

MINUTES OF THE 15TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF STORETON WOODS HELD ON TUESDAY 15TH MARCH 2005 IN VICTORIA HALL BEBINGTON

Present: The Chairman, 13 Committee members, Tim Kirwin (Woodland Trust), 30 members and guest speaker Gavin Hunter.

The Chairman, Ken Whittle, welcomed everyone to the meeting

1) Apologies: Received from Roger Jermy, Kathleen & Harold Maudsley, Rochelle McLean, Beryl Nelson, Penny Golby, Jean Whittle, Matt Adams, David Pitney, Jack & Joyce Friery.

2) Minutes of 14th AGM dated 16/03/04 and Matters Arising.

Minutes were distributed to the meeting and after a short period, were accepted as a true record. Proposed by Adrian Whittle, seconded by Mr. J.D.Allender. There were no matters arising from these minutes.

3) Chairman's Report.

Ken commenced his report by stating that over the past year, our activities have been widely publicised in Newsleaf which he hoped had everyone's approval and therefore the report would be kept short and concise.

Two outstanding events held during the past year were the Bat Walk by Tim Kirwin and the Flora and Fauna talk given by Dr. Hilary Ash and Dr. Mathilde Baker-Schommer. Both events attracted a large audience.

Our workdays are beginning to attract increases in the volunteers willing to spend a morning carrying out tasks such as litter picking to small tree felling. The committee feel encouraged by this response.

The problems of vanishing litter bins in Marsh Lane was discussed and that Clr. Sheila Clarke is working with the local authority in obtaining replacements as the need arises. If any member sees anything suspicious during their time in the woods, please contact any committee member or ring the Police.

Finally, Ken gave thanks to David Casement for the monies donated to the FOSW as a result of his many local talks given during the year, Edith Forsyth for the refreshments provided over the year and also to the committee.

Following the Chairman's report, a member raised a point about the state of the footpath from the Mount Road entrance during wet weather. Ken responded that footpath remedials were on the agenda for the coming months and Tim mentioned that the WT had monies in the budget for footpath work. This will be discussed by the committee at a future date.

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4) Treasurers Report.

A copy of the annual statement of Accounts for 2004 attached to the minutes issued was discussed, with Peter giving a resume' of the payments and receipts contained within the statement

He pointed out that the total balance held in the various accounts was healthy at £ 49,238-18. Income from the members subscription came to £2376 but donations exceeded this at £2579-90. He thanked David Casement for the £585 donated to us from the talks that he has presented to local groups over the year. Tax reclaimed through the Gift Aid scheme netted £624-18, a worthwhile effort.

Peter went to explain where the expenditure was, £3418-08 on Woodland management including wall repairs, tree surgery, grass cutting to the glades, gate and fence repairs, tree safety work after the gales. Printing costs increased this year as we had a reprint of the glossy info. leaflet. A new item introduced this year was the car stickers which went out to each member with the Newsleaf.

Peter's report was accepted by the members after being proposed by Len Moore and seconded by Margaret Pitney

Following the report, a member asked about Hancocks Wood and what would be the likely costs of acquiring it should it become available. The Chairman replied that discussions are stalled at the present with the Trustees but we hope approaches can be made in due course, as far as costs go they are unknown as these depend on current market values for woodland and the initial clear up costs.

5. Election To The Committee

As there were no new nominations received to serve on the committee, the Chairman asked for approval for the names of the retiring members seeking re-election namely: - Kitty Stower, Eric Forsyth, George Nelson, Dennis Clarke and Matt Adams to be re-elected en-bloc.

The members gave their approval en bloc.

One vacancy still remains.

6. Woodland Trust Report.-Tim Kirwin.

Tim reported on the actions taken since the last AGM including the making and displaying of the horse-rider signs as discussed last year. Tree felling works adjacent to Mount Road (mainly sycamore) was required on safety grounds following a survey. This should prevent any further damage to the boundary wall.

The bridle path was repaired in places during the latter half of 2004 as erosion was causing a problem.

Other works carried out by the WT during the year were Wintergreen control which is an ongoing problem and fencing repairs from vandal damage or natural wear and tear.

The Bat Walk was a success and Tim offered to lead another one if requested by the FOSW committee.

Works planned for 2005 include 20% thinning of the Silver Birch , footpath repairs as and when required.

A question was asked by a member whether any bats were seen or heard, Tim replied that 3 species were located by the detector during the evening and expanded on this by explaining the species and reasons for possible lack of other sightings.

Another question raised was on Japanese Knotweed being noticed in the woods. Tim responded by stating that it is an ongoing problem and perhaps during workdays action taken to remove and bag it. The disadvantage is that it cannot be disposed of in recycling centres such as Clatterbridge but must be burnt or treated chemically. Tim is adverse to chemical treatment if other means are available.

7. Constitution Changes.

There were no changes tabled.

8. Independant Examiner Ratification.

Peter asked members for approval to retain Mr.A.White as the Independent Examiner of the FOSW accounts for 2005. This was approved 'en-bloc' following Gordon Plumb proposing the motion and seconded by George Nelson.

9. Annual Subscription.

The chairman stated that your committee had agreed to maintain the £3 annual subscription in view of the healthy financial account. This was greeted with approval from the floor.

10. Correspondence Received.

The secretary stated that no correspondence had been received for the attention of the AGM.

11. Any Other Business.

i) A basket of flowers was presented to Edith Forsyth for the catering organisation during the year.

ii) As there were no points raised, the chairman brought the meeting to a close at 20-10 hrs. with a request for members to stay for refreshments and the presentation by our guest speaker.

After the refreshment break, an interesting and informative presentation on the Leverhulme Estates was given by the guest speaker Mr.Gavin Hunter, who is the Honorary Historian to the Leverhulme Estate.

Using Power-point presentation he gave a brief history of the three Lord Leverhulme's and how they acquired the land which now forms the Leverhulme estates from the North of Scotland down to London and including the Wirral Estates.

With the aid of old maps, drawings and photographs, Gavin was able to show how the Wirral estate grew. Apart from Port Sunlight, land was bought in Bromborough down to the docks with a view to develop it for industry, leisure and residential.

There were views of the Oval as it was built and an area of land highlighted on an old map of a proposed new stadium where the Croft Business park is today.

Working towards the Storeton area, Gavin displayed the master plan developed during the years 1900-1913 for wide roads and large housing estates to be built between Kings Lane - Lever Causeway with estate roads and houses within our woods. Hence Lever Causeway is wide with broad verges as this would have been a dual carriageway. This would have led to Brimstage and Thornton Hough. Evidence of the grand entrance driveway to Thornton Hall is visible in the area. A note of interest when looking at the old maps of the Leverhulme Estate showed that the roads proposed or built were in straight lines with little or no bends in them.

Gavin finally touched upon the village of Landican which is part of the Wirral Estate and that Landican Cemetery which is built on Leverhulmes Estate land.

After the presentation there was a good question and answer session and reminiscence by some of the members.