



FRIENDS OF STORETON WOODS



REGISTERED CHARITY No.1001472

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CHAIR- Eric Forsyth

WORKING WITH THE WOODLAND TRUST FOR THE BENEFIT OF STORETON WOODS

MINUTES OF THE 20TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FRIENDS OF STORETON WOODS HELD TUESDAY 13TH April 2010. VICTORIA HALL BEBINGTON.

Present: The Chairman, 12 Committee members, Tim Kirwin (Woodland Trust), 22 members and 1 guest.

1. Apologies: Received from Matt Adams, Rochelle Mclean, Beryl Nelson, Duncan Allender, and Julie Scarisbrick.

2. Minutes of 19th AGM dated 07/04/09 and Matters Arising.

2.1 Minutes were distributed at the meeting and had been available on the website. After a short period they were accepted as a true record following a proposal by George Nelson and seconded by Jeff Stacey. There were no matters arising from these minutes.

3. Chairman Report.

- 3.1 Eric mentioned that through the Woodland Trust, Mount Road wall had been repaired based on the condition survey carried out in 2008.
- 3.2 Tree safety work has been carried out during the year resulting in 21 trees being felled.
- 3.3 Eric briefly talked about the acts of vandalism relating to the some trees being "chopped down" by someone wielding an axe. Although the police were informed, the culprits were not identified or caught.
- 3.4 The wildflowers that were planted in late 2006 are now well established with around 80% surviving.
- 3.5 This lead onto the announcement that Eric will be conducting a "flower walk through the woods" on July 10th commencing at 16.00hrs from Marsh Lane. Full details will be in Newsleaf (next edition).
- 3.6 Eric thanked Gordon Plumb for the making and replacement of the new style benches that have appeared in the woods during the past year.
- 3.7 The management committee was thanked for their support and effort during the past year.
- 3.8 Following the conclusion of the report, a member raised a question over the development of acquiring Hancocks Wood. Eric replied that contact is being maintained with the Leverhulme Estates and only this month we had a communication from them confirming no new developments, but the Trustees are scheduled to visit the woods during the summer months.

4. Treasurer Report.

- 4.01 Peter explained the summary of the 2009 accounts that had been attached to the minutes. Receipts were £6166-36; expenditure was £2433-00 therefore showing a surplus of £3733-36 for the year.
- 4.02 We have a healthy balance in the total account held of £69,572-89 and membership remains constant over the 700 mark.
- 4.03 There was a slight increase in the subscriptions and donations due to some members paying already for 2 years in advance in 2008. Gift Aid claims refunded a healthy £541-87 over the 12 months period.
- 4.04 Our main expenditure last year was £ 1,028-30 on Woodland Management. This was split between the wall repair on Mount Road, tree safety work and replacing the benches (materials)
- 4.05 Peter highlighted that our invested monies, like everyone else's, suffered a further downturn in the interest paid on the accounts held (down by £2300 from 2008).
- 4.06 Peter also mentioned that the current account funds are now held by Nationwide having changed at the end of 2009 from the Halifax.
- 4.07 The decision to discontinue selling the shopping bags was explained however "T" towels and badges are still available.
- 4.08 At the end of Peter's report, a member queried whether the Charity Commissioner was concerned about the large amount of money being held in reserve - Peter replied that the committee had issued a reserves policy last year following guidelines from the Charity Commission and that is now being applied.
- 4.09 There were no further queries.

5. Election to the Committee.

- 5.1 George Bowler, Valerie Old and Barrie Old were re-elected 'en bloc' on a show of hands.
- 5.2 Mrs. Kitty Stower, with great regret, offered her resignation and this was accepted by the committee. Eric thanked her on behalf of the members for the role she has played for a number of years whilst on the committee.
- 5.3 Joanne Shennan has agreed to become a committee member after her nomination paper was endorsed by the management committee. Members, on a show of hands, ratified this appointment
- 5.4 There were no further nominations for the remaining vacancy on the committee.

6. The Woodland Trust Report. – Tim Kirwin

6.1. Tim commenced his report by thanking the FOSW Chairman, committee and especially Kitty for their work in supporting and maintaining the woods on behalf of the Woodland Trust over the past 20 years.

6.2 He briefly explained the changes within the Woodland Trust staffing structure stating that he now manages the NW only and that Clare Burnside has been relocated to cover the North Wales region. Simon has also had his area enlarged.

6.3 The theme within the WT is Woodland Creation, with the focus on using land not owned by them to plant trees on.

6.4 Tim stated that it was a quiet year for them regarding Storeton Woods with only the wall repairs and tree safety work. The latter will continue on a yearly basis.

6.5 He mentioned that future work in 2010 programmed is the renovation of the display boards at each of the main entrances and he has organised a Bat Walk through the woods on September 20th starting at 19.45hrs. Details will be announced in Newsleaf well in advance.

6.6 A question from the floor about the bird boxes within the woods was replied in that no activity has been noted recently.

7. Constitution Changes.

7.1 None tabled.

8. Independent Examiner Ratification.

8.1 Peter asked the members for approval to re-appoint Mr. Alan White as the Independent Examiner of the FOSW accounts for 2010. It was carried on a show of hands.

9. Annual Subscription.

9.1 Based on the healthy financial accounts, the management committee had decided to maintain the annual subscription at £3 per person. Members ratified this decision on a show of hands.

10. Correspondence Received.

10.1 There was no correspondence for discussion.

11. Website Report 2009/10

11.1 The Secretary, on behalf of Matt Adams, gave a brief overview on the progress made in the upgrade of the website based on Matt's report. Although we had started in 2008 to redesign the website, most of it was available during 2009 but unfortunately the web designer we had commissioned suffered a serious illness that put the project on hold. The good news is that it is now back on track and the committee with access to the internet are able to view the test site for comment. It is hoped to go live during middle of the year.

At present, the existing site is being kept up to date with new articles being added as well as updating future events etc.

11.2 During 2009 a total of just under 3000 different visitors accessed the site. Popular articles were the Storeton Tramway, "our woods" information page and Memories of Storeton.

11.3 The most visitors to our website appear to access it from the USA with the UK being second and Spain in third place. We are definitely worldwide.

11.4 Matt ends his report with a request for more articles, stories, photographs, poetry etc to be sent to him.

12. Any Other Business.

12.1. The Chairman informed the members that due to the possible closure of the Village Hall by WBC, the committee are looking for a suitable replacement venue for the AGM's. Suggestions from the floor were the British Legion Hall and the Civic Centre. These will be considered and a decision as to the next AGM date and venue will be discussed by the management committee during the next couple of months and announced in Newsleaf.

12.2 A member queried about producing a calendar based on the photographic display that was being shown at the AGM and from the website. Eric replied that the management committee would consider the suggestion as to the viability and cost of production. It was mentioned that many years ago we had produced some Christmas cards on a small scale but the cost of production was large

12.3 As there were no further questions, the AGM came to a close at 20.12hrs with an invitation to remain for refreshments followed by a presentation given by David Casement.

After the break, David Casement gave an interesting presentation on the life and work of Mr. Thomas Brassey (1805-1870) born in the Cheshire village of Aldford and became a Surveyor, Railway Engineer and Contractor of Public Works during his career. Using slides and photographs, David told the story of how Thomas started as an apprentice surveyor at 16 gaining practical experience working on the A5 Shrewsbury-Holyhead road for Thomas Telford. He became acquainted with the Storey Family of Hooton Hall and took on the operation of

running Storeton Hill Quarries for them. From there he developed brickworks in Birkenhead and lived for a while in Whetstone Lane before building a house, from Storeton Stone, in Ashville Road (Holgate House) for his wife. The Storeton Tramway that ran from the quarry to Bromborough Pool came from an idea following a meeting between Thomas Brassey and George Stephenson when the latter visited the quarries looking for stone to be used on the Liverpool-Manchester railway.

David showed some photographs of the examples of Storeton Stone being used in the Sankey Viaduct Warrington, also the bridge at Saughall Massie over the River Arrow constructed by Brassey in 1829.

During his life, Thomas Brassey was famed for building or being involved with 1/20th of the world's railways apart from Africa.

David explained that on 7th November 2005, a plaque was unveiled on Chester Railway station commemorating Thomas Brassey for his work.

He ended his presentation with a summary of the life of the man as follows; Born 1805; early 1830's –Building roads on the Wirral; 1840/1850's – building railways in the world apart from in Africa; 1850's constructing part of Birkenhead Docks for the Dock Company; 1861- constructing sewers in London. 1870-died of Cancer leaving £3.2m in his will.