



## **Vale of Evesham Civic Society (VECS)** **Annual General Meeting (AGM), 11 April 2023: Minutes**

**Present:** Pat & Ian Stanton, Adrian Peake (Hon Treasurer), Gill Pawson (Chairman/Secretary), Brian Chilver (Vice Chairman), Ken Pawson, Anne Albright, Dougal Chestnutt, Galen Bartholomew, Olga Allen, Tom Ashley, Linda Hart, Jackie Hale, Margaret Hodgetts, Carolyn & Bill Petts, Barbara & John Goodwin, Paula Bowden, Jackie McGowan, Jim Powell, Maryanne Stuart, Janet & David Osbourne, Sue Campbell.

**Apologies:** Robert Hale, Julie and Tim Haines, Caroline Abbey, Colin Tether, Sue Ablett, Franco Scimea.

Before the start of the formal AGM meeting, Gill Pawson introduced the team from Trichology, 4B Port Street. The committee had agreed to award a **VECS Letter of Commendation** for their work on the consistently good appearance of their shop front, in particular the shop window displays. A presentation was made of the letter in a frame, for display in the shop; a photo will be taken outside when the weather improves, for inclusion on our website for a press release. It was agreed that more shops needed to follow this example.

**The Minutes of the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting on 12 April 2022** were approved, with no matters arising.

**The 2022-2023 Annual Report** was given by Gill Pawson, who presented highlights from her report, which had been circulated in advance with the agenda papers to all members. In particular, thanks were given to Sue Campbell for organising the programme of events and talks for many years. A short explanation of the Evesham Town Centre Prospectus and Place Board was given; more information will be reported to members in newsletters and on the website during the current year. The full report is attached for the record.

**The 2022-2023 Hon Treasurer's Report** was given by Adrian Peake. Full figures had been circulated with the agenda, so he highlighted the unusual expenditure and income for the last year. One-off expenses were incurred for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events and for the updating and printing of the Evesham Town Trail booklet. He also explained that VECS now has to pay for the hire of rooms at Ecgwins Club; £10 per hour for the committee room and £2.50 a head for attendees at talks. This has meant that the charge for attending talks has had to be increased. An explanation was also given on the income and expenditure incurred in the Bengeworth Fountain area improvement works, which had been 5 years in the making. The committee had approved the income and expenditure, following its auditing by Peter Gay. The full report is attached for the record.

**Election of Executive Committee.** The existing committee members had agreed to stand for another year, namely Gill Pawson, Brian Chilver, Adrian Peake, Ian and Pat Stanton, Sue Campbell, Julie and Tim Haines. A member stood for election, Paula Bowden. She addressed the members, explaining that she had lived in Evesham since 1987 and that having recently retired from the role as project manager in a government department, she has time to give to help running the Society. She has been active during the last year, helping on clearing poster litter, and carrying out surveys of bus shelters and noticeboards. Existing and proposed new members were all elected unanimously.

**Election of Officers.** The following agreed to continue as officers:

Chairman – Gill Pawson, Vice Chairman – Brian Chilver, Hon Treasurer – Adrian Peake.

The role of Hon Secretary has been fulfilled by Gill Pawson since Colin Tether moved to London, but Paula Bowden had volunteered to take on the role. All were elected unanimously.



**Appointment of Auditors:** Peter Gay had agreed to undertake the role of examiner for another year. This was approved.

**Membership rates for 2023/24** were agreed as follows;

1. Single Membership £10
2. Joint/Family membership £15
3. Business membership £25.

### **Any Other Business**

Linda Hart asked that VECS press for a greater presence in Evesham of staff from Wychavon District Council, to assist members of the community with questions and queries relating to the Council responsibilities. At the moment there is only a WDC representative in the Library on a Friday afternoon. It was agreed that the committee would contact WDC Councillors after the local elections in May. **Action: AGM-01**

Brian Chilver asked for volunteers to add their names to the rota for the two days of the Medieval Market on 20/21 May.

Jim Powell spoke about the state of the town, in particular the traffic levels. He also raised concerns about the lack of involvement in town affairs by the local community and the need to promote public meetings and events widely.

Paula Bowden spoke, to offer thanks to the committee members for their work during the year. The thanks were endorsed by all members present.

Gill Pawson reminded members of the two forthcoming spring trips: Madresfield Court, which is now fully booked with a waiting list, and in June a garden party at 14 Owletts End, to celebrate Civic Day.

The evening finished with a talk by Gill Pawson, on the Market Garden Hovels of the Vale of Evesham.

## 2022/23 Annual Report

This year, the Society has managed to operate with a reduced number of committee members, 8 in all, as we have so far been unsuccessful in recruiting new members. VECS Constitution allows for 10 members of Executive Committee plus four Officers – Chair, Vice-Chair, Hon Sec and Treasurer (ie total of 14) – the demand on the existing committee members of fulfilling the executive roles and carrying out all of the other activities is challenging. We URGENTLY need members to step forward and be prepared to serve on the committee, so appeal to you, the membership, to get more involved and to recruit more members.

### Talks/trips/events

Since the last AGM in April 2022, we continued to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Society. The highlight was an evening party in the Rowing Club, in June, with members and invited guests at which we provided refreshments. It was well attended and very enjoyable. In May, members visited Huddington Court and Grounds for a guided tour. The autumn talks included 'Recording our farm buildings', the history of Wood Norton and the history and highlights of Worcester Cathedral. Thanks are given to Sue Campbell, who provided us with this excellent series of talks and visits.

VECS members put up the exhibition and maintained a presence at the Medieval Market and Battle of Evesham Festival, helping to raise the profile of VECS and provided a decorated Christmas Tree in All Saints Church.

So far this year we have had a talk on Tudor food and feasting and on the work of the Vale Landscape Heritage Trust. More talks and trips have been arranged for the remainder of 2023.

### Planning

Ian Stanton monitors the Wychavon weekly planning applications advising the committee of significant/relevant ones. During the last year, the following proposals have been considered and responded to:

- Yet another gypsy site in Aldington parish.
- The revised proposals for the Abbey Road/Boat Lane housing site for Taylor Wimpey.
- Change of use of Aldi on Swan Lane to a self-storage unit.
- Worcestershire County Council's scheme for the footbridge from Hampton across the river Avon.
- Change of use of the Riverside Hotel's old car park for holiday lodges.
- Another housing site off The Parks.
- Illuminated sign for Karma, Port Street

Our efforts to get some action by the Council on the enforcement front have resulted in some success in the last year. A new Enforcement Officer has managed to persuade most of the shops in the Conservation Area that had covered their windows in vinyl posters to remove part if not all of the posters. This has significantly improved the appearance of these properties. He has also achieved the removal of the black mastic grouting between the flags at the two entrances to Avonbridge House; the removal of posters put up by Merkur Slots and is currently investigating illuminated signs that have not got planning permission.

### **Facebook**

Julie Haines keeps our Facebook page up to date with items of interest to our members and the wider public of Evesham. We would encourage members to regularly review the information, so that they can keep up to date with the Society's activities. Gill continues to update the website, until a volunteer can be found to take on this small task.

### **Evesham Town Centre Prospectus**

Evesham has one conservation area with seven distinct character areas within it. They are perhaps the most important parts of the town reflecting its historic and architectural influence and are fundamental to its future. Most of the conservation area is included in the area covered by the Prospectus, a marketing document produced for Wychavon District Council to encourage investment in the town.

The initiative is being supported by a Place Board, made up of representatives of the town centre's stakeholders - District Council, Evesham Town Council and a range of local businesses and organisations. VECS is represented by Gill. The Board has been awarded funding to spend on small projects that will support the vision for the town centre, set out in the Prospectus.

### **Projects**

The Bengeworth Fountain project is now complete. Ringway, the County Council's contractors, undertook the construction of the hard surfaces for the new seat and the drinking trough; the latter was moved by other contractors from the Almonry Garden. A contractor fitted the seat and levelled and seeded part of the grass area and Wychavon's Parks Department provided a new litter bin and installed it. Wychavon District Council and County Councillor Emma Stokes (from her Divisional Fund) provided funds towards the work. The new information board was already in place.

### **Publications and newsletters**

Newsletters or bulletins have been sent out during the year, to inform the membership of our activities and forthcoming events.

We have updated and had re-printed the Evesham Town Trail booklet; available at £1.50 each. This and the other VECS publications can be found for sale at the Almonry. Leaflets are also to be found in six local coffee shops/cafes - this helps to raise our profile and some much-needed income.

### **Membership**

The number of members of the Society has remained fairly constant for the last few years, despite the pandemic and the continued loss of elderly members, but we have failed to grow the membership during this period. We continue to strive to attract new members but are in need of more help and new ideas.

We hope to encourage more businesses to join as members, not only to benefit from their membership fee of £25 per annum but to demonstrate the importance to the business community of our aims to improve the town.