

MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the FRIENDS OF ASTON'S EYOT, held on Monday 13th November 2017 at the Gladiators Club, Iffley Road, Oxford.

PRESENT : The Committee: Anthony Cheke (co-chair and meeting chair) Ruth Ashcroft (co-chair) Laurence Burrell, (treasurer) Claire Malone Lee, (membership secretary) Greg Webster, Iona Argyle, Sue Rowe, James Martin, Thelma Martin (minutes secretary) In addition, 28 others were present of whom a list signed by 18 has been retained.

1, APOLOGIES were received from Penny Bassett, Sarah Buxton, Alison Bendy, Helen Evans, Troth Wells, Stuart Judge, Bernadette O'Reilly, Penelope Newsome, Ivan and Jacqueline Wright, Gwen and Amos Clarke, Sarah Wild.

2. MINUTES and MATTERS ARISING: The minutes of the 2016 AGM were made available for scrutiny at the meeting. There being no matters arising, they were accepted nem. con.

3. ANNUAL REPORT: Ruth Ashcroft presented and elaborated upon the Annual Report made available at the meeting thanking the committee and all who had assisted in work on the Eyot in the past year, and noting the contribution to larger projects requiring heavy labour provided by corporate work parties and Oxford Conservation Volunteers, and highlighting co-operation with other conservation bodies.. For the future, following signs of great crested newts attempting to breed in the seasonal pond on Long Meadow, the project to construct two ponds inaccessible to fish will be revived.

Claire Malone-Lee reported on the wildflower Patch Champions scheme, now two years old, stressing the valuable work done by pulling nettles and other invasive plants, giving Himalayan Balsam as an example, and appealing for more helpers, stressing that they could work on an informal basis, if they are confident they are able to distinguish such plants. She also introduced the new leaflet designed to thank dog walkers for picking up after their pets so that the borders where flower diversity flourishes will keep low fertility upon which native plants thrive, the Eyot being home to some 300 species.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT: Laurence Burrell presented the Treasurer's report copies having been provided at the meeting. While FOAE is currently in good standing at the bank, he emphasised that grants were only available for special projects and insurance, basic costs and the cost of employing the services of Oxford Conservation Volunteers to do necessary work all had to be covered by membership and donations) An appeal was made for dog walkers to encourage the others they meet, together with Eyot users such as joggers, walkers, fruit pickers etc to take out membership. The report was accepted, being proposed by Jackie Ingram and seconded by Janet Hall.

5. SUBSCRIPTIONS : The Committee's recommendation that subscriptions should remain at £5 and £3 for concessions was accepted nem. con. A suggestion was made from the floor that the level should be raised by a pound, but LB pointed out that the low level was firstly an encouragement to membership and secondly a minimum amount, so that larger donations could be made by those who wished.

RA suggested that an "email free" membership could be arranged for those who wished to support work on the Eyot but did not want to be the recipients of work party information.

6. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE for 2017-2018: The Committee being willing to stand for the coming year were duly elected. Greg Webster had indicated his willingness to step down if a replacement could be found, but there being no candidates, the exiting committee was elected unchanged, proposed by Jackie Ingram and seconded by Christine North. Tribute was paid to Tim Lee, who sadly died in January, for all he had contributed to FOAE.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS: Jackie Ingram alerted members to the cessation of weekly visits to the area of the "Cultivate" mobile shop from 27/11/17.

Virginia Hodgson drew the attention of the meeting to the dangers of ticks and to appropriate prevention and treatment of bites.

Following the formal business, of the meeting, AC presented footage captured by trail cameras set up overnight at the Kidneys bridge and at the Jackdaw Lane entrance of deer, badgers and foxes. From the footage it is deduced that at least ten badgers are coming in and out of the Eyot on a nightly basis. There are setts in the Convent Garden and on the playing field, so it may be that the badgers do not all originate on the Eyot. Thanks were expressed to Sue Rowe for setting up the cameras at dusk and collecting them and their data at Dawn.

Paul Jepson then announced his methodology in conducting, and provisional findings resulting from, the Badger Survey conducted in Iffley Fields to ascertain residents' experience of living with badgers and attitudes to them. His work is not yet complete and when it is he proposes to present his findings to a residents' meeting. Having delivered leaflets to 542 addresses, he received 210 individual replies. Opinion is divided, with most people being content to live alongside the creatures, but there was a strong body of opinion focussed on the nuisance caused in gardens and by raiding bins.. So far it is indicated that Badgers are liked because of their beauty, boldness, ability to live alongside humans and because their presence makes the area feel more rural. They are disliked because of destructiveness, in gardens, messy pillaging of food waste bins , threats to pets and other wildlife. A few respondents expressed fear of them. How the pattern of badger activity corresponds to opinions about them will be the subject of ongoing study.

Meeting closed at 9.10pm.

Thelma Martin