

MELTON & OAKHAM WATERWAYS SOCIETY - 2015 AGM

Minutes of the 18th Annual General Meeting held on the 14th November 2015 at Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Melton Mowbray.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM.

1. Apologies

Received from Ann Butler, Michael Hipwell, Ian McDonald, Dinah Rudman, Mrs Loveday Stephen, Rosemary Terry.

2. Minutes of the 17th AGM held on Saturday 8 November 2014

Agreed and signed by the chairman.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

None.

4. Chairman's Report (Michael Clowes)

Plans to relocate our workboats "Mole and Badger" to a custom built boathouse adjacent our slipway on the Melton Ring were drawn up and submitted to the council, only to be put on hold due to objections by the local Scouts group. The comments submitted meant that the application had to go to a full planning committee who insisted on an ecological survey which would use up some of the funds earmarked for other projects. As suspected, the survey has not found anything untoward, but the whole affair seems to have soured our previously good rapport with this local group and we cannot understand why. Attempts to get them around the table to talk have proved fruitless, but the boathouse plans are to be resubmitted.

Our intention to set up East and West Partnerships based in Melton and Syston respectively, has also been delayed. Due to time constraints, venue availability and no chairman yet appointed for the Western end has resulted in this venture being put back to the New Year.

In contrast, things are happening at the Oakham Canal end. During the past year, new committee member, Paul Dadford, has put in hours of work, cataloguing the definitive canal line, establishing a display at the Rocks by Rail site and leaving none of the local councillors or landowners in the dark as to who we are! A wonderful effort but even more remarkable is that Paul has conducted most of his MOWS business via his computer from a hotel room in Rio de Janeiro. And, making this a family affair, Paul's wife, Jan, has now become our new Treasurer, and we welcome her to the MOWS Committee.

Work parties have put us to the test recently. Our ambitious plans to clear the Wilton Bridge approaches and ensure easy navigation through the main arch have been thwarted by heavy weed growth this year. This forms part of the Melton ring, so the main thrust of our work has been in and around Melton, but we have had forays down as far as Syston. Once the ring is deemed clear we have plans to work further afield.

The main reason for clearing the river and canal ring here in Melton is to eventually stage the IWA National Trailboat rally, although the other benefits are improved channel depth resulting in improved water flow and removal of excessive tree growth and rubbish. We have pre-empted the rally plans by contacting the Wilderness Boat Owners Club to invite some of their members to use our waterway for a weekend next year. It will be interesting to see if we get any takers.

We have always felt we have enjoyed a good rapport with the media, and this year has been no exception with articles in Canal Boat Magazine, the Melton Times and who can forget the wonderful 1st April spoof hinting that our restoration was being sponsored by MacDonalds!

During the year MOWS takes our message out to the people via our attendance at various shows and functions and the last 12 months has been no exception. We made an appearance at the Braunston Historic Boat Gathering, Rempstone Steam Fair, Melton Country Fair, and new for us this year, the Grantham Canal Discovery Day. We also get our message across by giving talks to other groups throughout the region and I personally enjoy meeting new people at these events.

The society has been represented on the Grand Union/River Soar partnership at their recent meetings where we champion our plans for the area around our front door, now designated "The Syston Hub". Bit by bit the funding package is coming together for the whole scheme and we aim to be involved until our plans for the area come to fruition.

Inextricably woven in with those plans are our western end partnership as mentioned earlier and the Junction landowner's ideas for developing his fields there by rebuilding the old toll house as a visitor centre and refurbishing the old tin isolation hospital buildings as a canoe centre. No definitive plans have been submitted yet but questions have been asked to ascertain what the council will permit, and in the meantime river clearance there, has opened up the water space and prepared the public for the changes to come.

Our society sees merchandising as a good source of income, thanks to Mike Handford, who has had a hand in designing and marketing all our stock.

We continue keeping our members informed through our quarterly newsletter and we have had some lovely comments this year and I am pleased that people find it informative. Dinah Rudman has been in regular contact with our website administrator in attempting to keep the website up-to-date.

Our committee has changed somewhat but everyone has worked hard and I thank them for that. My thanks also go to those committee retirees for a job well done. A big thank you also to all our hardworking volunteers who give up their valuable time. We acknowledge all those outside the society who have made a valuable contribution this year and we are perennially indebted to the owners and staff here at Sysonby Knoll Hotel. Also, to our members, my appreciation for your patience and support, not just throughout the last year, but since the society was formed.

5. Acting Treasurer's Report (Richard Booth)

The Accounts for year ending 31 August 2015 were presented. Income was down on last year mainly due to less Membership Subscriptions and no Gift Aid was declared. Despite this, the society has an increased excess of Income over Expenditure and an overall Capital Account profit of approx £800. The profit was mainly due to merchandise sales.

6. Election of Committee Members

Retiring committee members, Mike Handford, Linda Hulme and John Rudman have agreed to stand for re-election. All proposed by Richard Booth, seconded by Peter Samways.

Richard Booth retired as Acting Treasurer and Secretary. A new Treasurer was co-opted onto the committee during the year, Jan Dadford. Proposed by Richard Booth, seconded by Shaun Marshall. Committee member, David Andow had just agreed to become the Society's Secretary.

All the above were approved and agreed by the meeting. The Chair thanked Richard Booth for his hard work as Secretary for the past 18 years.

7. **AOB**) Taken as

8. **Open Discussion**) one item

Funding - Hugh Butler began by telling the meeting of the new funding opportunities which had just arisen for the society. At the recent Melton Environment Action Partnership (MEAP) attended by him and John & Dinah Rudman, there was concern voiced about the state of the waterway and lack of investment. This led to contact from two separate sources for funding. A LEADER grant (EU funding for environmental issues), which we need to apply for by 27 November and would award a minimum of 40% up to a maximum of 80%.

'Mole' Dock - Due to the Society's proposed plans for building a boat dock for 'Mole' having had objections from the local Scouts, we had to withdraw the plans temporarily and have an Ecology Survey carried out at MBC's request. As the Scouts have not contacted us with regard to their concerns, Richard Booth has spoken to the Divisional Scouts and arranged a meeting to discover why the Scouts have objections to the building of the dock.

When this has been resolved, the society will resubmit the plans. Richard Booth told the meeting that, although we had been in contact with Waterways Recovery Group (WRG) for building the 'Mole' Dock, that this was too small a project for them, but may be suitable for the BITM (Bit in the Middle). They are to visit the site in December.

Weed - The growth of prolific and almost impenetrable weed has caused a halt to work parties for the time-being. A few of our committee members said they were sure this was not just a local problem.

Michael Clowes added that the Cromford Canal Society had recently requested to hire our work boat, so this may be a source of income.

9. Presentation by Guest Speaker

Our anticipated guest speaker was unable to attend, so three of the committee each undertook a short (illustrated) talk. Michael Clowes presented a general review with photographs, Paul Dadford brought us an up-to-date progress report with new photographs of the Oakham Canal and told us of his discussions with RCC, riparian landowners and Oakam Angling Society. Hugh Butler informed us about the latest news regarding things happening around the Syston Hub, including the landowner's recent clearance of land adjacent the river and his plans to rebuild the Toll House.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.