

Chairman's Report 2013 to Society Members at the AGM

The Village Society year started and has ended in the Haddenham Community Library, symbolising the strong support given by the Society to the creation of a library which is increasingly acting as a centre for communication and support for village organisations. We are very pleased with the way Steve Sharp and his team and Emma Barrett as manager and the volunteers are making strong progress on their vision for the future.

Our year's programme has started and ended with the Society supporting the Witchert Chorale firstly in a very successful 'Music from the Orient Express' and recently in the very different and equally successful 'Back to Bach' with their magnificent singing and orchestral work. I should like to give a special thank you to our many members who provided refreshments, especially to Henriette Webb, Chris Thorogood and Lizzie Bannister.

A further boost to the Society was given when the Village Hall was filled to capacity for an exciting return visit by the BBC Any Questions team, engineered by Brian Bowman and strongly supported by a back stage team of members.

A very full programme ranged from war-time issues with the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939 and the international scene with villager Graham Tyack profiling Japan, and coming closer to home with a tour of a historic house and library, Shakespeare in the open air and a fascinating talk and exhibition by our local famed photographer Paul Wilkinson, not forgetting our usual feasting and walking and support for the Village Fete, where the beer and Pimms flowed fast in the Society tent. The success of these events particularly reflects the considerable efforts and organising ability of Brian Cole, supported by Henriette Webb, Brenda Greenough and the committee.

This year we have had the opportunity to give an emphasis to our core objectives of protecting and enhancing our village environment and way of life through the timely introduction throughout the country of new neighbourhood planning. We have been able to encourage the Parish Council that with the Society's support they could produce a Neighbourhood Plan which would safeguard what villagers enjoy and want. Having strong links with AVDC through my wife, several of the Society committee had an AVDC meeting with planners followed by a day's training and then we began a series of meetings with Parish Council members. They then undertook to work towards this and we have joined them in their Planning Group. For this I am particularly indebted to our committee members Sir Roderick Floud, Michael Talbot, Nick Lock, Steve Sharp (also on the Parish Council), John Nicholson and Keith Milmer, who has also made a tremendous impact on Haddenham communication through Haddenham.net.

We have focussed our activities on highlighting village issues and the recently circulated programme for next year has concentrated on these issues. Times have changed with social outings and events being more readily available through other organisations and in particular through the U3A which duplicates a good part of our older membership, and we encourage the development of Haddenham in Transition with its events and Big Picnic, which drew in many of the younger villagers. We were disappointed that in a very full year the date we had

chosen for a Summer Party did not suit most of those who had taken tables the previous year or attract sufficient newcomers, and this year we are keeping our options open.

There is much work that goes on behind the scenes and I am grateful for the unstinting inspiration and support provided by our President Tom Bucknell for fourteen years. He is indeed Mr. Haddenham and his Tythe Barn which has been our social focus for so many years epitomises village life and our heritage. His decision to step down is like the ending of an era and I am sure his support will continue in many other ways. We very much appreciate all he has done for us. I shall be nominating as his successor Brian Bowman, who I am sure would give us staunch support.

Brian Cole has admirably filled a complexity of roles within the Hon Secretary title and we are very pleased that he has offered to continue as Secretary despite taking on additional charitable responsibilities elsewhere. Therefore to assist him certain roles would be taken on by others. I am pleased that Bernard Warner is offering himself as a Programme Coordinator and there are other ways Brian can be supported.

Ralph Newell is another hard worker behind the scenes as Treasurer and we shall need to give him support to meet the bills and donations through fund-raising activities yet to be devised. His experience is invaluable, and he has re-drafted our constitution to ensure it adequately covers the committee's role as Trustees, and pending submission to the Charity Commissioners it will need to be agreed by the AGM.

Nick Lock has devoted considerable time and enthusiasm and acquired expertise in dealing with local development control issues, such as Red Lion developments, and we are sorry he has decided to step down from the committee, although he intends to maintain a role on the Neighbourhood Plan. We are immensely grateful for his role in fulfilling one of the main aims of the Society in caring for the character of the village. Steve Sharp is also stepping down from the committee having been first the Society's spokesman when Library changes were mooted by the County and now the driving force in developing a community library, and whilst being grateful for all he has done we appreciate the heavy workload he is carrying. We shall ask him to accept a further donation of £500 from the Society towards the development of the community library.

Sir Roderick, who has prepared a Haddenham profile, is centring his activities on the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, and I shall be nominating him as Vice Chairman. He has chaired the programming committee for next year, for which a highlight will be a session on the Neighbourhood Plan when you will all have an opportunity to present your valuable opinions.

Finally, while thanking Brian and Hazel Cole and Henriette for the AGM refreshments, I thank everyone for your support and contribution to the work and enjoyment of the Society during 2013 and wish you a happy and constructive membership of the Society for 2014.

John Brandis

December 2013