

BUCKLAND ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2014

DRAFT MINUTES of the Buckland Annual Parish Meeting held in the Reading Room, on the evening of Monday 31st March 2014 at 7.30pm.

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman, Nigel Husband, welcomed everyone to the meeting and took the opportunity to introduce Councillors Day, Horden, Pryor, and Westwell and the Clerk to the meeting and relayed apologies from Cllr Steed.

The Chairman highlighted that there is currently a vacancy and invited anyone who might be interested in becoming a Parish Councillor to approach the Clerk or one of the Councillors.

The Chairman encouraged everyone to take time during the refreshment break to read updates received from village groups that had been displayed around the walls of the Reading Room. He identified representatives present from each group who would be happy to answer questions and confirmed the updates would be included in the minutes (Item 8).

The Chairman welcomed District Cllrs Paul Potter and John Muggeridge, County Cllr Helyn Clack, Simon Elson, SCC Environment Enhancement Officer, PC Dominic Loraine and PCSO Ivor Williams from Surrey Police, Ian Adams, Kevin Shilling and Fiona Martin from Sutton and East Surrey Water ("SESW"), Lee Swain from Clancy Docwra and our Guest Speaker Giles Dawkes, a senior archaeologist with Archaeology South East and UCL. There were c.35 parishioners and c.10 members of the public in attendance.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Ken Caldwell, Ianthe Cox, Richard Grassley, David Hogg, Linda Hogg, Lucy Rawson, Ann Steed and Julian Steed.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2013

These had been displayed on the Parish Council Notice Board, published on the village website, and circulated to Cllrs. The motion to adopt the Minutes as a true and correct record was Proposed by Tim Westwell, Seconded by Philip Haynes and carried by the meeting. The Chairman signed the minutes.

4. SURREY POLICE

PC Loraine outlined the 13 reported crimes that had been recorded in Buckland during the first three months of 2014, all of which had previously been reported in the minutes of Parish Council meetings. PC Loraine reminded parishioners that he or PCSO Ivor Williams attend Buckland Parish Council meetings to provide a contact point for Buckland residents. PCSO Williams took the opportunity to ask everyone to ensure their outbuildings and sheds are adequately secured with any expensive items fixed to structures.

The Chairman thanked PC Loraine and PCSO Williams for attending this year's meeting.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman suggested the last year could be characterised by the extremes of weather; with the dry hot summer reducing the pond to a puddle and the unprecedented wet winter resulting in the pond being in danger of overflowing onto our local roads.

He suggested that the weather probably accounts for the fact that SESW and their contractor Clancy Docwra have been evident around the village for rather longer than expected and thanked the team for coming along to provide an update a little later.

With the end in sight for sand extraction at Tapwood Quarry he advised that a Buckland Liaison Group had been re-established and that the initial meeting had recently been held. He encouraged people to read the minutes that would be made available via the village website and be displayed for a period of time on the main Notice Board. He reported that the group has representatives from Hanson, Buckland Estate, SCC, the Parish Council and the B&B Society.

Chairman reported that following last year's consultations, the Decluttering Policy had been formally adopted and the Action Plan largely implemented. We hope, that with fewer signs, drivers will be more able to focus their attention on those that remain and that you will agree that the appearance of our village is much improved.

Chairman referred to the current major project, inspired by the forthcoming centenary of the start of the First World War and fuelled by James Day's talk at last year's meeting; the renovation of our Village War Memorial. He took the opportunity to thank Kyle Perkins and his team at Cobham Courtyards who had undertaken the work to the paving around the memorial at cost in memory of Kyle's grandfather who had served for his country in the Second World War. In part through Kyle's generosity, and with thanks to the B&B Society (£750), Hanson (£500) and to CClr Helyn Clack for her support in securing a £2000 grant from the SCC Mole Valley Local Committee, granite setts will shortly be installed alongside the final section of village green bordering Rectory Lane.

Chairman advised that the Parish Council plans to seed a mix of wild flowers with a concentration of poppies along the section of verge adjacent to the telephone box and that he hopes a proposal to sow a section of pond perimeter near to the War Memorial will also become a reality.

Chairman reported that Council had successfully secured a grant of £1830 under a new localism initiative launched by SCC Highways. The scheme accepts bids to undertake tasks relating to highways and highway verges and hedges and, this year, also agreed to fund the purchase of safety vests for the use of our volunteers e.g. during village "tidy ups". Chairman advised that a 2014/15 application had been submitted to secure a grant to fund maintenance to the metalled footpath that crosses the Village Green.

Chairman shared with the meeting Council's proposal for the next major project to be to seek a more attractive solution to the concrete posts and rails that run alongside the A25 near the pond. He cautioned that timing for this project will depend upon our success at securing donations and grants.

6. BUCKLAND PAROCHIAL; CHARITY ACCOUNTS

Chairman displayed the Accounts for the 12 months to 30th September 2013, introduced Treasurer and Trustee Philip Haynes and advised anyone with questions relating to the figures to speak to Philip during the break.

Chairman then invited Sheena Boyce to present the Parish Council accounts for the Year to 31st March 2014.

7. BUCKLAND PARISH ACCOUNTS

Sheena Boyce presented a summary of the draft accounts with a comparison against budget for the year ending 31 March 2014, copies of which had been made available to the Meeting.

The Clerk advised that council running costs had come in very close to budget and that ongoing activity had been funded from the precept of £8300 and a concurrent grant of £1200 from MVDC. She explained the impact of projects that span more than one financial year on the cash book accounting and commented that the unbudgeted £300 spent on pruning and reshaping the willow tree on the Village Green had been offset by reduced spending on salt and grit for the grit bins.

Sheena informed the meeting that new arrangements for grass cutting had commenced during March, prompted by the retirement of Mr John Morris who had been cutting the Village Green for many years. With no questions asked Sheena indicated she would be happy to respond to any queries during the break.

8. REPORTS FROM VILLAGE GROUPS

Village Rights of Way Team Update: Jim Docking

In addition to Alan Pryor, Richard When and Chris Worsley, our team of path wardens has been reinforced with three new members – Martin Cantor and Barbara & Tim Westwell – who have kindly taken responsibility for the higher paths on the North Downs.

Between us, we cover all the paths in the parish, and, as usual, twice a year I have kept the local Countryside Access Officer and Buckland Estate informed of any matters of concern.

With a winter of long periods of high winds and rain, walkers have experienced many fallen trees and large sections of deep mud. With the exception of some recently-reported fallen trees, the Estate has removed the trees that have blocked paths, but is behind on repairing stiles and cutting back hedges that have overgrown across paths because of priority given to damaged trees and fences. However, the stiles will be repaired in the coming months, and strimming will be carried out as required.

Dealing with mud is not regarded as a priority, but I have asked the County to attend to several deep potholes on the North Downs Way that constitute a hazard to walkers.

In response to our reported concern about the dilapidated sleeper bridge on the field path that runs westwards from just south of Glebe House on Rectory Lane towards the railway line, the County has carried out repairs but, unfortunately, the drainage pipes are too small and are consequently blocked. This too is a matter that we have reported.

In addition to the hazards created by the exceptional weather, several footpaths have been closed for some months while the new water mains pipe is laid. Because these paths and the surrounding areas have been dug deeply, they are filled with water, and it will clearly be a long time before they are dried out and useable again.

Betchworth and Buckland Society (“B&B”): Trevor Cooke, Chairman

The B&B Society provided a display that explained what the Society does, its aims, a calendar of events for 2014 and details of the people who serve on its managing committee. Hopefully, for anyone unfamiliar with the B&B, the display will have encouraged them to find out more and consider signing up to join for a modest annual fee of £10.00 per household.

Buckland Bridge Club: Richard Wheen, founder member

The Buckland Bridge Club has continued to thrive. We meet on Thursday afternoons and now often have nine tables (of four people each). We are getting a bit concerned as to what to do if, say, 48 people turned up, as there is not room for 12 bridge tables in the front and back rooms combined.

In 2103 the Club contributed £190 to two charities, as part of nationwide bridge tournaments. In one of them two of our members (Lesley Standen of Buckland and Hetty Fisher) came first in their class throughout the entire country over five days and thereby earned £250 for their chosen charity, St Catherine's Hospice.

Last year Geoff Woodcock, our vice-chairman, won the Club's individual championship, the Club pairs championship (with Gloria Whitwell) and the Club Greensand Trophy (also with Gloria).

In addition to the Club Richard Wheen offers bridge classes in the Reading Room during term times - sometimes two and sometimes three classes a week. Currently he is running a class for beginners and two classes for improvers (people who have been learning for more than a year)."

Friends of St Mary's: Richard Wheen, Honorary Secretary

The Friends were set up to help maintain the fabric and structure of the village church. We now have over 100 members and have raised a total of £5,200, £3,300 of which has been used to repair the church roof and vestry.

Last year's events included a very popular wine-tasting at Glebe House, Rectory Lane, a members' lunch coupled with the AGM, an open gardens event and an art show (the last two events raised over £2,800). As well as the May Fayre on Monday 5th May, there will be another wine-tasting at Glebe House on 16th May; and a bridge day (with Andrew Robson, the international bridge player, bridge teacher and Times columnist) is planned for 12th March next year.

We now have a chairman, Roger Daniell, and the remaining committee are as last year. For further information call Richard Wheen, Hon. Secretary or Simon Thomas, Hon. Treasurer.

Reading Room: Ken Caldwell, Committee Chairman

The Reading Room continues to be well used, providing a base for eleven local clubs and groups who use the Reading Room regularly, as well as village events and meetings, and around 30 children's parties and private events a year. We welcome enquiries from others who may be interested in using the Reading Room (see booking details in the Parish Magazine).

We have been aware of growing concern in the village about cold and damp in the main hall of the Reading Room in winter, which may be deterring some users from making full use of the facilities, especially amongst our older community members. The Reading Room does not meet modern standards of energy efficiency, and with rising energy prices, this is putting pressure on our energy costs. It has also been many years since the Reading Room was last refurbished, and the facilities are now a little dated compared to other community halls in the area.

Over the last year, on the basis of consultation with user groups and advice from a specialist environmental consultant, we have developed a refurbishment plan for the Reading Room. The main focus of this plan is to upgrade the insulation and heating in the main hall, followed by redecoration. We are also hoping to install solar panels on the roof at the rear of the building, to help reduce our energy costs.

We have applied to several different sources for funding towards the cost of this work, and are waiting to hear from them on the success of our applications. We also expect to make a significant investment from the Reading Room Maintenance Fund, which is funded mainly from hiring fees

If our funding applications are successful, we hope to be able to undertake the refurbishment work over the summer of 2014. We will liaise with user groups who may be affected once the timetable becomes clearer.

In the interim, we have made a modest investment to improve the front path to the Reading Room, including making it fully wheelchair accessible.

If you have any questions or suggestions, you can contact members of the Management Committee through the telephone numbers listed in the Parish Magazine and on the Parish website.

Buckland Parochial Charity: Ianthe Cox, Clerk and Trustee

The Henry Smith Charity is for 'the relief of need'. This can be provided either generally or individually to people resident in the Parish of Buckland, as stated in the constitution of 1889. The Trustees apply for the Henry Smith Grant each year which amounts to £2500.

During 2013 the Trustees held meetings in May and November to discuss any parochial need that had come to light and agree the distributions. This resulted in two financial distributions during the year to 11 residents for assistance for the provision of food and fuel bills. During the year ended 30 September 2014, income amounted to £3,029 and donations totalled £3,308.

The Charity is always willing to help any one in need and fortunately we have quite a good network of people to keep us aware of any potential needs. Minutes of the meetings of this Charity between 1893 and 1924 were recently discovered. and these historic documents have now been archived at the Surrey Record Office in Woking for safeguarding and preservation.

The Reverend Carol Coslett has been Chairman of the Charity for a number of years. However due to a change in her duties she has reluctantly resigned and has now been replaced by Mrs Ann Adams. The remaining Trustees are Rev. Pattie Vigers, Philip Haynes, James Day, Ianthe Cox and Susan Fellows.

Our new Trustee, Susan Fellows, has lived in Buckland for many years and has the responsibility for delivering the Parish magazine to those of us who live around Wildecroft. She has now kindly agreed to serve as a Trustee to the Charity.

9. UPDATE FROM SESW PROJECT TEAM

Kevin Shilling, SESW Contracts Manager took the opportunity to share a few facts and figures relating to SESW Operations as a reminder of the strategic need for the new water main. He then invited Fiona Martin, the Project Engineer, to provide an update. Fiona reported to the meeting that:

- The laying of the pipeline is essentially complete in the Buckland area, with the exception of coupling works at the footpath in Old Road and just north of the A25;

- while the crossing of Rectory Lane has now been completed, as the connections required in the area alongside the crossing are quite complex the team anticipate they will be in Rectory Lane for some time to come;
- over 95% of the total length of pipeline has now been installed and a 2.5km section near Outwood is in use, delivering water to customers;
- testing and commissioning will continue, stage by stage, along the pipeline, during the spring and summer and the intention is to complete this work by early autumn;
- of more than 140,000 tonnes of soil that have been excavated and moved, less than 20,000 tonnes have been removed from site and only 338 tonnes of waste has been sent to landfill;
- Restoration will commence shortly and the contractor has a two year period during which they are required to attend to any defects with their work.

Responding to questions from the floor, Fiona assured residents that work to rectify any damage to verges along those routes that have been used to access working areas will be undertaken upon completion of the remaining tasks. Fiona confirmed that if any initial planting fails that the contractor is required, during the two year defects period to re-sow/replant and to undertake any necessary care and maintenance.

Kevin concluded by advising that the team were happy to answer any individual questions during the refreshment break.

After a break for refreshments, the Chairman introduced our guest speaker, Giles Dawkes, a Senior Archaeologist with Archaeology South East and UCL.

10. GUEST SPEAKER: GILES DAWKES

Giles Dawkes shared with us, in the context of Buckland's local history, findings of last summer's archaeological investigations and outlined the process now being undertaken to try to explain the findings. Giles talked about finds suggesting a fleeting presence of prehistoric Neolithic and Bronze Age activity, evidence consistent with a Roman farmstead, substantial pottery finds in excess of 50kg and the remains of buildings in a medieval village that appears to have been intensively occupied between c1175 and 1325. Questions from the interested audience generated further interesting insights and a queue of people wishing to take a closer look at some of the exhibits.

11. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contribution to this year's Annual Parish Meeting with particular thanks extended to Giles Dawkes and the team from Sutton and East Surrey Water.

The Chairman concluded by asking people to make a note in their diaries that next year's Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Monday 20th April 2015 and declared the meeting officially closed at 9.15pm.

Such enthusiasm was generated by Giles that it was a further half an hour before he was able to carefully pack away the exhibits he had brought along to show us. Giles has kindly agreed to provide us some summary photos and plans to be made available via the village website.

Sheena Boyce, Clerk
email: bucklandpc@sheenaboyce.co.uk