

# FRIENDS OF ABBEY FIELDS

## THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Held on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 at the Senior Citizens Club, Abbey End Car Park, Kenilworth

1. **Welcome** – the Chair welcomed those present, especially Jon Holmes of the WDC and our Speaker for the evening, Neil Rimmington of Historic England.
2. **Apologies** for absence were received from: Sue Martin, Tony and Anne Gilmore, Susan Tall, Clive Nelson, Clive Stone and Heather Alford.
3. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 were approved.
4. Matters arising:
5. **Chairman Report**

Keith Rockett reported that it had been an active and productive year. The Committee had met 7 times and there had been 3 planting sessions. We had produced another calendar, the proof of which was on display tonight, and he thanked Pat Smith and Linda Pettifor for their hard work in choosing the photographs. The Treasurer had kept control of Finance, Sam had kept the membership healthy and had worked hard on the website to keep our members well informed and up to date. Linda has produced 4 issues of the Newsletter, and he thanked Emmerson Press for giving us support in producing it. He had some concern about the Wildflower Meadow, asking Jon Holmes to give us an update, but thought that we may just need to be patient. He went on to thank Dave Rickers for his work on Litter Picking and the other social events he had arranged. The weather had not been too bad for the Lions Show and in the end we had taken £100 – he thanked our helpers at the Show; Agnes Wylie, Ann Blacklock, Jarina Porter and Brenda Heath.

KR said he was pleased to see the paths improved and that when wet the drainage seemed to be doing its job. Our new project of Activity Stations had proceeded with researching joggers, then we met the WDC on site and put details on the website. This was followed by a meeting with Ian George of English Heritage who approved 2 of our sites suggested but changed one to near the Ford. Although there would be no digging required, Ancient Monument consent would still be needed. In June local community groups had been consulted as well as the Kenilworth District Council, and finally Councillor Shilton had given his approval. Following a discussion with the WDC regarding the equipment, they will then go ahead for approval and we will then be applying for grants. We hope we can now go forward with this project. KR thanked the Committee for all of their efforts.

6. **Secretary's Report**

Pat Smith reported that we had held 3 working parties this year; the final phase of the Meadow planting on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014; Bulb planting around trees on Abbey Hill on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2014; and Snowdrop planting around the Play Area on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2015. PS thanked those members who had come along and helped as it made much lighter work of the task. PS had produced a Birds on Lake Poster that had been submitted to the WDC Print Room for approval. PS also reported that the 2016 calendar should be in the shops by the beginning of August at a cost of £6 each; members could pre-order them from Sam Sexton. Finally PS said that at the Meadow planting Jon Holmes had reported seeing a little owl in one of the Oaks, as they had obviously been using the meadow to hunt prey. This had led to the purchase of an owl box to put in that Oak tree, which in due

course was donated by the Warwick Natural History Society.

Jon Holmes responded – on Paths that there was still some work needed with grass seed to blend in the edges to finish them off properly. Regarding Drainage – a hole under the path with 2 sumps had been carried out. In order to extend the path under the sump permission to do further work was needed to get the water away quicker. Regarding the Meadow – this had started well; the seed bank was now there; it only needs a few of each seed to bed in; it is a long term project. We could add more yellow rattle seed to keep the process going. With the moist conditions the grass was growing quickly – another early cut may be needed next year and more yellow rattle seed sown. It would prove to be a real asset for future generations. The Information Board had been produced by Pat Smith and was now with the WDC for further work as they wished to include more information on the site now being assigned as a designated wildlife area – in due course a notice board and 2 lecterns would be placed around the Lake.

Jim Dunlop remarked that as the No Fishing signs were missing there was nowhere for the Heron to perch. Jon Holmes responded that the Fishermen had brought them down when they dragged the Lake with their nets. They had been put back up but had not been knocked in far enough and they must have fallen over. It was suggested that they be put up nearer the banks to avoid this problem.

#### **7. Treasurer's Report**

Gordon Mitchell first remarked on how magnificent the Wildflower Meadow and the Butterfly Garden were looking, as well as the area around the Play Area. Our finances were looking much better than he had anticipated this year; we had started with £8,000 and finished with £9,200, despite spending money on various things. The insurance premium was down to £44 as he had previously paid for an annual policy and now purchased an event by event cover, which had proved much more economical. We had donated £100 to the Harry Sunley Tantara Project. He mentioned the walks and talks arranged by Dave Rickers, which the annual subscription was worth paying even if members only attended one of them. With the Wildflower Meadow, some members were happy to participate where as some just like to donate; both are welcomed by the Committee. The money received in this year's accounts had increased as the membership year had been changed so now overlapped with last year's. Also we had received some Gift Aid from the Charity Commission. We had also received 3 donations from bereavements, including one of our Patrons, Adrian Rowe-Evans. We had also been given a large donation from Emmerson Press following an award they had received through their environment friendly work. We had also received a good amount from sponsors of our 2016 calendar, as well as a small amount of bank interest.

When asked if there were any questions on the accounts, Suzette Garrett asked about the donations to WDC. GM responded that these were payment for the plants used in the 3 working parties, and that perhaps donations was the wrong word to use. He also explained that the £100 taken at the Lions Show had been reduced to £85 after paying for the pitch. Jim Dunlop proposed that the Accounts be accepted, and Ann Blacklock seconded the proposal.

GM then proposed that the subscriptions should remain at £7.50 as we were well in funds and £5,000 had been allocated to the Activity Stations, although we would be applying for grants. We had no other major projects, and the project proposed for next year should be well within the funds raised on the 2016 calendar sales. He therefore recommended that the subscriptions remain the same. This was agreed by those present.

GM then stated that with regard to the Auditors for next year that he should continue with the same Volunteer Auditor, Mr. Steven Copley. This was agreed by those present.

**8. Membership Secretary's Report and Website:**

Sam Sexton reported that since the last AGM we had gained 13 new members. One member had died but her husband had taken over her membership. We now have 151 members who have renewed their subscriptions and 45 still to renew. Both of our Corporate Members had also renewed this year. In response to GM's comments on the subscriptions remaining at £7.50, he said that quite a few members actually round up their payment to £10 to include a donation, which is very gratefully received. KR remarked that as we have 190 members that meant that there were over 10% in attendance at this AGM.

On the Website Sam pointed out that he has set up an Updates Page to direct people to current events easier. He will be putting the photographs for the 2016 calendar on the site very soon and members will be able to request advance orders via email, through the web or via an advance orders notice that will be in the next Newsletter. He does put a notice of our events on the Streetlife.com website. At the last AGM he had been asked how many 'hits' the website gets. This was quite difficult to gauge as there were hits from as far afield as Brazil and the Ukraine, but he believed that it was between 350 and 900 visitors per month. He had now disabled the spam comments. He asked for members to please let him know if anything needed adding.

**9. Newsletter:**

Linda Pettifor asked if there was anything members would like to see in the Newsletter that she would be very pleased to hear from them. In order to bring it up to date they were thoughts of putting it on line in order to move with the times; she asked for members' thoughts on that. One member remarked on how nicely presented it was. Linda stated that we were very grateful to Emmerson Press who printed it free of charge so it did not cost us anything. Suzette Garrett stated that as she was not on the internet she would prefer to still receive a hard copy. She said however that she would be willing to pay more to still receive a copy. Joan Rockett said that she also found the internet difficult and prefers to have a hard copy in her hand. Norman Stevens said that he subscribes to a magazine that went on line and he never reads it now. Another member said that she read a copy in Church which brought her to the meeting, so people would miss out if there were not hard copies in circulation, although it may save a lot of footwork.

**10. Past and Forthcoming Events**

Dave Rickers had organized 4 events this year – Bird Walk, Meadow Walk, Bat Walk and the forthcoming Moth Walk. The Bird Walk had been attended by 9 people, the Meadow Walk had attracted 29 people, and at the Bat Walk there had been 35 adults and 3 children, as opposed to 28 last year.

The Litter Picking will take place again this year from April through to November, as the latter months prove to be useful once the leaves have fallen so much more can be found as it is not obscured by vegetation. Due to the WDC having two people clearing the Fields of litter twice a day all year round, we have only collected 22 full bags of litter throughout the 8 sessions, whereas in 2013 we collected 59. DR expressed his grateful thanks to the Litter Pickers, who all agree it makes a pleasant morning's work rounded off with a cup of tea at the café. DR also thanked the dog walkers who also pick up litter as it all makes a difference. The Litter Picking will be continuing on the first Saturday of the month thanks to everyone taking part.

DR said that due to the obvious interest in Bats, he is hoping to arrange for an Evening Talk during the winter months by the Bat Expert. He also explained that the owl box mentioned by PS is actually a long round tube and not actually a box if you try to look for it.

## 11. **The Election of Officers**

Keith Rockett stated that a Chairman and 5 Officers were needed to be nominated for next year to form a Committee. KR said that he was willing to stand as Chairman for the coming year; David Pettifor proposed KR as Chairman; this was seconded by Sam Sexton. KR then accepted the position of Chairman. KR then suggested the 5 people to nominate onto the Committee would be:

David Pettifor as Vice-Chairman

Gordon Mitchell as Treasurer

Celia Rickers as the new Secretary

Sam Sexton as Membership Secretary and Webmaster

Dave Rickers as Natural History events

Linda Pettifor and Joan Rockett were willing to be co-opted onto the Committee.

KR stated that we would still need help as Celia Rickers was only willing to take Minutes and prepare Agendas for the Meetings. We would still need someone to answer and send out emails, contact the Press, etc. Unfortunately no-one at the meeting was willing to offer their services.

## 12. **Proposals by the Committee**

It had been suggested by Jon Holmes that a medieval hedge could be reinstated parallel to Bridge Street alongside the Wildflower Meadow. An aerial map taken in the 1950s was produced as a guide to where it was, as well as an old 1892 photo of the hedge as it was at the time looking towards Bridge Street. These photographs were circulated to the members in attendance. This hedge would give wildlife cover and add to the natural feeling of the Fields. We had no costings as yet, but as in the past we would pay for saplings that would be planted with split spading put in as natural hedgerow.

One member asked if a fence would have to be put in to protect it. Jon Holmes agreed that this would be the case. It was also asked if the hedge would interfere with the mowing of the grass; Jon Holmes said that this would not cause a problem. It would enhance the Wildflower Meadow. Norman Stevens said that they had carried out resistivity of this area and only a small hut had shown up so it would not be a problem to any of the Abbey ruins.

## 13. **Any Other Business**

- Jon Holmes produced a Survey that he would like FOAF to help get people to complete. DR said that he would be willing to approach the public while on Litter Picking duty. The survey can be completed on line or by getting copies from the Church, Swimming Pool or Library.
- He had also arranged for Laura Smith, Community Ranger on the Green Space Team to come to the next Committee Meeting to introduce herself and see how she can help.
- Jon explained that one of the Lime Trees had canker, which is contagious so that would be a gap left in the Avenue of Limes. They would also in due course be shifting the logs in the Play Area. The Car Park planting would also be going on at some point in time. Jon Holmes also mentioned the Rangers who would be in uniform and would be responsible for picking up litter as well as any problems on the Fields. At the present time they only have 8 but they hope to enroll up to 16 Rangers in due course.
- Jon Holmes ended by saying that it was nice to work with the Group who are pro-active and move forward in a positive manner.

A presentation was made by David Pettifor to Mrs Pat Smith on her retirement as Secretary and from the Committee. Pat had been on the Committee for thirteen years and during that time had held every office. It was as our Secretary that Pat was most associated and was to many the face of FOAF. David recounted that Pat was always willing to undertake any job from stream clearance and planting to cutting down trees ... as well as planting them; she was an ever present at all the annual Town shows whether it was selling raffle tickets or acting as part of the "one arm bandit" stall; the bi-annual Calendar had been a success largely due to Pat's hard work, both in its production and standing in the cold selling them. However a great deal of the work of a Secretary went un-noticed and David expressed our appreciation of all the countless "small jobs" that Pat had dealt with on behalf of the Friends. On behalf of all the members David thanked Pat for all her efforts and wished her a happy retirement both from the Committee and also her full time employment and hoped that with husband David, they would enjoy time together with the family ... and her beloved horses. A presentation of a bouquet of flowers was made to Pat as a small measure of appreciation. Mrs Pat Smith thanked the members for the bouquet and also the Committee who had previously presented her with an inscribed cut glass bowl. She had had great pleasure from her time on the Committee and would continue giving her support in the future.

Tea was taken.

**Our guest speaker**, Neil Rimmington, gave an excellent talk on the role that Historic England plays in Abbey Fields.