

RIVER YEALM & DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

Registered Charity Number 262929

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held at The Village Hall, Noss Mayo on Tuesday 11th April 2017

1. **Apologies for absence**

Were received from Charles Arkinstall, Susannah Bradley, Barbara Geddes, Christopher and Lesley Challacombe, Cllr Keith Baldry (Special Mention), Cllr Ian Blackler, Mel and Jean Ellis, Robin and Linda Forrester, Alan and Linda Gorczyca, Denise Marchant, Sue Spooner, Mike and Mary Norman, Mary Norton, Caroline and Victor Parsons, Sally Spooner, Sue Spooner-Rogers, Bill and Caroline Taylor, David Thrush, Mervyn and Penny Wheatley, Buff and Julian Whiteley, Chris and Mary Wilcox, Kate Wood.

2. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting on April 15th 2016 were approved and accepted.

Proposed Peter Hall Seconded Derek Pretty.

3. **Chairman's Report.**

Please see separate document for full Report.

Membership

The Association currently has **300 households of the 929 in the Parish**, which are members of the RYDA. The Association bade farewell to Eric Rodmell and Denise Marchant in 2016. Helen Lancina has succeeded Denise as Honorary Secretary. Many thanks to Katie Guy, co-opted until March 2017. Welcome to Lesley Dempsey who will launch the RYDA Website fully in late Spring.

Bob Styring will give an update on Brookings Down Wood and Eastern Hill Wood later in the meeting.

4. **Adoption of the Accounts.**

The Treasurer and Membership Secretary has compiled a separate Report for further scrutiny. There are sufficient resources to fund a new Telephone Directory should Luscombe Maye be unable to contribute when the next edition is due. The RYDA is fully insured for Public Liability to a value of £5M; by going through Zurich direct the premium is reduced to 2/3 of the previous year. The Harbour Authority and Parish Council generously contribute to these overheads.

The accounts for the year ending 31st December 2016 were approved and accepted.

Proposed Robin Hogg Seconded Bob Styring.

5. **Appointment of the Honorary Auditor.**

Thanks were extended to the Honorary Auditor Veronica Ingram who has scrutinised the accounts this year and the Committee requested that she be appointed next year as Auditor.

Proposed Margaret Pritchard Seconded Robin Geldard.

6. **Election of Officers and Committee Members.**

The Chairman informed the meeting that he is currently standing as 'Acting Chairman' as he has exceeded the requisite 3-year period.

The RYDA Committee:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Christopher Lunn | Acting Chairman |
| Helen Lancina | Honorary Secretary |
| Alan Lomax | Treasurer & Membership secretary |
| Christopher Bradley | Committee Member |
| Peter Pritchard | Committee (Planning & Newsletter) |
| Lesley Dempsey | Committee Member (Website) |
| Suzanne Sparrow | Committee Member |
| John Tighe | Committee Member (Directory) |

The Chairman asked for the support of the meeting for the approval of the Committee members:

Proposed Andrew Beveridge Seconded Robin Hogg.

7. **Appointment of RYDA Trustees.** The appointment of Trustees needed to be made following the acquisition of Eastern Hill Wood. Robin Geldard, Alan Lomax, Chris Bradley, Jeremy Spooner and Christopher Lunn have volunteered to adopt the role as new Trustees.

Proposed Roy Fenner Seconded Peter Brown

Brookings Down Wood. Bob Styring reported that the bluebells and blossom throughout the wood would be worth a visit very soon. The bird boxes have been replaced and work has been carried out to renovate the steps and maintain path edges, rendering the wood tidy and safe for visitors.

Eastern Hill Wood. This is now leased from the Woodland Trust following the creation of a Management Committee, facilitated by Robin Geldard, who liaised tirelessly with the lawyers to make the land available for public amenity. The wood was originally left to the National Trust, who passed responsibility to the Woodland Trust. Extensive clearing work has been carried out to the entrance of the wood, with further plans to create an infrastructure including new steps. 140 hours of voluntary work have been carried out since January 2017. Bob provided photos showing progress. Jeremy Spooner monitors both woods and finance depends on a meagre budget provided by 'Friends of Brooking Down Wood'. The extra expense of funding the steps has further diminished resources, with a plea for further enrolment forms to be taken up, with an annual £5 donation (Gift Aid).

Questions regarding wheelchair access and the age of the woods were raised; Brooking Down Wood could possibly be accessed towards the lower part by wheelchair.

The age of the woodland is unknown, although it is not classified as an ancient wood.

The Chairman gave thanks to Robin Geldard and all volunteers involved in maintaining both woods.

Harbour Clean Up by Andrew Beveridge.

The Harbour Clean Up will be held on 13th May at low tide. The main focus will be on the Spit (Andrew to lead) and the upper reaches of the river (Christopher Lunn to lead). Andrew is hoping for a collection of 1 1/2 tonnes as in previous years.

8. **Any other business.** The Chairman quoted snippets from previous RYDA minutes from its early days of existence (the 1950s), with input from Suzanne Sparrow and discussed the historical 'John Mejer' Awards, which were given to those who have made outstanding contribution to the conservation in Devon. The RYDA award was given to John Allen for his work at Noss Voss.
9. There being no other business the Chairman thanked the 47 attendees and the formal part of the meeting ended at 20. 15. There followed a talk by George Lopes on the Preservation of the Red Squirrel

10. **The Nobility of the Woods by George Lopes.**

George is a trustee of the Red Squirrel Survival Trust and gave an informative talk about the (native) red squirrel and more prevalent (alien) grey squirrel. Clinton Estates own in excess of 3000 acres of woodland, the largest woodland in the UK. There is to be no further hardwood planting because they cannot control the grey squirrel and consequently the damage caused to hardwood. After 15 years of growth, the squirrel strips the bark from the trees. Defra and the Forestry Commission informed the Government that there would be no further planting of hardwood, citing that the Woodland Trust has planted extensively and the trees will not survive due to damage caused by the grey squirrel. They predict that such woodland areas will become scrubland within 30 years. George pointed out that it is not illegal to kill grey squirrels if they are caught and that his gamekeeper alone culls approximately 200 per annum (humane traps) in order to address this serious environmental problem.

While Defra supports culling, conflict arises as the Woodland Trust are nervous of taking this approach, although the fact is that the red squirrel contracts pox from the grey squirrel, leading to extinction. While Scotland fully supports the culling process and red squirrels are now breeding, Cornwall is clearing from the Lizard and aims to create a 'vacuum' for the red squirrel. Funding for 'Escott' squirrel cages is required in order to reach the Tamar and George invited locals to monitor sightings of grey squirrels within the village. George also pointed out that the decline of the songbird was due to the grey squirrel.

11. The Chairman thanked each speaker for their contribution to a very interesting and informative AGM.

Christopher Lunn, Chairman

Minutes to be ratified at the AGM 2018.