

BLHS Chairman's Report

AGM 10th October 2026

Our meetings this year have again been well attended, we have had an excellent range of speakers, and we are indebted to Carol Cunio who has arranged these for us. Thank you also to Steve Adams who has produced some eye-catching posters which we have displayed in more locations this year, thanks also to you all for your support at our meetings. We have sadly; lost a number of members this year, namely Norman Doughty, Phil Warren, Rita Corbidge and mostly recently Brian Lawes and Deidre Abraham. We were able to present certificates to two more members who have reached forty years in membership, June Macey and Marilyn Bechter. In recognition of his twenty-seven-year service as a museum steward we invited Mike Paget to become one of our Vice-Presidents. I am pleased to report that our membership numbers have remained fairly steady and we thank Pam West who has dealt with subscriptions and distribution of our magazine, which brings me neatly on to saying a big thank you to our editor Steve Adams who continues to produce an excellent magazine which is much appreciated by members and friends alike. Please note his appeal for more articles, however short, for inclusion, it is your magazine so please give some thought to contributing, we can usually find photographs from our collection to accompany your memories.

I have given a number of talks to a range of groups this year, it would be lovely if someone else could do these on occasion as well. On the publication front we have recently reproduced a booklet on the history of the Catholic Church and a number of others are in progress, including a series on the large houses east of the Itchen, Bitterne Diary number 4 (1959 to 1979) and extracts from the logbooks of Bitterne Park School. We have attended the usual events this year; Trifest at Riverside Park and Christmas in the Triangle, as well as the Bitterne Precinct Light Switch On, and Peartree Fete. We again took part in the Heritage Open Days this year with a fine display put together by our museum stewards on the theme of workers in Bitterne, sadly attendance numbers were very low and this prompts me to say that we are looking for someone to be a publicity officer for the society as we feel we have been rather lacking in making known to the local community what we are doing. Our Heritage Centre continues to receive interesting artefacts and documents for our collection and we endeavour to change the displays periodically (we have just had some new signs written). We sadly lost one of our stewards this year namely Nigel Hobbs and we are grateful to his family for the donation given in his memory.

We took part in the Heritage Fair organised by Southampton Heritage Network at Southampton Art Gallery which was very successful and I am pleased to say another is being planned for 2028. I wonder if we could do something smaller by way of a local exhibition next year? Digitisation of our photograph collection continues and a new computer and printer are being installed in our Heritage Centre which will much improve the facilities we are able to offer visitors. Our thanks to Spencer Millard and our other stewards who have facilitated this, also our website continues to improve what it has to offer and is often the first port of call for those with an enquiry which Steve Adams follows up with help from

others. Steve also deals with book orders over the internet, the number of which is increasing each year.

This brings me on to our Charity Shop and a word of appreciation to all of our volunteers, many of whom are not Society members but just enjoy giving their time in this way. Sales have fluctuated greatly, not least affected by the extreme hot weather, roadworks and parking charges in the local car parks. We have successfully taken a number of items to auction which has brought in much needed extra income, we have also had a stall at Bitterne Market on a number of occasions, our thanks to those who help with this, an 8.00am start for some! Mary Abraham and other volunteers continue to make our window displays attractive. We are still trying to arrange to hold a book sale in one of the empty shops in Bitterne and looking at the possibility of moving to a more prominent location. We were given a sectional 10 x 8 shed to use in the garden at the rear of the shop this year but sadly have not had any luck in finding anyone to lay the base. If anyone could recommend a contractor who might do this, please let us know.

Finally, may I say thank you to my fellow officers and committee for their continued support, we would love to see a few more folk join us, in particular we need a minute secretary.

I look forward to our forty-sixth year as we continue to encourage an interest in the history of our area and preserve items from the past in our collection.