

## **MELTON & OAKHAM WATERWAYS SOCIETY AGM – SATURDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2022**

Minutes of the 25th Annual General Meeting held at 10.00am on Saturday 5 November 2022 at Sysonby Knoll Hotel, Melton Mowbray.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Lorraine Forman, Mike Handford, Gary Jesionowski, Alicia Winterton.

### **2. Chairman's Report and Accounts (24th AGM, 13 November 2021)**

The minutes of the previous year's AGM were adopted as a true record of the meeting and the accounts as presented and were signed by the Chairman.

### **3. Matters Arising from the Report and Accounts**

The Chairman stated we always need more volunteers to help with the work parties.

### **4. Chairman's Report**

The first thing I would like to mention in my yearly report on the society's activities is the way that our newest committee members have not only slotted seamlessly into the mix, but that each one of them has brought something new to the table, which in turn has changed our outlook, and the way we go about things. Each of the new people has connections locally and their knowledge and skills have been invaluable in getting things done, and expanding on what was already there.

In no specific order, I will talk about our years activities and will start with our social media. I will be the first to admit that I am a bit of a dinosaur when it comes to technology, and ignored earlier calls to improve our online profile. However, once I relented, I have been pleasantly surprised by the effect that things like Facebook and Twitter have had on bringing the society to the attention of the general public. This has resulted in a current Facebook membership of around 1400, with around another few on the other platforms. We have also used our on-line presence to earn the society much needed funds, via several of the fundraising schemes promoted by large traders, such as Amazon, etc, and so, overall, I think our social media has been a resounding success. This has been due in no small part to committee member Gary who handles this side of things and also looks after our membership. He gave his thanks to Gary.

Whilst on the subject of funding I should mention that Melton Borough Council has generously provided a sum of money to be used on our new weed-cutter boat and also the local firefighters "Trumpton" scheme which will provide life jackets to be used in conjunction with our new rowing boat hire scheme. More on that too in a moment. We also receive a little through the Melton Lottery and other little bits and pieces via individuals and other societies.

Another source of income, and something that has been a roaring success this year, have been the new Melton Navigation walks books. These have sold like hot cakes and has meant a reprint has been needed. I would like to thank Geof Malone, who walked the route, and photographed and documented the whole thing, and then used his publishing knowledge to get the book finished.

I also thank Jane Martin who has looked after distribution and placement of the book. If you haven't got one, they are on sale here today and a steal at £3.95! We are also in talks with County Hall about the design of a way marker to define the route, which will be added to the footpath posts already in place.

Membership has remained fairly steady this year due (in some part) to the chasing up of lapsed members and removing any who haven't responded. I know from bitter experience how frustrating it is to have to send out numerous e-mail reminders year on year to get people to pay their subs, which let's face it are quite reasonable

in comparison to most other waterway societies. We have lost a few members this way, but gained others and the result is a sort of break-even figure, but I expect this to grow now we have got rid of the “dead wood”. This is just one example of the influence new committee members are having, and I have to say I like it as it can only be for the long-term good. If only we could translate some of the Facebook members into actual ones it would make such a difference as when it comes down to talking to movers and shakers in the restoration world, they only use our actual membership to gauge whether we should receive assistance, and therefore I thank everyone who remains a fully paid-up member.

Moving from indoors to outdoors, I would first like to talk about our new rowing boat hire incentive. I know there were some on our committee who were not in favour of splashing the cash on this idea, and remain sceptical to this day, and I have to admit I had my doubts initially. However, once agreed we have supported this idea and thanks go to Geof, Jono and Jerry for the original plan, sourcing, transportation, and painting. Special thanks too to Cllr Rob Bindloss for his help and expertise with the fibreglass side of the renovation work. We now have four boats fully operable, with two more to follow and a seventh as a long-term project. This is just the beginning though as we have to get permissions to use an area of the Melton ring as a trading site to get people safely on and off the boats via a suitable landing stage, which will involve discussions with the local council and Town Estate. It will be nice to aim for the coronation next year as a grand opening, but red tape may yet be our downfall.

Our assistance with other things has extended to helping “Melton in Bloom” by repairing the model narrowboat planter outside the council offices, and Gary (ably assisted by his dad) should get pats on the back for the wonderful end result.

Another regular outside activity are our work parties, and anyone who has read my “musings” in the last newsletter will know that I have long thought that the numbers attending are far from what they could be. It was pointed out to me that less than 0.5% of our actual or online membership ever came to the work parties, and that any work attempted could be achieved much quicker if we could only raise this figure to around 1%. I know from talking to other societies this problem is country wide, but taking the example of the fantastic difference a few souls have made down at the Eye Kettleby lock site, when finished it would be hard for any local authority to say we were not making a significant difference and support us accordingly. Thanks to committee members Jono and Gary the work parties are discussed in advance and details sent out and posted well in good time, so I can see no reason why our numbers at work parties should not continue to grow. This has happened in a small way in recent weeks and people are to be commended for “having a go” Alongside that I have to thank our “regulars” who very rarely miss a work party and can be relied on to turn out in all weathers. Special mention should be made of Stuart and Mark who constructed the “Mole” boat canopy, and then devised and constructed a method of lifting it clear of the boat, a job which ran over many, many weeks and required absolute devotion to see it through.

I briefly mentioned the newsletter in the last paragraph, so it is at this point I have to thank Linda who puts it all together and sends it out, even putting copies in envelopes to go to our non-computer members. If you have something you would like to say, via the newsletter, just let myself or any committee member know via the usual channels.

Talking of our committee, I would like to thank each and every one for their contribution this year. To Lorrie, Jane, Jono, Gary, Dave, Geof, Jerry and council representative Rob and Town Estate rep, Billy, many thanks. We don't always see eye to eye on everything, but that is what makes it so interesting. Zoom meetings are fine, but when our face-to-face encounters recommenced earlier this year, it was with a sense of relief that things were finally getting back to normal. My only reservation is that without representatives from other places along the navigation, our discussions seem to forget that the waterway begins at Syston rather than at the Melton Parish boundary!

A final thanks to anyone who has donated money or materials – you know who you are, to those armchair supporters who are unable to join us regularly, and also to the many people giving help and advice from all over the country. Lastly, I always like to thank the management and staff here at the hotel, because year upon year they give us a home and make us feel so very welcome.

I am reminded that this is our 25th year and I am immediately taken back to that evening in 1997 when about 20 people met in the green room, at the other side of this building, and the society was formed. Sadly, some of those people are no longer with us, and it is in their memory that we have tried to live up to the ideals, that were put on the table that night. Our first Chairman was Richard Fairhurst, who departed after about a year to continue his career in Journalism, eventually becoming editor of Waterways World Magazine. Mike Hanford then took over the hot seat, with myself as vice-chair, and when his work commitments meant he had to step down, I became our third Chairman, where I have stayed ever since. However, I am aware that some facets of the society are becoming a little stagnant and in need of a shake-up and, as I turned 70 earlier this year, and with other commitments becoming more of a distraction, I feel the time is right for a change of leadership. It is my sincere hope that this will give the society fresh impetus and provide a springboard to greater achievements and therefore, I have decided (with a very heavy heart) to step down as Chairman with immediate effect.

I still hope to serve on the committee and will also remain a regular at our work parties. I see this as a sideways step rather than a disappearing act, as I could never back away from all the friendships I have made down the years. I would like to thank everyone for their loyalty to the cause, and look forward to assisting my successor in driving our restoration plans forward.

## 5. Treasurer's Report

The accounts were agreed and approved by the meeting.

## 6. Election of Committee Members

Gary Jesionowski will be stepping down with immediate effect. Gary was thanked by the Committee for his work on updating the website, his searching for funds from local and national sources, overseeing the website watchers, and with his dad, repairing the faux canal boat outside the Council Offices.

Michael Clowes has also tendered his resignation from the Chairmanship, but wishes to remain on the Committee and will continue until a replacement is found.

The Chairman asked for an en bloc vote for the remaining committee members which was accepted.

Dave Andow wished to rejoin the Committee and three new persons have put their names forward to join; namely; Glyn Cartwright, Eric Brown and Rob Nash.

The society's committee will now comprise:

Mick Clowes	David Andow	Eric Brown	Glynn Cartwright
Jerry Filor	Lorrie Forman	Jono Hewitt	Geof Malone
Jane Martin	Rob Nash		

Break for refreshments.

## 7. AOB / Open Discussion

From the floor member, Dave Andow, thanked Michael Clowes for his 17 years of steadfast Chairmanship of the Society.

Hopefully, the position of the reinstatement of the park landing stage will be clarified after member Cllr Rob Bindloss will be speaking to the Melton Borough Planning Department to see if we do need planning permission or not.

The outgoing Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the AGM was wrapped up with humorous monologues by Michael Clowes.

The meeting closed at 11.15am.