

## **North West Mills Group**

### **Minutes of Annual General Meeting – held 29.03.14**

#### **Little Marton Windmill, Blackpool**

1. **Present:** 8 members (4 committee & 4 ordinary):  
Stuart Hobbs (Chairman), Jim Woodward-Nutt (Treasurer), Margaret Croker (Membership Sec), Audrey Steeley (Committee), Shirley McCauley, Mr & Mrs Bonson, Jon Harrison.
2. **Apologies for absence:** were received by: Mike and Vickie Brereton, Shirley Matthews (Committee member, may be late), Wendy Venables, Nick Jones, John Ingham (Melrose Developments), Janet Edmunds, Alan Campbell, Charles Rowntree, Mildred Cookson (committee member).
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting:** were of the AGM 2012. The minutes had been sent to the committee members but some had not received them by email. Written note accepted and committee had been in correspondence with each other over the last 12 months.
4. **Matters Arising:** None specific. Will be covered by Chair' report etc.
5. **Chairman's Report:** by Stuart Hobbs: Stuart thanked the out-going committee members who had chosen to stand down from their roles over the last 12 months. Charles Rowntree – who is going to follow other interests and spend time with family. And Mick Easton who felt that he couldn't offer anything constructive to help the group but wished us luck in the future.

He said that 2013 had been a slow year for the NWMG and that there had been no tour and little interaction with the majority of mills. There had also been no Newsletters (see Newsletter Editor's report) and that some mills did not know of the NWMG or what we do. Also that the committee members had busy years in 2013 with their own mills or other commitments, but that the group felt stagnant. Suggestions were that we could organise a mill tour to the Cheshire/Manchester mills for the autumn as there had been updates and restorations to many mills since the group last visited.

Options of mills to visit were Bunbury, Mickle Trafford, Stretton and Walk mills. The committee were going to see if anyone had the time to take on organising the mill tour.

#### **Stuart Hobbs to email committee.**

Mr Bonson questioned why the group was stagnating as it was not as active as other groups he was part of. We discussed the lack of time and commitment available from the committee due to work, mills and health over the last 12 months and also that members did not contact the group with proactive ideas or asking for help between AGMs. The NWMG cover a large geographical area making attending open days or displaying at county shows difficult due to staffing, travelling and insurance issues. But we could look at other active groups for ideas.

Some members had previously received a newsletter by email and/or post even though they had chosen not to receive a printed copy. Also some had not received by email. Stuart

suggested talking about this in detail for the Newsletter Editor's report. **No Secretary report as position vacant though Margaret had been helping with the work load.**

6. **Treasurer's Report:** Jim has kindly supplied the treasurer's report (see attached) and show the accounts in good order mainly due to little outgoing (i.e. no newsletter) It was noted to change the date of the 'general reserve' to '31.12.2013'.
7. **Membership Secretary's report by Margaret Croker:** 2013 saw 44 members in total comprising of 39 paid members, 4 life members including 7 mills (corporate). So far in 2014 we have had 25 renewals plus the 4 life giving a total of 29 members. The membership renewal reminders were sent out for the beginning of March.

Margaret suggested that we can drop the membership card as there is no practical if the committee and members agree. **Stuart to email committee to decide.**

We can email a receipt of payment or if a member would like a physical receipt they can send an SAE. Corporate members can have a printed receipt for their records if requested otherwise email. Also for those who paid by cheque, it should be apparent that it has been received once the cheque has been cashed by the recipient.

Three members who will not be renewing membership are Janet Edmunds who has moved away from the North West.

Geoff Ibbetson who has moved away following a severe stroke.

Patricia Parr who has resigned.

Thank you to Margaret for the report and also doing the role of Secretary.

8. **Newsletter Editor's report by Stuart Hobbs:** Stuart is still carrying out the role of Editor as no members have come forward to take over the position left vacant at the 2012 AGM. He apologised for the lack of publications over the past 12 months as commitments at Heron Corn Mill and the lack of news meant he didn't want to print for the sake of printing. But accepted that this must change and also pointed to the fact that our corporate members and potential corporate members could have article in it to promote their activities. Also some mills do not know what the NWMG are or how they can help. Mills owned by large establishments such as councils or the National Trust are reluctant to send information outside their normal marketing plan like at Helmshore Mill, though the friends of Helmshore Textile mill may be a better avenue to follow up. Tony Bonson who was present told of his slight displeasure of not receiving newsletters and suggested looking at other mills groups for ideas such as the very active Midlands Mills Group.

Time has been taken to try and make a more modern looking newsletter but setting a useable template up in MS Word or Publisher hasn't been very successful though most people found the look of the last newsletters very good apart from one member who receives a digital copy to read on a tablet.

Stuart would look into whether a digital copy should or could be different for ease of reading on small digital devices. Jim Woodward-Nutt suggested looking at a program called Quark for a newsletter template/editor.

Stuart will continue as editor when he has time until the position is filled and currently had some ideas for the next issue already in digital format.

**Website:** In 2013 AGM Shaun Blezard (of Heron Corn Mill) offered to take a look at the website and update the look of it possibly on a Word Press template. Mike Brereton needed to arrange something regarding the security of the website before handing over log in

details to Shaun. Stuart Hobbs did send a follow up email to Mike but had no reply. **Stuart Hobbs to follow up with a phone call in the next month before National Mills Weekend 2014.**

## 9. Reports from the mills:

**Gleaston Mill, Ulverston:** Re-opening for the new season after improving the displays of artefacts and information available to visitors. Currently awaiting new timber for water wheel repairs being cut to order at Gayle Mill. Stuart Hobbs will again contact Mike Brereton to offer assistance on behalf of the group.

**Heron Corn Mill, Beetham:** RE-open on Good Friday after being closed for 12 months due to extensive renovation works. Part of a HLF funded project it will re-open with a festival weekend and plan a programme of event throughout the year. The waterwheel is finishing renovation and will power the machinery where they plan to grind grain for demonstration and have flour for sale.

**Marsh Mill, Thornton:** Report printout supplied by Margaret Croker

### Marsh Mill Report

For the first time Marsh Mill closed for the winter, from Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November to Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2014, the exception being Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> November when we were open for a few hours during the switch-on of the Christmas lights in the square when we were extremely busy. Consequently I decided to make admission and tours free with a request for donations to the charity selected for the event.

The newly-opened local shops were very disappointed that the mill would be closed as they see it as an attraction and receive many enquiries about when it is open.

Access has been denied during the duration so we have yet to find out if any cleaning or maintenance has taken place. Michael Brightman, Chair of the friends of Marsh Mill learned that the rainwater containers have been emptied.

The news regarding repairs, again via Michael Brightman, is that repairs are likely to begin later in the year. The council does say that funding has been put aside for that purpose.

[See report from John Ingham from Melrose]

The Windmill Players, a local drama group, has shown an interest in trying to support the mill and are providing entertainment throughout the opening day. It would be great if this could be an on-going relationship.

The volunteers will be continuing to man the mill but we could do with one or two more. The council had talked in terms of placing a paid member of staff in the mill but so far we have heard nothing more about this.

The Friends of Marsh Mill held their first Annual General Meeting in January 2014. We now have about 35 memberships. The Chairman, Michael Brightman, is keen to establish a relationship of trust with the council in which they might accept advice or recommendations from the Friends.

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**Helmshore Textile Mills, Lancashire:** Stuart Hobbs had spoken to members of staff at the mill who had said that a tender for repair work to the waterwheel had been sent out and that they were choosing a contractor. The contact could not supply any more

information about whether they were specialists or millwrights only that a lot of work by the friends group and Lancashire Council had gone in to the tender. Stuart also requested a copy but was informed that Lancashire County Council Museums were unable to supply us with information. But he was able to have some event leaflets to distribute from Heron Corn Mill. The mill will be open year round. **Stuart Hobbs to make contact with the Friends group.**

**Acorn Bank Mill, Penrith:** Stuart is in contact with the volunteers that run the mill and open it to visitors co-ordinated by the Acorn Bank NT staff. Continuing improvements to the building and machinery are made by the volunteers who have returned the mill to working order able to mill grain into flour and provide tours of the facilities. The adjacent barn will be having a phase 1 restoration completed shortly so the impact of the work on the mill will be minimal. Phase 2 works, to be carried out in the future, may provide space for improved visitor facilities and interaction. A blog is updated on a regular basis and can be found online at [acornbankwatermillblog.blogspot.co.uk](http://acornbankwatermillblog.blogspot.co.uk)

**Little Salkeld, Penrith:** No update was provided for the AGM but Stuart has spoken to Nick Jones, the owner, who said that the mill was still for sale as a going concern and that there was a potential private buyer interested as well as a community group buyout.

**Little Marton Windmill, Blackpool:** Will be opening on national mills weekend and one Sunday each month until October where volunteers will conduct tours and have refreshments available. It will also be available to special interest groups by prior arrangement

**Rosset Mill, Wrexham:** Margaret had provided an update after being contacted by Michael Kilgannon, former owner of the mill.

Michael expressed concern that the new owners of the mill may not be so keen on maintaining the milling aspect of the mill (Presumably interested in using the site as a residence only) and may wish to remove some of the machinery. The building was listed in September 1952 and is now grade II\*.

*At the time of the meeting it was not known whether the machinery is also listed or just the building)*

We suggested he contact the SPAB mills section if he thought there was significant risk and that Michael could provide a contact name and address if he would like a letter of support from the NWMG. No positive intervention by the NWMG could be thought of at the time of the meeting as there was little evidence of the risk and information at the time.

Michael has also been in contact with Bunbury Mill trust to offer support to them and ask for support for Rossett mill to remain intact.

He also thought that he had not received any newsletters over the past 12 months.

Margaret was able to inform him there had not been any, he also suggested he would continue as a member of the NWMG.

- 10. Election of Officers:** Stuart Hobbs wished to stay on as Chairman but offered the position to the audience. The three committee members present agreed to have Stuart Continue. Jim Woodward-Nutt to continue as Treasurer and Margaret Croker to continue as Membership Secretary. Newsletter editor position is still vacant but will be temporarily taken by Stuart Hobbs.

Secretary position is vacant but Margaret Croker has kindly dealt with the responsibility whilst the workload is low.

An email will be sent out to the other committee members asking if they would like to continue as committee members.

11. **Future Events:** Ideas of a group trip to mills in September was put forward and will be followed up if the committee found time. It was seen important to have at least one yearly trip or event. Margaret Croker used to take the Fyle Windmill displays around to local agricultural shows but commitment to Marsh Mill and insurance issues mean this is not possible this year. **Possible newsletter appeal for members help.**
12. **Any Other Business:** Concerns were raised about the proposed works to Marsh Mill. Who was going to do them? Who drew up the schedule of works and what are the specifications. It was suggested that Mildred Cookson may be able to write to Wyre Borough Council on behalf of SPAB mills section to find out this information.
13. **Date of next meeting:** A date was not set as the committee usually make contact via email but agreed to the potential of a meeting in person should pressing matters arise. Otherwise the next meeting would be the AGM 2015 and should be arranged for a Saturday that doesn't clash with other mill group AGMs.

Following the meeting the Friends of Little Marton Windmill were thanked for their hospitality and use of facilities. Ann Allen gave a presentation about Allen Clarke (Local Author 'Windmill Land') on behalf of Shirley Matthew who couldn't make it back from an earlier engagement.