MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the FRIENDS OF ASTON'S EYOT held on Thursday 23rd November 20223 at 7.30 pm at the Gladiators Club, Iffley Road, Oxford.

Present: The Committee: Anthony Cheke,(co-chair) Ruth Ashcroft (co-chair), Laurence Burrell, (Treasurer) Susie Jakobsson (membership Secretary), Rosemary Cameron, Ash Stally Chudasama,
Thelma Martin (minutes) together with 16 members, a list of whom has been retained

Chairman's welcome to the meeting. Volunteers were thanked for their work.

1. Apologies were received from Jessica Upton, Denise Cullington, Claire Malone-Lee, Charlotte Ellis.

2. Minutes and matters arising:
Ash trees do not seem to have been as vulnerable to die-back as was feared because of drought, although the badger population was. Minutes accepted nem. con.

3. Annual report:
Ruth Ashcroft presented the annual report, explaining that a more formal version would be presented to the Charity Commission. She highlighted the signing of a lease of the Eyot from Christ Church, and the delays at the Land Registry of a year, meaning that it had not yet been registered formally.
Ash Stally Chudasama had overhauled and updated the website, and set up Paypal for donations. It was more user friendly and could be used on the Eyot from a smartphone
The Art Auction had been very successful and may well be repeated.
Grants, for which successful applications had been made were excellent for funding projects but not for routine maintenance, for which membership fees and donations were needed.
Footfall on the Eyot was lower than during Covid, but it was still busy. It is still said that the area was a life-saver during lock-down.
A scything course was planned.
There had been less anti-social behaviour than last year.
Conservation groups were thanked for their assistance. The Council were thanked, as they had moved sand and gravel in quantity over and above their contracted mowing work.
The design of deer exclosures with taller fences and measures against burrowing underneath seem to have deterred Muntjac at last, In unprotected areas, the numbers of species which deer will eat appear to increasing; they now eat teasels and burdocks. It is known that deer cross the Kidneys bridge as they have been photographed doing so, but they do not seem to graze out as much. It is not known why, and could be that it is a more open space with people and dogs loose.
An annual tree safety check is carried out, using Forestry Commission guidelines. Ash die back had remained stable, perhaps because of wetter weather which made it easier to take up water.
The Ponds Project was described and illustrated with a PowerPoint presentation. It will be fish free, and not a place to release overgrown terrapins. The largest will be about 80cm deep n the middle. The depth is to allow for evaporation, though the valuable areas are the shallow, warm regions around the edge.

4. Treasurer's Report: This was presented by Laurence Burrell. The final figure was misleading as large expenses funded by grants had not been paid out at the date of preparation of accounts. The final closing balance after deduction of grant money was

likely to be between four and five thousand pounds. The minutes were accepted, nem. con.
An increase in subscriptions was put the meeting:. There had been no increase since the inception of the Friends. An increase to a minimum of £8 was approved, nem.con.

5. Election of Trustees and committee members: Ruth Ashcroft, Laurence Burrell, Susie Jakobsson and Ash Stally Chudasama were required to stand down as trustees, the rest remaining in post. Their re-election having been proposed by Anthony Cheke and seconded by Jackie Ingram, they were duly elected. Rosemary Cameron remains as a non-trustee committee member. An appeal was made to the floor for those who might wish to join the committee to put themselves forward, on the basis that they could be co-opted.

6. Wildlife report: Butterflies: Red Admirals have abounded, but hardly any small tortoiseshells have been seen. The position has been repeated elsewhere, but it is uncertain why. It may be that there is a large increase in good years so parasites increase as well. If numbers begin to decline parasites have a larger effect, until they too follow the downward curve.
A PhD entomologist observing the Eyot reports that the Brown Hairstreak population is healthy. They are difficult to see as they inhabit treetops, but eggs are laid on Blackthorns. They prefer new growth so it is necessary to cut back to ensure fresh growth.
Birds: Ring neck parakeets are frequently seen. It has been a poor breeding year for tits as at least a third of nests failed to rear young. This could be due wet weather. There have been twice as many Great Tits as Blue Tits
Rabbits: The population appears to be up, from images caught on camera trap footage.
Badgers: There appear to be fewer, and no white individuals, but the number of cubs may be up. Four were observed during vaccination and on Camera.
Amphibians have been present but not in the numbers seen in the 1980s. Following discussion, those mowing the Kidneys Meadow would be asked if they could mow from the inside out to allow escape time for frogs and toads.
Brief sightings: Water Voles (two) Otters (two) Snipe, Water Rail.
Anthony Cheke suggested that FOAE should monitor Dragonflies. They were best identified by means of a photograph and then researched later.

AOB: After discussion, the view of members present was they they would not object to having forwarded to them events run by other organisations along the river corridor, East Oxford and Shotover. What would be sent would be a link, and no passing of FOAE members details to other bodies would take place. There was no objection to a seed sharing scheme.

Following the close of formal business, a montage of stills and films from the camera traps was shown. Sarah McFadden was thanked for her work with these, and Ivan Wright for the gift to FOAE of a surplus projector.

Meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Thelma Martin