

MINUTES of the Eighteenth Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Hagg Wood held at the Reading Room, Dunnington, on Wednesday 25th May 2016.

PRESENT Andrew Cutts, York Urban Buzz, speaker, David Mayston, Chairman, Alan Worsley, Treasurer, Linda Maggs, Secretary, Tony & Elaine Hudson, Michael & Diana Dunn, Alan Briers, Olwyn Fonseca, Wendy Worsley, Sara Bailey, Sandra Laws, Tony & Diane Conway, Michael Clarke, Derek Utley, Peter & Wendy Crosby, Helen McPherson, Nigel Emery, Brian & Pauline Poulter, Irene Watson, Ken Pateman, Margy Vernon, Sue Firth and Penny Mills.

APOLOGIES from Canon & Mrs B Pearson, John Maggs, Margaret Eastwood, Jennie Stopford, Rowena Bedlington, Steve & Sue Ashby, Ian & Lita Black.

MINUTES The minutes of the sixteenth AGM, 27th May 2015, were accepted as a true record after date of previous AGM was changed from 2013 to 2014.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

David welcomed our speaker, Andrew Cutts, and everyone to FHW 18th AGM. It had taken the members a couple of years to draw up a formal constitution but the group was formed twenty years ago to rescue the wood from privatisation and to prevent any restriction of public access. We looked forward to our 20th anniversary party, to celebrate the formation of the Friends of Hagg Wood, on 4th June and hoped members would come along to enjoy Dunnington Community Choir and Woodsmoke singing a few songs.

FHW had enjoyed another busy year with a cycle ride to Fangfoss in the autumn, followed by a successful Fungal Foray in the wood with Malcolm Greaves. Our autumn speaker Barry Bishop, who is Chairman of York RSPB, gave us a lavishly illustrated talk on an English Village, which happened to be Stamford Bridge. We enjoyed a traditional New Year lunch at the Sports Club, a great way to start the year. In the Spring we had a delightful talk by Dr Rachel Pateman about Butterflies and the necessity of taking extra measures to conserve them. Terry Weston gave his illustrated annual lecture, this year on 'Hassacarr Nature Reserve, Saving a Place for Wildlife' with an uplifting story of how the area had reached Local Nature Reserve status. We had a cycle ride to Buttercrambe in April, calling at the Balloon Tree for refreshments. Later we had a wonderful afternoon excursion, walking from Fountains Abbey to Markenfield Hall, a 14th century Manor House and Moat, and back again, admiring the spring flowers on the way.

The monthly working parties had been very well attended; we had extended our interest to 5 main areas: the Bluebell area, which looked better than ever this year and where we had recently taken our oldest member, Mr Arthur Horne, 103, the Queen's Jubilee Wood, which the FC had clear-felled and we had replanted with deciduous trees, the Millennium Wood where the schoolchildren had planted oaks in 2000, the Crater area which had been extensively cleared and the Breathing Places area which needed weeding but looked attractive with flowering cherry trees. Work had also been done along Chambers Way and the Main Ride. There would be a wonderful display of foxgloves along the cleared path along Chambers Way, later 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, 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.

ELECTION OF THE COMMITTEE

Members nominated for election: Alan Briers, Michael Dunn, Olwyn Fonseca, Tony & Elaine Hudson, Linda Maggs, David Mayston, Brian Poulter and Alan Worsley. They were duly elected. Another member had been asked to join the Committee since the closing date for nominations, John Eastwood, and he had agreed to be co-opted.

ELECTION OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

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

ANDREW CUTTS OF URBAN BUZZ, YORK ' THE STORY SO FAR '

Andrew spoke with enthusiasm about the recent afternoon he had spent in Hagg Wood, with various members of the Committee. He was wowed with the eruption of colour even if the afternoon had ended in a cover of snow. Andrew introduced his talk by speaking of his new job for Buglife, which had been formed in 2002 with headquarters based in Peterborough, with the idea of assisting other wildlife organisations. York had been one of 8 cities to receive an Urban Buzz Award from BIFFA (Building Communities, Transforming Lives). The other cities were Leeds, Birmingham, Leicester, Cardiff, Bristol, Plymouth and Ipswich. He would be based in York for 18 months and then move on to Leeds.

Andrew's vision of his job was divided into 3 sections: Pollinators, Communities, Colour. It was very important to halt the decline of pollinators such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies as we relied on them for providing our food. It was important, too, to work with Communities to improve our city's landscape, to make it a better environment for both pollinators and people. There were many conservation projects that people could get involved in, to get out and have fun, to learn new practical skills, and to learn about pollinators and the problems they face. Colour is very important in our everyday lives and contributes to our sense of well-being. 97% of our stunning wildflower meadows have been lost over the years due to intensive agricultural methods using damaging chemicals.

Andrew described the process of pollination, how insects took pollen from the stamen of one flower and deposited it on the stigma of another flower. Pollinators provided a healthy environment for food production. It was vital to not only maintain but to increase the potential for creating new wildlife habitats for many of the struggling pollinators.

Andrew then went on to describe insect pollinators. There were at least 20,000 types of insects with 1500 species of Hoverflies, Wasps, Weavils/Beetles, Butterflies/Moths and Bees with 271 species of Bees alone. There were 27 varieties of Bumble Bee but 2 were now extinct. Andrew had a fine collection of photographs of different bees and other insects, such as the Hairy Footed Bee, Red Mason Bee, Tawny Minor Bee, and Garden Bumble Bee. He recommended an excellent new book 'A Field Guide to Bees of Great Britain and Ireland' by Stephen Falk, a great addition for enthusiasts.

Wasps were not popular insects but they were important pollinators. Andrew showed more photographs of insects and butterflies such as the Orange Tip, Comma, Peacock and Brimstone. Peacock butterflies made a noise if disturbed, possibly to deter mice and other creatures which could eat them. Long horn beetles visited umbellifer flowers and acted as pollinators.

Andrew then described the life cycle requirements of the pollinators: where the eggs are laid, what the larvae eat, where they overwinter. Nettles are very important for peacock caterpillars and are very valuable as a food source. Some insects make their homes in oak trees near the acorns. Bees need both pollen (protein) and nectar (carbohydrate), besides sand, water and sun.

Andrew outlined his ambitions: he'd like to create 100 new habitats in York and already he'd created 16 with 108 volunteers. An area of 4.8 ha near the Millennium Bridge in York had been converted into a green space for pollinators. A green at West Bank Park had been converted into a pollinator meadow. A group of volunteers had raked over the grass and scraped back a 1-litre square. A group of 10 volunteers had been formed at St Nicholas, the Eco Centre, to seed a bed with wild flowers. Aerial nests and ground nests had been created in canes and tubes for the insects to colonise. Martin Hammond and a group of volunteers at Rawcliffe Meadows had created a Bee Bank with sleepers and shuttering, replicating geological layers of sand and loam. Andrew mentioned the Pollinator Potential Form which could be filled out with the intention of getting a grant for trees, plants and training.

The next step was to get together Best Practise Guides and share the knowledge with the wider public. Andrew showed a short video from YouTube with his Manager, Alice Farr, talking about the importance of actively working to save pollinators. 66% of our moths are in decline and the reason is largely because of the loss of wildflower habitats. Yellow Oil Seed Rape attracted many species of bees and alder buckthorn and blackthorn were two very important shrubs. Andrew stressed the importance of scalloped edges along woods and the creation of glades within woods.

David thanked Andrew for his interesting talk and thanked members for attending. After refreshments Tony H showed Pam's film of the Community Woodland Opening, 2003, which was very amusing.