

 	<p>Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society 2016</p>
<p>Registered Charity 310525 President: Richard Gem OBE MA PhD FSA Honorary Secretary Sarah Gray MA AMA</p>	<p>The County Museum Church Street, Aylesbury Bucks, HP20 2QP</p>

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society 2016.
The Meeting opened at the County Museum, Aylesbury, 7th May 2016 at 2.00 pm. The President of the Society, Richard Gem, took the chair.

Item 1 Minutes of the AGM held 9th May 2015

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

Item 2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Item 3 Annual Reports

i Former Hon. Secretary (2013-2015), Michael Ghirelli: published in the *Newsletter* p12. Report noted; there were no questions.

ii Acting Hon. Treasurer, Harry Ball: The annual report and accounts were published in the Spring *Newsletter* p15. There were no questions. The accounts were approved by the meeting: proposed by Peter Marsden, seconded by Michael Ghirelli.

iii Associate Editor Records of Bucks, Bob Zeepvat: published in the *Newsletter* p21. Report noted; there were no questions.

iv Hon. Librarian & acting Archivist, Marian Miller: published in the *Newsletter* p22. Report noted; there were no questions.

v Hon. Membership Secretary, Bronwen Lee: published in the *Newsletter* p14. Report noted; there were no questions.

Item 4 President's Remarks

Normally I might open my remarks by saying that I consider the Society is in good shape, and in many ways indeed it is: much has been achieved over the past year. But at the same time, we approached something of a crisis point recently in recruiting volunteers to contribute their time and effort as officers of the Society and members of the Council.

Following the unanticipated resignation (for personal reasons) of the Honorary Secretary elected at the last AGM, and the difficulty Council has had in identifying an acting successor, the burden of covering for this post has fallen upon our Chairman and our Librarian, who have striven valiantly to take on the additional burdens. But both were already shouldering the responsibilities attached to the positions to which they were elected and it has not been right that they should have had these additional burdens thrust upon them. The situation could not have continued, and without appointments to these posts some of the work of the Society would have had grind to a halt and the Library would have had to be closed. Fortunately we now have generous volunteers willing to fill the vacant posts – as we will come to later in the meeting.

The situation has set me wondering whether what we have faced is more than just a temporary problem, or whether it might relate to a more general decline in volunteering in contemporary society. The answer to this is probably no. Statistics gathered over a period of years seem to indicate a fluctuation in rates of volunteering within a margin of only 10%. In 2005, respondents to the annual Citizenship Survey peaked at 30% of respondents saying they had volunteered formally at least once a month. This fell to 25% in 2010/11, but rose again to 27% in 2014/15. So it appears that around a quarter or more of the population is actively volunteering on a regular basis. Within this sector the highest rate of volunteering is, understandably, among those who have reached retirement age and have more free time; but there are also substantial numbers within lower age groups and here the numbers are rising.

This volunteering of course spreads over a wide range of sectors. In order of popularity these are: sports, recreation, religion, children's education and activities, disability and social welfare, community and neighbourhood, the environment and animals. But I have not found relevant statistics for volunteering in the heritage and historic environment sector.

There are both national and local bodies that recruit volunteers for work in different sectors, including the historic environment. Thus, for example English Heritage and the National Trust make use of volunteers in the heritage sector, and they have large numbers of members who enrol to support their activities and enjoy the benefits that membership confers. At the local level, the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust makes extensive use of volunteers; while Bucks County Council recruits volunteers over several sectors, including the green environment, but not as far as I know the historic heritage.

Characteristic of these schemes is that the organisations essentially recruit volunteers to engage in activities, rather than to sit on committees; and statistics show that engagement in activities is the most popular form of volunteering. But still, 37% of volunteers do sit on committees, and 23% are involved in administrative work.

So how is the Bucks Archaeological Society positioned in all this? Our Active Archaeology Group is vibrant, no doubt precisely because it involves members in outside activities; our lectures and excursions have a reasonable level of attendance; and our journal, *Records of Bucks*, has a wide circulation. But should we be drawing in a wider range of people to the Society, and especially younger people who can bring new thinking to what we do and lead us forward in future? Yet, that in turn is dependent on projecting the Society as relevant to that wider potential audience.

One of the questions facing us when we take stock is this: what is the role of a county archaeological society today? In times past county societies were the natural foci of all local archaeological and antiquarian interest. But now we have to position ourselves in relation to a proliferation of: university departments of archaeology; a range of societies concerned with specific archaeological themes and periods; also the Council for British Archaeology with its regional groups; and so on. The focus of dialogue in the archaeological community has moved away from the county societies to a significant degree.

Furthermore, we live in a world where archaeology has not only become increasingly professionalised, but where much of the field work is conducted by commercially based organisations in the context of building development. The operational constraints on the latter organisations leave their staff little opportunity to engage with the wider archaeological community and the county societies. Again, the county societies may be regarded by local planning authorities and by Historic England as among their consultees: but their views have no more status than as to be 'noted'.

So, what is the point of my remarks? It is this: that in order to enthuse and extend our membership and volunteer base, the Society needs in my view to do two things:-

The first is to appraise where the Society stands in the early 21st century within the archaeological community – its ecological niche if you like. What relationships can we develop with other partners, such as will have most leverage and be most effective and productive? Obvious partners are the County Museum, where we have a profound interest in helping to ensure that the vision of its Trustees and Director comes to full realisation – and Richard de Peyer has already invited the Society to contribute its knowledge to developing the Museum's new displays. Another link is with the local authority archaeological services within the county. We already have good relations with these partners, and these should be developed further. We have also been successful in contributing to the archaeological response to the HS2 railway development proposals, and our input has fed through to the national level. These are strengths that we can build upon to go further.

At this point it may be appropriate to digress and to draw attention to a specific area that seems likely to call for a major input from the Society in partnership with other bodies. Aylesbury Vale District Council is reported as being on the point of opening talks with the Government regarding a bid to become a unitary authority for north Buckinghamshire (a move opposed by the County Council, while district councils in the south of the county are said to be content with the present arrangements). AVDC wishes to take over the provision of all services, doing away with the present two-tier provision. However, at the same time they say apparently that they wish to transfer the financing of services away from revenue derived from council tax, and towards revenue derived from commercial activities and subscription services, with a view to abolishing council tax by 2023. This rather suggests that AVDC is less intent on taking over the actual *provision* of services, and rather more on running services down (not that the County is unaffected by the same malaise, as we see from the county library service). This change, if agreed by Government, must inevitably have consequences for the County Archaeology Service, the Historic Environment Record, the Centre for Bucks Studies, and the County Museum – though the latter now has independent trust status. Our Society, therefore, must be prepared to join with partners in a vigorous campaign to ensure the maintenance of fully adequate public funding for these services, which are absolutely essential for the preservation and understanding of the county's heritage.

Returning from this digression to my main theme, **the second area** where the Society needs to move forward, in my view, is in developing its *outreach*, while basing this upon a re-enthused vision that will increase our appeal to a wider demographic audience, and draw them to participate in, and enlarge upon, our activities. To do this, however, will require not only a re-envisioning of what we are about, but also the active development of an appropriate strategy to communicate this. Yet, this cannot be achieved without the time and commitment of new volunteers willing to take on the challenge and help to lead us forward. Of course, we do have already a solid, and much-appreciated, bedrock of voluntary commitment that maintains and develops our web site, and that promotes our presence at events. So we should be able to build on this with new volunteers to develop our communications in new directions and using new media.

And now, while urging that your Council needs to call on the membership of the Society for more support and commitment, I will turn with gratitude and pleasure to extending the Society's thanks to all those who, indeed, have helped us tirelessly through the past year with their time and commitment.

Item 5 Votes of Thanks

In the first place I extend the Society's grateful thanks to **Marian Miller** who is retiring from the official role of Librarian and Archivist, and from many other unofficial roles. The debt we owe her is enormous, not only for looking after and sorting the Library and (assisted by Dr Garry Marshall) the Archive, but also for maintaining our e-mail communications and for effectively acting as Secretary following the resignation of the elected post-holder.

In equal first place our thanks are due to **Graham Parker** who has retired as our Treasurer, having modernised the Society's accounts and put them in good order.

Then we must thank our Ordinary Member of Council and Trustee **John Dodd** who at this AGM completes his 3-year term, during which he has contributed very actively at our meetings and with follow-up actions outside them.

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, **John Broad** as editor, **Bronwen Lee** as Membership Secretary; and elected Council Members: **Kim Biddulph**, **Nicola Powell**, **Nigel Wilson**, **George Lamb**, **Roger Bettridge**, **Eliza Alqassar** and **Sarah Gray**.

In addition to these we are blessed with many other helpers in various appointed roles: **Bob Zeepvat** as our Associate Editor, without whom we would have no *Records of Bucks*; **Michael Ghirelli** who has given a smart and colourful new look to our *Newsletter* while retaining its former virtues; **Julian Hunt** as the indefatigable organiser of our lecture programme; to him also together with **George Lamb**, **Diana** and **Peter Gulland** and **Sarah Gray** for organising our summer outings; **Michael Hardy** for arranging the annual church crawl; **Pauline Hey** for leading the Active Archaeology Group; **David Thorpe** for organising the Local History Network conference; to **Jeremy Howarth** for his work on our print collection, leading to the recent successful exhibition – 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.

6 Election and Re-Election of Officers and Members of Council

Item 6 (a) Re-election of Society's Officers

i **Hon. President:** Richard Gem was re-elected unanimously, proposed Michael Ghirelli, seconded Graham Parker.

ii **Hon. Chair of Council:** Peter Marsden was re-elected unanimously, proposed Richard Gem, seconded Michael Ghirelli.

iii **Hon. Membership Secretary:** Bronwen Lee was re-elected unanimously, proposed Julian Hunt, seconded Cory Cashman.

iv **Hon. Editor of *Records*:** John Broad was re-elected unanimously, proposed Peter Gulland, seconded Graham Parker.

Item 6b Election of Officers of the Society

i **Hon. Treasurer:** Harry Ball, who has been acting unofficially alongside Graham Parker to ensure a smooth transition in our financial management, was elected unanimously, proposed Sarah Gray, seconded David Hillier.

The President introduced the election of the remaining officers, saying: We have posts to fill for the offices of Secretary, and Librarian and Archivist. Returning to my earlier remarks, I should say that Council is giving active consideration to reconfiguring the responsibilities attached to these posts, and to spreading the burden by creating additional posts to share the workload that has become attached to them. Thus the elected Secretary should focus on the core activities of taking minutes of Council meetings and dealing with formal correspondence on behalf of the Council; while the Librarian and Archivist should simply look after the Library and Archives respectively. Additional appointed post-holders may then take on activities such as communicating news to members, answering routine questions addressed to the Society by e-mail, and so on. What is proposed at this AGM, therefore, is that we should elect a team of three who will together with Council work out a new division of responsibilities.

ii-iv The three posts to be filled were then nominated on a team basis:-

Hon. Secretary: Sarah Gray

Hon. Librarian: Julian Hunt

Hon. Archivist: Roger Bettridge

These were elected unanimously, proposed by Peter Gulland and seconded by Diana Gulland.

Item 6c 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 are:

Kim Biddulph (elected 2014)
George Lamb (elected 2014)
Nigel Wilson (elected 2014)
Nicola Powell (elected 2014)
Eliza Alqassar (elected 2015)

All were re-elected unanimously, proposed Pauline Hey, seconded Peter Gulland.

Item 6 c ii Election of new ordinary Members of Council

Also eligible for re-election would have been Sarah Gray (elected 2015) and Roger Bettridge (elected 2015): but since they have just been elected as officers, their re-election as members of Council would seem superfluous. We have then two vacancies to fill by rotation; in addition to which are the two further vacancies just referred to. Yvonne Edwards and Pauline Hey have indicated their willingness to stand.

Further nominations were invited from the floor and Sandy Kidd and Charles Le Quesne were nominated. All four were elected, proposed Peter Marsden, seconded Sarah Gray.

Co-opted Members of Council include:

Michael Ghirelli (Newsletter Editor)
Bob Zeepvat (Assistant Editor, Records of Bucks)

Item 7 Re-appointment of Hon Auditor:

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

Item 8 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. The current Vice Presidents are: Lord Cottessloe, C V Dawes, M E Farley, H Hanley, M Hart, D C Maynard, and Mrs D Gulland.

Item 9 Amendment to Rules of the Society

The proposed amendment set out in the *Newsletter* p5 is aimed at improving the smooth transaction of the Council's business in a world where the speed expected of decision making is being impacted upon increasingly by electronic communications. The amendment would take away any doubt that decisions of Council are valid if, in necessary cases, they are made following mainly electronic communication between members of Council without convening an extraordinary meeting.

The proposed amendment which read:

Clause 7 (f) to be renumbered 7 (f) (i); then new clause 7 (f) (ii) to be added:

"If between ordinary meetings of the Council the Chairman deems it important to establish the views of the Council on any urgent matter, and if in his or her opinion it is not convenient or reasonable to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council, then the Chairman may consult all members of Council by electronic means or otherwise and shall have power after so doing to reach a decision based on the majority view of the members of Council responding. Upon the Chairman reporting his or her decision based on such consultation to the next ordinary meeting of the Council it shall be duly entered in the minutes as having been approved by the Council."

was approved unanimously, proposed Richard Gem, seconded John Dodd.

Item 10 Any Other Business

No items having been notified not less than 10 days before the meeting, the President closed the official business of the AGM at 2.40pm.