

THE BEACON HILL SOCIETY

Minutes of the Meeting held 4.00pm on Sunday 6th February 2011 at the Poachers Pocket, Chelynch, Shepton Mallet.

Present: Peter Banks (Secretary), Eileen Bird, Fran Britten, Caroline Gentinetta (Editor), Peter Leach, Phillip Malcolm, Christine Mayle, Mary Newman (Treasurer), Jennie O'Kane.

1. Welcome & Apologies:

In the absence of the chairman, Secretary Peter Banks welcomed everyone to the meeting at 4.05pm. Apologies had been received from; Julian Back, Jon Burgess and Brenda Rogers.

2. Minutes of previous meeting on 29th Nov'10:

The minutes, as circulated with the notice of this meeting, were accepted.

3. Matters arising: There were no other matters arising that would not be covered later.

4. Officers Reports:

Chairman: No report.

Secretary: Peter Banks had nothing to report on this occasion.

Treasurer: Mary Newman updated the meeting on the current financial situation which included the expenditure of £513 on the printing of the Booklet. A healthy balance remained in current and deposit accounts.

Membership: MN confirmed that there were now 23 subscribing members so far this year, plus 5 hon. members.

Editor: Caroline Gentinetta reported the next newsletter was due for circulation but no items for inclusion were yet available.

Webmaster: No report.

5. Archaeological Project:

Circulation of the Booklet was discussed and the following agreed:

1. We decided to give 20 copies to each local museum, library and TIC, inviting them to sell them at £1.00 and offering to supply further copies if required at 50p.

2. We also decided to give a copy to each committee member of our local history groups, i.e. Frome Society for Local Studies and Shepton Mallet Local History Group, with copies available to sell to members, and those who attend meetings, at £1.00.

3. We also agreed to give a copy to each committee member of those Parish Councils who have a place on the Beacon Hill Society committee, i.e. Shepton Mallet, Ashwick, Stoke St Michael and Doultong; plus Downhead.

4. A copy to each member of CHERT and those who helped with the digs; with a copy to Andy Pickering of Strode College and the offer to supply copies for his students according to his requirements.

5. We also agreed to supply a few copies to each local school for their library.

6. We also agreed it would be a good idea to issue a press release to publicize the Booklet's availability.

6. Update on Beacon Hill Management Work:

PB read out an email recently received from Jon Burgess giving an update on progress of the thinning and harvesting work being carried out at the eastern end of the wood; this is likely to be completed shortly. Sensitive areas had been taped off to prevent extraction vehicles crossing them. When work starts shortly on the western end of the wood, horses will be employed to extract timber because the area here is even more vulnerable, with more old quarries, more archaeology, more boggy ground. Jon intends holding an open day one Saturday so people can come and see the horses in action; Jon hopes the Society will help in advertising and stewarding this event. Being unable to attend this meeting Jon invited members to meet him at the main gate the following Tuesday (8th Feb) when he would be happy to explain the work and answer questions.

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7. Future Events and Activities:

i. **Interpretation of the management works.** The possibility of other activities being demonstrated during the open day was discussed, e.g. charcoal burning, pole-lathe turning, and even the presence of other local amenity groups having a marquee to present their publications. Those present were invited to put forward any proposals they may have, in time for consideration by the WT.

ii. **Litter Pick.** Members present had carried out a litter pick before the meeting and several bags of rubbish had been collected and taken home for recycling/disposal.

8. Future structure of the Society:

PB reminded those present that he would be standing down as Secretary at the next AGM. He also understood that the Chairman and Treasurer would also like to hand on their responsibilities to another volunteer. PB was not aware of any member who wished to take on any of these various roles and wished to discuss the situation if, essential committee member posts becoming vacant following the AGM, the Society thus became unviable. PB made the suggestion that in such event, the Society could hand over to another local organisation the responsibility for local community liaison with the Woodland Trust; as was required by Mendip District Council when they granted the funds for the purchase of the wood. Preliminary enquiries by PB to the Shepton Mallet Local History Group to take on the role, had met with a favourable first response, subject of course to agreement on the details. The meeting agreed this was an acceptable solution in the event of the demise of the Beacon Hill Society.

9. Any Other Business:

MN asked the meeting if we could express opposition to the government proposal to sell Forestry Commission woodland. It was agreed to prepare a letter and invite members to send copies to the government.

MN had observed some alien grass species growing near the eastern gateway, she had experience of this as an invasive plant and wished to express concern to the WT to have it removed.

FB invited the Society to help set up a hedge-laying project along the green lane running south from the wood. Her husband was keen to support and see this done to invigorate the hedge line; she confirmed he would also be happy to assist in the removal of the unsightly pile of rubbish which had lain for many years at the Yellingmill Lane end.

FB also raised concern over the situation in nearby Asham Wood where ancient trees were being felled, access tracks laid close to a site of historic importance and considerable damage done by off road 4x4 and scramble bike activity.

10. Date of next meeting.

It was agreed the next meeting would be the AGM, at a date, before the end of March, and place to be confirmed.