

FRIENDS FINAL AGM 28 APR 2023

CHAIR'S NOTES/SUMMARY RECORD

(Afternotes for winding-up record are in italics)

A warm welcome to you all.

Item 1 – Apologies. Received from Committee member Geoff Witts, and co-opted member Alison Wilson. *(Approximately 30 attended, and a further 16 arrived later to attend the talk).*

Item 2 - Review of 2022 AGM Minutes

The draft minutes have been posted on the parish website for the past 8 weeks and given the important matters we need to discuss this evening I will cover the key matters arising and do not propose to go through the minutes in detail unless any member has a particular observation to make.

In my report last year I highlighted the 'big issue' of the Wiltshire Council Local Plan and the need for the village to actively pursue the development of a Neighbourhood Plan in order to influence planning in the future, particularly in relation to the 34 new dwellings target proposed for SA in the first draft of the Local Plan. The circulation of the final draft of the Local Plan has been delayed to later this year, but I am pleased to report that the PC has now embarked on the process for developing a Neighbourhood Plan, and I hope members had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire and will become involved in the evolution of the plan. The plan will not be aimed at stopping development, but at influencing it in order to best support the village's evolution. New homes means new people to help re-energise the village; the last sizeable development Home Farm Close was a controversial development 25 years ago, and it is entirely appropriate to scrutinise such developments in order to help maintain the character of the village, but perhaps interesting to note how many residents of the Close have actively contributed to the Friends and other village organisations. The same doubtless applied to Bartletts Mead and the Butts – developments which back in the day when perhaps we had a less conscientious Parish Council, encouraged membership of The Friends.

In my report I looked forward to the 50th Anniversary of The Friends in 2023, but I also I raised the issue of the continuing existence of The Friends, and the need for new committee members 'post-covid' to come forward in order to enable the running of an effective society.

Can I ask that the minutes be accepted as a true record.

Proposer: Helen-Montague Smith

Secunder: Anne Little

Unanimous vote

The draft 2022 minutes were signed as approved by The Chair.

Item 3 - Chair's Report (reproduced verbatim)

50th Anniversary

I will start with the positive – The Friends made it to 50, celebrating with a lunch on 12th April, the exact date of the first committee meeting in 1973. 42 members attended, and it was a memorable occasion. During the lunch there had been much conversation about past trips, talks and achievements, and there was an opportunity to view the archive - as there is again this evening.

For the May village Newsletter Bryan Berrett has very kindly penned an article on 50 years of The Friends which I recommend to you.

Winding-Up of the Society

So, to put the 'bottom line up-front', we have unfortunately had little success in relation to the committee despite repeated efforts to improve the situation. While active paid membership has declined to a current total of 60, that should in theory be sufficient to generate a committee, however many of those 60 have already done much past service, and dare I say our membership demographic is on the mature end of the age spectrum.

Despite bidding a grateful farewell at the last AGM to committee stalwarts Tony Evans who led on Luffenham and long-serving PCC rep Rosie Brett-Green, this time last year - as the impact of Covid reduced - we had hopes for turning things around with the development of our electronic communication and membership management. Sadly, the capable individual we recruited soon fell by the wayside due to other commitments. Four other individuals came forward as potential committee members before and after Christmas, but all declared they were unable to commit to any specific roles such as Treasurer, Secretary, Planning, Communications & Membership, and Events. On the plus side, Geoff Witts has continued to undertake the maintenance of Luffenham, but because of Covid shielding he has not been able to attend any committee meetings.

So our active current committee members attending meetings consists of 3 individuals:

Myself – Chair, Chair 2007-10 and also since 2019, planning to stand down 2023

Lydia Peters – President, on committee since 1997.

Anne Howard – previous Chair 2012-2019, planning to stand down 2023

Between us we have been covering the various tasks assisted by:

Geoff Witts – Luffenham

Ann Hunt – WI Rep

Rob Leonard – PC Rep

(PCC rep vacant)

In addition, Alison Wilson joined the committee as a co-opted member who expressed an interest in taking on the village oil delivery scheme in conjunction with Rosie Brett-Green.

In summary, it has become clear that the failure to recruit and the resulting limited bandwidth of the committee regrettable makes current and future management, and delivery of the society's objectives, untenable.

The society's constitution does not prescribe any process for winding-up the society, but to ensure effective communication the committee provided a final update on the situation in the village Newsletter and on Facebook in December 2022, and with no committee reinforcement forthcoming announced the decision to wind-up in the March 2023 Newsletter.

The constitution does state that on winding-up members should vote at a general meeting on disposal of any funds, and we will come to that later. In the meantime, are there any observations from members concerning the decision to wind-up? Should we vote on it, perhaps on basis that anyone voting against also agrees to join the committee?

The Chair reminded those present of his intent to stand down, and asked if anyone at this late stage wished to come forward to try and continue the society? There was no response, and it was generally agreed that The Friends should wind up on a positive note having reached their 50th anniversary.

The Chair asked for a vote by members to reluctantly agree the committee's proposal that The Friends be wound-up. The vote was unanimous.

Future of Luffenham

In 2005 the Friends signed a lease agreement with The Trustees of Crooke and Others concerning rent and maintenance of the field in order to maintain and develop the meadow as a village environmental amenity. The Trustees are actively investigating options for the future, including the PC taking it over.

My Bryan Berrett, Chair of The Trustees of Crooke and Others asked to record a vote of thanks to The Friends for all their support since taking on the lease in 2005, particularly recognising the efforts of Tony Evans and latterly Geoff Witts.

Future of the Village Oil Delivery Scheme

The Friends initiated the scheme with a view to reducing oil tanker movements in and around the village while offering a bulk price and predictable delivery date. In recent years under the administration of Colin and Rosie Brett-Green, the income from scheme subscriptions has directly benefited the society. It is intended for the scheme to continue outside of the Friends, and information will be issued in due course.

Disposal of The Friends Archive

I have arranged to deliver the Friends archive to the Swindon and Wiltshire History Centre at Chippenham, and hope that you will take the opportunity to look at the documents this evening.

Recognition

In closing I would like to sincerely thank all members for their support, and if I may to recognise the contribution made by various individuals during the final few years of the Society:

Tony Evans joined the committee in 2012, and until 2022 took the lead on Luffenham, conscientiously mowing, planting, clearing and nurturing to make it the special place it is today. He handed over the lead to Geoff Witts, who continues to try and develop what Tony initiated.

Anne Howard also joined in 2012, and was President from then until 2019, since when she has given me very valuable support, leading on matters such as the talk this evening and the new Polish memorial plaque.

Rosie Brett-Green became the Parochial Church Council rep in 2003, and has been a great source of knowledge about the village as well as an active organiser of events. She continues to operate the village oil scheme.

Malcolm Crucefix joined the committee in 1995, alongside his wife **Ines** who represented the WI. In the days of paper and a sound relationship with Wiltshire Council, Malcolm grappled with the reams of paper involved in reviewing a myriad of planning applications. He also continues to lead on the production of the Friends village walking guides.

Last but not least.

Lydia Peters joined the committee in 1997, and has risen through various posts to become our President, actively involved in all aspects but particularly in relation to events, catering, decorations, publicity – and keeping an eye on the Chairman's wayward grammar! Lydia's contribution to The Friends over the last 26 years has been magnificent, and I hope you will agree worthy of special recognition. *A bouquet of flowers was presented to Lydia by The Chair on behalf of members.*

That concludes my report, may I ask for a

Proposer: David Little

Secunder: Ann Hunt

Unanimous vote

Item 4 – Review of Accounts.

Accounting period from 1st April 2022 extended to cover winding-down of the society and dispersal of residual funds. Some paper copies of the current account reconciliation spreadsheet are available for reference.

Current cash balance is £2,018 with final talk and other expenses to be cleared estimated at approx. £300, offset in part by TBC final talk admission income and cash float.

Note that c/f from last FY was £514 ring-fenced for Luffenham Field, of which £350 remains. To be considered concerning dispersal of residual funds.

Assets to be written off for disposal consist of Luffenham maintenance equipment, stock of village and walk guides, and 2 x poster A frames.

Constitution states that 'in the event of winding up of the Society the disposal of funds shall be decided by a majority vote at a General Meeting of the Society'.

Once approved (and after clearing of all outstanding expenses) payments will be made from the residual total on a % basis.

In consultation with the Hon Treasurer Anne Strange, the account will subsequently be recorded and closed to ensure compliance. *The Chair submitted account closure documents to Lloyds Trowbridge on 31/05/23 for a final closure date of 30/06/23. The balance on 31/05/23 was £260.50, with two cheques totaling £259.80 to be cashed. The residual 70p to go to the recognized Lloyds charity. After closure of the account the final Friends account record will be placed on the PC village website along with this AGM/final record.*

Proposer: Tony Evans

Secunder: Ann Hunt

Item 5 – Proposed disposal of Society Assets

Strimmer and all other Luffenham Field maintenance equipment (held by Geoff Witts) – to Trustees of Crooke and Others.

Stock of Village History and Guides (held by Lydia Peters) – to Village Shop.

Stock of Village Circular Walk Guides (held by Malcolm Crucefix) – to Village Shop *and St Mary's Church.*

2 x Poster A Frames (held by Lydia Peters) – to SA WI.

Any comments/counter proposals? There were none with exception of continuing distribution of walk guides to St Marys Church as well as the Shop.

Proposer: Gerry Oughton

Secunder: Roger Carter

Vote: Unanimous

Item 6 – Proposed % Disposal of Society Residual Funds

(After all pending expenses cleared and prior to closure of Lloyds account)

After final reconciliation, of AGM/Talk takings of £238.50 and clearing of costs the total amount calculated for final dispersal on 02/05/23 was £2,028. Countersigned cheques were sent out by The Chair on 03/05/23.

Committee's proposed dispersal package is as follows:

50% - to Village Hall for kitchen and bar refurbishment project plus Friends 50th Anniversary recognition. (£1,014)

30% - to Trustees of Crooke and Others for Luffenham Field. (£608.40)

10% - to Parish Council for St Mary's recreation area project. (£202.80)

10% - to Steeple Ashton Girl Guides. (£202.80)

Any comments/counter proposals? – has to be alternative complete % package. There were none.

Proposer: Helen Montague - Smith

Secunder: Pat Bartholomew

Vote: Unanimous

Item 7 AOB

Pat Bartholomew expressed appreciation of the Society on behalf of the residents of Keevil who have much enjoyed the various events over the years.

The Chair thanked all those present and reminded them of the following talk – The Friends final event - starting at 8pm by Gordon Lewis on 'Imber – seven miles from any town).

The meeting was closed at 7.45 pm.

MJ Beard
Mike Beard
Chair
31/05/23