

LITTLE BADDOW PARISH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the History Centre Committee was held in the Memorial Hall on March 10th, 2025. The Meeting commenced at 7:00pm. In attendance: -

Cllr Barbara Teal - Chair

Chrissi Frost

Andy Coppel

Caroline Ogden (taking minutes in the absence of the Clerk)

Members of the Public – 0

12/25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllr Peter Irvine, Cllr Carla Galea, Andrew Wiltshire, Margaret Martin, Christine Coleman, Ian Wardle (Clerk to LBPC)

13/25 Declarations of Interest

The Chair suggested the appointment of the Admin Assistant (Caroline Ogden) as requiring declaration

14/25 Approval of the Minutes of the 20th January 2025 Meeting

Committee approved the minutes from the meeting held on the 20th January 2025 and they were signed by the Chair.

15/25 Public Participation

No members of the public in attendance.

16/25 Appointment of Part Time Assistant, hereafter History Centre Administrator

Following approval by Little Baddow Parish Council, the position has been given to Caroline Ogden. Several others requested details but did not take it further. Cllr Galea and Cllr Teal interviewed Caroline, who is aware of the requirements of the role, and they feel she is the appropriate person to appoint. The role will be flexible, 8 hours per week on a self-employed basis, commencing Monday 17th March. The Chair proposed, Chrissi seconded, and Caroline was duly appointed.

Caroline commented that she will resume writing an article every month for Little Baddow News; contact schools, museums, leisure organisations and companies with our offer and identify synergies; propose exchange visits and exchanges of exhibition memorabilia; continue PR role; and the Chair suggested contacting other history groups such as the Essex Family History Federation and the U3A regional head office, who used to visit regularly according to Andy, to tie in with their themes/study areas.

There was discussion of the heating operation, with which Caroline was less familiar. Chrissi explained the thermostat, which is set at a minimum temperature and should only be adjusted upwards.

17/25 Plans for Exhibition/Display for the Opening on 6th April 2025

Committee members discussed the forthcoming re-opening of the Centre. Caroline has received no responses to her social media PR or adverts in local magazines. We will need to review future events if this trend continues. Andy commented that publishing what people have missed may work, so Caroline will refer back to the fun at the Halloween event in any future publicity. Lack of village involvement by young people was discussed. The Chair suggested an email to the Heads of the schools in Danbury.

Refreshments were discussed; tea/coffee and scones would be free for paying visitors. Exhibition boards will remain in place throughout the summer.

Chrissi commented that Jane Matthews had been advised in the past not to populate the bottom half of boards as people tend not to read. Also blue tack should not be used on walls/windows.

It was agreed to spend the Thursday slot at HC next week to prepare, bringing any items we have. The Chair would collect the pupils' slates tomorrow from The Men's Shed, and has arranged the loan of a handbell from the church bellringers. We also have marbles and conkers. We could include old coins. It would be good to source a hoop. Window embrasures could be filled with toys, dolls, games etc. Caroline had been promised

some desks with lids from Elm Green School, which Ann Milner will kindly deliver. Michael Tubbs has sent us his account of the early days of the school and we have hard copies of the images from his talk. Andrew has once again obtained permission from New Hall for exhibition visitors to park in the church car park and has suggested the use of bollards on the route, as with the Halloween event. The Chapel vestry will be available from 12.15. (It will also be available on Open Gardens day, where we have a good cluster of attractions nearby to potentially boost visitors. Refreshments will be available in a nearby house. The HC will not open on the following day, out of fairness to volunteers. This will be publicised.). The Chair asked if eventually the non-local Chapel China currently stored at the HC could be displayed in the vestry (the Essex Chapel China is now in the HC foyer). Andy confirmed, but it might be in a year's time, and post-quinquennial, when the Chapel's old school and storage rooms are refurbished and converted into a library and exhibition area for their very important records. (The Chapel aims to work with the parish council and St Mary's to be more community-focused.) The Chair commented on the synergy between the two collections.

18/25 Proposed History Book Club

Christine Coleman's proposal was discussed. She is prepared to run the club. The suggestion is £5 per person per book (to cover teas/coffees/electricity), with members suggesting history-based books for discussion in turn. The time of day was discussed. The committee supported this as being in line with our aim to make the Centre a village hub.

19/25 Roles and Responsibilities Update

Committee agreed to defer to next meeting, as several relevant members not present.

20/25 Rota for Summer Sunday Opening

Cllr Galea had prepared a rota, which includes a few who may be unable. After discussion, it was agreed that the Chair would consult with her. It is incumbent on all committee members to do sessions if they are able. It works out at two Sunday two-hour sessions in 6 months, with the option to swap dates with each other. The Chair would check availability with volunteers. A Thursday rota is not necessary as it is a general volunteers' day.

21/25 Ancestry Resource Subscriptions

With wi-fi now at the Centre, the Chair has taken out a 6-month (not worldwide) trial Gold subscription to Ancestry.com for £99, with the Clerk/Treasurer's knowledge. Caroline proposed and Andy seconded reimbursement of the Chair by the Clerk/Treasurer. Chrissi may be able to renew at 50% when the Chair's sub runs out. The Chair has her own worldwide subscription which can also be accessed. There was discussion with Chrissi of the first customers.

A phone handset (phone line with answerphone is included in internet charge paid for by parish council) is required at the Centre – Chrissi proposed and Caroline seconded.

22/25 AOB

- Caroline had produced a possible letterhead. The Chair would produce a more professional A-frame laminated sign for the parking area opposite and a 1.5m banner at the gate for when the HC opens, with the HC image. She would approach Blue Sky Printing in The Meadows, Chelmsford for the A-frame and Supplies for Business for the banner.
- We have had an additional £150 of income for research being done for others.
- Glen Opie has a friend Sarah Burgess, who would like to do a talk about a book entitled *We've All Life Before Us: A Love Story of the Second World War*, a collection of as yet unseen love letters from RAF pilot Bob Keddie of Downham to Sarah Burgess's godmother Diana Dawkins née Ladner of Waterhall, Lt Baddow, which also give an insight into everyday life in wartime Britain as well as an amusing account of RAF training and service. He later married Diana but died in an accident at sea. His two brothers also died in the war.
- Cllr Galea had prepared an email to send to all committee members and volunteers to the effect that no documents or other items must be removed from the HC, as it is easy to lose track (the sign-out book is not always used) and items have been lost irrevocably or (in one case) sent to the ERO without our prior knowledge or permission. (The Chair has now signed a receipt to say the ERO is in possession).

There was discussion of specific books that cannot be found and would be difficult or too expensive to obtain again. (There was also discussion of the tendency to 'dump' items on the HC after a clear-out!). Now the administrator is in post, access to the HC for research in situ will be more easily arranged, obviating the need to remove items. Caroline will put her contact details on website and Facebook page.

- Alison Buchanan has purchased a copy of Goddess's Grove as part of a farewell present for Patricia Stewart, who at 97 is leaving the village after nearly 71 years to be nearer her family in London. There was uncertainty as to who that money should go to; Caroline would ask Mel Thompson.
- Chrissi asked for the Chair's agreement to the purchase of sundries, stationery etc with receipts, and with reimbursement from the petty cash.
- The Chair had raised Caroline's suggestion of paper towels for the HC loo, rather than a towel.
- The damp in the storeroom was discussed. Neil had treated with anti-mould and moved items for better airflow, but did not think there was water ingress, rather that it was owing to lack of ventilation. The Chair disagrees. Chrissi suggested it could be the soil on the outside causing damp; the Chair will ask Neil to remove. Neil has also secured the narrow bookcase in the archive room, and has finished moving the shelves, apart from one high-level shelf for which there was no room, with some spare uprights purchased, which are on top of the bookcase.
- Cllr Galea's maintenance schedule was referred to by the Chair, and also the list sent by the Clerk to Andy some while ago with costs for Neil's work. The Chair would find and send to Andy before he can agree anything.

23/25 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee, with a post mortem of the opening and of participation in Open Gardens, will be on 28th April 2025 at 7.00pm in the Memorial Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.