

14th Friends of Weir Wood Annual General Meeting.

Minutes of the AGM held at the Weirwood Sailing Clubhouse on 14th April 2011. The meeting opened at 7.15pm.

Present. Bob Johnson [Chairman], Glen Tocher [Treasurer], Derek Washington [Website Editor], Committee members - Roy Sanderson, Shaun Taylor, Barbara Mortlock, Peter Erridge, Alan Caulkett, Shirley Dunsmore-Rouse and 9 members.

Apologies for absence.

John Kinchington [Secretary], Peter Johnson [Newsletter Editor] Ken McManamon [Ranger], Nigel Driver [Committee] Doug Roberts [Auditor], Henrietta Gordon, Audrey Wende, Andrew Guest, Norah & Michael Wretham.

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming members to the 14th AGM of the Society. A notebook was circulating for members to record their presence at this meeting.

Minutes of 2010 AGM.

These had been circulated, copies were available at the back of the room.

Two minor alterations were required. On page 1 Peter's surname should be spelt Erridge. Then on page 5 under the heading Glen Tocher – Treasurer. In the paragraph starting with 'Barbara Mortlock' the penultimate sentence has an error. The words 'by bequeath' should be deleted as they have no meaning and the sentence should read – 'This is the way Roy had set up the Friends of Weir Wood and had been approved.'

The Chairman then asked for approval of these corrected minutes.

Proposed by: Shaun Taylor Seconded by: Roy Sanderson and carried unanimously.

Matters arising from 2010 AGM Minutes.

Last year the Treasurer had advised that we needed to raise the subscription charges from £2 to cover our rising costs. The Committee proposed raising the subscriptions by 50p to £2.50 the minimum necessary. There was a proposal from the floor of the AGM to raise subscriptions further to £3, the argument for this being that £3 was still considered a low fee. This proposal was approved by the meeting.

To abide by our Constitution Rules this was further discussed at the next Committee meeting and approved by an overwhelming majority for a £3 subscription rate. This became effective on 1st October 2010 and all 2011 subscriptions are now at this new £3 rate.

That concluded the matters arising.

Chairman's Report.

An 'Open Day' was held on Sunday July 11th in good weather. Groups were taken over to the meadow pond for pond dipping although the numbers for this activity were disappointing.

Activities in the bird hide Car Park included:

- a display of Moths caught the night before and later released.
 - bird song identification information with songs and calls being played through a loudspeaker.
 - information sheets and displays of wildlife in general.
 - Ken, the Ranger and some of his assistants were on hand to talk and answer questions about the reserve.
 - telescopes had been set up for people to use, with experts to help identify the birds seen around the reserve.
- drinks and biscuits were available.

The Weald Forest Ridge Millennium footpath improvement was officially opened at the dam end on that day, with several dignitaries attending.

Michael Evans from the Weir Wood fishery gave a demonstration of how to fly fish cast as part of the activities on the build up to the official opening.

We intend to hold another Open Day this year, around late July/Early August and hope to include some bird ringing displays in the study area, weather permitting.

Bob continued by highlighting some of the conservation work and activities we have carried out.

The meadow pond was still looking good, and we have been allowing some winter flooding over part of the adjacent meadow to help some of the marsh plants, and improve the habitat.

In Whillets meadows along the archery fence, the hedge planted a few years ago has had another section 'laid' by Ken and his team this year. This is where the hedge plants are bent over at an angle, which in our case improves the habitat for wildlife and nesting birds in particular.

Two Otter holts have been built along the river margins in the last 12 months.

At Whillets and the study area we are now looking to try to improve the habitat for wild flowers and butterflies. Butterfly recording has been neglected in recent years so with regular recording we will monitor the improvement of the site

By chance in 2010, the Butterfly Conservation (Sussex Branch) launched a 5 year project to map the distribution of the 45 butterfly species found in Sussex. The results will be published as the Sussex Butterfly Atlas.

Their database holds very few records from our part of Sussex, so we have agreed to send records for 3 Tetrads that include Weir Wood TQ4034 Dam end, TQ3834 West End, TQ3634 Whillets Meadows.

We have a few information sheets and recording forms on display for anyone interested in recording butterflies around the reserve or elsewhere in Sussex for that matter. Supplies of recording sheets for any tetrads, can be requested directly from the Butterfly Conservation. (Details on the info sheet)

We hope to have a speaker from the Sussex Butterfly Conservation Trust for next year's AGM.

Whillets Pool reed bed was cleared of overhanging trees and looking good. The island is now being managed to make it attractive for nesting birds. (Canada Geese are already interested)

We had a major clearance of trees along Pintail Bank which had become too over grown, the intention was to encourage ducks and Snipe back. Subsequent sightings of Snipe along Pintail Bank indicate that this is working.

The Heronry is in full swing with at least 23 nests, chicks have already been seen in some nests.

In the last few days we have been getting regular sightings of an Osprey which is excellent news.

Old rotten wooden nest boxes are being replaced with new long life woodcrete boxes, a further £300 was spent recently as part of that improvement programme.

Thanks went to Shaun, our building work expert, always ready to offer help, he organises and helps with all the hide repairs, gutters, shutter catches, doors and shelves and has organised and assisted with much of the tern raft work.

Shaun and Alan are now our nest box monitoring team and have been assisting Roy in the study area.

Bob also wanted to particularly thank Ken McManamon our ESCC Ranger for all the hard work he does for us, and thanks to all the volunteers Ken brings with him.

Thanks went to Glenn for his hard work as our Treasurer. He is also our regular main-stay on the Tuesday work parties and helps co-ordinate with Ken and the 'Friends' volunteers on Tuesdays. There are usually 6-7 plus 'occasionals', anyone interested is welcome to join us at the hide car park 10.15 on Tuesdays.

The whole reservoir bank area had become very overgrown. The volunteers have completed a lot of important work including tree and scrub clearance work, some beyond the Local Nature Reserve [LNR] area down toward the dam end of the reservoir and at the picnic site. Bob said we are indebted to these volunteers and he would like to thank them, as the reserve cannot be maintained without their efforts

Thanks went to the winter bird feeding team of David Martin and Shirley Dunsmore Rouse plus Bob himself. The feeders being refilled 3 times a week.

We are just about stopping the main feeders now, which will resume again in the Autumn.

There is also a ground level log feeder which Derek looks after; it is more for bird photography opportunities and continues into the summer.

Bob gave thanks to Derek for all the hard work he has put in for the Society. He is a regular at working parties, and has volunteered to get involved in several projects for Weir Wood, such as butterfly conservation. He has also happily taken on problems like chasing Councils over fly tipping etc., which helps Bob and John Kinchington as they are still in full time employment and have limited time for these matters that need resolving during the week.

Derek's main job is still running the website which goes from strength to strength and is proving very popular. He reports over 10,000 hits last year from 36 countries and all continents except Antarctica! A new development is setting hyperlinks from sightings to some of the photographs. He will listen to other suggestions from members.

We do know that not everyone is on the internet, so thanks went to Bob's son Peter who continues to edit our quarterly Newsletter. This is still appreciated by a lot of people and still remains one of our main formats for passing on information to the membership.

Bob finally thanked all the Committee generally for their efforts, dedication and hard work. Roy although now retired as Chairman is still very active and involved. Peter E is our Dragonfly recorder, publicity officer, and also very involved with working parties. Barbara collates and sends the bird records to the SOS. Shirley is involved with the bird feeders. Alan is on the nest box team and very involved with the working parties. John takes the meeting minutes, and covers some secretarial duties. Nigel is active with bird sightings and records.

Treasurer's report.

It was advised that members should have received a copy with their last Newsletter. Copies were also available at the meeting.

Glen reported that for 2010 the subscriptions had only just covered the expenses. This year many members had paid their 2011 subscriptions early, so the final figures for last year were flattered with some of this year's payments.

Some years ago when our hide had to be rebuilt a separate 'Hide fund' was set up. Monies left over from the rebuild had been used for maintenance but these had now run out. Glenn now proposed that he would close the empty Hide account and any works on the hide would be paid for out of the conservation fund. Glenn asked if there were any questions but there were none.

Acceptance of the accounts.

Proposed by: Alan Caulkett Seconded by: Shaun Taylor

Our auditor, Doug Roberts, was thanked for his excellent work and has kindly agreed to stand as auditor again for 2012.

Proposed by: Shaun Taylor Seconded by: Bob Johnson

Election of Committee and Officers

No other candidates were willing to stand for any of the Officers or Committee member posts.

Chairman - Bob Johnson was re-elected.

Proposed by: Roger Tullett Seconded by: Alan Caulkett

Secretary - John Kinchington was re-elected.

Bob advised that John had apologised to the Committee regarding his recent absences, mainly due to other commitments. John advised Bob he would like to continue, and wanted to get more involved on the Committee.

Proposed by: Bob Johnson Seconded by: Shaun Taylor

Treasurer - Glenn Tocher was re-elected.

Proposed by: Bob Johnson Seconded by: Alan Caulkett

Committee Members standing for re-election

Committee Member & Newsletter Editor – Peter Johnson

Committee Member – Shaun Taylor

Committee Member – Peter Erridge

Committee Member – Shirley Dunsmore-Rouse

Committee Member – Barbara Mortlock

Committee Member – Alan Caulkett

Committee Member – Derek Washington

Committee Member – Roy Sanderson

Committee Member – Nigel Driver

There were no other nominations. All were agreed

Proposed by: Mark Roberts Seconded by: Judy Johnson

Question and answer session.

Bob asked if there were any questions but none were raised.

Before closing the meeting Bob thanked the Sailing Club for accommodating us and to John Chisnall and Chris Fyans, of the Club who came to our rescue, when we had a crisis with arranging access.

Refreshments were available with tea or coffee and biscuits at 50p at the mid talk interval, all the proceeds of which went towards our funds.

Thanks went to Judy Johnson, Maggie Washington and Maree Tocher for their help in arranging the refreshments.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.

Minutes taken by Peter Erridge for John Kinchington.