

FRIENDS OF ABBEY FIELDS

THE FOURTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Held on Wednesday, 27th July 2016 at the Senior Citizens Club, Abbey End Car Park, Kenilworth

1. **Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed everyone. He said the meeting was quorate.
2. **Apologies** for absence were received from: Pippa Austin, Jon Holmes, Max Phillips, Jill Pugh, David and Helen Rush and Ann Smith.
3. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 22nd July 2015 were approved.

4. Matters arising: None

5. **Chairman's Report**

Keith Rockett thanked the Committee for their work during the year and good natured meetings. He thanked Dave Rickers for arranging the open meetings in the Fields, which were well attended and organizing the litter picking sessions - thanks to all who took part. The calendar was a great success and thanks go to Pat Smith for her last major contribution to the Friends. The Newsletter had been edited by Linda Pettifor for ten years and grateful thanks go to Linda who will be leaving the Committee at the end of this AGM. Fortunately a volunteer has come forward and Catriona Wood would be co-opted on to the Committee as soon as possible. Thanks go to Emmersons for printing the Newsletter as a donation. My last thanks go to Celia Rickers for her efficient role as meetings Secretary, Joan Rockett for her recruitment skills and David Pettifor for his support as Vice – Chair.

Projects in the Fields during the last year:

- i. Yellow rattle seed was distributed in the meadow, to weaken the grass which is still very dominant and the wild flowers will take some time to develop
- ii. Restoration of an old hedge has not progressed very far
- iii. Progress is slow towards the installation of the activity stations*. A grant of £2100 has been obtained from the Community Forum, the contract with Playdale is settled and written submission to *Historic England* has been made. Informal verbal agreement has been given. It is hoped work will be undertaken this autumn.

*a member queried the term activity station, which is an exercise apparatus and another member suggested less vigorous fitness units for older users as in Knowle Park, but these had been previously rejected by *Historic England* because of the nature of the material used for their manufacture.

6. **Elections**

The Chairman said he was prepared to stand for at least another year. He was proposed by David Pettifor, seconded by Clive Nelson, and elected by the members. The Chairman hoped one or two new members would be willing to join the Committee to ensure continuity as he, Dave and Celia Rickers retired. The Committee, who also were prepared to stand for another year, David Pettifor (Vice-Chair), Gordon Mitchell (Treasurer), David Rickers (Events), Sam Sexton

(Membership Secretary/Website) and Celia Rickers (Meeting Secretary) were proposed by Christine MacDonald, seconded by Maggie Bartmanis and elected by the members. Joan Rockett and Catriona Wood would be co-opted members elected by the Committee.

David Pettifor supported the Chairman's appeal for members to come forward with help for the Committee. Mr. Ojars Bartmanis (Bart) offered to become involved.

7. **Treasurer's Report**

Gordon Mitchell said it had been a successful year, FOAF had monies totalling £9305 in its accounts at the beginning of the financial year and finished with £13898, an increase of £4593.

The amount of subscriptions appeared to have dropped, but this was due to the special circumstances in 2014/5 when the membership year was moved to match the financial year. Over £500 in fees had been received since the accounts were prepared. Other income came from the Kenilworth Community Forum (a grant of £2100 towards the activity stations), the Lions Show and Gift Aid. Sponsorship money for the calendars was also in the previous year and surplus from the calendar sales totalled over £3000. Expenditure included £210 on walks and talks, running costs of £140 and a small contribution to Warwick District Council for seedlings. It was to be remembered £7100 was committed for the activity stations. He asked for any questions on the accounts and it was suggested third party insurance could be needed, the Treasurer said he would check on this. Linda Pettifor proposed the accounts be accepted, seconded by Mr. Ojars Bartmanis and were accepted by the members. As sufficient funds had been received to cover future projects the Treasurer recommended the subscription level stayed the same. This was agreed by those present. The Honorary Auditor Mr. Steven Copley had expressed his willingness to audit the accounts again and the Treasurer was happy to continue with his services, this was also agreed by those present.

The Chairman thanked Gordon Mitchell for his efficient presentation of the accounts and help throughout the year.

8. **Membership/Website**

Sam Sexton said two members had died since the last AGM (Val Golby and Tom Backhouse), but we had 15 new members. Ann Blacklock is leaving Kenilworth and sends her best wishes to all our members. There are now 196 personal and two corporate members (Crackley Hall School and St. Nicholas) plus two Honorary Members. Sixty nine members have yet to renew their subscription.

Website

Nothing much to report, but Sam welcomed any comments or suggestions. In 2015 there had been an average of 644 unique visitors to the site per month, so far this year the average is 470. This seems a high number as the figure excludes automated web crawlers, but not hackers. It would appear there are quite a few of those, but comments are not allowed and there is no evidence of intrusion. People trying to hack websites are just part of the internet.

FOAF also advertises events on Streetlife.com in the Kenilworth area and there have been enquires about them as well as positive feedback regarding the recent bat walk.

9. **Newsletter**

Linda Pettifor said she had edited the Newsletter for ten years and was leaving the Committee at this AGM as it was time for new ideas, she gave her thanks to Catriona who had offered to take over from her. Catriona thanked Linda for her help and asked for contributions and suggestions for the Newsletter, she was particularly interested in any articles on the historical uses of the Fields.

10. **Past and forthcoming events**

Dave Rickers said a moth evening had been held in July 2015, which 23 people had attended. In May 2016 a bird walk was held and 18 people came and 24 birds were seen and heard. Also in May a meadow walk took place in good weather and 23 species were spotted by 24 people. A bat night held in July attracted 27 people, which included three children. The last event of 2016 will be a moth evening with the County Moth Recorder, Mr. David Brown at 9pm on 12th August.

There were seven litter picking sessions with an average of 10 volunteers each time and twenty one bags were collected over the year. Since Warwick District Council had instigated a new system of litter picking for the Abbey Fields, the number of bags collected had dropped from seven per session in 2013/4 to 3 last year.

Dave thanked everyone who picked up litter, the FOAF volunteers, dog walkers and members of the public who contributed towards the tidiness of the Fields.

A bouquet of flowers was presented to Linda Pettifor by the Chairman and thanks given for her ten years as Newsletter Editor and Committee member.

REFRESHMENTS

11. **Members' Forum**

Cycleway. The Chairman had been in touch with Councillor Whitehouse, there were no firm proposals as yet and what there was, was confidential. As a stake holder FOAF would be informed of future developments. Open to the floor, views on the cycleway resulted in a lengthy discussion, at the end of which the Chairman asked for a show of hands for and against the cycleway, which ended in a 12/12 split.

Footpath. For many years there has been access to the Abbey Fields alongside 39 High Street and it was hoped this would continue, although new owners were developing the site. The Chairman said in fact this was not an official right of way, and the owner was prepared to provide a path the other side of the wall with suitable access to the Fields. The AGM was happy for the Chairman to write to Warwick District Council to support this solution.

Mrs. Barbara Platten who had notified the Committee in writing regarding this footpath had also the following points to make about the footpath from the side of the cottages in High Street which was very narrow and overgrown with grass and people were unable to pass each other without treading on the grass. It was suggested it should be widened and retarmacked, which met with a favourable response and the Chairman said he would write to Jon Holmes.

Social event. Barbara also suggested a social evening so members could meet each other, but only 5 members expressed any interest and the idea was not pursued.

Calendar. A verbal suggestion had been made regarding the addition of photographs to outside the Abbey Fields area. There was no support for this idea as the members felt it was a FOAF calendar and should contain views of the Fields.