made it clear it would take no responsibility for the site). This eventually led in 2008 to the formation, with County Council support, of the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust, of which I was appointed a trustee as the representative of our Society. The aim of the trust was to take over the site of Quarrendon from the developers' property consortium under the terms of a Section 106 agreement already in place between them and Aylesbury Vale District Council. However, it has taken from 2008 until now for negotiations between the new Trust and the developers to reach completion – much to the frustration of the Trust which has lost promised grants due to the ongoing delays. However, I am delighted to report that as of April the Buckinghamshire Conservation Trust has become the owner of the Quarrendon Leas site, comprising the scheduled ancient monument together with all the adjacent land between the new relief road to the north and the River Thames to the south. A formal public launch will be arranged later this year. The Trust will now be able to put in hand a programme for the management of the site, for public access, for educational programmes, for environmental conservation, and for archaeological research. Towards the initial management costs the Trust has received a limited amount of funding under the Section 106 agreement, but into the future the Trust will have raise its own funding for all management and development – this will be a challenge.

Coincidentally, the past year has also seen the publication of a new biography of Sir Henry Lee by Sue Simpson. This is based on new and original research and updates our knowledge of the man and his career – the only previous biography being that by Chambers in 1936. Henry came to at Quarrendon as a boy and entered into his inheritance there in 1553. A few years later he took up his court career in London based in lodgings at the Savoy, while from 1571 he moved his principle country residence to Woodstock Park. But his estranged wife and daughter continued to reside at Quarrendon. Sir Henry continued his interest in Quarrendon, as well as at Woodstock, at Ditchley Park (which he acquired in 1583), and at The Lilies near Weedon (which derives its name from the Latin for Lee, *Laelius*). The layout of the Tudor gardens at Quarrendon is attributed to Sir Henry and in the presentation of the site by the Trust this aspect will figure prominently.

I hope that from now on the Society and its members will be able to contribute to developing our knowledge of the history and archaeology of the Quarrendon site.

On that note I will turn now to the agreeable duty of extending the Society's thanks to all those who have helped us through the year with their time and commitment.

## **Votes of Thanks**

Before proposing any votes of thanks, I would like first to pay tribute to our former President Bill Mead who died last July, and whose obituary notice appeared in our autumn Newsletter. Bill has left a generous legacy of £5,000 to the Society and also assigned various rights in his publications. For these we are most grateful, while we also remember his time as our President with respect and affection.

Now I would like to turn to thanking on the Society's behalf those who have retired or are retiring as officers or members of council:

In the first place **Michael Ghirelli** who is retiring from the role of Secretary.

Then, among our Ordinary Members of Council and Trustees we shall be losing **Yvonne Edwards**, **Julian Hunt** and **Michael Ghirelli** who complete their 3-year term at this AGM – though we look forward to retaining Julian as our Lectures Organiser and Michael as our Newsletter Editor. We have also lost **David Green** who has resigned following a change in his employment raising a possible conflict of interest in relation to HS2.

We are no less appreciative of the continuing contributions of our ongoing Officers and Ordinary Members of Council, without whom our work would come to a standstill: **Peter Marsden**, as Chair, **Graham Parker** as Treasurer, **Marian Miller** as Librarian and acting Archivist, **John Broad** as editor, **Bronwen Lee** as Membership Secretary; and Council Members **John Dodd**, **Kim Biddulph**, **Nicola Powell**, **Nigel Wilson** and **George Lamb**. And I would especially like to congratulate George on his return to full active involvement with the Society following his terrible road accident and prolonged convalescence: we are delighted to have him back with us.

In addition to these we are blessed with many other helpers in various roles: **Bob Zeepvat** as our ever hard-working Associate Editor, **Julian Hunt** as our enthusiastic organiser of the lecture programme, **George Lamb** as outings organiser and co-ordinator of distribution for *Records*, **David Thorpe** for organising the Local History Network conference, **Michael Hardy** for arranging the annual church crawl – and all the others who have helped in many ways.

To all these I invite the meeting to express its thanks in the customary way.

## **7 Election and Re-Election of Officers and Members of Council**

### **7a Re-Elections of Society's Officers**

i **Hon. President:** Richard Gem was proposed by Peter Marsden, seconded by Michael Ghirelli. Elected unanimously.

ii The following were all re-elected unanimously, having been proposed by Michael Farley and seconded by Michael Ghirelli:

**Hon. Chairman:** Peter Marsden

**Hon. Treasurer:** Graham Parker

**Hon. Librarian:** Marian Miller

**Hon. Membership Secretary:** Bronwen Lee

**Hon. Editor Records of Bucks:** John Broad

### **7b Election of Officers of the Society**

i **Hon. Secretary of the Society:** Michael Ghirelli has resigned from the post of Hon Secretary. Jennifer Bruce-Mitford was proposed by Peter Marsden, seconded by Michael Ghirelli, and was elected unanimously.

ii **Hon. Treasurer of the Society:** Graham Parker has indicated that he intends to stand down during the course of the year. Therefore the Society is seeking seeking a replacement to work with him and stand for formal election at the next AGM.

### **7c i Election and Re-Election of Ordinary Members of Council**

Council comprises 9 Ordinary Members, who are each eligible for election then re-election for a maximum continuous term of 3 years. Serving members eligible for re-election were:

**John Dodd** (elected 2013)  
**Kim Biddulph** (elected 2014)  
**George Lamb** (elected 2014)  
**Nigel Wilson** (elected 2014)  
**Nicola Powell** (elected 2014)

These were all proposed for re-election by Sarah Grey, seconded by Michael Ghirelli and re-elected unanimously.

### **7 (c) (ii) Election of new ordinary Members of Council**

The following were elected as Ordinary Members in 2012 so that their terms of service expired in 2015:

**Yvonne Edwards**  
**Michael Ghirelli**  
**Julian Hunt**

The following were elected unanimously as Ordinary Members:

**Roger Bettridge:** proposed by Kim Biddulph, seconded by Sarah Grey  
**Eliza Alqassar:** proposed by Michael Farley, seconded by Kim Biddulph  
**Sarah Gray:** proposed by David Church, seconded by Michael Ghirelli

Co-opted Members of Council include:

**Julian Hunt** (Lectures organiser)  
**Michael Ghirelli** (Newsletter Editor)  
**Pauline Hey** (Active Archaeology Group)

### **8 Re-appointment of Hon Auditor:**

**Mrs B J Dharamshi,** proposed by Richard Gem, seconded by Peter Marsden.  
Passed unanimously.

### **9 Vice Presidents**

Vice Presidents serve until their resignation or removal by an AGM. The Vice Presidents, who are listed on the agenda, are not subject to annual re-election. However, during the year sadly the deaths have occurred of Mrs Hegarty and Prof Mead. The AGM was invited to take note.  
The current Vice Presidents are: Lord Cottesloe, C V Dawes, M E Farley, H Hanley, M Hart, D C Maynard, and Mrs D Gulland.

## **10 Any Other Business**

There were no matters raised.

**The meeting closed at 3.30 pm.**

**The next AGM** will be held on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 2.30 at the Museum, Aylesbury.

**Presentation:** The formal business of the meeting was followed by a presentation by Garry Marshall.