

Friends of Oakley Wood

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 1 March 2016

at the Bishops Tachbrook Sports & Social Club at 7.30 pm

<u>Present:</u>	Wendy Barlow (Chairman)	Rod Scott (Treasurer)
	Phil Dalton (Membership Secretary)	Judy Cooper
(Secretary)	Chris Hastie (Web Manager)	Rosemary Dalton
	Graham Leeke	Liz Sheehan
	Susan Watt	David O'Sullivan

and 16 members of the public.

Apologies: Geoff Cooper, David Johnstone, Cllr Judy Falp

Minutes of the AGM held on 3 March 2015 were approved and adopted.
Proposed by Graham Leeke and seconded by Liz Sheehan.

Chairman's report:

This is our 8th AGM and my second as chair. We have held 6 meetings over the year to ensure we are up-to-date with all that is happening in the Wood.

This year we were hoping to have put together a simple survey for our members but have been rather overtaken by the latest Management Plan which has taken up 4 special meetings. As a committee we thought it very important to go through this Plan on your behalf, very carefully, as it is very much a long-term plan and though we are not experts in some of the areas we do have strong views on a number of points.

The 3 groups (WWT, WDC and The Friends) that have an interest in this Plan come from different standpoints but have a number of aims in common.

The purpose of the Friends - as stated in our Constitution - is to ensure that the Wood remains as natural as possible for all to enjoy now and in the future. WWT is more concerned with conservation and WDC considers the Wood to be an amenity. This is putting it in very simplistic terms but it does show the difficulties we sometimes have in agreeing a long-term plan for the Wood that satisfies all 3 approaches. We felt that we should not sign off the Plan without careful consideration and have proposed quite a few changes to reflect our viewpoint. When the updated Management Plan is finally agreed it will of course be put on the website. The existing Plan is presently summarised on our site and a link is available to the full Plan held on the WDC website.

On a practical level this year the new interpretation boards and waymarkers have been put in and are fairly unobtrusive yet helpful. A couple of dog bins

have also been installed, which should please many Wood users, and these will be regularly emptied.

Activities this year have been centred, as in past years, around enjoying the Wood but learning about the flora and fauna and how to care for it in practical ways. We are exceedingly grateful to Karl at WWT and his amazing team for their input .

In the spring we ran a rather poorly-attended Bluebell Walk which nevertheless gained 20 new members for The Friends. Thanks to Karl for bringing along WWT members to swell the numbers.

In the summer we had David Brown's Moth and Butterfly walk which was in the pouring rain but was utterly fascinating. Thanks to Liz and her husband for allowing moth traps to be put up in their garden.

WWT and The Friends put on a Woodland Discovery Day which saw approximately 70 people attending and was a wonderful mix of woodcraft, wood trails, tree planting, mini beast hunting, pole lathe turning, Green Man storytelling. The goody bags on offer were particularly popular with the children.

In October the very popular Fungus Walk was held - once again thanks to WWT.

We have learnt a lot from organising these events about signage, advertising through face book, which days are more appropriate to organise events and which times are most convenient.

The Oakley Wood website is key to keeping contact with our members and others and many thanks go to Chris for making sure this is regularly updated. It is an interactive site so you can leave comments, which means everyone can have a voice. Everyone being involved and caring for the Wood is the most important part of being a Friend of Oakley Wood so please keep communicating with us. Thank you.

A date for your diary: we have already arranged one event for this year - on Sunday 8 May here will be a Woodland Discovery Day led by Karl which will begin at 10.30, meeting at the gate leading from the Crematorium. Further events will be announced on the website so keep an eye out for them.

This year I will be stepping down as Chairman but will stay on as a committee member. I have very much enjoyed working with the rest of the committee but I cannot do some of the things I did last year due to time constraints. We are lucky to have such a keen and knowledgeable team. They give up a great deal of time to support events and meetings. We are always looking for new people to join the committee to add new ideas so if you interested in joining us please let us know (now or at the end of the meeting).

Adoption of Accounts:

Rod presented the Accounts as shown to the meeting (copy attached) which showed a starting balance this year of £670.97 ending with a final balance of

£576.97. A grant of £1,000 from WDC's Small Grant Fund was received to enable us to run the Woodland Craft Day. There was no cost to us this year for the website as Chris had negotiated a favourable rate for 2 years. The Accounts were adopted, proposed by Dan Sheehan and seconded by Alex Farr.

Membership Secretary's report:

Phil reported that last year we had 424 members and this figure has been steadily building to 478 at present. We will soon reach the 500th member and intend to recognise this in some way.

Election of Officers:

Nominations were received as shown to the meeting (copy attached). A change to the printed list meant there was now a nomination for Liz Sheehan to stand as Chairman. Wendy Barlow was nominated to take the Vice Chairmanship. Other committee members remained the same. With these alterations Graham Leeke proposed accepting the committee en bloc, seconded by Dan Sheehan.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.55 pm

(Refreshments)

Address by David Lowe, Principal Ecologist for Warwickshire County Council on the national importance of Oakley Wood for Wildlife and how Oakley Wood fits into England's woodlands:

The last time David spoke at The Friends' AGM 4 years ago he highlighted the need for connectivity for wildlife in order that they may travel across areas at will. Now, with new computer mapping, it is easy to see the routes wildlife can take and where there are gaps preventing wildlife from moving about freely. To view these maps visit www.maps.warwickshire.gov.uk/greeninfrastructure which make for fascinating reading.

The Local Records Centre was established in 1974 and was one of the earliest in the country to be set up. A map from the 1880s shows 2 miles of wood at Oakley Wood which means a little woodland has been lost since then. Warwickshire is the most recorded county in England for ecology. Useful feedback is received from WWT on findings from FoW events. A habitat biodiversity audit in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull is held every 5 years with the help of volunteers when every field, hedge etc is checked. This makes it an accurate, evidence-based document.

It is amusing to consider that Oakley Wood can be viewed as a service station for birds following the M40 motorway! Jaguar Land Rover are also playing an important part for wildlife as they are adding to and maintaining grassland in all the expansion work being carried out at the plant.

The forthcoming HS2 planning team has declined to do any connectivity mapping but David and his team are putting pressure on them to consider the importance of biodiversity.

All large planning applications for new building works pass through David's department to consider the possible biodiversity loss. Green schemes are put in place or developers must pay for this loss and the money is then spent to reinstate the loss somewhere else in the vicinity.

We can all play a part in promoting biodiversity, for example, by encouraging local farmers to consider hedge and tree planting.