

## 18<sup>th</sup> Friends of Weir Wood Society Annual General Meeting.

Minutes of the AGM held at Forest Row Community Centre on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2015. The meeting commenced at 7.15pm.

Appreciation: Before starting the formal business Bob announced the death of Derek Washington. A member since 2002, joined Committee as Website Editor in 2009. His hard work and dedication resulted in an excellent website. His passion for photography meant the website rightly had a reputation for excellent photographs, with Derek encouraging everyone to send in pictures. In declining health he left the committee in 2014 but volunteering to maintain the website.

Derek was very knowledgeable on wildlife becoming actively involved with the management of the reserve. His main interest was butterflies and he set up and ran our butterfly transect recording system for Whillet's meadows. A very practical person he was a regular member of the Tuesday working parties, later despite his failing health. Over the years Derek has donated many items to the Friends to assist in our conservation work. His input to the Friends has been considerable. He was kind and generous and was always willing to help anyone in need.

He will be missed by all who knew him. Our thoughts must now be for his wife, Maggie and family.

### AGM

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7.20pm, by welcoming members to the 18<sup>th</sup> AGM of the Society. A notebook was on the table at the back for members to record their presence at this meeting.

Present: Bob Johnson [Chairman], Glenn Tocher [Treasurer], Alan Caulkett, Shirley Dunsmore-Rouse, Peter Erridge [Minutes Secretary], Phil Holland, Peter Johnson, Barbara Mortlock, Shaun Taylor, of the Committee. Eleven other members attended.

Apologies for absence: Doug Roberts [Auditor], Andrew Guest, Maggie Washington, Monica Hopkins.

#### 1. Approval of 2014 AGM Minutes.

Copies of the 2014 AGM minutes were available at the back of the room. No alterations were suggested. The Chairman asked that they be accepted as a true and accurate record. Given by a show of hands.

#### 2. Matters arising.

A] Management contract. In April last year our contract had expired and SW refused access to us until a new contract had been signed resulting in a 3 months delay for the work parties. The new contract was for 42 Ranger visits and a budget of £700, held by ESCC, for grass cutting and other approved expenditure for wildlife management at the site. All the Ranger visits took place and we were reimbursed in full for expenditure.

#### B] Open Day 2014

On Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July with dry sunny weather we held an "Open Day". Static displays at the hide Car Park included a second hand book sale, moth display, and reservoir bird watching. Other activities such as our regular bird ringing demonstration, pond dipping and guided flower meadow walks, were all held over at Whillet's meadows.

The numbers of visitors were not huge, but enough to keep our helpers quite busy. We made £48 towards funds from donations and gifts etc., but in future we will do more to encourage visitors to become members. A success that justifies repeating the event.

### 3. Chairman's Report.

An update regarding the running and management of the Society and Nature Reserve, and highlight some of the work which we completed last year.

A] Website. This had to be temporarily put on hold, but is now up and running again. Our computer expert Peter Johnson has adapted the site to make it easier to maintain for anyone wishing to take over. Peter then explained to the meeting some of the changes he has made. The website programme has been changed to WordPress which makes updating and maintenance much easier. Moving information from the old website is time consuming and so far only the most commonly accessed sections have been incorporated. The remainder will soon be transferred. Peter will remain as consultant for the website but the new website editor will look after the site.

B] Site meeting. On 6<sup>th</sup> February there was a site meeting with our SSSI Natural England representative and the Southern Water ecologist. They were taken around and shown what we have been doing. They were pleased with what they saw.

I was asked to produce a 5 year Management Plan rather than 12 monthly extensions as previous years. The new plan is prepared for Southern Water which then has to be approved by NE. Be assured this does not put any duty on the "Friends" to complete all the work within the plan, we assist ESCC in carrying out work within that plan.

C] Contract. The new contract with Southern Water has a slight financial increase by raising the Ranger visits from 42 to 45 over the 12 months, and again includes a £700 fund to pay for grass cutting and any approved necessary reserve management costs. The contracts have been signed and we are now running under the new contract.

#### D] Work programme.

i) A significant decision was to carry out work along North bank outside of the LNR boundary. We normally concentrate our main efforts within the LNR.

Two large meadows along North bank from the picnic area towards the dam wall had been good flower meadows which had become neglected due to SW no longer running a grass cutting programme. Now overgrown with tree scrub and blackthorn etc. we decided they should be saved before further deterioration. A huge area was cleared and both meadows have now had a grass cut, their first in many years.

ii) The area immediately dam side of the Canoeist's Car Park has also had clearance work to restore the views from both the Anne & Ted Lecomber's seats.

iii) At Whillet's Pool in the autumn, trees were cleared around the reed bed and a channel through the reed bed was re-opened. One result was that for a few weeks during December/January we had over 100 winter roosting reed bunting visiting with a peak count of over 200, and a water rail was also around.

iv) A programme of replacing some of our old nest boxes that are in poor condition are now nearing completion. 7 new bat boxes were also built and erected. Progress has been made on the control of the Grey Alder in the study area with more trees being cut down or ring barked, and suckering saplings cleared making some open glades where we have also cut back bramble.

v) Over the last 12 months, we fitted a new reserve boundary buoy rope across the reservoir. Two rafts broke their moorings, one was repaired plus new anchorages needed, the other was beyond repair and replaced with a new one constructed by our skilful Tuesday group. The bird hide was painted inside and out, plus various maintenance repairs and some new ID charts.

Our volunteers have accomplished a lot, come along and see for yourself at our forthcoming events.

#### 4. Treasurer's report.

Glenn, our Treasurer, reported a stable financial position, however costs are rising. The cost of distributing the Newsletter has been reduced through members accepting electronic transmission, saving £200. We need to keep the subscription as low as possible to maintain a strong membership since we can be a pressure group to resist threats such as the clay pigeon project. Donations last year amounted to £600 which is helpful.

As co-ordinator of the Tuesday work group he thanked the members for their help throughout the year. He went on to thank Bob on behalf of everyone for all his hard work and enthusiasm as Chairman.

No questions were raised. Acceptance of the accounts was omitted at this point but approval by a show of hands was given after the Elections [Item 7].

Auditor. Bob thanked Doug Roberts for again ensuring that our records and accounts are in order. He has agreed to continue. The meeting approved his re-election by a show of hands.

#### 5. Forthcoming events.

Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May – Members' Bird and Spring Walk. Hide car park 9.15am. for the Research area walk or 11.0am for Meadow walk. Members' families welcome. A chance to see some of the recent work to improve the site for nature, admire the spring woodland flowers and maybe spot some of the nesting birds. The meadows will provide an opportunity to see the flowers, insects and the ponds.

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July – Public Open Day. Southern Water has agreed this date. The programme, yet to be finalised, is likely to follow the pattern of last year. Details later via Newsletter and Website.

#### 6. Election of Committee and Officers.

Two members are seeking election

Website manager – Tom Howard-Jones. Approved by a show of hands

Butterfly recorder – Richard Lowe. Approved by a show of hands.

Shirley Dunsmore-Rouse has decided to stand down. After many years on the committee this founder member of the Friends was thanked for all the work she has done for the Society and the meeting gave a round of applause.

Bob thanked the hard working committee –

Glenn as Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Work group co-ordinator.

Peter Erridge as Minutes Secretary, Publicity Officer and meeting organiser

Peter Johnson for his website work and Newsletter production.

Shaun, Alan, Phil and Colin who carry out the construction and maintenance work as well as nest box recording. Shaun also designs and carries out a lot of the project work such as tern raft construction.

Barbara our bird recorder for SOS.

Bird feeder team – David Martin and Duncan Dunsmore-Rouse, who has taken his Mother's place.

Election of Officers.

Chairman – Bob Johnson. No other nominations. Approved.

Treasurer – Glenn Tocher. No other nominations. Approved.

Minutes Secretary - Peter Erridge. No other nominations. Approved.

Election of Committee members.

Peter Johnson, Shaun Taylor, Barbara Mortlock, Alan Caulkett and Phil Holland have all agreed to stand again. The re-election was taken en bloc and approved by a show of hands.

7. Any other business – Question and answer session.

The omission of the acceptance of the Accounts [Item 4] was raised and approval given.

There were no questions. Bob thanked the Refreshment team of Judy, Maureen and Marie.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 7.42pm.

Peter Erridge

Minutes Secretary

13/4/15