

FRIENDS OF VALLEY GARDENS, HARROGATE

Minutes of General Meeting held at St Peter's Church on Thursday 17 July 2014

Present: Jane Blayney (Chairman), Robert Grange, Neil Hughes, Amanda Wilkinson, Anne Grange, Simon Collier, Paula Collier, Anne Broadbent, Trish McLaughlin, Liz Chidlow, Peter Blayney, Joyce Peachman, Brenda Exall, Jon Collins.

Apologies: Martin Fish, Jim Clark, Patrick Kilburn, Neil Hind, James Cain and Jenny Travena.

Minutes of last meeting: These were approved as a correct record.

Matters arising: None.

Special Presentation: **JB** made a special presentation of a restaurant voucher to Simon and Paula Collier in recognition of and gratitude for their faithful support, especially over the 1940s Open Day.

Report from HBC: On behalf of Patrick Kilburn, Parks Development Manager, **TM** had expressed delight at the success of the 1940s Open Day. There were a couple of related concerns which were being dealt with; another was the Victorian lampstandards; however, these were a County Council issue which was also being addressed. HBC have no plans to replace them and FOVG's comments had been noted. Finger posts for the three-sided noticeboard would be in position shortly as would be a finial on the top. On 22 July tree work would take place in Sovereign Park necessitating the part closure of Back Lane. A list of forthcoming events in the Valley gardens was given. **AG** congratulated HBC on the exceptional way the Tour de France had been handled. Some lights in the Valley Gardens are still not working.

Appointments from AGM: **PB** advised the following: Trustees - Jim Clark, Jane Blayney, Anne Grange, Jon Collins, Peter Blayney. Vice Chairman and Membership Secretary - Jon Collins. Young Persons Representative - Sally Haslewood.

Old Magnesia Well Pump Room: **RG** reported that the external painting was nearly finished. The doors would be refurbished soon. Mulbrand would be dealing with the internal panelling. The windows had been re-glazed and they and the security guards and lights fitted. The first electrical fix had been carried out. This would be followed by the completion of the lighting, plug sockets and ceramic heater. A new wooden floor would be installed. It would then be necessary to decide what was needed inside to service the function of the building. The project should be concluded by the next 1940s Open Day. **RG** paid tribute to **NHs** plans.

Peat Garden: **LC** described the progress. Thanks were due to **SC**, **PC** and **TM**. HBC gravediggers had created drainage channels. 30 tons of grit, soil and sand had been mixed to surround the reservoir and local stone added. Much research had been carried out to select plants with the right colours, sizes and flowering times and **JT**, **JB** and she had planted them. Now weeding was needed. The Sensory Garden had been created thanks to **TM** obtaining funding from WREN. All senses had been served. **TM** appreciated the work put in. **RG** advised that a resin bonded path similar to those recently constructed would link the Magnesia Wellhead to the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room when the stump of the laurel tree had been ground out. The Wellhead would be surrounded by York stone paving. A plaque would be placed in the north bed. **TM** will suggest a design.

1940s Open Day: This had been a highly successful community event with 27,324 visitors to the Valley Gardens on the day according to HBC's figures. Everyone concerned had worked exceptionally hard. **AW** and **NH** were cited as examples. There had been very positive feedback. FOVG would like to have made more money from the day from the catering but a picnic-type culture was developing which added to the happy atmosphere. The group has started to consider ways to streamline for next year but it was felt that there was little scope for achieving much more revenue from the event. The weather was critical to ensure good visitor numbers and also the BBMF flypast, which had been a singular attraction. **JC** had contracted out the catering which meant that fees were paid regardless of the weather. Lessons had been learned. The Sun Pavilion was being contracted out and thanks were due to Tim Dabell for his considerable support. The programme costs had been covered by the advertising, Harrogate Mumblers had done a splendid job with the tombola, Hales Bar had presented the magnificent sum of £2,000 and Yorkshire Building Society personnel, assisted by FOVG volunteers, had sold out of cakes, contributing nearly £1,600. The programme had not been adequately exploited and more revenue could have been created. Equally, there was a shortage of volunteers to put theories into practice and more were eagerly sought for next year. Placing programmes in shops and incorporating song pages

within the programme were suggested. Any more ideas for improvements or for money-making would be welcome. Perhaps music could continue to be played after the National Anthem to bring the event to a gradual end.

Treasurer's Report: **AG** announced that the 1940s Open Day had raised a total of £6,000. The charity had £25,000 in the bank which should be enough to pay for work done and to complete the work to do on the building. More recently there was £3,000 from the Arts and Heritage Fund and a further £1,000. A sponsor will be sought for next year's 1940s Open Day.

Membership Secretary's Report: **JC** reported FOVG's current membership at approximately 150. Experience had shown that the 1940s Open Day may not be the ideal occasion to launch a major recruitment drive. People take away forms and forget to respond. Five new families had been recruited. Their membership would run from June to June. A new updated membership form had been produced. **TM** offered to display FOVG papers on noticeboards. **PB** raised the issue of keeping members not on email informed. Communications to them were sent by second class post and this could quickly eat up annual membership fees. Events were chronicled in seasonal Newsletters and it was suggested that members not using email might be restricted to these and that they might be asked to pay a higher membership fee.

Future Events: **JB** advised the following: Play Day - 6 August, Heritage Open Days - 11 to 14 September and volunteers were needed to man the OMWPR, Asda Bag Pack - November. From the show of hands offering to volunteer, this would be adequately covered. Even though the financial situation is healthy, funders frequently require match funding.

Funding Applications: **JB** had written to the Harry Bolland Trust to transfer a balance of £425. This was the difference between the £475 granted and the actual cost of £50 for the disabled ramp. Thoughts are turning to the next project, e.g. possibly the restoration of the bandstand. Discussions would take place with **TM** and **PK**.

Any Other Business: **PB** presented a poster depicting Hygeia, ancient Greek Goddess of health, cleanliness and sanitation, daughter of Aesculapius and Epione. Clearly adopted by our forebears as epitomising the health-giving powers of Harrogate's spa waters, she would be the ideal choice of talisman for the Valley Gardens and, more particularly, for the senior building within, the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room. Hygeia was frequently depicted with a serpent coiled round her body drinking from a cup and it was interesting to note that the serpent, having strong connections with the medical profession, had been incorporated into the many benches placed round the gardens. **PB** formally proposed the adoption of Hygeia as FOVG's talisman. This was seconded by **JC** and carried unanimously. FOVG had played host to a party from the Wisconsin Hardy Plants Society. Unfortunately, their heavy programme that day had rendered them both late and tired.

Date of Next Meeting: The next meeting will take place on Thursday 2 October at 7.30 pm in the Brostoff Community Hall in St Peter's Church.