

THE MOSELEY SOCIETY
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON
THURSDAY 22th MAY, 2016, 7.30 p.m.
at The Moseley Exchange, The Post Office Building, Alcester Road,
Moseley.

Helen Minovi, in the chair, welcomed all to the meeting. There were over 30 members and 2 non-members present. The AGM began at 7.30 pm

1. APOLOGIES had been received from Sally Wright, Paul Lindley, Jean Gilkison, John Rouse, Eric Adams, David Whittingham, Joyce Elliott, John Newson, Ann Burness, Gill & David McGillivray, Rosemary Turner, Mary Stopes-Roe, George Macleod, Edwina Rees, Michael Lawrence, Janet Berry, John and Cathie Carey.
2. MINUTES of the last AGM held on 21st May 2015 were taken as read and agreed, on a motion put by Judith Tizard and seconded by Geoff Rees.
3. PRESENTATION OF THE REPORTS.
The Annual Review containing reports of the different aspects of the Society's work had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Helen Minovi said the document reflected the fast rate of change and the many issues that had arisen during the year, notably the proposals from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Pointing to the reports from the five sub-groups she said that these groups reflected the changes proposed at the Annual Meeting in 2015 to the way the Society organised itself. The system of sub-groups, of Marketing, News and Membership; Dovecote and Icehouse; Programme; Planning and Licensing; Moseley History, was working well and additional members had been included in the groups. She said that revision of the constitution had been undertaken by a sub-group and the new constitution was briefer and included a provision to restrict the length of service and provide an opportunity both for turn-over and for people to volunteer for a set period of time. She said it was hoped that this would encourage new people to come forward.
There were no questions about the reports. The reports were approved on a motion put by Derek Blake and seconded by Eva Ling.
4. TREASURER'S REPORT AND ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS.
Copies of the full report and accounts to 31 December 2015 had been circulated in advance by email and were made available in paper format at the meeting. Phil Williams presented the accounts and said that they show that income is comfortably exceeding expenditure. He invited questions and Linda Gresham asked if there were items the Society could or should be spending money on. Phil said that this was discussed regularly by the committee. Fiona Adams said that the possibility of making a request for a Judicial Review was always borne in mind and that the Society is likely to want to make a contribution towards the production of an Appraisal and Management Plan for the St Agnes Conservation Area, or of a leaflet to explain the Appraisal to house holders in the Area. Helen Minovi said that funds were also held in reserve in case they were needed for repairs to the dovecote, cowhouse or icehouse. Jack Wilson pointed out that if major repairs were needed to any of the buildings the funds in hand would not be sufficient. Fiona Adams said that in the past funds had been raised specifically for the restoration of the buildings and if necessary this could be done again. She said that meanwhile, thanks to the skilled work by Paul Lindley repair bills were kept to a minimum. The accounts were adopted on a motion put by Michael Marlow seconded by Jack Wilson and supported unanimously.

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE.

Helen Minovi said that the process of adopting the provisions of the proposed new constitution would result, by the time of the Annual Meeting in 2017, in fewer trustees but more people involved in sub-committees. She said that the aim was to create a pathway to involve more members in active participation in running the Society. Michael Marlow added his encouragement for people to join particular activities. It was agreed that for the time being the 2016/17 committee would continue as

Helen Minovi (Co-Chair)
 Geoff Rees (Co-Chair)
 Phil Williams (Treasurer)
 Fiona Adams (Secretary)
 Roy Cockel
 John Dring
 Jean Gilkison
 Paul Lindley
 Mike Marlow
 Robert Orme
 Ray Tier
 John Underwood
 Sally Wright

6. PROPOSAL TO ADOPT THE REVISED CONSTITUTION.

The proposed document had been advertised to members 28 days in advance of the meeting, with copies circulated by email and made available for inspection in person. Paper copies were available at the meeting. There were no questions and the new constitution was adopted on a motion put by David Taylor and seconded by Frank Gresham and given the unanimous support of all members present.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

7.1 Linda Gresham asked how many households in the area were members of the Society. Fiona Adams said that at present there was a discrepancy between Geoff Williams' records which show around 250 paid-up subscriptions and her distribution and email lists which show nearer 350 households. She said she suspected there were a number of people who needed to be reminded to pay their subscriptions, or to be removed from her lists. Helen Minovi said that she hoped that the proposed leaflet and new membership leaflet would encourage new and renewed membership. Michael Marlow said that the map of where members live that had been produced to support the case for a revised Moseley Ward revealed that members did indeed live across the whole area between the rivers Cole and Rea.

7.2 Judith Tizard asked if there had been any success in moves for residents' parking schemes in Moseley. Fiona Adams said that Councillor Claire Spencer had convened a group of people from roads affected but that they had realised there would be no easy or quick solutions.

There were no further Helen Minovi closed the meeting at 8.00 p.m.

Judith Tizard proposed a vote of thanks to the Co-Chairs and committee and all involved in working hard for the benefit of the Society and she wished them all the best for the year ahead.

Paul Richards, Vice-Chair, Chamberlain Highbury Trust

Introducing himself and the new trust Paul said that he lives in Moseley and the newly formed Chamberlain Highbury Trust (CHT) has been registered with Companies House so he could introduce himself as a Trustee and its Vice-Chair. He showed a photograph of the other Trustees and explained their varying skills and roles. He commented that although there is a range of ages and equal representation of gender, all the current Trustees are very aware that they are not representative of Birmingham's diverse population. Therefore not all the Trustee places have been filled.

Introducing the role of the CHT he said it was to care for the Hall, its grounds and the legacy of the Chamberlain family and their contribution to the civic governance and the development of the City of Birmingham. This included their ideas about what a city should look like and the resources needed and provided by a city. Although Joe Chamberlain would be the main focus, the contributions of Austin and Neville and the women of the family would also be part of the Trust's interests.

Showing photos of the original approach to the front of the house Paul said that the 1960s caretaker's house had been built across that drive. The Chamberlain family and their visitors would have entered the grounds by the Moor Green Lane Lodge and approached the house via a drive. They would have felt as though they were going into the countryside. Since then vegetation has been allowed to grow up and cover much of the original formal gardens, and obscure the view of the park from the house.

Paul described the formation of the new Trust. Following registration as a company charitable status is now being sought. He said that the number of visitors to the house had been in steady decline and the aim of the Trustees was to reverse this and to interpret the legacy of the Chamberlain family to the city. The house and grounds are still owned by the original Highbury Trust, of which the City Council is the sole Trustee, and the CHT needs to negotiate a 25 or 30 year lease. The CHT is also developing relationships with the tenants – including Civic Catering, Four Seasons, the Beekeepers. They have also begun the process of developing a bid to Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Their aim is to submit a bid for £5m in December 2016 and to raise a further £5m in match funding. He explained that £5m is the maximum a local organisation can apply for – a larger application would have to be considered nationally and judged against the very large institutions bidding at that level. In order to support the bid to HLF and to promote the charitable aims the Trustees are involving stakeholders – local organisations; schools, colleges and universities and city-wide strategic stakeholders.

An early move has been to talk to all schools and colleges in the city with Chamberlain in their name and to all the universities in the city.

Paul explained that part of Highbury Park belongs to the Trust and the relationship with the rest of the park, with other local parks and the A435 corridor was also important. There are many significant historic features on the Moseley Road part of the A435. Within the park the key stakeholders are the beekeepers, Highbury Orchard Community, Friends of Highbury Park and Four Seasons. Locally there are groups, including The Moseley Society, that have an interest in and know the area.

Local history groups can help animate the house and garden and local social and intellectual capital can help support the CHT.

Turning to financial sustainability Paul said that the aim is to build a charitable business that works for everyone, with a flexible use of the house and garden. He said the house included a great deal of space that has not been used for many years and this could provide space for many possible income generating uses. The Trustees are aiming to extend public access, build partnerships, enhance the local area and add to the Chamberlain 21 network of local assets.

He said that the number of people using the house has been declining – there are fewer weddings than in the past and there continue to be occasional ‘Craft Fayres’. Yet the Trustees know that school groups really appreciate spending time at Highbury and the atmosphere encourages them to think about the future of the city.

Paul showed the timeline that the Trustees are working to which, if all goes according to plan, will see the refurbished house being reopened with a new purpose in September 2019.

He said the vision of the CHT is to create a legacy in which the Highbury estate provides a centre for learning for a diversity of people; which engages young people to think about citizenship; and which is central to the life of the local community. A key objective is to make the house and gardens an entity once more. The house and grounds are expensive to repair and maintain and the Trustees do not wish to charge an entrance fee so they have to find ways to cover costs. He showed photos of some of the problems – trees in the gardens which have not been cared for; damage to the house, especially the upper floors, because of lack of maintenance of the roofs. He said that some work had already been done to the roofs to prevent damage getting any worse. He said that Chamberlain House had been sold for £750,000 to Uffculme School and this sum would provide some of the match funding. The rent from Civic Catering would pay for the appointment of a Project Director to help the Trustees achieve their vision.

Paul invited ideas and contributions from members.

Linda Gresham asked if the National Trust had been asked if it was interested in such a fine civic building. Paul said that the Trustees would be talking to the National Trust but because they do not wish to charge an entrance fee they do not want the NT to take the building and gardens over. He said they are also talking to the Landmark Trust about the possibility of renting out space on the upper floors as holiday apartments. It was agreed that visitors to Birmingham found it difficult to navigate their way around the City’s heritage.

Paul confirmed that the aim is to demolish the 1960s caretaker’s house, which is empty, and to open up the original drive that leads from the entrance by the Lodge.

Eva Ling commented on the lack of any public transport serving the House. Paul said the Trustees are considering this. Fiona Adams said that in 2014 The Society had collected signatures on a petition for a new bus service between Moseley and Birmingham University and the University hospitals (UHB). Although this had not received immediate support from Centro and National Express, there remains a strong desire at the University and UHB to increase their public transport links to

Moseley. Paul said that improved access through the Park, particularly for cyclists to link to other routes, was also under active consideration.

Jack Wilson suggested that Kenwood, managed by English Heritage, provides a model for a house that is open to the public and free, and for which there are no boundaries between Hampstead Heath and the grounds of the house. He suggested that this might provide a model for how security could be managed. Paul thanked him for this idea and confirmed that security is an issue. He said that the Museum and Art Gallery is considering removing Chamberlain family items from Highbury because of poor supervision during events. Security and environmental conditions both have to be considered.

Ellie Gabbay suggested that if the Library and other parts of the building are to be kept as a museum there might be grants available from the Museums Development Trust, based at Ironbridge Gorge. Paul said that in addition to the Chamberlain family history there was also historical information that could be displayed about Highbury's role as a military hospital and convalescent home. He said that Phillada Ballard has much information about this.

Ellie Gabbay asked if CHT had a newsletter yet, and Paul said that although it is planned, as yet there are no funds that can be used for this or for a website. So far only a Facebook Page exists.

Shakil Ahmed asked about plans to involve people from all communities in Birmingham. Paul said that working with schools was essential and they had had preliminary discussion with Queensbridge and Uffculme schools as well as all the schools with Chamberlain in their name. He said a group from such a school in Small Heath would be visiting after half term.

Shakil also asked how young people would be involved in the development process and Paul said that they hoped that developing the website could be done by young people. He said that many of the processes undertaken by the Trustees so far had been about leaking roofs and lawyers but as the developments became more interesting they hoped for much greater involvement from young people.

Helen Minovi closed the meeting, thanking Paul for his presentation and wishing the new trust well and saying that the Society looked forward to being part of its future.