

Bidford & District History Society

Annual General Meeting for Programme year September 2016 – August 2017

Chairman's Report: 2016/17

19th January 2018

2016/17 was our 11th year following the Society's launch in September 2006. It is very gratifying to report that our membership has, throughout those 10 years, been over 90 every year and in most years over 100. We remain the largest group in the village and in 2016/17 we reached a membership of 119. We are already well over 100 for the current year and, if previous years are anything to go by, should add to that number during the remainder of the programme.

At the end of the year we said, 'au revoir' but, fortunately not, 'adieu' to Judy Smith, our hard-working, dedicated and loyal Secretary for the past 5 years. Judy is one of those folk on whom organisations such as ours much depend: not normally one for the 'front-of-house' positions, but whose sustained efforts in terms of compilation and distribution of committee-meeting agendae and minutes as well as consistent support of the refreshments team ensure the successful running of History Society activities. Thank you, Judy. We also thank Jenny Ganderton for agreeing to take on Judy's role as well as her existing responsibility as Membership Secretary.

Our continued success is also in no small way the result of a hard-working team whose tireless work and enthusiasm has ensured that we do not rest on our laurels and I would like to thank all our committee members over the past year for their valuable contributions which continue to underpin our success.

The past programme year has maintained our intention for variety of content but with some consistency too. So, whilst we continued to touch on WW1 (Passchendaele) during its centenary period, we also had three evenings on perhaps the topic of the moment, the importance of women in history, with the ever excellent, Dr Gillian White, fascinating us with Bess of Hardwick, the Curator of the British Motor Museum telling us about women and motor cars, and Dr Robin Hill provoking reminiscences amongst some of our older members with his account of the Land Girls. We did not forget our 'obligation' to local history, as well, with prehistoric Bidford, 17th century church/local politics and Warwickshire churches being addressed. In addition to the ten talks in 2016-17 our annual coach outing proved to be an outstanding success and was, for many perhaps, the highlight of the year. We followed up on February 2015's talk by Dr Richard Buckley, Lead Archaeologist on the Richard III project, with a visit in July 2017 to Leicester visiting the sites of Richard III's 'grave in the car park' at the Richard III Visitor Centre and of his tomb in nearby Leicester Cathedral.

The programme year also saw continuation of our recent tradition of short local trips to places of interest with a guided walk in early June over the Battlefield of Evesham, led by Tony Spicer of the Battlefields Trust. For many familiar with the town it was fascinating to see the terrain in a different perspective as we walked across the site of one of England's bloodiest battles.

Special thanks must go to Helen Smith and Bob Marshall for organising and delivering such successful trips.

A few members also visited the Norton Collection Museum in Bromsgrove over the 2017 August Bank holiday weekend. Following a short talk from the founder and principal driver behind the museum we were able to wander around the rooms taking in the extensive displays on Bromsgrove's history, heritage, crafts and customs: all a tribute to the perseverance and dedication of one man in building up this fine collection of items relating to the town. Thanks must go to one of the members of our Research Group, Sandra Parker, for organising the trip.

The whole Committee, in one way or another, were involved in a first for the Society as, in May, we hosted a very well-received tour of Bidford by the Warwickshire Local History Society. The latter's tradition of visiting places of historical note within the county brought them to our area and a walk across the river, along the High St and around the Icknield St/Grange Rd area, provoked much interest from our visitors, many of whom had not realised how much history the village contained. Whilst four of the Research group led two simultaneous tours other Committee members laid on a sumptuous tea for the returning walkers.

Several of the Committee attended an 'Umbrella' Meeting organised by the Warwickshire LHS at Warwick School in November 2016 and held on the subject of 'Going online for research and publicity.' In addition to providing a useful overview of internet sources for historical research it gave the Society an opportunity to 'promote its wares' through a stand during the day but, more particularly, by delivery of an excellent and witty talk on the Society's website by our very own Webmaster, John Alexander-Head.

Whilst participation in these latter two activities is, perhaps, not widely known amongst our members, I believe that it is important for members to know that the Committee continues to engage in more than just its ten talks and one outing each year in promoting not just the Society but local history within and beyond the Bidford district. Can I also recommend our very accessible and readable website, developed by John Alexander-Head for not only finding out about future meetings and events but also for mining its rich vein of information on history of our district: www.bidfordhistory.org.uk

Indeed, the Society's Research Group, touched on above, continued to be very active during the year in exploring the history of the area, particularly in the 20th century, and a report of their work will be given elsewhere in the AGM by its hard-working Chairman, Wendy Shaddick.

I remain very grateful to the present Committee for their hard work but they, like me, would, I'm sure, welcome additional support from you, our members, as our numbers are small! So, can I appeal for anyone who is interested in participating in the work of the Society to approach me or any member of the committee? You can rest assured that any contribution you feel able to make will be most appreciated.

In conclusion, I would also like to thank all of you for your loyal support over the years and hope for your continued interest in, as well as enjoyment of, the programmes which we strive to offer.

Mark Shaddick
Chairman

Treasurers Report

The Society made a surplus of £309.27 in 2015/16. I am reporting a shortfall of income over expenditure for 2016/17. This reported deficit of £107.90 is due to higher speaker costs in 2015/16 while our income and general expenditure are broadly aligned.

Income

The membership number for 2016/17 was 119; a reduction from 126 for the previous year. 90 members enrolled into the society before the start of September 2016, each paying £15. This early bird discount encourages renewal and is of benefit to the society, but it reduces the income available to cover running costs during the year. There was a modest increase in casual visitors up by 6 to 65 over the year. Overall income from subscriptions and visitors was down in 2016/17 by £59.70 on the previous year.

Expenditure

Our speakers are an important item. The cost of speakers and their associated expenses in 2016/17 was £915.00, a substantial increase on the cost in the previous year of £454.10. It should be noted that in 2015/16 no fees were paid to 4 of the 10 speakers. In 2016/17 speakers were paid on each of the 10 events. In addition, we made a payment to The Battlefield Trust for the visit to the Evesham Battlefield. We made no charge to members for this event.

Each year we have some significant and recurring costs. These are website and domain name £254.80, membership card printing £78.00 and virus protection for the Society's laptop. The subscription to the British Association for Local History (£65.00) provides our insurance cover and we are members of the Warwickshire Local History Society (£16.00). A more discretionary cost is the printing and distribution of our publicity leaflet which cost £290.00 in total. This compares with £260.00 in 2015/16. The leaflet reinforces our profile with existing members and contributes to the recruitment of new members.

Independent inspection of the accounts

I can report that the accounts of the Society have been independently inspected and found to be satisfactory.

Reserves

The Society has reserves of £11800. A proportion of this will be used to fund publication of the book on the survivors of World War 1 due out in November 2018.

2017/18

Looking forward to 2017/18 it is important that we sustain and grow our membership and encourage visitors. In February we will again offer the opportunity of a half year membership. This helps us to encourage visitors to become members who then stay on in future years. We are enjoying an advantageous rate for the hire of the Crawford Hall this year and the committee will review the continued use and cost of this venue later in the year.

Mary Alexander-Head