

THE BEACON HILL SOCIETY

**Minutes for Beacon Hill Society Meeting held on Wednesday
9th August 2017**

**Somerset Earth Science Centre, Moon's Hill Quarry, Stoke St. Michael
7.00pm**

1. Chairman: Welcome and apologies for absence

Present:- Richard Raynsford (Chairman), Bo Walsh (Secretary), Peter Banks (Treasurer) Mary Newman (Membership Secretary), Jennie O Kane, Nicola Stoate, Fran Britten, Lesley Stewart, Janet Raynsford, David Van Dyk (MDC), Christine Mayle.

Guest:-Chris Smith

Apologies:- Jake and Victoria Britten, Paula Jordan, Paul Newman, Liz Gibbs, Alan Stone, Rod Hill, Kay Watts, Stuart Jenkins, Joe Middleton (Woodland Trust), Marion Black, Jo Baverstock. Lesley and John Rowan, Lucy Chard

2. Minutes of previous meeting and AGM (25/04/17)

These had been circulated on 10th July 2017 and were agreed.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes & not on the agenda

None

4. Officers Reports:-

Chairman - Richard reported that the Society continues to progress well and there are several upcoming matters which will be discussed through the agenda.

Secretary – Bo confirmed there are up-dates regarding the archaeological / WWII investigation for discussion through the agenda. He also reported a meeting with a member of Spark – an organisation which facilitates connections with volunteer groups. She provided a detailed summary and Bo will circulate this to members shortly.

Treasurer – Income: 25 membership renewals, £10 donation, £10 from sale of booklets through TIC (Shepton Mallet) and (£235.00) Dennis Hill Bequest gives a current balance of £1083,54.

Outgoings: the coaches and toilet rental for recent school visit to the Woods (the Hill bequest), booklet printing potentially £50.00+, alterations to addresses on existing leaflet, cost of reprint and folding (£37) and laminating for display board (18.26). This is due to Peter Banks. Chairman approved its payment

immediately.

Membership Secretary – Mary gave a reminder that annual subs due – £5.00

Web-master / Social Media co-ordinator – Lesley Rowan (part time manager of the site (Face-Book) was absent but there was a brief discussion about “tidying up” the Society's Face-book page(s). The possibility of putting a link from other group web-sites was suggested. This will be revisited at a future meeting.

5. Future Events and Activities

i. Mid-Somerset Show takes place on 20th August. Peter Banks has set up the display boards with photographs of the site. Chairman asked what the Society was proposing for the show ? It was suggested that some details of the Management Plan (Woodland Trust) should be included. Its not certain where exactly the board will be setup. It is hoped it will be in the Heritage tent. There will be steering meeting at 10am 17th August at WhiteRock House, courtesy of Peter and Janet Banks.

ii. Forest School / Family Day – Kaye Watts – it's thought it may now be too late in the year. Further information could be advertised at the show. SPAR K may be able to assist. Chris Smith suggested speaking with Bridgwater/Cannington colleges who undertake these events (Forest Schools). Peter reminded that it is not for the Society to be involved in organization – the Society is caretaker of the woods only.

iii. Peter confirmed that he attended the Health Walk in May (11th). As Lesley Rowan was absent, further discussions were postponed.

iv. The proposed Geology Field Trip has not taken place. Due to communication problems, though it is hoped that ongoing dialogue between Roy Vranck and landowners will prove fruitful. Fran Britten will try to progress this.

v. The Fungal Foray is confirmed for the afternoon of the 15th October. Further details will be available at the next meeting.

vi. The general consensus was that the Society has left it too late for a photographic calendar this year and may not have sufficient suitable seasonal photos. Fran Britten has suggested she will speak with a photographer and try and arrange a meeting to assist members how/when/what photos to take. Both Mary and Janet commented that photos for “Autumn” will have to be taken this year!

vii. It is believed that there is evidence a secret bunker (WWII) is located towards the escarpment in the woods. This has been investigated by Tim Wray who thinks this would have been used by members of a “secret army” whose remit was guerilla warfare in the event of an invasion by Germany. It has been shown to members of the Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team (CART) an organisation for dedicated researchers who focus on the British Resistance in WWII. They looked for evidence, within the depression, of a bunker – corrugated iron roofing, ladder, access, etc., but without success. Though they did think there may well have been activity in the area. The Society cannot undertake any archaeological investigation without a permit from Historic England but it is thought that metal detectorists may be able to help as this would be non-invasive. Fran confirmed she has a metal detector should anyone wish to make use of it. It was also noted that Joe Middleton (WT) had mentioned access to ground penetrating equipment. The possibility of contacting him before he leaves for Costa Rica for 5 months was raised.

viii. The meeting discussed arrangements for clearing some of the areas within the site which have become overgrown and are affecting the tumuli, which have been identified. Peter confirmed that the suggestion of trampling of the fern and brambles and possibly removing the saplings that are over grown. Some of these could be potted and replanted during the implementation of the management plan. Jennie O' Kane expressed her concern of the possible exposure of the tumuli within the woods to the public. Peter explained that it was the roots of the saplings were doing the most damage. Jennie was reassured that this intervention was necessary, along with removal of the overgrowth around the Parish Boundary stone. Joe Middleton has made an offer of assistance with working parties. It is believed he will act as First Aider, provide a risk Assessment and, hopefully tools and equipment. He has provided dates when he will be available -Phase I will take place on 29th August. Fran asked whether we should make wider appeal for assistance.

6. Woodland Trust Management Plan

i. There was a discussion of the Management Plan, following a very wet visit to the Woods with Joe Middleton on 2nd August. The plan is structured over 5 years and involves selectively clearing existing trees in certain areas and replanting with different native species (currently predominantly Beech with Scots Pine), and Joe had hoped to put hard surface pathways along the top of the site (parallel to the road)- this intended as a route / means of extracting thinned / felled trees. The Society was reminded that no clearance or replanting could take place within the Scheduled area of the site. However, on visiting the site on the 2nd August it was decided that

clearing the mud and leaf mould from the existing paths would be better – following the principle of the work undertaken by the Society along the footpath up the escarpment (Hollow way). Some members expressed concern that the Woodland Trust would bring in heavy machinery to clear the site. Peter and Bo commented that its unlikely that any of this work would be happening very swiftly (i.e. during 2017) – as Joe is on a sabbatical from the beginning of September and there is no-one else at WT taking on this Plan at present. The suggestion was raised that the wood could possibly be joined with the Living Landscape programme and it was further suggested that the Society contact the Somerset Wildlife Trust and arrange visits from Adel Avery and Lila Morris.

7. Any Other Business

1. Litter picking – TBA
2. Bluebell survey – Mary Newman suggested that a survey of bluebells within the Wood be commenced next year, possibly for 3 years, to assess their spread. Fran commented that there are no Bluebells in Cranmore Wood.
3. Fran raised a concern that the Society and its events are not mentioned within the Mendip Society pamphlet. How can we address this?
4. Chris Smith commented that there was Ash Die-back in local woods. There is a likelihood it will occur at Beacon Hill.
5. Peter Banks asked David Van Dyk whether he would like to become join the Society as a representative for Mendip District Councillors. David commented he would be pleased to pay his subs and join the Society and would promote the Society's aims with other groups he attends.
6. Mendip Rocks – the Earth Science Centre programme for the public to visit local quarries/attend family geology days. Further information can be accessed from www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk

8. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 13th September 2017 @ 7pm. Venue: Somerset Earth Science Centre , Moons Hill Quarry **NB**. This date has now been post-poned – new date to be confirmed.

Meeting closed at 20.49pm

Bo Walsh (Secretary)

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