

## **MINUTES of the Seventeenth Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Hagg Wood held at the Reading Room, Dunnington, on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015.**

**PRESENT** Dr Colin Beale, speaker, David Mayston, Chairman, Alan Worsley, Treasurer, Linda Maggs, Secretary, Tony & Elaine Hudson, Michael & Diana Dunn, Alan & Kath Briers, Olwyn Fonseca, Sandra Laws, Tony Conway, Wendy Worsley, Michael Clarke, Derek Utley, Steve & Sue Ashby, Helen McPherson, Nigel Emery, Peter Dean, Brian & Pauline Poulter, Canon & Mrs B Pearson, Rowena Bedlington, Richard & Betty Law, Margy Vernon and Sue Firth.

**APOLOGIES** from Diane Conway, Mr & Mrs East, Mr & Mrs Turner, John Maggs, Sarah Bailey, Ian & Lita Black, Pam Nyman, Barbara Pyrah and Jennie Stopford.

**MINUTES** The minutes of the sixteenth AGM, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2013, were accepted as a true record.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

David welcomed our speaker, Dr Colin Beale, and everyone to FHW 17<sup>th</sup> AGM. David said FHW had enjoyed another busy year including an outdoors visit to York Cemetery to explore the fungi, and a cycle ride to Poppleton to view the Medieval Barn and Nature Reserve, which happened to coincide with the Scouts Apple Day; we were able to drink the apple juice from their orchards. Indoors, we were given an excellent talk in the autumn by member, Steve Ashby, on 'Protecting our Plants' and then we very much enjoyed our New Year Lunch at the Sports Club organised by Michael Dunn. In the spring member Derek Utley gave an inspiring talk about 'Treemendous', a York organisation which had the ambition of planting 50,000 trees over the next few years. Terry Weston gave his usual spectacularly illustrated talk on a Naturalist's Year and we also had an interesting day in Ilkley, organised by member Brian Poulter, who led a walk around beautiful Middleton Wood, a deciduous wood covered by a sea of bluebells, before climbing on to the moors to view the rock carvings. The future cycle ride would take place on 14<sup>th</sup> June, a change from the calendar owing to members' other commitments.

The monthly working parties had been very well attended and the Trust for Conservation Volunteers had been commissioned for a day's work to help with the bramble clearance in the bluebell area. The bluebell area continued to expand with more light reaching the ground after our clearances of rhododendron and bramble. We had worked in the Jubilee area, the Millennium Wood area, the Breathing Places and also around the Craters and there would be lots of foxgloves to enjoy later in the summer.

We would be celebrating our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year and we had decided to try and make an impact on the drainage of the wood along Chambers Way. We had asked officers from the Forestry Commission to accompany us around the wood, with the view to creating more ditches to allow the water from the footpaths to be channelled to the main drains. We hoped to see some improvements undertaken in the summer.

David thanked the members of the Committee for their involvement and Linda thanked David for his continued dedication as Chairman. The audience clapped in appreciation of David's efforts.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Alan presented the FHW Accounts, which had been independently examined, and said they were in a healthy position with a reasonable balance. Membership fees remained unchanged and were the lowest of any local organisations. Alan emphasised the importance of donations and thanked people for their generosity. He said that a Bioscience group may help our working parties. The FC was limited by tight budgetary constraints and FHW still looked out for suitable grants for projects. A member, Helen McPherson, suggested writing to large companies such as Shell.

### **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 places on the FHW Committee and any member who would like to join would be most welcome.

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

Dr David Worsley had agreed to continue to act as the independent examiner and he was thanked.

## Dr COLIN BEALE ON THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON WILDLIFE.

David gave a warm welcome to Colin who began his talk by saying that climate change was real and that wildlife had to move, adapt or die. Colin illustrated his erudite talk with many graphs, the first one showing climate change over millions of years, which affected thousands of species but life was robust and in the long term biodiversity of species had increased. Only when the impact of human beings was brought into the models did we see a significant difference and it was the speed of climate change which led the International Panel on Climate Change to agree on its veracity. The speed of climate change would be quite variable across the globe, central England may only change by 1°, the south east more, but less in the north west.

Colin then went on to talk about the environmental impact. The Comma butterfly was quite rare in York in the 1970s but it was now common and it had already reached Aberdeen, a dramatic change in its environs. Colin went on to talk of his fascinating experiences in Tanzania, recounting research on the Penganny Long Claw which moved the fastest, some 300 km west, stopping at the Rift Valley. Water availability proved to be the key factor. The White Brow Scrub Robin moved into the ground by Lake Victoria, into areas which were most like their previous areas, in that case, dry savannah. Food availability and the quality of the grasses were the intermediate reasons. Colin recalled amusing experiences (in hindsight) when he was put in prison for a few days, suspected of being a spy, after trespassing on a Tanzanian Army training base.

Colin said that birds, butterflies and plants were all moving, which was an appropriate response to survive. He then went on to describe what we could expect: new species will arrive and some may leave. For example the tree bumble bee had arrived, unknown 10 years ago and the Nuthatch had become more common.

There was a common folklore rhyme of 'Oak before Ash or you'll be in for a splash', but this had proved to be nonsense - oak were coming out earlier and earlier as the leaf seemed to depend on warmth whereas ash seemed to respond to the length of the day and recently May 10<sup>th</sup> had been a common date.

Amazingly wildlife seemed sometimes to adapt, responding appropriately to survive; this was known as a plastic response. The whole aspect of timing was important for caterpillars and birds; birds like to have their chicks when the caterpillars were at their fattest, so it was important that there wasn't a mismatch, which climate change could threaten. Coal tits, blue tits, great tits, and pied flycatchers seemed to be adapting but sparrow hawks may be struggling. Colin recounted his interesting research on Wheatears in the Fair Isles - early feeding could lead to double brooding but autumn food was critical for their survival.

With climate change we can expect earlier and faster springs, variable changes in populations, decline in migrating birds and a few surprises. The day length was very important and also changing temperatures; for instance, changing temperatures allowed butterflies to eat different food, e.g. Brown Argus that used to feed on rock roses can now feed on geraniums. Colin discussed whether animal population was declining or projected to decline - there was a fear that some sea mammals may face extinction but in the UK it was estimated that there may be more winners than losers. Globally it was difficult to predict exact changes, and all the recent estimates suggested between 15°-30°C change, much higher than prehistoric estimates, but on the whole it was best to be sceptical. The only species that is known to have become extinct is the Golden Toad, which inhabited Costa Rica.

The best way forward was to accept inevitable change and create new reserves. It was essential not to give up on existing reserves, in fact we need more, bigger, better and better connected reserves for wildlife. Climate change is real and the environmental responses are already obvious with movements of plants and wildlife, behavioural changes and adaptations and in future we may see greater extinctions. Arguably we are facing the greatest threat to biodiversity the world has ever seen and it is up to conservationists to adapt and communities must mitigate these threats. There were many interesting questions and then David thanked Colin for his stimulating and illuminating talk and thanked members for attending.