

Bolsterstone Community Group Annual General Meeting
Chair's Annual Report
25 March 2014

Welcome to our 13th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and to my first AGM as Chair. The AGM will be slightly different this year. We will start as usual with the Chair and Treasurer's reports, but then - to add a bit of variety - we will hear additional information about other local groups, from various members. We thought that this may be of interest to us all.

The theme for Bolsterstone Community Group (BCG) this year seems to have been one of expansion! We have had fifty new members this year - yes I did say FIFTY! Some of them are here tonight and I am sure that you would want me to extend a warm welcome to them on behalf of all of us. It is good to know that so many people care about Bolsterstone and wish to be involved in our village activities and events and to support the common aim as set out in in our constitution. That is:

"To promote the well-being of the people of Bolsterstone and the adjoining areas through the advancement of education and information and the conservation of the environment".

There have been changes to the BCG Committee as well. Frances Tivey and John Johnson have left the committee and four additional members have joined it. The four new committee members are Bryan Howard, Anthea Peers, Chris Prescott and Cheryl Rodgers. We are very grateful that they have made this formal commitment to the group. The team of the full BCG committee now consists of Bryan Howard, Dorothy Kirbyshaw, Anthea Peers (Treasurer) Tony Peers (Secretary) Chris Prescott, Cheryl Rodgers (In Bloom Co-ordinator) Phillip Verhamme and myself, Alan Rodgers (Chair). I am pleased to tell you that we are all willing to stand again in the coming year. However, if anyone else would like to join the BCG Committee we would be pleased to welcome you on board. Just have a word with any of us later this evening if you are interested.

Again, most members will be aware that the sad news about our committee and indeed our community, is that we lost Stuart Ashton. Many members attended his funeral and he will be sadly missed by us all. He faithfully represented St Mary's Church on the BCG committee for several years and provided a very useful link between the church and the group. We have sent condolences to his wife Sally and her family and she is exploring the question of Stuart's successor on the BCG through the Parish Council.

Looking back over the year, St Mary's Church, Bolsterstone's Summer Fayre in July was a resounding success as usual. The weather was very good and many BCG members were involved with the Church and Village Hall Trust to raise funds for the Church. Talking of the Church, everyone will doubtless be aware that the Revs Kevin and Catherine Barnard have moved to Halifax and that regular services continue to be held at St Mary's in the absence of a resident vicar.

The BCG allotment garden Open Day on the 21st September allowed 2 of the plot holders the opportunity to show a number of visitors the result of their work during the year. An added bonus this year was that one of the Village Hall Trust's now famous Cream Tea afternoons was held on the same day - giving visitors an additional treat. A similar "treat" for us all to enjoy in September, was the Bolsterstone Quilters' exhibition. Whilst this was independent of BCG, lots of us had the opportunity to admire their breathtaking display.

Although we have received no free allocation of bulbs from Sheffield City Council this year, we have received a Ward Pot Grant of £370. This, together with a “top up” from BCG’s own funds, means that Cheryl and her In Bloom team of volunteers have already planted some winter plants and bulbs and ordered enough bedding plants to make the usual array of colour in troughs and baskets a real credit to the village. Thank you to all those involved. There have been many positive comments from visiting walkers and local people about the flower displays over the year.

Unfortunately Ben Hennig and Bettina Platten have now left Bolsterstone and moved South, but we are grateful that Ben continues to manage and update the village website from various places on his travels. The website can be found at www.bolsterstone.info. It attempts to include as many aspects of village life as possible. Although originally set up with EPIP funding for BCG’s benefit, we have latterly tried to incorporate information about as many other local organisations, events and activities as possible. We will of course, continue to provide paper copies of our newsletter for those members without access to a computer, so that everyone is as fully informed about BCG events as possible.

When members contact us about their concerns, whether it be about about fire damaged telephone boxes, fly tipping, highways matters or planning issues, we are always willing to listen and to help and advise if we can. As we remain true to BCG’s original aims - one of which is to conserve the environment in Bolsterstone and the surrounding areas - we will have to be even more vigilant to do what we can to protect the Green Belt and the beautiful countryside around our village in the light of shifts in Government Planning Policy.

As usual, the Christmas Fayre in November, was a successful event to start off the Christmas season. Whilst there were slightly fewer stall holders than usual, they all said that the event was certainly worth attending. Wharncliffe Side Junior and Stocksbridge High Schools provided seasonal entertainment to begin the festivities and we thank the pupils, parents and teachers for attending. The fact that Father Christmas was busy and cakes and mince pies eventually ran out indicates that all the visitors had an enjoyable time. Thanks go to the Christmas Fayre team who helped prepare for and organise the event and to everyone who made cakes, donated raffle prizes, or helped out on the day.

The Christmas Wreath Making Evening was also very successful. This year we asked that people should book places beforehand - and it is a good job we did! The tables had to be set out diagonally to fit everyone in and the hall was packed. Several people joined BCG as members that evening, because they enjoyed themselves so much. Thank you to everyone who helped to support this event in any way. The Wreath Making Evening, together with the Christmas Fayre, provided the source of most of our year’s fund raising, which will allow us to carry out activities for next year.

Talking of next year, you will doubtless be aware that the Tour de France will be visiting our area on Sunday 6th July (the day after the Summer Fair). As soon as we hear more definite details about anything connected with this, we will let you know!

It just remains for me to thank you all for coming tonight and to thank everyone who has helped support this and our many other activities over the past year. We rely on your continuing support for the coming year. I will now hand over to Anthea for the Treasurer’s Report.

Alan Rodgers - Bolsterstone Community Group Chair - 25th March 2014.

