

AGM Minutes 2015

Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 29th October 2015 at the Gladiators Club, Iffley Road, Oxford.

Present: The Committee; Anthony Cheke (Chair) Ruth Ashcroft (Secretary) Laurie Burrell (Treasurer) Claire Malone-Lee (Membership Secretary) Timothy Lee, Penny Bassett, Greg Webster, James Martin Thelma Martin (Minutes)

In addition, 21 others, of whom a list has been retained, were present.

Apologies were received from Christopher Cullen, Ivan and Jacqueline Wright.

MINUTES of 2014 AGM were accepted. (Proposed by LB, seconded by GW).

ANNUAL REPORT The Chairman, having welcomed those present to the 6th AGM of FOAE, presented his annual report outlining work undertaken and activities carried out during the past year, the association's fifth. The report was supported by film and still images curated by Timothy Lee and Penny Bassett, and by filmed images of wildlife taken by Anthony Cheke's remote camera, and curated by him. The Committee Ivan Wright of Shotover Wildlife for his loan of projector and screen. A copy of the report has been circulated to members. The Chairman highlighted the Patsy Wood Trust grant, donations from ITV for filming on the Eyot, and from Paul Jepson, and thanked the donors for their generosity, as he did all who have subscribed or helped during the past year.

Members' attention was drawn to the arrival, and great benefit to the work of FOAE of, the Toolstore, the several hundred trees and shrubs now planted by the Friends, some of which, Birches for example were now approaching ten feet in height and would soon be able to manage without protection. Rowans were beginning to fruit. Measures to increase biodiversity were beginning to have an effect. The invasive Japanese Knotweed had virtually gone and what little is left can be kept in check on the meadow areas which have replaced it.

There have been fewer rough sleepers and camps on the Eyot this year, but some aggressive boat users did considerable damage by burning support stakes and a huge log put out as seating, as well as creating a great deal of rubbish.

The Chairman drew the attention of the meeting to the sad death of Pamela Webber, a founding committee member of FOAE after a long illness.

TREASURER'S REPORT Laurie Burrell presented his report, copies of the accounts having been provided for members at the meeting. A very generous grant had been received from the Patsy Wood Trust in the sum of £12,855.00 of which £8,296.53 had so far been expended, mainly on a toolstore, tree work, tools and plants. Income had also come from donations from ITV and Paul Jepson, and from subscriptions and sales of calendars, vital as our insurance and running expenses cannot be met by grant income. At present the closing balance is £6,955.35, of which £2,396 is not tied to the Patsy Wood Grant.

SUBSCRIPTIONS The meeting agreed (nem.con.) after proposal by The Chairman and seconding by Greg Webster, that subscriptions should remain at £5 per annum, and £3 for concessions. Ruth Ashcroft sought the view of the meeting as to whether the opportunity for digital payment or standing order payment would be welcomed. The response was positive, and the practicalities will be investigated further, including more frequent bank statements.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE for 2015-16: The committee were all prepared to stand for re-election, and, there being nine candidates for nine vacancies, were elected without a contest, having been proposed by Kate Patullo and seconded by Jackie Ingram.

An appeal was made for new committee members to be co-opted into the three available positions. Tim Lee suggested that members consider the matter outside the meeting and approach the Committee if they would like to attend a “taster” committee meeting before committing themselves.

FUTURE PLANNING Ruth Ashcroft outlined future plans, including further Willow pollarding and removal of saplings at School Corner and down the ditch to the River, a few more trees being removed from the plantation as the canopies had spread so much, planting additional fruit trees in the Orchard following the removal of Sycamore which had overtopped existing ones to their detriment, and creating more large netting deer exclosures in the plantation to allow flower and shrub growth to be protected from browsing by deer.

The Council is contracted with Christ Church to mow four times per year, but due to the problems of raking the mowings, we have negotiated a reduction to two cuts, but with mowings picked up mechanically, to be at times agreed with the Friends to maximise benefit to path side plants. Due to staff illness only one Council mow was achieved this year. In addition, there is a possibility that the Council will also mow and collect cut material on the meadow areas, it being explained that removal of such material was important as it would lower soil fertility which was better for native wildflowers, and also would not act as a fermenting mulch on growth underneath.

More “free trees” had been ordered, and would be planted by a work party on the first Sunday of December instead of the last in November. This will probably be the last major planting, as we have already planted approximately 700 trees, which Ruth said would make a great difference to the Eyot even if nothing else was done.

Claire Malone Lee outlined her “Patch Champions” scheme, whereby members would be responsible for individual small patches of interest to keep nettle free and allow more varied growth to thrive. She emphasised that she was available to give advice and help with the identification of species to be left. She also thanked all who had come on plant identification walks with her, to which Jackie Ingram responded with thanks to Claire Malone -Lee for leading them and sharing her erudition.

Recording of mammals, birds, lepidoptera, reptiles and amphibians would continue. Anthony Cheke urged anyone making their own regular observations to share them with the Committee and have them appear on the website.

Ruth Ashcroft mooted the development of ponds. The Freshwater Habitats Trust had been consulted, and advised that clean, shallow, warm ponds (there being maximum biodiversity in water about 2cm in depth) were ideal for breeding, but must be sited so as to exclude fish which would eat larvae and amphibian eggs, and be above flood level. The Park Rangers were keen to have a pond on the Kidneys to allow pond dipping by schoolchildren, As the ditch and ground water we had so far found were both heavily polluted, any pond would probably have to be lined and rainwater fed. A discussion followed on the attractions of such ponds to children and dogs, and the option of a “sacrificial” pond near a path being created for that sort of use, while concealing a more ecologically sound pond for wildlife in a less

accessible place. Matters of the disruption during any necessary work were raised, as was the possible hazard of mosquitoes breeding in stagnant water. It was pointed out that the ditch, despite efforts, was stagnant for most of the year and didn't appear to cause a problem, and also that if amphibians bred, they would eat mosquito larvae.

AOB A question from the floor was posed about the oft-proposed possible construction of a cycle path and bridge. It was agreed that it would be most disruptive if it were to be built, but the college landowners on both sides of the river were against it and it was certainly not an active proposition at present, as the colleges had persuaded the County Council not to include it in their cycling budget. It was noted from the floor that Cyclox were also against it.

A question followed about the relationship between the Park Rangers and the Eyot. The Chairman explained that as City Council staff, they had jurisdiction over The Kidneys only, but they did pass through the Eyot and had caused the cessation of its use as a motor cycle track as they had found the offender on the Kidneys with his bike.

The Committee was asked about its attitude to the Full Moon Party, who lit a fire and played music every full moon. Given that all fires were banned by the Landowners, Christ Church, approval could not be given, but the reality was that the ban was unenforceable in practice, and the Full Moon Party removed all their rubbish from the site in what was after all a wild area. Adverse comment was directed not at them but at others who had burned stakes from enclosures and left a great deal of rubbish which FOAE had to remove.

A discussion on the desirability or otherwise of litter and dog waste bins took place. There are bins just outside the Eyot, and there were technical questions as to whom the duty to empty bins on the Eyot would fall, whether it was desirable that they should be there at all, and whether they would attract rubbish and overflow. The general view was that they were available near the gates outside the Eyot and were not needed on it.

A question was posed as to whether trees could be labelled. This was felt to be more appropriate to a park than a wild area, but the production of a map on which significant trees or groups of trees would be identified would be considered..