

## MELTON & OAKHAM WATERWAYS SOCIETY AGM - 12 NOVEMBER 2016

Minutes of the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting held on the 12 November 2016 at Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Melton Mowbray.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM.

### 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from K Allen, A Batten, R Booth, J Filor, H Hall, J Herlihy, M Murray, D & J Rudman.

### 2. Minutes of the 18th AGM held on Saturday 14 November 2015

Agreed and signed by the chairman.

### 3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

None.

### 4. Chairman's Report (Michael Clowes)

The Chairman gave his review of the Society's activities during the past year.

**Boat Dock** - After the withdrawal of the planning application last year, permission was approved in April. We had to obtain a fence flood certificate, and erection of bat boxes and the removal of Himalayan balsam were agreed, so we now just have to sort out the water framework directive.

The Chairman wished to thank our Secretary, Dave Andow, for his fortitude in this matter. The funding for the dock build is being sought initially via a legacy grant from the Inland Waterways Association.

**Partnerships** - Eastern and Western end partnerships are being formed to bring together councils, businesses and interested groups along the waterway line into two coherent groups to further our restoration plans. Each locale would then have a say in how their particular area could be developed, whilst the unified voice could then ask for funding with more weight and volume. The Eastern end meeting took place in September, with the initial Western end meeting scheduled for early December in Syston.

**Syston Plans** - The landowner at the junction has plans to rebuild the old toll house and develop the other buildings and land to the rear. Tentative enquiries have been made at Charnwood Borough Council, but as yet no firm plans have been submitted.

**Work Parties** - During the past 12 months our work parties have been mainly centred around Melton itself, with the odd foray to other sites and we feel we have achieved more than we believed possible. The ongoing work down at Wilton Bridge is finally coming to an end with the river at this point much wider than 12 months ago, but the reed beds are beginning to encroach on the other side and may soon narrow it down to pre-work levels.

One of our most enjoyable work parties this year was at Pile Bridge Farm near Wymondham, where, at the request of the owners, we attempted to find and start to excavate two of the Oakham Canal locks buried by the building of the nearby railway bank. A gate recess was found plus two lines of brickwork indicating the lock position and direction. A ground paddle hole of the second lock was found. A good day, with great hosts and the promise of a return invitation in the future.

**Events Attended** - Our activities have been curtailed somewhat by the untimely passing away of Richard Nicholson, who used to organise such things and whose presence around our committee table has, and will continue to be, sorely missed.

We relinquished a work party in favour of attending the Grantham Canal Discovery Day on 9 October. It was a good, family-friendly, day out and we trust more people are now aware of our society. We also do a number of talks and presentations throughout the year.

**Membership** - New Membership Forms have been designed and printed, for which we say thank you to committee member, Paul Dadford.

We have decided to increase the membership fee next year. The committee felt that the fees needed to be increased to better reflect the costs borne by us in recent times. This is only our second increase in the 20 years since the society has been in existence.

**Oakham** - Committee member, Paul Dadford, our Oakham end expert has, during the last year, managed to speak with many landowners, Councillors and County Councillors about the various problems besetting the canal line. He has also put together an exhibition for Oakham Museum and all this whilst working abroad for a good percentage of the year! The display at Oakham Museum is on until 17 December.

**Merchandise** - We took a bit of a risk, when a couple of years ago we started selling our own merchandise, but long-term this is starting to pay off, so thanks go to committee member, Mike Handford, who looks after the sales.

**Thank You's** - The Chairman began with thanking the Town Estate whose riparian ownership affords us permission to use the river, whilst their generosity has allowed us to plan to build the new dock on their land. To all other landowners we say thank you for the permissive paths that form part of the Wreake Valley Way, which gets well used and allows people to walk at certain points on the old navigation towpath.

An enormous debt of gratitude goes out to our sterling group of volunteers, who through all weathers have manned the boats, cutting back the trees and vegetation, moving what seemed like thousands of tons of silt and, more importantly, doing it with smiles on their faces.

The Chairman conveyed his thanks to the rest of the committee. To the owners and staff at Sysonby Knoll Hotel we say a big thank you for providing the society with a long-term base and a home for the workboats, which we hope to relocate soon and give them their riverfront back.

And finally, our members, thank you so much for the loyalty you have shown down the years, because knowing you are behind us always spurs us on to greater efforts in whatever we do.

## 5. Treasurer's Report (Jan Dadford)

The Accounts for year ending 31 August 2016 were presented. Income was down on last year mainly due paying costs for surveys, reports, admin costs, etc, connected with the boat dock. Membership subscriptions were down, which also contributed towards the loss.

The accounts were proposed by Hugh Butler and seconded by Dave Andow. The accounts were approved by the meeting.

## 6. Election of Committee Members

Retiring committee member, Hugh Butler has agreed to stand for re-election. Proposed by Paul Dadford, seconded by Mike Handford.

Committee member, Peter Samways, tendered his resignation in September.

- 7. **AOB** ) Taken as
- 8. **Open Discussion** ) one item

The Chairman started the discussion by an appeal for more committee members. We also require a new website administrator/social media person. As well as a dedicated fundraiser, event co-ordinator, health and safety officer. He stated that these do not necessarily have to be committee roles and could be done from home.

A member suggested that we could approach a local college to ask if the administration and maintenance of the website is something that their IT students could do as an outside project.

The same member also wished to thank the society for keeping the river clear. She also reported that the EA had released weevils to kill off the Azolla weed.

## 9. Presentation by Guest Speaker from The Grantham Canal Society

Our guest speaker, Rosemary Gibson, aided by Tony Jackson, of the Grantham Canal Society, gave us a really interesting talk about the Grantham Canal, with fascinating old photographs, along with more up-to-date news of the society.

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The Chairman thanked Rosemary and Tony, with everyone showing their appreciation. He then thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting. A light lunch was available for those wishing to stay and chat.