

Minutes of a meeting of the Herne Hill Society Committee

held on Tue 30 April 2019 at 7:30 PM at Herne Hill United Church

1. Welcome and apologies

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

2. Minutes of last meeting, matters arising & action points

The minutes were approved. The matters arising had been deferred to a future meeting, or had already been completed except for one item: MH confirmed that he had now written to the two people who had raised queries about the annual accounts at the AGM in March.

3. Brockwell Park tree in memory of Patricia Jenkyns

The campaign to raise funds to plant a tree in memory of Patricia Jenkyns (former chair and founder member of the Society and also local Conservative councillor) was making good progress: approximately two-thirds of the funds needed had been raised through the just giving page justgiving.com/crowdfunding/treeforpatriciajenkyns

it was agreed that a contribution from the Society up to a maximum of £100 should be made if necessary, and that the Secretary should check during the next week to see whether the campaign had moved closer to reaching the financial target, in which case a donation from the Society could be offered. **Action: PR**

LM added that the executors of Miss Jenkyns's estate had given him, among other things, a copy of William Blanche's *History of Camberwell* - a rare (1875) and useful book, although this copy was in need of re-binding. He felt he ought to make a personal financial contribution, possibly towards the tree project or the Brompton Hospital.

4. Remembering Herne Hill

Later that week CW and LM were holding an exploratory meeting with the Station Manager of Herne Hill station and an unpaid consultant, formerly Deputy Director of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to discuss the installation of a permanent plaque in the station to commemorate the deaths of Herne Hill residents during World War I, paid for by Southeastern Railway. They would report to the committee either by email or at the next committee meeting on 4 June. **Action:**
CW/LM

5. Future of the Committee and the Society

It was noted that the membership survey conducted before the AGM in March, whilst providing many useful insights into members' opinions and attitudes from over 100 responses, had demonstrated that no-one new wanted to serve on the Committee.

CW stated that he had decided that he would only stand as Chair at the March 2020 AGM on the basis that he would work to wind up the Society by the end of the calendar year 2020, in accordance with its constitution. After 15 years on the Committee (seven as Chair) he felt he could no longer give the necessary level of commitment. He was not willing to stand as a candidate for the Chair in the absence of any clarity about the future of the Society, and had therefore come to the conclusion that, unless someone else came forward as a candidate for the role, his best contribution to the Society would be to help in handling its complicated dissolution, amalgamation or winding up.

VS and PR stated that their positions were identical.

MH said that he would be happy to continue as Treasurer (though not as Chair) after March 2020 for the foreseeable future if the Society could, by some means, continue.

LM said that for the present he would be happy to continue as a Committee member focusing on what he did at present for the Society, i.e. local history, planning matters and magazine production. But he had no inclination whatsoever to assume any other role on the Committee following Colin's retirement, e.g. Chair. In practice therefore this would mean that if no new Committee officers

came forward as candidates and were elected to replace the retiring Committee members, he sadly could not see how the Society could continue in its present form after March 2021. Put plainly, there seemed to be not enough people coming forward to lead the Committee.

JP confirmed that she would be happy to continue with her present support responsibilities if the other key Committee roles were filled after March 2020, but did not feel able to take on additional responsibilities. HF said he was in a similar position.

MH suggested, and it was generally agreed, that the membership, having collectively shown no willingness to take on Committee roles, ought to be warned in the course of the coming summer, and in advance of a possible EGM later this year, about the current Committee's decision and its serious implications for the future of the Society.

6. Contactless payments

After discussion it was agreed to accept a recommendation in the paper circulated by PR and HF to buy a unit that would take both contactless and card payments for publications, donations and membership. It was also agreed that we should be in a position to give a handwritten receipt for such transactions if the customer required one. (Cash payments would of course still be accepted.) The Committee asked PR to purchase the unit, if possible with a discount, and claim the cost back from the Treasurer in due course. It would be ideal to have the system functioning in time for the Dulwich Park Fair. **Action: PR**

7. Draft Business Plan 2019

Detailed points:

- *Expand the Committee*: we have done what we can.
- *Future of Society*: issue had been discussed (item 5 above).
- *Ruskin 200*: The public meeting scheduled for 9 October (in Herne Hill United Church) is a musical recital. (This means that if we were to hold an EGM in October it would need to be on a different day.) The Saint Saviour's School musical concert scheduled for 10 October. Friends of Ruskin Park, on

the strength of a recent Arts Council grant of £5000, are planning various events to commemorate Ruskin in Herne Hill.

- It remained possible that the Society could publish a slim book about Ruskin 200, incorporating the forthcoming June lecture by Jon Newman along with LM's for the magazine and other publications (e.g. London Topographical Society).
- *Membership recruitment*: renewal campaign in hand. PR is redesigning the flyer and will circulate draft for approval by net meeting. **Action: PR**
- *Contactless payments*: in hand, see item 6 above.
- *Corporate membership*: CW will continue to pursue, but VS wondered whether the gain is worth the effort. Only one at the moment - Rondanini. Agreed to let the issue lapse and not pursue actively.
- *Collaboration with other groups*: in hand with BPCP, HHWR.
- *Remembering Herne Hill 1914-18*: maintaining the website, and promoting interest in it, is the challenge, and needs time. **Action: CW**
- *Markets & fairs*: committed to attending Dulwich, Ruskin Park and local history Festival; keep open possibility of attending Herne Hill Christmas market.
- *Local Transport campaigning*: in hand.
- *Membership Survey*: MH asked how we would handle the offers of help received from Society members in their responses to the Membership Survey: was it planned to reach out to them for a further conversation? CW confirmed that this would happen. An earlier informal working group (CW, VS & PR) had concluded that we could identify certain specific tasks which could be offered to appropriate volunteers. This would not solve the underlying issue about Committee membership although it might lighten the workload of some members, e.g. the Chair and the Membership Secretary. It was planned to do this in the coming weeks, ideally before the next Committee meeting. **Action: CW/VS/PR**

- *Licensing*: further discussion needed about how to respond to Lambeth proposals for events in Brockwell Park possibly in alignment with Brockwell Park Community Partners. **Action: CW/LM**
- *Forward publishing programme*: possible booklet about Ruskin 200 incorporating Jon Newman's talk, if he agrees, the copy already written by LM, plus additional material. Also a book on the Lost Grand Houses of Herne Hill, if suitable illustrations can be sourced.
- *Small grants*: Music Festival, paddling pool, memorial tree to P. Jenkyns.
- *Magazine*: continue to publish, along with e-newsletter.

9. Next Committee meeting

Scheduled for Tuesday 4 June.

10. Forthcoming events

Herne Hill Welcomes Refugees meeting, Baptist Church, 8 May: PR reported on the preparations for this meeting, handled by the HHWR team. It was agreed that the Society would have a reception table by entrance with sample materials including magazines and membership forms, but would not push sales.

Dulwich Park Fair, 19 May: CW was not able to be present. LM had agreed to collect necessary materials from the Arch, including the tent. MH agreed to draw up a roster. This was on the assumption that we did finally receive confirmation from the organisers that we could attend. At the date of the meeting, no such confirmation had been agreed. **Action: MH**

Monthly Meeting, 11 September: Ian McInnes (Dulwich Society) has agreed to give a talk about his research on the North Dulwich Triangle. This means that the special open meeting to discuss the future of the Society, originally planned for September, would need to be postponed to October, or on an alternative date.

11. AOB

Ruskin Park Paddling Pool Fundraising 2019: no application had yet been received but MH could check whether funds were needed this year, on the strength that we indicated in 2018 that we may be able to support them again. **Action: MH**

Financial position: MH circulated details of the latest balance sheet as at 31 March, which was broadly satisfactory. Income was up on the previous year's; increasing the subscription rates had made a noticeable difference. VS commented that there had been an apparent misunderstanding about Gift Aid, i.e. whether it could be claimed for membership subscriptions, or merely for donations. She thought that this had now been resolved in a satisfactory fashion: membership subscriptions were indeed eligible for Gift Aid. However, the facility to opt for gift aid on membership fees on the online application form needed to be clarified.

Action: VS/CW

Herne Hill Forum Update: CW gave a short summary of the Forum's latest update, mentioning the complete absence of CCTV cameras covering Station Square, and the location of the controversial power supply unit.