**MINUTES OF THE ROWLANDS CASTLE ASSOCIATION (RCA)**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Held on Monday 24 February 2014 at 6.30pm in the Small Parish Hall**

1. **Apologies for absence**

Mike Winn, Gillian Lovegrove (Webmaster)

**Present: Committee Members:** Richard Milton (Chair), Sharon Broom (Treasurer), Sue Connell (Secretary), Kevin Connell (Editor), Fiona Charlesworth, Martha Dombey, Sue Morrison, Jane Collins

**President:** Alan Drinkwater

**Vice President:** Alan Eyers

**Guest Speaker:** Marge Harvey

**Members:** 16

1. **Minutes of Annual General Meeting of 2013**

These were read by those in attendance and were agreed as a true representation of the meeting. Proposed by Martha Dombey. Seconded by Alan Drinkwater. The Minutes were signed by the Chair, Richard Milton. Alan added praise for the Minutes, saying that they encapsulated what the RCA is about.

1. **Matters arising**

It was noted that changes this year included the addition of a Guest Speaker, and a change of start time from 7pm to 6.30pm.

1. **Chair’s report**

The aims of the RCA are: to conserve the character of Rowlands Castle, to provide a channel of communication on matters of local interest and to enhance the life of the village.

Our first aim - to conserve the character of Rowlands Castle

During the year we were pleased to play a part in supporting the Parish Council in opposing the planning application of Keydell to build in the Village by donating £1,000 to the fighting fund and we congratulate the Parish Council on its successful challenge.

Our second aim is to provide a channel of communication on matters of local interest

We continue to publish the Village Magazine under the editorship of Kevin Connell and I’d like to thank Kevin for keeping up such a high standard of output – I know how time consuming it can be.

I want to thank the army of deliverers, without whom you would not get our magazine, organised by Martha Dombey and also thank Prue Amner who manages all the advertisements. Thanks also to Ken Anthony who produces the annual Village Directory. Ken is relinquishing this task after some ten years so special thanks to him for all his efforts.

We also have a noticeboard outside the Londis shop, which advertises village events as well as our own information and which you are all welcome to use.

My thanks got to our webmaster, Gillian Lovegrove, who does a first rate job of managing the Rowlandscastle.com website and the Grapevine email list. Grapevine is run on behalf of the Village by the RCA, for everyone to use. It is moderated by Fiona Charlesworth and Martha Dombey.

The grapevine is continuing to grow and currently has 391 subscribers, which means about one-third of the homes in the Village are now reached by Grapevine messages.

In addition to running the Grapevine, we host mailing lists for other village organisations, like the friends of St Johns Parents and Teachers and the Village Fair Committee.

Our third aim is to enhance the life of the village.

We enhance the life of the village through the events we organise.

Bonfire and fireworks

For many years we have run the bonfire and fireworks display for bonfire night in November. Running the fireworks night is quite a logistical feat, and I would like to thank all who make it possible, including Selstar for the fireworks, Bill Burnett for the fairground attractions and the Scouts and Guides for refreshments, St John Ambulance and the Police for keeping us safe. I also want to thank Mike Coombe and his colleagues from the Havant Rotary Club who volunteered to act as marshals this year.

Thank you to everyone who helps to build the bonfire. Many people of all ages from across the village help under the direction of our bonfire-meister Alan Eyers, and there is a real sense of achievement once it is built (and bonfire builders get in to the fireworks for free).

Thanks also to two local businesses – Keyline who provide pallets and Carroway who provide a flatbed truck and driver and a skip. I’d also like to thank all the volunteers who get up early to clear up the morning after, especially the Scouts and Cubs this year.

We ran into difficulties with insurance for bonfire night in 2013 because premiums have been increased dramatically. It seemed for a while as though we might have to drop the bonfire altogether, but I’m pleased to say that our Parish Clerk, Lisa Walker, and her colleagues on the Parish Council found a solution which enabled us to go ahead as usual with their support. So I want to thank Lisa and her colleagues for making that possible. Many thanks to Steve Protheroe for organising fire extinguishers for the event.

Children’s Christmas party

We also run the children’s Christmas party at St John’s church hall each year. Many thanks to Nicci Lucas for organising last year’s event together with Anita King, who is going to be taking over the running of the party as Nicci has moved to take over the Rowlands Castle Scouts.

Many thanks also to Kath Molloy for stepping into the breach as Santa Claus this year.

Socials

For the last few years we have had an RCA quiz night – thanks to Kevin and Sue Connell who have inspired and organised this event and turned it into a regular part of the RCA calendar. This year as a result of the money raised we were able to make donations both to St John’s School and Rollies nursery group.

Supporting other village groups

We also enhance the life of the village through supporting other village groups by making donations. In the past 12 months we have donated:-

Contribution of £1,500 to Outdoor gym equipment on the Rec

£500 to the Photography Club for a projector

£830 to the Scouts for new Camping Equipment

£400 to the Village Hall towards a dishwasher

£200 to St John’s School

£200 to Rollies Nursery

U3A

The final donation I’d like to mention - £163 – is the smallest we have made financially but it is among the most important. It was the seed money that helped to launch the Rowlands Castle branch of the University of the Third Age – the U3A. This was started with assistance from the RCA and was first and foremost a project conceived and led by Kevin Connell. It has been amazingly successful and the Rowlands Castle U3A now has more than one hundred members and more than 20 active interest groups. I’m very proud that the RCA played a part in the formation of the U3A in the Village but I want specially to congratulate Kevin for all his many efforts to make this happen.

Closing remarks

I’m happy to report that the RCA is in good shape both financially and in terms of the very able people who are currently running the Association on behalf of all of us.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the committee, Sandra Hodgetts who audits the accounts and Alan Drinkwater our President.

My four years on the Committee are now up and so I’ll be stepping down as Chairman at these elections. I want to thank all my colleagues, past and present, for the very enjoyable privilege of serving with them. It’s been a lot of fun. And it’s great to know that the RCA is going to be in such capable hands in future.

1. **Treasurer’s report**

Our financial year ends on 31 December so the accounts presented today relate to the year ending 31 December 2013.

Many thanks go to Sandra Hodgetts for auditing our accounts.

The receipts for the year, including donations and profits from various events held over this period, total £5742.99.

Payments over the year are £7481.86, thus we have an excess of expenditure over income of £1738.87.

These payments do appear high, however they include a substantial grant towards two projects - £1500 towards the Recreation Gym Equipment and £1000 towards the cost of the barrister for the Keydell appeal, both of which are valid reasons for expenditure and which prove the reason for the existence of the RCA.

The current account stood at £8109.39. The reserve account stood at £4663.66 and there was cash of £305.95.

1. **Confirmation of President and Vice President**

The RCA Committee unanimously confirm Alan Drinkwater as President. Alan follows with a speech and reports that he first started as President in 1998, and that since then the RCA has grown from strength to strength, has developed well, and offers an agreeable social atmosphere. Alan strongly urged the Committee to consider the appointment of a Vice Chairman, and last year the chair, Catherine Billam, changed the constitution to allow for this. When names of candidates were debated, Alan Eyers appeared as a very strong contender due to his tireless contribution to village life. Alan Drinkwater therefore confirms and welcomes Alan Eyers as Vice President, and adds that he has lived in the village for many years, has served on both the Village Fair Committee and the RCA, and has considerable experience in business, management and administration.

Alan Eyers then responds with a short talk describing his 23 years in the village, his time on the VFC and his time as Chairman of the RCA. He states how much he enjoys life in the village and the tremendous amount of activities it has to offer, and that he will be pleased to help out in any way he can.

To close, Alan Drinkwater mentions and thanks the 3 Committee members standing down this year – Richard Milton, Sue Connell and Mike Winn.

1. **Election of officers**

This part of the AGM was also presented by Alan Drinkwater and the election went as follows:

**Chair** – Kevin Connell voted as new Chair, unanimous

**Treasurer** – Sharon Broom to continue as Treasurer, unanimous

**Secretary** – Fiona Charlesworth voted as new Secretary, unanimous

1. **Election of committee**

The remaining Committee members were announced by Alan Drinkwater, all of which were also voted in unanimously – Martha Dombey, Sue Morrison and Jane Collins. Kevin Connell will continue as Editor, in addition to his appointment of Chair, and Gillian Lovegrove will continue as Webmaster.

Richard Milton closed this part of the proceedings and thanked Alan for his presentation.

1. **Any other business**

Alan Drinkwater refers to planning applications and housing, explains how the system has changed, how there is a requirement to have a land provision, and how important it is that councils have their act together. Richard Milton then calls upon Alan Drinkwater to introduce the guest speaker, Marge Harvey, and congratulates her on being our councillor. Marge Harvey thanks the RCA for their contribution to village life, especially when it comes to fundraising. Alan formally introduces Marge and announces how she was born and raised in the village, and was also married there.

1. **“Planning for our Village explained” by Councillor Marge Harvey**

Marge began her talk by thanking Alan for his introduction and overview, and then set about explaining planning procedures, beginning with listening to the Parish Council and progressing on to EHDC. Keydell was given as an example of recent applications. The Landscape Character Assessment was consulted, and Marge spoke as Ward Councillor about concerns over traffic, closeness to schools and other problems. There was victory in the end, but by a very narrow vote. A second application was then received and was refused with a huge majority. An appeal followed, at which point the Parish Council became involved. Alan Eyers asked how many times Keydell can apply, and Marge responded with as many times as they like, with another one already going through, which now has to be fought.

Marge also mentioned Keyline, whose application was refused after 18 months, and how they wanted payment to move to another site. Apparently they have also now gone to appeal. They were not giving any affordable homes, and Rowlands Castle has to have 150 new homes up until 2028 (Strategic Housing Availability Development). Anyone can offer their land for housing. There is also the JCS (Joint Core Strategy), which operates with a National Park. The Hazleton Estate was also mentioned, as well as 3 applications for The Gap. Marge stated that it was very important that nothing was built in The Gap, and that she was working very hard to ensure that. Lastly, there is the application going on behind College Close, with all its related problems, especially drainage.

There followed questions from the floor on what Marge could do, both as District Councillor and as her role in a political party. Catherine Billam asked what is the planning situation around fracking, and Marge commented that there wasn’t any at present as not enough is known about it. Hampshire have to be included, and then East Hants (if it is in our area). The government will make their decision and we can then be involved. Alan Eyers asked whether any potential sites have been identified, and Marge proceeded to list them. Alan was also concerned about flooding risks and how the environment agency should foot the bill if houses are to be built on that sort of land.

To bring the evening to an end, Richard Milton handed over to the newly elected Chair, Kevin Connell. Kevin thanked Richard, Sue Connell and Mike Winn for their work on the Committee, and also thanked Gillian Lovegrove for her work on the RCA website, and more recently the U3A website.

Many thanks again to Councillor Marge Harvey for being our guest speaker this year.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.