



**Friends
Of
Leckhampton Hill &
Charlton Kings Common**

**Minutes of the Fifteenth Annual General Meeting
held on Wednesday 12th November 2014 at Leckhampton Primary School**

15.0 Welcome

The Chair, Julius Marstrand, welcomed about 31 members to the fifteenth AGM of FOLK.

15.1 Apologies for Absence

Cllr. Rob Reid, Alan & Liz Booth, Chris Ryder, Suzette Johnson, Mike Donnelly, Shirley Wood, Martin Wood.

15.2 Minutes of the Fourteenth AGM Held on 13th November 2013

The minutes of the fourteenth AGM were accepted as a true record.

15.3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

15.4 Officers' Reports:

15.4.1 Chair's Report. Julius Marstrand

Julius made an interesting review of his 10 years of chairmanship of FOLK as follows:

As most of you are no doubt aware, the Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common came about as the result of a series of well attended public meetings about the future of the Hill, organised by Cheltenham Borough Council, from 1998 to 2000.

The site is well loved and well used by many local residents and many were concerned about the future prospects for the site. Designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the Borough Council was concerned that it could not afford to honour its statutory obligations to maintain that Scientific Interest. Conservationists were concerned that important biological habitats, notably unimproved limestone grassland, were being lost. Geologists were concerned that nationally significant limestone exposures were becoming obscured. Recreational users, especially horse-riders and off-road cyclists were concerned that their freedom to use the site might be restricted, to protect what was left of the habitat. Ramblers, families and dog-walkers were concerned that their enjoyment of the site was being impaired by other users.

The difficulty was how to reconcile these apparently conflicting interests – all of whom love the site for different reasons. It was recognised that any attempt to impose the interests of any one special interest group over any others were likely to end in failure. The public meetings nominated a small group of us to draw up FOLK's initial constitution. I drafted it, based on the Charities Commission model, in case we ever need to register as a charity and the working party then tidied it up, before presenting it to an Inaugural General Meeting in July 2000 and the first Annual General Meeting was held on 23rd October 2000.

I think it worth revisiting the original Aims and Objectives we adopted:

- 1* To promote the conservation and management of the ecology, geology and archaeology of the Land
- 2* To promote the Lands status as an SSSI, an AONB and compliance with relevant National and European legislation
- 3* To support the widest possible recreational use of the land consistent with the above objectives
- 4* To promote public awareness and education in the objectives above
- 5* To liaise and consult with the owners and trustees of the Land and of adjacent land over matters of mutual interest.

It has been the way we have balanced these Objectives and the competing interests that has been behind the success of FOLK.

It is worth noting that the most heated discussions have usually not been between obviously conflicting interests, for example, between ramblers and horse riders – which had previously resulted in the erection of the 'horse-barriers' across the Cotswolds Way along the top of the East side of Charlton Kings Common, or between walkers and 4x4 drivers, which have plagued some other sites, or between mountain bikers and walkers. The most heated discussions have usually been between different groups of conservationists! Over what time of year mowing should be carried out, over the interests of birds or invertebrates as opposed to the limestone flora and so on.

It is even true that the interpretation of what is in the best interests of the "Lands status as an SSSI, an AONB and compliance with relevant National and European legislation" has not always been consistent. Ideas about how best to achieve this have even changed over time!

The constitution was designed to reduce the risk of the Executive Committee becoming a self-perpetuating clique, or the risk of a single special interest group packing a single General Meeting and taking control of the organisation. This is why the officers have to stand for re-election every year and are limited to how many years they may stand for re-election and only around one third of the remaining Executive Committee members are re-elected each year.

I should like to take this opportunity to encourage this approach of not promoting any one 'special interest' above all others, apart from the general one of "promoting the conservation and management of the ecology, geology and archaeology of the Land", but "To support the widest possible recreational use of the land consistent with the conservation objective."

The site was originally purchased by the Town Council, on behalf of the people of Cheltenham, long before it was designated as a SSSI. If this principle is ignored, we cannot expect all the recreational users of the site to support the conservation efforts.

I was elected as the first Chairman and have had the great privilege of chairing FOLK for ten of its first fourteen years. After the maximum five years, I stood down and was replaced by Judith Frazer-Holland, another founder member. Judith served for four years, during which FOLK made great progress, not least working with CBC and Natural England to raise the funds for the 1.3km long dry-stone wall along the Southern boundary of Charlton Kings Common. Unfortunately she then became too ill to carry on and I was re-elected. There were many founding members of FOLK, but of those, apart from myself, the following were members of the first Executive Committee: Honorary Secretary, Jack Shepherd; Treasurer, Anne North and Andy Gilbert, Shelagh Hallaway, Diane James, Tony Meredith, Maureen Peirce and Allan Wood, as Committee Members. We all owe a great debt to the work they did getting FOLK established. I am certainly grateful for their support, particularly Jack who was responsible not only for administering the Executive very efficiently, but also for producing the first newsletters.

Since then many people have contributed to the success of FOLK, either on the Executive Committee, or in the Conservation Working Parties, particularly in the latter case Allan Wood, Judith Frazer-Holland and Mike Donnelly for co-ordinating the Working Parties. On behalf of all users of the site I should like to thank all of them for their efforts and support of FOLK to help maintain the site in the interests of everyone now and in the future.

15.4.2 Treasurer's Report. Geoff Holt

Geoff presented the audited annual accounts, see page 5 of these minutes. Subscription income was down but donations were up, especially when the direct payments by CBC for new tools, tool servicing and fuel were taken into account. The Treasurer stressed the value of this help and also noted the valuable donations from the Leckhampton with Warden Hill, Shurdington and Charlton Kings Parish Councils. He drew attention to the fact that despite these sources of income, there was an excess of expenditure over income, amounting to £431 for the year.

This deficit was largely due to a significant increase in the cost of producing the Newsletter, of which two colour copies and one black and white copy had been produced during the year, in contrast to the previous practice of having three black and white copies. Some issues had been larger than most in previous years. The Treasurer stressed that the Executive realised that FOLK could not maintain this increased expenditure in future years and had begun to discuss future policy. The Treasurer then initiated a discussion on this issue.

Several contributions from the floor welcomed the colour format and the excellent content of recent issues, for which the Editor was warmly thanked. It was suggested that the colour format created a much better image for FOLK, that of an active and lively organisation.

The value of the newsletter in promoting the organisation was stressed and it was agreed that recent issues did this very well.

The possibility of getting commercial sponsorship was raised. Comments from the floor suggested that the combination of the failure of past attempts to attract sponsorship and small print run would make this difficult. It was noted that some sponsors seemed only to fund organisations that were registered as charities. The Chair noted that in the past FOLK had considered that the constraints imposed by being a charity outweighed any benefits that might accrue.

The Treasurer noted that circulating the newsletter electronically would considerably reduce costs and asked the meeting for a show of hands as to how many of those present would be happy to adopt this approach. A large majority indicated their support for this. It was noted that this would require FOLK to develop a list of the e-mail addresses of members. The Executive were aware that some members would not wish, or indeed not be able, to receive Newsletters in electronic form. The Executive's present thinking was that arrangements would be made for any members in these categories would continue to receive hard copies. A possible mechanism for producing such hard copies cheaply was being explored.

A member noted that copies of the Newsletter could be placed on the FOLK website and asked why the website was so limited in content. The Treasurer accepted this criticism and responded that this was another matter that the Executive was currently exploring. He expressed the hope that a much better site would be in place by the next AGM.

There was limited discussion of the option of reducing the number of Newsletters to two a year. A comment from the floor noted that in the early years of FOLK, four newsletters had been issued each year, but that the difficulty in getting enough material to fill the pages had resulted in the decision to reduce the number to three. The general feeling of the meeting was that, subject to funds being available, at least three should be produced.

The Treasurer and Chair thanked the meeting for its contributions to the discussion.

The audited accounts were accepted at the meeting:

Proposed: Paul Ryder

Seconded: Serena Meredith

15.5 Motions for Discussion

15.5.1 Honorary Life Membership

Geoff Holt proposed that the long and valuable contribution to FOLK made by Julius Marstrand be recognised by awarding him honorary life membership of FOLK.

The proposal was carried unanimously.

15.6 Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members

15.6.1 Election of Officers

The Chair, Treasurer and Secretary may stand for election annually for a maximum of 5, 4 & 3 years respectively.

The Chair, Julius Marstrand, has reached 5 years and is therefore retiring from the position of Chair. The constitution allows him to be automatically co-opted as a committee member for a further year and he has accepted this.

There was one nominee for the position of Chair. John Harvey.

Proposed: Rick Plummer

Seconded: Serena Meredith

John Harvey therefore becomes our new Chair.

The Treasurer, Geoff Holt is eligible and willing to stand for a further year.

Proposed: Peter Whalley

Seconded: Guy Meredith

There being no other nominees, Geoff Holt therefore continues as Treasurer.

The Secretary, Rick Plummer, is eligible and willing to stand for a further year.

Proposed: Pete Niblett

Seconded: John Harvey

There being no other nominees, Rick Plummer therefore continues as Secretary.

15.6.2 Election of Executive Committee Members

There are currently three vacancies:

There was one nomination, David Browning as a biking representative.

Proposed: Rick Plummer

Seconded: Geoff Holt

We welcome David Browning to the committee.

Other elected members continuing on the committee are:
Pete Niblett, Anne North (membership secretary and grazier), Peter Whalley (newsletter editor), Chris Ryder,
Tim Sugrue

15.7 Any Other Business

There was no other business so the formal AGM closed at around 7.40pm, followed by an interesting talk by Eleanor Reast from the Cotswold Conservation Board who is working on the three year national project in the Cotswold area, entitled "Save Our Magnificent Meadows".

Signed:

Chair

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Secretary

Date:

FRIENDS OF LECKHAMPTON HILL CHARLTON KINGS COMMON

Statement of accounts for the period 1st October 2013 to 30th September 2014

INCOME	(2013)	2014
Membership subscriptions		
Individual Members: 5 year subs	60.00	232.50
Individual Members: 1 year subs	320.00	72.00
Organisational Members: 1 year subs	65.00	65.00
Sub-Total	445.00	369.50
Donations/Sponsorship		
Cheltenham Borough Council	250.00	0.00 See Note 1
Cheltenham & County Cycling Club	100.00	100.00
Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council	250.00	250.00
Shurdington Parish Council	50.00	50.00
Charlton Kings Parish Council	0.00	300.00
Other	10.00	60.50
Sub-Total	660.00	760.50
Total	1,105.00	1,130.00

EXPENDITURE	(2013)	2014
TCV Membership and Insurance	534.01	534.01
Newsletter and AGM notices production		
Autumn Newsletter Printing	55.00	239.00
Spring Newsletter Printing	55.00	225.00
Summer Newsletter Printing	24.00	28.35
Newsletter Postage	36.70	20.00
AGM Notice Printing	170.70	512.35 See Note 2
Sub-Total	1,105.00	1,130.00
Other Expenses		
Fuel and Sundries	8.98	0.00
Tools and Equipment	25.88	285.68 See Note 3
Photocopying	20.00	25.00
Room Hire (For AGM at Leckhampton School)	25.00	25.00
Open Spaces Society Membership Fee	45.00	45.00
Sundry	11.00	134.00 See Note 4
Sub-Total	135.96	514.68
Excess income over expenditure	264.33	-431.04
Total	1,105.00	1,130.00

Current Account	
Opening balance as at 1st October 2013	1028.06
Add excess income over expenditure	-431.04
Balance in Current Account at 30th September 2014	597.02
Savings Account	
Opening balance as at 1st October 2013	2,135.10
Income: Interest received	0.93
Balance in Savings Account at 30th September 2014	2,136.03

Notes:

- CBC have paid directly for new tools and fuel to the approximate value of £900
- Newsletters have been produced in colour rather than black & white as previously
- Includes the cost of sending 1 member on a brush-cutter training course (£150)
- Includes the cost of hosting a return visit by Cleeve Hill Conservators (£126)

I certify that, based on the evidence and explanations given to me, the above represents an accurate statement of accounts at 30th September 2014

Signed by:  Name: Paul Stefanoski BA(Hons) CPFA

Date: 29th October 2014