

## **MINUTES of the Fifteenth Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Hagg Wood held at the Reading Room, Dunnington, on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013.**

**PRESENT** Nigel Rylance, Forestry Commission Planning Officer, speaker, David Mayston, Chairman, Alan Worsley, Treasurer, Linda Maggs, Secretary, Tony & Elaine Hudson, Michael & Diana Dunn, Olwyn Fonseca, Michael & Janet Clarke, Diane & Tony Conway, Peter & Wendy Crosby, Barbara Pyrah, Richard Law, Joan & Ken Turner, John Rodwell, Nigel Emery, John & Margy Vernon, Sara Bailey and David Rowe. **APOLOGIES** from Alan Briers, Wendy Worsley, Mr & Mrs East, John Maggs, Judith Smart, Pam Nyman, Ian & Lita Black and Jennie Stopford.

**MINUTES** The minutes of the fourteenth AGM, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012, were accepted as a true record.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

David welcomed the speaker, Nigel Rylance, and everyone to FHW 15<sup>th</sup> AGM. David said FHW had enjoyed another busy and successful year, with 17 people attending the last working party in the wood. (A photograph of the group, by Tony, was circulated). It was good to see the fruits of our labour, clearing the rhododendrons and seeing the carpet of bluebells burst forth. During the year we had help from TCV and also from St Peter's School. The heavy autumn rainfalls had caused problems to the drainage in the wood but the FC had arranged for contractors to ameliorate the system and the footpaths were now much improved. During the year we had two interesting lectures, Barry Bishop talking about woodland birds and Rob Stoneman, CEO of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, talking about the work of his organisation. We had enjoyed a trip to the Hepworth Art Gallery and on Saturday a visit the Himalayan Gardens at Grewelthorpe had been organised. We had also made progress on a national level – David and Linda had been invited to meet the Independent Panel and they made their views clear that they were happy with the current management arrangement of the FC lands and did not want to lose the support of the FC advice, support and guidance. It was satisfying to think that we had had some influence on the Independent Panel Final Report. The Government responded in January, accepting the Independent Panel's recommendations – a new body will be set up with the public forests invested in a trust. The devil is often in the detail but it is hoped that, like in 1996, the proposal to sell-off FC lands will be overthrown. A new 10-year FC Forest Design Plan had recently been drawn up, stressing the importance of returning Hagg Wood to predominantly broad-leaved cover. The Jubilee planting and the earlier Millennium planting were both beneficial in achieving this aim. David went on to say that the wood continued to benefit from various grants we have successfully secured. The latest one had been used to improve the bomb crater area, where frogspawn was now developing and the area was much more open which helped to increase the biodiversity of the wood. The time had come to have a period of consolidation, to watch the wood regenerate naturally. David thanked the members of the Committee for their involvement and gave special thanks to the outgoing Treasurer, Alan Briers. He also thanked Alan Worsley for taking on the position. Linda thanked David for his continued dedication over the many years he had spent as Chairman – it required great commitment and leadership. The audience clapped in appreciation of David's efforts.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Alan Worsley presented the FHW Accounts and said it had been a quiet year with everything under control. £460 remained in the bank for the hedgerow survey that may be published soon. There were no questions. The accounts had not yet been audited as we lacked an auditor volunteer but they were provisionally accepted.

### **ELECTION OF THE COMMITTEE**

Members nominated for election: Alan Briers, Michael Dunn, Olwyn Fonseca, Tony & Elaine Hudson, Linda Maggs, David Mayston and Alan Worsley. They were duly elected. David said there were two unfilled place on the FHW Committee and any member who would like to join would be most welcome.

### **ELECTION OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**

Alan asked if anyone knew of an accountant prepared to take on this role – no one had any suggestions but the role would be filled during the year.

### **ILLUSTRATED TALK ON BROXA FOREST PLAN – LESSONS FROM A FOREST TRANSFORMATION BY NIGEL RYLANCE**

David gave a warm welcome to Nigel Rylance who began his account by saying that to create a vision for the future it was necessary to have good planning and careful formulation of ideas in line with national strategy, and then the plans had to be implemented in an efficient and robust manner. Overall the FC managed 21,000 hectares of forest land in the North Yorkshire Moors National Park and Broxa consisted of 730 hectares, a not insignificant area.

During the 1940s and 1950s the planting in Broxa had been largely conifer: pine and larch trees, with small areas of ancient woodland remaining in the valley along the sides of the River Derwent and other steep-sided gills. Interestingly, there are 30 scheduled ancient monuments covering cultural and historic features in Broxa forest. When developing a plan the first thing is to understand what you've got, based on the soil composition of the land. In Broxa, the vast majority was iron pan on the plateau which was acidic free. The elements leached through the soil profile and the iron made it impenetrable for trees to root; deep ploughs were required to break-up the soil in order to plant the trees. The steep-sided gills had richer nutrient soils with higher moisture content, providing conditions for much wider tree species than higher on the plateau. The current species were largely pine: Scots Pine, Corsican Pine, small tracts of Lodge Pole Pine and Larch, including Japanese Larch. Spruce had recently been introduced but Sitka Spruce was very thirsty and therefore not a very good choice. Silver Birch, Ash, Alder Downy Birch and a little Oak were found at Barnscliff and Langdale.

The second stage of the plan was to draw up management information, such as the 30 scheduled monuments – the tumuli and the rich landscape in terms of field systems. It was important to know where the badger sets were and the species of raptors. Pre-forestation there were distinct heathland areas and all these factors helped to maintain the diversity of the area. The Lister family had made a collection of Bronze Age relics including a stone axe, brooch and finely crafted arrow heads, now kept on view at the Dalby Visitor Centre. The next step was to study the ecology. The night jar was an iconic species and North Yorkshire was quite a hotspot for them, in part due to the management of the forests involving sequential rotation of clear felling, which guarantees a good population of the bird. The area was rich in moths and night ants. Half a million ants were recorded in one nest in Broxa and the River Derwent was host to white clawed cray fish. Otters were also found in the forest and these 4 species, night jar, night ants, cray fish and otters, all needed sensitive continuous management.

There was on-going forest research, with experimentation in weeding/fertilisation and rather than the pre-1986 uniform blocks of the past, an intricate, systematic range of plots were laid out on a grid system. The 1993 Forest Design Plan was just coming to fruition, with lines of thinning allowing more light which improves the diversity, especially on the heathland understory. The 2009 Plan really highlighted the geographical systems which allowed a whole range of programmes to be scheduled: timber extraction, weeding, maintenance all clearly imprinted on the plan. The FDP's aim was to increase biodiversity and to respond to the landform, creating better shapes both internally and externally. The CROW (Open Access) policies had been very positive overall with a vast improvement in visitors' experiences. There was never an even age of trees, yet now it was possible to improve the structure of planting and improve the diversity, with robust management to ward against climate change and diseases. The main design concept was still for timber production but it was essential to grow trees with a robust/resilient character. Larch trees were subject to disease and Corsican Pine suffered from needle blight which, over a period of time, can kill the tree. Macedonian Pine can take dryer climates and Oriental Spruce can suffer droughts – it was a continuous process looking for new species to build into the FDP. It was essential to use the latest scientific ideas to help make the best choices. It was important, however, to keep the native species as the dominant type and also to keep up with informative apps, to help with interpretation and to increase people's enjoyment. The ideal was to have organic non-geometric coups with interesting overstory and several understories, to increase biodiversity.

Langdale and Barncliff were both PAWS (Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites). The hilly conditions meant that the land had to be worked in small areas to stop windblow. The target was to plant sessile oak, silver birch, holly and rowan with ground flora of heather, bilberry, broad leaved buckler fern and wood sorrel. In the upland areas the mixed broadleaf trees had a bluebell understory. It was important to improve the nutrient and moisture status of the middle slopes to allow regeneration. After the felling in the 1980s it was restocked in 1987 with Japanese Larch and Douglas Fir; any failed planting was regenerated with silver birch. The lower slopes were more nutrient rich with better moisture allowing meadowsweet, primrose, dog violet, tufted hair grass, herb robert and bluebell to grow. After the 1990s felling the land was regenerated with ash, birch, willow and alder to encourage biodiversity. Nigel then went on to talk about the River Severn/Pickering Beck flood alleviation scheme. £¼ m had been set aside by DEFRA, led by Forest Research, to work with partners such as the Environment Agency and NYMNP to investigate/monitor projects involving the 'de-synchronisation' of water flow, to allow greater absorption of water through soils on rougher ground. David thanked Nigel for his stimulating talk and Nigel graciously thanked the FHW for their continued support of FC and good work at Hagg Wood.