

North West Mills Group

Minutes of Annual General Meeting – held 25.04.15

Little Marton Windmill, Blackpool

1. **Present:** 6 members (3 committee & 3 ordinary (corporate)):
Stuart Hobbs (Chairman), Margaret Croker (Membership Sec), Shirley Matthews (Publicity Officer) Steve Williams (Lytham Mill), Geoff Pope (Little Marton), Ann (Little Marton)
2. **Apologies for absence:** were received by: Mike and Vickie Brereton, Wendy Venables, Nick Jones, Alan Campbell, Charles Rowntree, Mildred Cookson (committee member) Audrey Steeley (committee member).
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting:** were of the AGM 2014. The minutes had been sent to the committee members via email.
4. **Matters Arising:** None specific.
5. **Chairman's Report:** by Stuart Hobbs: Another very slow year with dwindling numbers.

A lot of things happening with mills in the north-west but none had contacted the NWMG and many had forgotten it existed (lack of newsletter?). No help had been sort from the group. But with imminent repairs to Marsh Mill the SPAB mills section through Mildred Cookson had been in contact with Wyre Borough council about the specifications of repair. Only some information given out and no news on their position with regards to lease obligations as raised in the last AGM.

There had been no tour or meeting in the past 12 months. It seems like the current committee doesn't have the time to commit to organising a group trip and no members ordinary or corporate contact the group with offers or ideas or even news updates.

Stuart then told of the planned work at Warwick Bridge Mill with an HLF application for restoration and the need for match funding. It was agreed to look at the NWMG reserve as there was money transferred in 2012 for projects to help mills after the treasurer's report.

The idea was to see if we could donate some money as match funding.

Another idea Stuart mentioned was for there to be a 'buy one get one free' offer on mill membership that was unanimously agreed. This idea was to retain membership numbers and give the opportunity for the group to demonstrate them moving forward and offer value for money due to the lack of recent newsletters.

Also an idea was to offer financial help to the mills open to the public in the form of help paying or producing printed leaflets (detailed in an earlier email to the committee). This was not thought to be achievable by the members present but a brief chat between Geoff Pope and Stuart Hobbs suggested that Heron Mill might be able to subsidise printing costs for Little Marton Windmill. **The offer was left for Geoff to consider.**

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) A healthy reserve meant that we as a committee would consider applications for match funding from mills.
7. **Membership Secretary's report by Margaret Croker:** A slight fall in numbers over the previous year.

Minutes from the last meeting meant we could drop the use of the membership card. Margaret also stated that Bunbury Mill had been in touch with her via email to say that our contact for the mill had retired and that they would not join as corporate members as the NWMG.org.uk website still contained incorrect information about Bunbury Mill, the trust, opening times and contact details, after many attempts of asking for it to be updated. Following the Bunbury mill email being forwarded to the committee before the meeting, Stuart Hobbs has made the changes to their details. Margaret also agreed with a way of offering 2 years' membership for the price of one.

8. **Newsletter Editor's report by Stuart Hobbs:** Stuart Hobbs (SH) 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. Again 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. There is some news from Helmsore Mill that has been sent electronically but by the time the latest issue has been finalised, a lot of the news self-sourced is out of date in terms of events and fund raisers. Another request for someone with time to take over the newsletter was asked for as there has been no up takers for the last 2 years. Most of the mills open that have events and open days publish their own literature or online content so the need for the newsletter seems to be diminishing, especially with no input from NWMG members.

Website: After the last AGM a request from SH was made for log in details from Mike Brereton in relation to changing the content of the website nwmg.org.uk. Just before the AGM 2015 new log in details were set up for SH with thanks to Mike. Some alterations have been made but the method of long term changes is not something SH is familiar with.

Steve Williams has offered to look at the website if time becomes available but cannot guarantee that. SH agreed to send log in details and software link as needed.

9. Reports from the mills:

Gleaston Mill, Ulverston: Visitor numbers are doing well and repairs are well under way with regards to the waterwheel though there is still a lack of water. Amateur radio group will again be taking part in 'Mills on air' over the upcoming National Mills Weekend.

Heron Corn Mill, Beetham: Everything going well with good attendance. Waterwheel to have bucket repairs in June which mean the wheel will not turn for 3 weeks.

Marsh Mill, Thornton: Report supplied by Margaret Croker with information from Wyre Council and SPAB that repairs to the mill are being undertaken and the mill will re-open at the end of the season.

Helmshore Textile Mills, Lancashire: After the last AGM, SH made contact with the mill to find that the waterwheel has now been repaired. The friends' group have kindly sent information for the newsletter.

Acorn Bank Mill, Penrith: The mill is running well and there are more volunteers on board to continue the impressive restoration work with access to the mill now restored after recent work to the building next to it. The drying kiln rebuild is still underway and will be completed late summer.

Little Salkeld, Penrith: New owners are running the mill as before and obviously looking to stamp their own mark on it. No other news since the new owners took over in July 14. SH did meet them and has left contact details.

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 at the AGM in 2014. Very little has been heard except for rumours of alterations risking the machinery. Mildred Cookson contacted SH to point out the machinery is part of the listing of the building and cannot be altered without consent. This was following SH wrong information following the 2014 AGM report. **SH suggested SPAB could try and make contact with the current owner.**

10. **Publicity Officer Report:** Shirley reported that she had contact the local newspaper and radio station about the 2015 AGM being held at Little Marton. Thank you to Shirley for the efforts following the information being published in the paper. Sadly this has not resulted in a larger turn out.

11. **Future Events:** Last AGM the idea 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. The publicity officer had great ideas for how a trip to the Cheshire mills could be advertised but declared that she would have little time to organise the trip and make bookings. It was offered to other members present but little could be done as they all had the same time limitations.

It must be pointed out that the return of Steve Williams attending the meeting that a positive atmosphere was felt throughout the meeting. Very good ideas were made by those present with regards to the Fylde windmills creating a stronger bond with the possibility of joining efforts during open days and collaborative mill visits as well as new ideas with interpretation.

12. **Election of Officers:** Jim Woodward-Nutt, Shirley Matthews, Margaret Croker, Audrey Steeley, Stuart Hobbs, Mildred Cookson had all made intentions clear to stay on in their current roles on the committee. Mike Brereton and Steve Whitely would be contacted to ask if they would continue following the AGM. Steve Williams was also invited to join following his positive attitude to the group at the meeting and was unanimously voted onto the committee. Welcome Steve.
13. **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.
14. Future of the group was brought in to question with some committee members suggesting (via prior emails) that this should be raised at the AGM. There were good arguments for and against with a strong and valid case from Mike Brereton that the group could be a 'virtual' group. This option was not taken with the members present willing to carry on for another year. Mainly due to those present not being a fan of social media and would find the available content less appealing. **SH to review over the coming 12 months.**
15. **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 2016 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. The members present were invited to talk about their local mills with some illustrations projected on to the screen.

Stuart Hobbs had also compiled some images to accompany mill updates including a new waterwheel at Langdale Spa Hotel that generates electricity, pictures of the 3rd wheel at Acorn Bank which have recently surfaced. The new installation of water turbines at Halton near Lancaster and of the suggested alterations of Kirk Mill, Lancashire that was once a furniture manufacturer. The mill still has part of a waterwheel installed but there were planning applications to turn it into a hotel and gym. The positive news is that the developer was looking at retaining or restoring the waterwheel. It was agreed to send SPAB mills section the details. **SH**

The treasurers report and attendees list is to be added.