

**Minutes of Friends of Haddon Wood**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Held on Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 upstairs at the Alhampton Inn**

**Present:** FHWC, Margy Cockburn, Chrys Henning, Andrew Nicholls, Charles Evans, Anna Telfer

**Apologies for absence:** Lydie Gardner, Sarah Kerr, David Kerr, Maureen Hawes, John Clarke, Nancy and Arthur Llewellyn, Angela Piggott, Wendy Silver, Chris Ringrow, Michael and Jess Leach, Mike Henning

**MINUTES**

**ACTION**

**Chair's Report**

With the fifth full year under our belts there were a number of matters to mention

**The trees** - are doing well and tree tube removal is now in full swing. We need a fair amount of work on that this year and we're doing our best to find the most ecologically sound way to dispose of the tubes. At the moment the most probable result is taking them to Southwood where they'll be removed for incineration as part of an Energy *from Waste* undertaking.

**The pond** - The frog and toadspawn last year resulted in an extraordinary event on 24 June when the northern end of the path around the pond was impassable due to the mass of tiny frogs, exiting to who knows where. We also had the excitement of our first water birds to raise chicks: both moorhens and little grebes nested successfully. We've had intermittent visits from mallards, other ducks and geese, although none has yet decided to nest. In the bad weather this year the pond froze across its entire surface.

**The orchard** - is just coming into flower, notably the pears. In December, as part of an assessment of the orchard for re-staking etc, Gert and Nick discovered mouse damage to the bottom of a number of the apple trees. Gert and Chris Archer did an amazing job of clearing around, mulching and putting rabbit guards on all the apples, and a number of the Friends worked on a Saturday to do the same for the remainder of the trees. Gert has also done a great deal of formative pruning.

**Wildflower areas** - Last September our WT manager, Joe Middleton, went on a sabbatical and in the meantime we have Paul Allen working with us. He has a lot of knowledge of wildflowers and sadly feels we have a major task on our hands to establish wildflower areas in the wood, due to the high phosphate levels. These make the soil more fertile than is hospitable to wildflowers, and it's hard to reduce the level on our clay soil as it holds on to the phosphate. However, we've sown more yellow rattle and we'll see how that does this year.

**Hedgerow maintenance** - The Woodland Trust is now cutting all our hedges due to delays in getting authorisation for Mark and Nick to use brushcutters. There seems to have been a communication problem this year, with the result that hedges we hadn't anticipated being cut have been, there's been a lot of ground damage and the area abutting Gert's boundary hedge has simply been razed to the ground. The hedge itself, which was a problem primarily due to its height, has not been reduced in height but in width only. We will be discussing this with Paul after this meeting when we have a clear decision on what we want in future.

**Fund raising** - Jo has the spectacular results of the Alhampton open gardens on 18

June last year. As ever we owe special thanks to those who opened gardens, sold refreshments and plants, helped with ticket sales and signage, and baked for the teas. This year we'll be taking a break and instead we're working with Ditchheat to run an open gardens event there, along with an illustrated talk by Charles Dowding in the Jubilee Hall. Proceeds will be split 50/50 between the Jubilee Hall and Haddon Wood. Because of this there won't be a fund-raising event in the wood this year; a number of the committee attended the Oak Fair in the summer, with a view to identifying possible appropriate exhibitors/attractions for a fundraising event in the wood and made some good contacts for the future. However, we are aware that we need a slightly more established wood to make this kind of event feasible.

**Training** - The 6 committee members who are accredited First Aiders renewed their qualification last autumn.

**Leasing** - Following our earlier decision to lease Haddon Wood we had further conversations with Joe Middleton which led to us reversing this. Our revised decision was based on new information to the effect that there was no expectation that we would lease after all, that the wood would be unlikely to be leased to anyone else and that we had insufficient knowledge to take this on at the present time.

**Finally, thanks as ever** to our committee, who turn out whenever maintenance is needed, and with some particular mentions:

- Jo: who maintains our risk assessments, looks after everything to do with money, found a way for us to insure people to brushcut, cuts grass, and generally keeps us in order on paperwork
- Mark: grass cutting, hedgerow maintenance, anything else requiring muscle/construction skills
- Rose: photography, producing goods for sale at open gardens, designing and producing open gardens posters and brochures, publicity
- Nell: taking minutes at some undisciplined meetings, the blog, horticultural knowledge
- Gert: plant and tool sales at open gardens, horticultural knowledge, sowing rattle, a lot of work in the orchard
- Nick for horticultural knowledge, keeping us on track with what's needed in the orchard and planting
- To all those Friends who have come to the wood on many occasions to help with much-needed maintenance.

## **2 Treasurer's Report**

The account balance for the year to April 2018 stands at £9010.05, comprising proceeds from fund raising (including a whopping 2453.60 from Open Gardens) and donations totalling £614.

## **3 Election of Officers**

HH raised the annual requirement to elect committee officers and Chrys Henning proposed that all existing members be re-elected. It being unanimously agreed by all present, the committee comprises: -

Secretary: Nell - Proposed by RH, seconded by HH: Unanimously approved

Treasurer: Jo – Proposed by HH, seconded by NH: Unanimously approved

Chair: Hil – Proposed by RH, seconded by JC: Unanimously approved

PR Officer (a new addition) Mark Curtis – Proposed by HH, seconded by GS:  
Unanimously approved.

HH will email all Friends re: standing in future ie anyone is welcome, so long as she has a note, with a proposer and seconder, in advance of the AGM

HH

#### 4 Discussion and decision re hedge-cutting and paths for the future

It was agreed to request that the WT continue to cut perimeter hedgerows, to prevent creep from ever thickening undergrowth and to keep a perimeter path, also to request permission to remove a row of trees along the southern boundary to allow for Mark to mow walks in the wood that are as interesting and varied as possible. MC and NT would get on with brushcutting wherever necessary

HH

MC/NT

Chrys said she had been asked to bring up the issue of wheelchair access and whether paths could be made suitable. It was generally accepted that the WT would neither pay for such a thing, nor condone any 'urbanisation' of their woodland, but it was thought that we could do something to make access from the gate into the Chapel Field, at least to the picnic bench. It was also noted that once the drier weather sets in, access is really not all that difficult to many parts of the wood. To improve things in the near term, MC said that we could drop some hardcore into the muddiest gateways to make them more navigable.

HH

MC

#### 5 A O B

- Margy suggested that if we want to treat the orchard, long-term, as a separate community space, with a view to being able to erect, say, some sort of field shelter, it would perhaps be wise to start setting the precedent now
- Charles raised the dog poo issue and asked if bins could be erected in exit gateways. RH explained that we had discussed it many times, but always, in the end come to the same conclusion as the National Trust, which is that doing so simply encourages the leaving of more rubbish
- Chrys asked if we were aware of a camper van parking in a gateway, apparently overnight. HH said that it had been noted.
- Re: gateway/car park flooding on West Lane, HH has been talking to Neil Corp of Highways, who wants to examine the site when dry.
- Andrew Nicholls asked if it would be possible to have regular working parties – particularly in light of the current need to remove so many tree tubes – and it was agreed this would be constructive. The third Saturday in every month was mooted, trialling for 6 months with the first session being on 19<sup>th</sup> May, starting in F5, from 10.00am to 12.00 noon. NT suggested we have a more focused approach, and forego stopping for cake. Agreed to try this
- It was agreed that RH should have a budget of £500 for new merchandise such as cards, notebooks and tea towels, for which she showed two designs.