

Minutes of the AGM of the *May Hill Society*
held on Friday 23rd October 2015
in the Village Hall

Introduction & Objectives of the May Hill Society

Kevin Oxlade introduced himself as the new Chairman and read out the Objectives of the Society.

He also introduced Audrey Toomey as the new Longhope Parish councillor.

Present

Jennifer Jones, Brenda Jones, Janet Bollington, Hannah Loebel, David Nutter, Gaynor Oxlade, Chris Charnock, Frank James, Audrey & Malcolm Toomey, Roger Cox, Paul & Gillian Johnson, David Armstrong

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Russ Green, Rob & Gillian Guest, Simon Barker, Sheila Constable, Ann Charnock, Mary & Nick Ouroussoff.

Minutes of the last AGM on 21st November 2014 were approved and signed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Reporting of potholes: the Chairman is still prepared to help with this.

Collapsing posts & rails in Yartleton Lane: Audrey will ask the Parish Council to speak to Highways.

Bus stop signs on A40: Audrey will get these details from Roger Cox and raise this at Parish Council.

Jumps on bridleways: Roger will continue with his "positive action".

Treasurer's Report

Bob Constable presented a Statement of Accounts (circulated to the meeting) for the period 22nd November 2014 to 23rd October 2015 showing an opening balance of £56.12 and a closing balance of £84.32.

During the year, income was £52.20 (donations at the 2014 AGM) and expenditure £24.00 (room hire for the AGM)

Bob apologised that the Minutes had not been circulated in the Reporter last year but said that this would be rectified so that they will be published in the upcoming December issue.

Bob thanked for the very generous donations which were given at the last AGM. The accounts were then approved.

Chairman's Report (Kevin Oxlade)

"Planning applications for May Hill"

The May Hill Lodge planning application was dealt with by the previous chair, Frank James. My only involvement was to send a further email to the planning inspectorate, during the appeal process. This email was to confirm

the May Hill Society vote that took place in September 2014 and the decision to object to the principal of the application. As we know the appeal was withdrawn prior to the hearing.

With regard to the general principle of future planning applications on May Hill and the work carried out by Frank and others in the various local planning development committees, there is now a Forest of Dean Allocation Plan that sets out the intention of the Council for future development in the Forest of Dean area.

Page 45 of the draft Plan gives detail on May Hill and is titled "Locally Valued landscape May Hill". It presently states:

"Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they will not adversely affect the character and landscape setting of May Hill and should show how they add to the overall quality of the area. Included in the assessment of all proposals will be consideration of the following potential impacts:

Visual- whether proposals affect detrimentally long distance or local views of May Hill

Amenity (in addition to visual) – whether proposals affect the settled nature and tranquillity of the locality, by virtue of noise and other disturbance (eg traffic).

Whether development contributes to or enhances the landscape character of May Hill."

On the 28th of August, The Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination by a Planning Inspector. The Secretary of State has appointed Planning Inspector, Brendan Lyons, to conduct the independent Examination to assess the soundness of the Plan. Following completion of the Examination, the Inspector will issue a Report for the Council giving recommendations for action. This process is expected to be completed by August 2016. There is comprehensive information regarding this examination process on the Forest of Dean District Council website and I will periodically look at this info to see if any changes are proposed to the May Hill section of the 300 plus page document. I may also attend some of the Hearings where interested parties are allowed to make comment.

Wedding Photos

Longhope Parish Council granted permission for a wedding party to take photos on top of May Hill. They informed May Hill Society (via Frank James) out of courtesy and in case the May Hill Society had any objections. Longhope Parish Council was informed that May Hill Society had no objections at this stage. The situation will be monitored as will the number of applications. If anyone becomes aware of any issues with these applications, let me know. "

Election of Officers

The committee were all unanimously re-elected en bloc.

Kevin Oxlade - Chairman

Bob Constable - Treasurer

Lifa Oakley - Secretary

The Chairman then introduced David Armstrong (National Trust)

David reported on the success of the May Hill Celebration Day which took place in June and was attended by over 300 people. It raised the profile and there was good involvement from local people.

Annual bracken cutting took place in late July because of the ground-nesting birds. 50% is done at a time allowing some gorse to thrive, particularly on the Common, giving benefit to the flora. The height of the bracken has been reduced and the grasses are now coming through allowing species such as the rare Grizzled Skipper Butterfly to be seen.

The Belted Galloway cattle are still grazing the top of the Hill and The National Trust is very grateful to those volunteers who check the cattle regularly. Numbers are down at the moment and 2 have been lost due to arthritis but it is hoped to increase the numbers slightly.

The county boundary wall has been rebuilt using stone from the original quarry in the nearby woodland. It will be completed in the New Year.

Mushroom and fungi picking is becoming a problem with parasol mushrooms and waxcap fungi being stripped and possibly sold commercially. This contravenes the National Trust byelaws and warning posters are being erected.

The Dean Green team has been on the Common removing one third of the trees to keep views open. They will be coming regularly and will be managed by the new ranger, Laura.

Lesley, another volunteer, will be providing a landscape assessment of the Hill and hopefully will be able to report next year.

David spoke of the upgrading of a footpath on to the Hill to bridleway. He is concerned that horses which are grazing the Common should not have access to the top of the Hill. He hoped that a kissing gate will prevent this. The number of horse-riders in the future will have to be monitored.

Discussion ensued on how to stop horses coming down into the village. Jan Bollington reminded the meeting that next year by law all 'equine' will have to be micro-chipped.

The cattle grids on the Common are in a dangerous condition and David reported that Herefordshire Highways will be coming to attend to these in the near future.

The Chairman recorded thanks to David Armstrong.

Any Other Business

Frank drew attention to the new Forest of Dean Allocation Plan. Also he urged members to go and vote when the final consultation for the Longhope Neighbourhood Development Plan is announced probably in the Spring.

Audrey spoke of the picnic fires that had occurred over the summer on the top of the Hill. The Parish Council are in the process of erecting fire signs.

Rob Guest reported to the Secretary that up to August 2015 he had supplied 92 maps of May Hill properties into the old phone box.

Kevin apologised for the lack of advertising in advance of this meeting and promised that next year there would be an improvement. Lifa has taken the email addresses of all the attendees and will send out the Minutes in this way.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.10 p.m.