# Minutes of Woodlarks Camp Site Trust

# Annual General Meeting

# Saturday 25th March 2017 at 11.30 in the Dining Room at the Camp Site

**Notes**

Officers Reports will be published in full on the web site.

Numbers refer to numbers in the agenda.

Present: Ken Luckett (Chair), Alexine Crawford, Angus Berry, Christian Strover, Mark Greenwood, Sarah Lane and Nick Richards. In addition, various guests including attendees at the Camp Leaders’ Weekend.

**1. Welcome**

Alexine Crawford welcomed the attendees.

**2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Tim and Julie Dicker, Dave Dawson, Trish Nice, Carly Hayton, Ali Fox, Phil Drew, Nigel Southon, Grahame Done and Malcolm Jarrett.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the 2016 AGM were agreed and signed.

**4. Matters arising from the Minutes**

None.

**5. Chairman’s report – Alexine Crawford**

For a second year we are combining the AGM with the week-end for Camp Leaders. The week-end is designed to bring Camp Leaders up-to-date with various aspects of running camps, along with useful networking among leaders. The AGM element last year was appreciated as giving the bigger picture of Woodlarks as a whole, which we hope will be the case again.

I’d like to pay tribute to the Camp Leaders whose enterprise and the responsibilities they shoulder are truly amazing. Preparations begin in the autumn with forms being sent out early in the New Year. Aided in some cases by a committee, they devise a theme for the year, locate and order fun activities and personnel, and deal with the complications of matching campers with helpers, which can lead to juggling because of last minute cancellations. Each camp has a distinct family feeling, with participants returning year after year.

I received a last minute invitation in April to nominate two of our volunteers to attend the Golden Jubilee Patrons’ lunch in the Mall in London. So many people could have been appropriate, but I was pleased that one veteran helper and one still a student were able to attend this memorable occasion.

In August Pathfinders Camp celebrated its 60th anniversary with a special day which included thanksgiving in the chapel, a display of vintage photos, buffet lunch with speeches and toasts, and a remarkable mobile pizza van providing supper before – of course – a camp fire. A camper and her helper presented a cheque each to Pathfinders and Woodlarks, earned by swimming 36 sponsored widths of the pool. The newly floored bunkhouse tent and approaches which Nick had worked hard to have ready, partly funded by this swim, was formally opened by a camper.

The swimming pool being such a major facility, it is perhaps not surprising that it can also present the major problems. The new changing rooms have had a number of snagging issues, some due to more extensive use of the showers than anticipated, some due to the Changing Rooms being, to quote the architect, a prototype of their kind. Christian Strover along with Nick, the contractors and architects, Mark Davis and Dave Bywater, have addressed these issues which are mostly solved.

More worrying has been a big leak in the pool itself. This meant that in order for experts to investigate the cause of the leak, the pool had to be drained, and refilled. Despite remedial action a less serious leak continued. It looks as if at last the reason has been located. We very much appreciate the prompt action taken on several occasions by the pool team.

Santa’s Grotto goes from strength to strength, thanks to the “Elves” who devote time to its preparation throughout November. 181 children with additional needs came in successive groups during the first week of December and enjoyed the magic created all over the Site. Two schools were new to Woodlarks and hope to taste its joys in the summer. Banks and other firms which totally fund the Grotto each sent a couple of employees to join the elves on different days. Nick Richards is key to the enterprise, inspiring donors and participants alike, and making it all possible.

It has been a tough year for Sarah during her prolonged cancer treatment, a year in which Nick has supported her throughout, as well as keeping up with his Woodlarks commitments. Sarah managed to keep going at maintenance level during this time, but the Trustees, realising that her normal work for Woodlarks has multiplied over the years, decided that her role should now be salaried. Nick prefers to keep his Woodlarks commitment on a voluntary basis.

Although the salary was paid from May onwards, the contracts were complicated and we owe thanks to David Selden and Malcolm Jarrett who paved the way, and to our solicitor Dermot Burke for his generous professional work. It was a learning process for us all! Sarah’s full time engagement with Woodlarks is a joy both to her and to us.

We are delighted as well to report that several volunteers have come forward to take on necessary jobs. The Drew family should perhaps be mentioned together. The choir in which Brian and Louise sing put on a memorable concert in aid of the Camp Site, the funds generously augmented by the choir members. Brian has taken on DBS checks, so if any of you need your clearance updated, he is the person to get in touch with. Phil Drew, their son, has taken on care of our tents, and is now a member of the Management Committee to which he also brings his professional experience. His wife Alyson is now distributing and emptying our collecting boxes.

How to manage our accumulated archives has been something of a worry, so we are delighted that Martyn Allen, long-time Woodlarker and leader of Adventurers Camp, has become our enthusiastic archivist. He is digitising many records, stowing indexed papers in a designated cupboard in the Undercroft, and making relevant items public.

Lastly, we are pleased to report that Grahame Done has become a Trustee. Grahame lives right next door and has already spent time with campers and the Grotto. He has his own business and is keen on all that Woodlarks does. Two of our former Trustees have stood down, both because of increased professional commitments. Clive Spooner, long involved with pool cleaning and Rotarian help, chaired the Management Committee until work took him weekly out of England. David Selden gave regular support and valuable financial advice over the six years of his trusteeship, consulting with Julie Dicker. We sincerely thank them both.

Malcolm Jarrett has put in hours of work updating and standardising our many policy documents, a list of which is available to view. In addition he has re-structured and improved the Woodlarks web site, eliciting some help on the way, a good example of our policy of small groups being called upon for particular projects. Carly Flack who is looking after social media for Woodlarks, married in November so is now Mrs. Hayton. We continue to advertise judiciously, for campers and for legacies.

The annual accounts have again been inspected by our new accountants, Butler and Co, who are proving thorough and diligent. They work closely with Julie Dicker who prepares the accounts.

As we have said in this year’s Year Book, Woodlarks is both a fantastic place and fantastic people. I wish I could mention personally all the thousand or so who come for camp or working party, but I hope this report gives a flavour, and acknowledges with gratitude all who come; who lead, who work, who participate, who contribute in so may ways which make Woodlarks happen. Thank you.

**6. Treasurer’s Report – Julie Dicker**

In comparison to last year which saw the bulk of the Changing Rooms project hit the accounts, this year has been relatively quiet for Woodlarks in financial terms. Donations for general Woodlarks’ use (i.e. not specifically for any large capital project such as the Changing Rooms) have increased slightly on previous years, huge thanks go to everyone who has donated to Woodlarks during the year; we appreciate every single penny!

Income from camp fees has remained fairly steady year on year, but unfortunately, we have seen a slight decrease in other areas of income over the year. This has been coupled with an increase in costs in several areas, leading to an overall deficit (loss) for the year. This deficit on a standalone basis is not an issue for Woodlarks, we have sufficient reserves to cover it without too much damage, but clearly, we cannot continue making losses, and ideally need to turn the position around for our next financial year!

Several of the increases in costs were ‘one-off’ items, such as the improvements made to the lower car park, the costs incurred during the leak in the swimming pool, and the work done to create new tent bases and to repair the existing ones. These costs therefore have impacted this year’s accounts but are unlikely to affect any future years. On the other hand, there were several recurrent cost areas showing a general trend of increasing – for example, increasing costs of gas and electricity. We came out of some fixed price contracts during the year, and have felt the impact of rising unit costs combined with an increase in usage (although part of this is attributable to the leak in the swimming pool) .

As a result of recognising the size and complexity of the demands of the Site Secretary role, the Trust took the decision during the year to make this a remunerated role rather than a voluntary role, and as a result Woodlarks now covers the salary costs of this role. Once the decision to make this change formally took effect, several grants and funds were applied for to contribute towards these costs, and we have been successful in securing some funding to contribute towards this cost in 2017.

Our investments provided a slightly lower level of income during the year than in previous years, but this decrease in income was more than outweighed by a strong increase in valuation at the end of the year; the performance was far stronger this year than we have seen in several prior years.

Overall, the Trust has returned a deficit (loss) in the region of £45,000. This has brought into sharp focus the need for tight cost control and the need to obtain value for money for every penny spent. Whilst our reserves have been able to absorb the loss this year, they cannot sustain a loss-making position indefinitely.

**7. Friends of Woodlarks Report – Trish Nice**

**Balance as at 30.9.2015**

Treasurer’s Account (Current) 599.29

Flexible Account (Instant saving account) 271.15

**Balance in bank 870.44**

**Income received during year**

Subscriptions £2 per person(27) 54.00

Donations 41.00 95.00

Combined interest on account

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**Total** **965.52**

**Less expenditure during year £ £**

Payment for year books 38.25

     

38.25

**Balance as at 30.9.2016**

Treasurer’s Account (Current) 656.04

Flexible Account (Instant saving account) 271.23

**Balance in bank 927.27**

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**Total 965.52**

For the last 2 years we have 27 loyal subscribers for which we are eternally and extremely grateful. 2016 was a quiet year for the Friends, but in Oct which is in the this financial year we have purchased a fold up bed as a trial for camps and working parties to use during the year and comment on - if favourable the Trust may purchase more as this will provide more space in the old dorm area to be used for other activities. The Trust has had some feed back from camp leaders but the beds have yet to be tried for a full season.

Once again thanks to everyone who have or still do subscribe for your support. The Friends isn’t just about subscriptions/donations, it is also the many Friends that give their time and support to Woodlarks, it is invaluable – We certainly couldn’t do it alone. Both of which are priceless.

Historically, the Friends of Woodlarks was never intended to be a full and substantial fundraiser, the reasoning behind this was so that people could donate or subscribe small amounts to receive a Year Book after their camping or working party experience.

Please can I remind anyone who is renewing/joining subscriptions or sending donations to the Friends of Woodlarks **cheques have to be made out to the Friends of Woodlarks** otherwise the cheque will go into the general fund (you will still however get a yearbook). You are all Friends to me.

May the spirit of Woodlarks continue - It just goes to show how much being part of the Woodlarks family means to so many

Thank you once again

**8. Operations report – Nick Richards**

* Nick Richards praised Christian Strover for the hard work he has put in to ensure the pool rooms were completed on time and to standard. He went on to thank the grotto elves for their support and enthusiasm for the event which is a great success every year.
* He further praised the impressive amount of projects completed by our working parties and he emphasised how many do not realise how much gets done out of season.
* Whilst Malcolm Jarrett is away, Grahame Done will be the trustee over-seeing operations and Tim Dicker and Phil Drew will work alongside Nick Richards.
* Nick Richards informed the meeting that grants will be applied for this year to enhance the site and cover as many running costs as possible, for example a grant has been obtained to cover the cost of a new roof for the pump house. . He thanked the donors who had provided funding for the new tent.
* He pointed out to the meeting that there will be a new shed at the pool for storing the toys and the pool cleaner and that there are new reflective signs on the gate after it was driven into last year and had to be replaced.
* Nick was happy to report that there will soon be a new door for the ladies outside toilet (a big favourite among campers).
* He went on to tell everyone about the new flood light on the top field for emergency use.
* Nick thanked Sue Lewis, David Bywater, Terry Bourbonneux and Julie Cooley for their hard work during engineering week.
* Finally, Nick thanked the camp leaders for all they do and asked for input.
* Angus Berry thanked Nick Richards for all of his hard work.
* Julie Cooley invited all present to the Easter Working Party.
* Ken Luckett said what a joy it was to be involved with Woodlarks.

**9. Any other business**

* Angus Berry explained how he has been battling with the utilities providers for better deals for the camp.
* Carolyn Page suggested that the Friends of Woodlarks should be publicised more.
* Everyone wished a speedy recovery to Malcolm Jarrett.
* Sarah Lane thanked everyone for their support during the last 18 months after being unwell.
* Carolyn Page thanked the trustees for keeping Woodlarks going.

**10. Time, date and place of next AGM – to be decided**

**Signed: (Chairman) Date:**