

Minutes of a meeting of the Herne Hill Society Committee

held on Tuesday, 5 February 2019 at 7:30 PM at Herne Hill United Church

Welcome and apologies

Present: Colin Wight CW (Chair); Henry Ferguson HF; Martyn Hall MH; Laurence Marsh LM; Jackie Plumridge JP; Jeff Segal JS; Val Suebsaeng VS; Pat Roberts PR (minutes)

Apologies: Dan Townsend DT

Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the January 2019 committee meeting were briefly reviewed. Subject to any last-minute observations to be forwarded to the Chair and the Acting Secretary, it was agreed that they should be uploaded to the Society's website as usual.

Matters arising & action points from the last meeting

These were noted, as summarised on the agenda. Items to be carried forward to the Committee's post-AGM April meeting were: a welcome letter for local estate agents; a re-examination of the Committee's 2019 objectives; and options for adopting a contactless payment system. *Pubs of Dulwich and Herne Hill* would be allowed to go out of print, as there was no evidence of strong demand and reprinting would be expensive.

Other items already figured on the agenda.

Tree planting in Herne Hill

The Treasurer reported that he had received an invoice for the sum of £1,797 from Lambeth Council, reflecting the Society's recovery of Gift Aid on residents' 2015 donations for the planting of trees on Fawnbrake Avenue. The invoice from Lambeth was intended to finance the planting of up to 4 additional trees.

It was agreed that conversations with the appropriate officials in Lambeth Council should be pursued in order to agree a timetable for the planting of trees later this

year; but that the invoice should not be paid until we were confident that the work either had been accomplished or was credibly scheduled.

Survey of members

CW reported that the online survey of members had now been distributed. He thanked HF, JS and PR for their help in composing the survey. A few responses had already been received. He would reissue the survey in the hope of provoking more replies in time for a meaningful report to the AGM in March. Additionally, paper copies for completion could be distributed at the AGM.

Society financial accounts for 2018

In advance of the meeting, MH had circulated an unaudited version of the accounts, with a view to the presentation of these at the AGM. It was agreed that while some exceptional items would need to be explained at the AGM (for example revenues and outgoings related to the First World War project), the accounts reflected a generally stable and satisfactory position.

The committee took the view, nevertheless, that an informal inspection of the accounts by a third party, as in previous years, would be desirable, and possible names were discussed. Meanwhile, it was agreed that MH and CW (who would need to present the accounts at the AGM in MH's absence on vacation) would meet shortly to review presentation details and possible Q&As. CW would prepare presentation slides for the AGM.

Preparation for the Society's Annual General Meeting on 13 March

Opening a discussion about the perennial challenge of a shortfall in committee membership, CW noted that he had now been Chair for nearly six years and did not intend to retain the position indefinitely. He knew from informal soundings that some other committee members were likewise intending not to stand again after one or two more years' service.

In discussion, it was noted that the problem of recruitment of new committee members and other volunteers was therefore becoming more acute, as it could not be realistic for anyone without at least a year's membership of the committee to assume responsibility for the management of the society's work, whether this be as chair, membership secretary, website & social media editor, publications

secretary etc. (existing responsibilities could be split into component tasks, JS suggested). The membership survey was intended, among other things, to encourage more people to volunteer; but we were all aware that previous attempts to secure more support for the committee's work had not yielded the hoped-for results. It would therefore be appropriate for him, and possibly others, to make it entirely plain at the AGM that matters could not continue as at present.

Meanwhile, however, CW hoped that all current committee members would be willing to stand for election, and he reminded the meeting that all would need to be proposed and seconded in good time (see footnote¹). It was understood, however, that Dan Townsend would not seek re-election now that the First World War project was well underway.

Events in 2019

It was agreed, after discussion, that the committee would plan to take a stall at:

- the Dulwich Park Fair on Sunday 19 May (acknowledging that this had resulted in very few sales in 2018, so this year's attendance would be a test of whether we should attend in future years)
- the Ruskin Park Summer Fête, Saturday 22 June
- the Lambeth Local History Fair, Saturday 7 September

A stall at the regular Herne Hill Sunday market later in the year might also be considered.

It was agreed that the Society would not attend the Lambeth Country Show this year in view of the poor position allocated last year to local societies and the inordinate work involved, for a depleted committee, in setting up and staffing a stall.

John Ruskin 200th anniversary

Preparations for the Thomas Lynn Bristowe Memorial lecture on Wednesday 12 June, on the subject of John Ruskin, were in hand; the downstairs hall at the

¹ The Constitution states that *"Nominations for election to the Executive Committee shall be made in writing to the Secretary at least seven days before the AGM. Each nomination must be supported by a seconder and the consent of the proposed nominee must first have been obtained. Both the nominator and seconder must be members of the Society..."*

Herne Hill Baptist Church had been booked. Jon Newman's small book on Ruskin (*Lost in Herne Hill*) was still in print and more copies were being ordered. LM had written an article for the Magazine. It was possible that a free-standing booklet celebrating Ruskin's connections to Herne Hill could be produced, ideally in time for the Lambeth Heritage Festival. A notional £500-1000 budget was approved in principle to support the Society-led commemorative activities.

Herne Hill Music Festival are also planning Ruskin-related events, subject to additional funding being found – in which event the Society may also offer financial support.

Any other business

The problem of beggars in the station tunnel and other localities of Herne Hill was discussed. There were strong rumours of drug dealing, but no hard proof. The Herne Hill Forum had also discussed the matter, but there seemed to be little coordination among the parties involved, including Lambeth Council, Metropolitan Police, Network Rail/Southeastern Railway and British Transport Police.