



THE HERNE HILL SOCIETY

Minutes of the 38th Annual General Meeting held on Wed 13 March 2020 at 7:45pm
at the United Church Hall, Herne Hill

1. Welcome

Colin Wight, Chair, welcomed everyone to the AGM. There were 38 attendees.

Apologies for absence were received from Keith Ball, John Conway, Frances Lamb, Christopher and Lucy Sims, David Taylor, and Carolyn Weniz.

Opening the meeting, Colin said that this would be his last meeting as Chair of the Herne Hill Society, a position he had occupied for some seven years. He had decided a year ago that, mainly for family reasons, he would have to give up a role that he had thoroughly enjoyed. He had mixed feelings about stepping down and acknowledged that the Society could always have achieved more, but hoped it would be agreed that the Society had been effective in much of what it had done.

Before proceeding, Colin paid tribute to the Society's late Honorary President, Mr Bill Kirby, who had died recently at the remarkable age of 100. Even at his advanced age, Bill had managed to attend almost every meeting of the Society and remained supportive, open-minded, alert, with a sharp mind and an astonishing memory, which had been evident in his interviews for the History Hear project. The meeting celebrated his life with a round of applause.

2. Minutes of the 2019 AGM

Copies of the minutes were available to attendees. The Chair reminded those attending that only paid-up members of the Society were eligible to vote. There were no matters arising from the minutes. It was proposed by Patrick Roberts and seconded by Rosalind Glover that the minutes of the 2019 AGM be adopted as a true record. The motion was carried. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Chair's Report

Colin noted that for a small Society, with a Committee at less than ideal strength, we achieved a fair bit last year. For example:

- we published three issues of Herne Hill Magazine
- we made a number of Small Grants, totalling £1,500
- we worthily celebrated local hero John Ruskin, by sponsoring two concerts and inviting Jon Newman to give the well-attended Thomas Lynn Bristowe Lecture
- and we worked with Herne Hill Welcomes Refugees to hold an important and very well-attended meeting.

But above all the year was notable for our First World War project, which resulted in an online database with descriptions of the lives and deaths of more than 550 of Herne Hill's residents. The work unearthed a huge amount of information. The most tangible output of the project was the stone plaque, made by Mark Brooks and paid for by Southeastern Railway, now installed in the Ticket Hall of the Station. We were delighted that Helen Hayes MP was able to unveil it at our Remembrance Sunday commemoration. Laurence Marsh deserved a special thank you for carefully choosing the very appropriate wording.

In addition, Colin expressed his warmest thanks to everyone who served on the Planning Group under the dedicated leadership of Laurence Marsh who, he was glad to say, would be standing again as Vice-Chair.

Other thanks were due to Sophia Marsh, for designing the magazine; Bil Harrison, our Transport expert; Robert Holden, for maintaining the public noticeboards and leading three history walks; John Conway, for technical work on the website; Jeff Segal, for preparing successful bids to Southwark's CGS fund; and to the team who helped distribute the magazine.

4. Treasurer's Report

Martyn Hall, Treasurer, presented statements of the Society's income and expenditure over the last year. Explaining some exceptional items of income, Martyn also pointed out that the rise in membership subscription income was due partly to a number of life subscriptions at £100 each, and to the increase in the regular annual membership fee from £8 to £10. On the expenditure side of the accounts, the phasing out of the National Lottery Heritage Fund income for the WW1 project explained one dip in expenditure, plus magazine publishing costs were down because we produced three rather than four magazines during the year. Nor had we needed to print or reprint any books. Hall hire costs had ostensibly risen. Small grants expenditure explained the small excess of expenditure over income. Our balance at the end of the year was over £16,000; overall we had strong finances which should bode well for the future.

The Chair expressed the Committee's thanks to Sally-Anne Jeffries for checking the accounts.

It was proposed by Dr Rebecca Tee that the statement of the Society's financial accounts should be adopted. This was seconded by George Young, and the accounts were duly adopted unanimously.

5. The Future of the Society

Patrick Roberts (Secretary) summarised the difficulties experienced by an under-strength Committee in recent years and the undue strain this placed on certain members, notably the Chair. He recalled that this challenge had been outlined over the last year or so to members, at last year's AGM and in subsequent communications. An Extraordinary General Meeting in November 2019 had heard yet again of the difficult decisions we faced because of the imminent resignation

of the Chair, the Secretary and the Membership Secretary unless people came forward to fill these positions. That EGM in November had provoked several offers of assistance from current and new members which had been encouraging, though no one had come forward at that stage as candidates for the Committee itself.

Nevertheless, in recent weeks the situation had become more encouraging. Dr Rebecca Tee, a long-time Society member and Herne Hill resident, had offered to become a Committee member with a view to taking over as Chair later in the calendar year, at which point Colin could resign as planned. Rosalind Glover had volunteered to return to the Committee (where she had served for several years as Treasurer) as Membership Secretary; Carol Boucher, a well-respected member of the community and a former Lambeth councillor, had also offered to join the Committee; and Henry Ferguson, presently on the Committee, had offered to stand as a candidate for the post of Secretary. Other Committee members, including Laurence Marsh (Vice-Chair) and Martyn Hall (Treasurer), would be staying on if re-elected.

So the position was much less precarious than we might have feared earlier in the year. Nevertheless the Society and the Committee would always need to work to attract energetic and committed people if our work was to match up to the community's needs and expectations.

The Committee had, alongside these conversations and as sanctioned by members, opened a dialogue with the Herne Hill Forum: this could continue. Meanwhile, discussions with the Dulwich Society had established that a merger between the two societies was not feasible but that close and friendly cooperation would, of course, stay in place.

Commenting, Sheila Northover said that this was excellent news and she congratulated the Chair and the Committee on working hard to bring us to this more encouraging situation. (Applause)

Annie Gelly commented that the magazine was a credit to the Society and had improved vastly in recent years.

5. Committee retired

The 2019/20 Committee then stood down pending the election of a new Committee.

6. Election of new Committee for 2020/21

Elections were conducted by Dr John Brunton. The new Committee officers were nominated and seconded as follows:

Chair	Colin Wight, nominated by Jeff Segal & seconded by Linda Casbolt
Vice-Chair	Laurence Marsh, nominated by Ian McInnes & seconded by David Williams

Secretary Henry Ferguson, nominated by Patrick Roberts & seconded by Martyn Hall

Treasurer Martyn Hall, nominated by Laurence Marsh & seconded by Jackie Plumridge

All nominees for election as officers of the Society were elected by a unanimous show of hands, with no votes against or abstentions.

Committee members nominated and elected were:

Carol Boucher (nominated & seconded by Fred Taggart & Frances Lamb)

Annie Gelly (nominated & seconded by Pat Roberts & Valerie Suebsaeng)

Dave Gelly (nominated & seconded by Jackie Plumridge & Colin Wight)

Rosalind Glover (nominated & seconded by Valerie Suebsaeng & Sheila Northover)

Jackie Plumridge (nominated & seconded by Martyn Hall & Henry Ferguson)

Patrick Roberts (nominated & seconded by Anne Langley & Robert Foster)

Val Suebsaeng (nominated & seconded by Liz Ochavagia & Rachel Wingard)

Rebecca Tee (nominated & seconded by Colin Wight & Laurence March)

Committee nominees were elected by a show of hands in favour, with none against and one abstention.

7. Any other business

Ian McInnes drew attention to an exhibition at Bell House marking 100 years since the first phase of the Casino and Sunray Estates were completed. Annie Gelly announced a concert at Bell House to commemorate the sailing of the Mayflower [subsequently cancelled]. The revival of an Easter Passion Play was announced by Mike Stirling [also cancelled].

The meeting ended at 9:45pm.