

FRIENDS OF VALLEY GARDENS, HARROGATE

Minutes of General Meeting held at St Peter's Church at 7.30 pm on Thursday 17 November 2016

Present: Jane Blayney (Chairman), Steven Watkinson, Jon Iddon, Simon Collier, Paula Collier, Andrew Goss, Liz Chidlow, Mike Hine, Kate Dawson, Maureen Rush, Chris Rush, Peter Blayney.

Apologies: David Mason, Anne Grange, Robert Grange, Ann Beeby, Mavis Meadowcroft.

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

Matters arising: None.

Update: **JB** reported that, following restoration at a cost of £82,000, the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room had been officially opened by Malcolm Neesam on 6 October 2015. The building, converted into an Information and Education Centre, and surrounding Peat Garden were now open to the public on the first and third Sundays in the month. The opening on 18 December would have a Christmas theme.

The 1940s Open Day in June had raised £7,900 and had attracted a record 30,000 visitors to the Valley Gardens. Bookings for 18 June 2017 were well advanced. It may be necessary to hire portable toilets.

The Valley Gardens were becoming popular for school heritage tours. 120 pupils had recently been shown round. Unfortunately a spate of vandalism had occurred and damage sustained to benches and the "Bus Shelter" in addition to the damaged Pou Whenua. There was litter and graffiti in the colonnade and extensive damage to the bandstand where there had been consumption of alcohol and drug taking resulting in police intervention. Dismay was expressed that there appeared to be a policy of not taking action against known individuals responsible. Welcome restorative attention is currently being paid to the bandstand.

A four day event had caused severe damage to significant parts of the grassed area necessitating their enclosing for up to nine weeks for re-seeding. An open meeting had taken place at which opinions on the future usage of the Valley Gardens were freely expressed. A subsequent meeting with the Head of Parks and Environmental Services had failed to obtain reassurances for the future which left open the possibility of further large events and thus the development of a patchwork effect to the grassed areas and an overall degeneration in the park's condition. This could have the effect of reducing the chances of future In Bloom type success. The Old Magnesia Well Pump Room and Peat Garden had recently been granted a Platinum award by Yorkshire In Bloom and the Friends the Harrogate In Bloom 2016 Trophy.

(For the Volunteer Gardening report see the attached). The poor state of three trees in the Peat Garden area had been reported. It was learned that they are being monitored. It was hoped to organise a series of trips for the volunteer gardeners. A notice would be posted on the public noticeboard calling for more recruits. There had been complaints over the behaviour of dogs/their owners. **KD** will ascertain the current policy.

A considerable amount of work had been put into the Japanese Garden by **AB** and **LC**. The valuable assistance of HBC personnel over this and the King Edward VII Memorial Gate project was very much appreciated.

Finance: The bank account stood at £23,512. £336.19 Gift Aid refund had been received. FOVG had participated in the Asda and Waitrose Green Disc schemes and an arrangement had been made with the Otley Road Co-op whereby FOVG benefits by 1% on purchases made.

Membership: There are currently 94 paid-up members, including 7 Corporate Members.

Events: 16 March 2017 Annual General Meeting
18 June 2017 1940s Open Day

Date of next meeting: see above

There followed a fascinating illustrated talk by Maureen Rush entitled "Paint in my Waterpot", after which the Chairman gave a vote of thanks.

P J Blayney: Secretary

J E Blayney: Chairman