

# THE CANTERBURY SOCIETY

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the United Reform Church, Canterbury

6.30 pm Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023

**1) Attendees** Geoff Meaden Jan Pahl Sarah Wren David Clarke Rebecca Lambe Pippa Clague Maggs Mackechnie Denis Linfoot Nick Eden-Green Diana Holbrook Peter Bradford David Broadbridge Kristina Robertson Paul Johnson Clive Bowley Sue Chambers Catherine Bentley Pip Hazelton Ros Rootes Andrew Booth Peter Gladman Richard Norman Beverley Paton Hilary Brian John Walker Kim Parker Martin Vye. Ptolemy Dean President and Speaker

**2) Apologies** Ian Osterloh Madeleine Richardson Gary Healey Richard Scase Ray Evison Doreen Rosman Hubert Pragnell Mehri Holliday Valerie Ainscough Carole Wells

**3) Minutes of last General Meeting.** These were confirmed as accurate. There were no matters arising other than..

**4) Change to Constitution** The Charity Commission were uneasy with our wording of the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet point of item 3.1. The Chair requested omission of this bullet point, reverting to the previous version. This had been endorsed by the Committee and this was agreed nem con by the General Meeting.

**5 Chair's Address.** Hilary Brian welcomed everyone to the AGM. The meeting was quorate and no declarations of interest were identified.

Hilary said that she had taken over half way through the Society's year, so she had established just a few priorities.

\* The first was to maintain continuity of management of the Society, and she expressed gratitude to Geoff Meaden and Jan Pahl for their help in ensuring that minutes of committee meetings going back to 2008, and therefore a record of what the Society had achieved, were now in 'the Cloud'.

\* She saw as a priority communication with members and the wider public. She hoped that Members were enjoying the new-look Newsletter, for which thanks to Carole Wells and Pat Rose for their help---the intention is to 'spice it up'

\* She wanted to make the website more user-friendly---work is underway on this.

\* A key objective is to hold more social events. There had been a wonderful summer party, and a winter one is being planned---watch this space.

She praised the work of the working groups, and she asked the chairs of each group to explain the aim of their group, and its achievements, directly to our Members.

No hard copies were provided, for environmental reasons, but were offered if anyone needed any.

## **6) Treasurer's Report**

\* Kim Parker reported that the Canterbury Society's funds were in good shape, as evidenced by the printed report that had been circulated. Income had exceeded expenditure by a reasonable amount

\*He pointed out that whereas there were certain expenditures which were constant, year by year, such as room hire, speakers, and insurance, the Society spent different amounts each year on charitable objectives.

\*Specific fund-raising contributed substantially to the amounts needed. These included this year money spent on the Bison Mural, and the bison and chough vinyls.

\*Restricted Funds showed money kept aside for future expenditure on the Blue Plaques scheme, and garden enhancement.

## **7) Reports of Working Groups**

i) John Walker, chair of the **Heritage and Conservation Working Group**, reported that there were signs that the City Council were taking the concerns of local organisations like the Canterbury Society about conservation and enhancement of heritage assets in the City more seriously.

\*A Cabinet Member for Heritage had been appointed. In addition, he, as chair of the Heritage and Conservation Working Group had been invited to serve on the Council's Tales of England Delivery Board, which was working closely with the City Council to deliver the Levelling-Up Projects using the Levelling-Up funds that the Council had received from the Government.

\* The Society had been invited by Corinthian, the developers of Mountfield Park, to help with devising a design code for the new 4,000 house development, and the Group was providing that help.

\* They were also involved in the process of drawing up a World Heritage Management Plan for the Canterbury WH Site, though this process had been delayed.

\* John reported also on progress on the Blue Plaques project. A good number of historical figures connected with Canterbury had been identified, and it was hoped that the City Council Planning Department would now expedite the process of getting the Plaques installed. In June the Society's committee had agreed to put £1000 into the fund raised to pay for the plaques and their installation. This figure has been matched by the Canterbury Commemoration Society, and the balance has been provided by sponsors and individual donors.

\*He mentioned finally that officers of the Society had met with the new Dean of Canterbury, had discussed several issues with him, and had found him very keen to listen to, and work with, the wider Canterbury community.

ii) Martin Vye ,chair of the **Council Matters, Governance, and Local Democracy Working Group** , said that all Working Groups were engaging with the Council. His Group concentrated on overarching issues, such as the Canterbury Local Plan, the Council's Corporate Plan, and the democratic arrangements of the Council.

\*He said that John Walker, Richard Scase and he had had communications and meetings with the former Leader of the Council, and senior officers about the emerging Local Plan.

\*The Group had also drafted the Society's response to the latest draft of the Plan, in which we had raised concerns particularly about the number of dwellings it was proposed to accommodate by 2045, and about the proposal for an Eastern By-Pass. After the May Council elections this year the group had sent the new administration a copy of that response, and would be seeking meetings with senior members of that administration .

\* The Group had liaised with a group in Whitstable that was promoting the idea of a Town Council for that town. Following a public meeting in Canterbury it had been decided to explore the desirability and possibility of a Town Council for Canterbury.

\* Martin referred to a 'democratic deficit' in Canterbury, and praised the work of the Canterbury Forum , organised by Richard Norman.

Martin is also chair of the **Health and Wellbeing Working Group**. Our Vice-President , Jan Pahl, and he had been commissioned by the Canterbury UN Sustainable Goals Forum to produce a 'Report on Poverty in Canterbury'. Crucial support had been given by members of the Soroptimists and a member of ACRA, and the Report had been launched in April. Since then the Canterbury Society, through this Working Group , and with the active participation in it of Mehri Holliday, has been pursuing successfully the development of a Poverty Forum in Canterbury, comprising representatives of the voluntary, community, and statutory sectors.

III) Clive Bowley, Chair, explained the objectives of the **Planning, Architecture, and Streetscape Working Group**. One of the most important tasks of the Society, and of this Group, was to scrutinise carefully the list of planning applications made to the City Council. Unfortunately several developments which were insensitive to the quality and vulnerability of the unique built heritage of Canterbury have been allowed

\*.The Group has worked closely with the Canterbury Heritage and Design Forum , and has brought to the Society's attention several inappropriate applications. and has protested against the unauthorised demolition of an old building in St Dunstons

\*.There is some evidence that notice is being taken of their concerns, especially with regard to ensuring that new shopfronts are in conformity with the Shopfront Design Guide.

\* The Group had put in a strong response to the Public Consultation about the use by the City Council of the 'Levelling Up Funds' it had been awarded, especially with regard to the Castle. where restoration and improvement need to be very sensitively carried out.

iv) Beverley Paton chairs the **Green Spaces and Biodiversity Working Group** It concerns itself with the protection and enhancement of the public gardens and open green spaces of the City , and also of the river that is such an important feature of it.

\*There are several community groups which share this aim, such as 'Canterbury in Bloom', and the Canterbury Biodiversity Network, and the Society, through the Working Group, works in collaboration with them.

\*A great deal of work is put into maintaining the gardens, for which the Group raises volunteers. Beverley mentioned especially the Festival of the Stour, scheduled to take place on World Rivers Day, September 25<sup>th</sup>, for which the Canterbury Society is leading on a photographic competition.

\*She and Sian Pettman are writing a new leaflet for Canterbury's Green River Corridor, and a river litter pick would be organised between St Radigunds and Barton Mill.

\*The Group had publicised the petition, organised by the Canterbury Biodiversity Network, calling on the Council to declare a Biodiversity Emergency. The requisite 1000 signatures and more had been achieved, and the Council agreed unanimously on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July to adopt the Declaration, and to request the Cabinet to report back at the full Council meeting in October with a plan .

\* Beverley announced that she is stepping down from the Society's committee , after many years' service. She said that there is now a vacancy for this role.

v) A written statement by Carole Wells , chair of the **Marketing and Membership Working Group** was distributed. She said that the prime priority of the Group was to increase Membership , and that therefore their role was to promote the Canterbury Society, and all that it does, to a wider range of members and potential members.

\* The Group has written a Marketing Plan, with 10 Key Objectives 2023-25, which was approved by the Committee. Four of these have already been started.

1) Updates and changes to the Society's website have been drafted, and our presence on Facebook and other social media has been reviewed.

2) A new Canterbury Society leaflet has been designed .

3) Our mailing list of key Partners and Community Organisations has been expanded, and we intend to increase communication, collaboration, and partnerships with these.

4) Over the next year we also plan to increase collaboration with businesses and the City Council. One exciting possibility is the holding of a Community Convention in 2024 or 2025.

## **8) Election of Officers and Committee Members for 2023/24**

Richard Norman was asked to conduct the elections. The following had been nominated, and Richard ascertained that there were no further nominations from the floor. The following were elected by a show of hands by the General Meeting.

**Chair:** Hilary Brian  
**Vice-chair** John Walker  
**Treasurer** Kim Parker  
**Secretary** Martin Vye  
**Committee members** Clive Bowley Hubert Pragnell David Clarke (co-opted) Mehri Holliday Carole Wells Sarah Wren Peter Bradford

### 9) Questions by Members

1) The dire quality of the River Stour was raised. Richard Norman stated that the MP for Canterbury, Rosie Duffield, had raised this in Parliamentary Questions.

2) David Clarke asked about the need for scrutiny by an independent examiner of our annual accounts. It was suggested by David, and agreed, that John Walker (Deputy Chair) and Kim Parker (Hon. Treasurer) investigate the suggestion that the respective Treasurers of The Canterbury Society and The Ramsgate Society might be willing to act as Independent Examiners of each other's accounts, which would save both societies the expense of employing a third person.

### 10) Date of next AGM Wednesday September 11<sup>th</sup> 2024

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#### Speaker and Society's President, Ptolemy Dean OBE

Hilary introduced Ptolemy—he attended school in Canterbury, and after training as an architect worked in America for a few years. He has appeared on television with Griff Rhys-Jones, and arguably his most notable work is the new staircase in Westminster Abbey

Ptolemy expressed his gratitude to the Canterbury Society for the work it was doing. Clearly, though, it was an uphill struggle. Planning officers seemed not to care, and he had been depressed by the lack of interest shown by lead councillors in the past.

During the COVID lockdown period he had visited many historical towns like Canterbury, and he showed on screen the sketches he had made of the 'streetscape' in each of them. In his entertaining and interesting talk he showed how different ages had added to the complexity and attractiveness of the streetscapes.

- The Romans had established a grid pattern.
- In Anglo-Saxon times, however, the streets began to meander.
- The Normans would add a massive castle, and a cathedral. He showed how later ages would often add buildings of different styles that added to the attractiveness of the streetscape..

- Even a Victorian water-tower , placed at the end of a straight street , or a Victorian town-hall, created by an architect who thought deeply about its historic location ,could complete a picture satisfactorily.

He stressed the importance of curves, and half-revealed interesting buildings , and spires appearing over roofs, to create a sense of multiple 'rooms' in a town , which invited one to explore.

He concluded with sketches of Exeter( 'poor Exeter') which had been more extensively bombed than Canterbury. He showed how the opportunity to 'think deeply' about post-war reconstruction of historic cities had been missed, both in Exeter, and of course in Canterbury.

There followed further refreshments and much conversation between Members