

THE BEACON HILL SOCIETY

Minutes of Meeting held Wednesday 16th January 2019

Somerset Earth Science Centre Moon's Hill Quarry Stoke St Michael

1. Chairman - Richard Raynsford opened the meeting at 19.00hrs and welcomed those present.

Present: Richard Raynsford (Chairman); Peter Banks (Treasurer/Membership); Lesley Stewart (Secretary); Matt Brookbank (Publicity/Website); Mary Newman (Events); Christine Mayle; Paul Newman; Janet Raynsford; Margaret Hares; Nicola Storate; Jo Baverstock; Jennie O'Kane

Apologies: Paul Allen (Woodland Trust); Marion Black; Bo Walsh (Mendip District Council); Alan Stone; Graham Price; Mark Adler; Paula Jordan.

2. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved.

3. There were no matters arising from the minutes and not on the Agenda.

4. **Officers' Reports:**

Chairman: Richard extended his welcome to all members present

Secretary: Lesley confirmed that a hard copy of the latest correspondence from Paul Allen of the Woodland Trust was available to all members present.

Treasurer/Membership: Peter informed the members that the current balance of the Society's account is £928.73. The petty cash holds £5.00. Matt presented the invoice for the new signage which has been put on the main board at the entrance to the Woods. This amounted to £64.79 and it was agreed that this will be settled by Peter in due course.

Peter confirmed that the Society has 28 members, including the 3 who joined at the Mid Somerset Show. This is down on the previous year's membership of 35.

Events: Mary confirmed that the Hill Family Bequest was being made available to St. Aldhelm's School again this year. She is meeting with the new Headmistress to discuss arrangements for the school's trip to the Woods.

Publicity/Web site manager: Matt confirmed that the website was fully updated and he was continuing to add to the existing archaeological information. He confirmed that the new sign, giving the website address for the Society, is now in place.

5. **Beacon Society**

Future projects and events:

- Paul Newman spoke briefly about the possibility of organising a "Moth Day" in the Woods. It was decided by all present that this presented too many difficulties to be undertaken by the Society. However, the possibility of a "Bat Day" was discussed. It was agreed that Nicola and Jo would contact Liz Ely (?) who may be able to advise and assist with a future event.

It was agreed that the Society is likely to be at the Mid-Somerset Show and would also like to explore the possibility of attending the Collet Show, which is scheduled for June.

It was suggested that the Society organise an "Archaeology Walk" through the Woods – It was suggested that Matt leads the walk.

- Matt confirmed that all the current information about the Society including recent photos of the sapling clearance, was on the website. Janet asked whether we were able to track the number of "hits" on the website. Matt thought this was possible and will investigate.
- Peter confirmed that there are now only a couple of copies of the Society booklet available for sale. It was agreed that the booklet should be updated to include further archaeology information courtesy of Matt, together with any other updated information which is available. It is hoped that the new booklets can be produced in time for the Mid-Somerset Show in August. It was agreed that costings would be investigated. Peter and Matt will liaise on this matter. Lesley told the members that Mark Adler has again offered to include any information the Society may wish to present in the Mendip Times.
- Peter confirmed that he and Janet (his wife) and Matt had cleared saplings around the Parish boundary stone and around some of the barrows before Christmas. Peter, Matt, Mary and Lesley cleared saplings on the remaining barrows two weeks ago. Clearing the brambles which are encroaching the barrows was discussed. It was agreed this could be done to the central barrows. Jennie felt that clearing those less visible could make them potentially at risk to further damage. It was also noted that if clearing the brambles was undertaken it would have to be regular ongoing work, to keep the re-growth as minimal as possible.
- A litter pick organised by the Woodland Trust (per email from Paul Allen) was discussed. It was felt that the timescale – end of March- could be detrimental to the bluebell growth. It was suggested that members undertake a litter pick in the Woods and the Woodland Trust be asked to organise a litter pick along the roadside verge shortly after, preferably by the end of February. Matt, Peter and Lesley are drafting a reply to Paul Allen's email, which will include this request. The Society litter pick will take place on Sunday 17th February at 10.00am. Nicola has kindly agreed to provide a sharps container and bucket for glass.
- The date for the AGM was agreed. It will take place on Wednesday 10th April, commencing at 7.00pm at the Somerset Earth Science Centre.

6. Woodland Trust

On a positive note, it was confirmed that the new sign detailing the website contact details for the Beacon Hill Society has been fitted to the main board at the entrance to the Woods. However, both Matt and Peter expressed concern about the condition of the information board itself; the main posts are in very poor condition and water has damaged the information poster. The email from Paul Allen explained that financial constraints within the Woodland Trust would mean there are unlikely to be any funds available for replacing the board. The general consensus among the members present was that the Society has funds which could be used to replace the posts and backing and it would be prepared to replace the board, as long as the Woodland Trust will provide a new information poster.

The ongoing concerns about the current Management Plan were raised again. Peter reminded members that the Woods have undergone a 1 in 5 clearance three times previously but there does not appear to have been any appreciable improvement to the current biodiversity of the Woods, nor is there currently any cleared area which could lead to an improvement in the diversity of wildlife. Matt felt that Paul's email was suggestive of the possibility of a change of direction with regard to the Management Plan and it was decided that a reply to Paul would be prepared setting out the suggested date for a litter pick, the possibility of the Society funding the replacement information board and the idea of at least one larger clearance area within the Woods, recommended by Chris Smith following an update to the current ecological survey. Matt, Peter and Lesley will prepare a draft reply to be circulated to the Committee members.

Any Other Business

1. Mary told the members present that Somerset County Council is making enquiries about the condition of footpaths within the County. She asked if there were any paths within the Woods which would need to be reported through the relevant Parish Council. It was agreed that there were none.
3. Margaret Hares told the members that a number of motorcycles have been seen in or near the Woods. It was felt that this could be monitored and dealt with if the need arose.

The meeting was closed at 20.32pm.

Next Meeting: AGM Wednesday April 10th 2019 7pm Somerset Earth Science Centre, Moon's Hill Quarry, Stoke St Michael

Date for your diaries – Litter pick Sunday 17th February at 10.00am. We shall be picking up litter within the Woods – please come along a support us as many hands make light work!