

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING OF**  
**SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL**  
**HELD IN THE MILLENNIUM PAVILION**  
**THE TRUNDLE, SOMERSHAM**  
**On Monday 21st May 2018 at 7.30 pm**

**PRESENT WERE:-** Cllr S Criswell, Cllr P McCloskey (in the Chair), Miss L Minter (VHMC Chairman), Miss J Bullard (Feoffees Charity Committee), Cllr M Greaves, Cllr K Hawkins, Mrs M Slevin (VHMC), Mr T Palmer (Angling Club Chairman), Mr P Clark (SNRG Chairman), Mr A Draper (Hammond Trust Chairman), Cllr D Dew, Mr D Bonnett (Somersham Poor's Money Chairman, Feoffees Charity Chairman), Mrs L Bird (Time Bank Co-ordinator), Mrs J Parsons (VHMC outgoing Treasurer), Mr R Braithwaite (VHMC incoming Treasurer) and Mrs P Bryant (Parish Clerk).

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were accepted from:

Mr J Bowland (Somersham Town Cricket Club Chairman)

Mr D Cornwell (SSLA Chairman)

Cllr A Hulme

Cllr D Skeggs

Cllr R Sutton

**2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2017**

The Minutes were proposed by Miss Bullard, seconded by Cllr Criswell and agreed by all present to be a true record of events and were duly signed by the Chairman.

**3. PRESENTATION OF ACCOUNTS & REPORTS**

**a. Somersham Charities of Poor's Money**

Mr Bonnett reported the Trustees have met twice in the last year. Despite advertising the charity and its aims there have been no applications for funds.

Finally, Mr Bonnett read out the 2017 - 2018 yearend accounts.

**b. The Educational Charity of Thomas Hammond**

Mr Draper reported the Trustees have met twice in the last year and no applications or dispersions have been made despite advertising locally. Mr Draper reported Reverend S Simpson will make the CP school aware of the fund.

Finally, Mr Draper read out the 2017 – 2018 yearend accounts.

**c. The Harvey Feoffees Charity Committee**

Mr Bonnett gave a summary of the committee's activities during the last year with the following actions: *SEE APPENDIX 1*

Miss Bullard read out the 2017-2018 yearend accounts.

**d. The Victory Hall Management Committee**

*SEE APPENDIX 2*

Mrs Parsons read out the VHMC financial review for their yearend @ 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017.

**e. Somersham Lake Working Party inc Angling Club**

Mr Palmer reported the Angling Club completely re-organised themselves this year with a new committee and have agreed new charges, ticket books and receipts with the Parish Council to reflect how the Council and Club wish the lake to be used and to be able to move forward successfully.

There are 4 bailiffs, the committee meets every 2 months and the Club join the SNRG working parties on the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday every month.

The Angling Club has an active Facebook group with 100 members and that is growing fast.

The Club will also meet every Wednesday evening for 2 hours during the summer.

The plan is to revamp the fishing pegs and remove the lime pile outside the gate at Springfield's.

Mr Palmer estimates volunteers have contributed in excess of 100 hours this year.

Finally, Mr Palmer described the planned projects for the coming year and they are actively seeking funding for improvements.

**f. Somersham Local Nature Reserve Group (SNRG)**

**SEE APPENDIX 3**

**g. Somersham Sports & Leisure Association (SSLA) (Millennium Sports Facility)**

*Written report received from Mr D Cornwell.*

The field has been well used by various football teams throughout the winter which is now drawing to a close, sadly there will be no cricket played this year as the Somersham club has been mothballed, we are hopeful the club will be resurrected in the near future.

Last year saw the travelling group of actors, the Handlebards perform Midsummer Night Dream in July and in August we had Picnic in the Park and I am pleased to say both are back again this year, 18<sup>th</sup> July for the Handlebards and 4<sup>th</sup> August for Picnic in the Park.

In October 2017 we held our successful 'Somersham Sprint' which is a 5k or 10k multi terrain running event.

The Tearoom continues to be busy with regular hirers but there is always room for a few more bookings!

We have had a number of issues with the changing rooms, heating and showers. We have had repairs carried out to the boilers, but the showers need further attention involving a considerable amount of money, we have notified Parish Council (the owners) of the situation and await quotations.

In October our secretary Penny Bryant announced her retirement from SSLA after almost 20 years of tireless work, grateful thanks to her for all that time. Our new secretary is Jeannette Rowden who has been a member of our committee for a number of years and knows our business well.

I will be standing down as chairman of SSLA at our next meeting but will continue to serve as a committee member.

We have several vacancies on the committee and will be contacting the user groups to try and fill these places.

Mrs Bryant read out the SSLA yearend accounts for 2017 – 2018 on behalf of Mr Cornwell.

**h. Somersham Community Library**

On behalf of Elsa Evans (FOSL Chairman) Miss Minter read out the annual report.

FOSL's financial year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> June. The annual accounts will be audited and considered by FOSL at their Annual General Meeting in July.

**SEE APPENDIX 4**

**i. 1<sup>st</sup> Somersham Scout Group**

No reports or accounts were received for the meeting.

**j. Somersham & Pidley Time Bank**

Mrs Bird updated the meeting on the years events for the Time Bank with some work was carried out in conjunction with the SNRG. Activities and events include Somersham carnival, Knitter natter, health walks, Apple Day, coffee mornings, social evenings, Twiddle muffs, palliative care blankets and dementia friends. Additional funding (for up to 2 years) has been found through the County's Innovate & Cultivate Fund to set up a new programme called 'Changing Lives', the aim is to help support people with neurological illnesses and older people stay in their homes longer but being more active through exercise. The Time Bank has also participated in a joint crowd funding event with the Cambridgeshire Partnership.

**k. Somersham Town Cricket Club**

The Cricket Club did not attend the meeting and did not submit a report.

**l. Somersham Parish Council Accounts**

Mrs Bryant read out the 2017 – 2018 yearend accounts for the Parish Council and responded to questions raised.

**4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Cllr Steve Criswell**

Most notable about the last year, has been the turmoil in council membership. Over the last 12 months we have lost 9 councillors due to them stepping down or not seeking re-election on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. I will name them all because it can be a thankless task and they are worthy of our gratitude for stepping up to make a difference. Thanks therefore go to Deb Carr, Yvonne Cooper, Alice Eastham, Roy Fabb, Mick Hoy, Debbie Jones, Lesley Minter, Leah Robertson and Graham Siggs. Graham of course tragically died soon after retiring. In particular I draw attention to Lesley, who has served for 11 years and Mick who has served for well over 30 years.

Disappointingly, following the uncontested election on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, we have only 8 councillors out of a possible 15. This includes 1 new councillor in Debbie Dew, to whom I offer a warm welcome. Whatever the reason for such lack of interest, the reality is that good decisions and effective actions stem from a wide range of views and experience. I therefore hope that more members will put themselves forward in the fullness of time.

The parish council has continued to be active on behalf of residents. In particular, the Time Bank has celebrated its 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A key part of this has been our excellent co-ordinator Lucy Bird. Unfortunately Lucy is moving away, so it is with a heavy heart I thank her for all she has done and wish her well for the future. We are currently interviewing for a new and enthusiastic replacement. Building on the success of the Time Bank, we launched the Changing Lives project last September with the support of our MP Shailesh Vara. The 2 schemes are complementary in supporting people and helping to nurture our community spirit.

The District Council Local Plan to 2036 has been through the final 2 consultation stages in the last 12 months. As a Key Service Centre, Somersham was always destined to be allocated a share of the required 22,000 homes. The parish council played a full part in considering the Plan, but has had to accept it can only comment, as Planning decisions are the responsibility of HDC.

The parish council continues to support our valuable Community Library, by paying for utilities. We will also be seeking to renew the lease on the building.

In most years we target a road safety issue and apply for some joint funding from the County Council. Last year's bid was aimed at improving safety at White Post junction. The reconfiguration work was completed last autumn and has been well received.

Speeding drivers continue to be a source of complaint. The council now has its own Speed Indicator Device which will be moved around the village to remind drivers of their social and road safety responsibilities.

The parish council is now the proud owner of the telephone kiosk on The Cross, having purchased it for £1. It is classified as a Grade 2 listed building and is undergoing some restoration work after which it will be made available for various community uses.

I would like to thank all councillors for their contribution over the last 12 months, Penny, our parish clerk and Megan her deputy, for efficiently conducting parish affairs. Also, many thanks to all those who contribute to our community.

## **5. ANNUAL REPORT OF COUNTY & DISTRICT COUNCILLOR STEVE CRISWELL**

I am pleased to have been elected to serve as the Somersham representative on HDC for a further 4 years. For the last 12 months I have chaired the Licencing & Protection Committee and that role will be continuing within the new council.

The most notable issue for HDC over the last year has been the completion and submission of the Draft Local Plan to 2036. This has been a huge task and has had to account for several changes to national planning guidance during its formation. Not least of those has been the growing number of houses expected to be delivered and therefore the increasing number of sites to be identified and allocated.

At the County Council I continue to represent 9 villages and therefore support and assist 9 parish councils. At Shire Hall I chair the Communities & Partnerships Committee. This was newly formed last summer to work across the whole council and exert influence across the whole public sector. This has given me the exciting opportunity to set my own agenda around 4 main themes. Building the resilience of communities, Delivering Adult Skills to match the needs of the local economy, Tackling Deprivation, and Improving Partnership Working. We are forming closer ties with P'boro City Council, sharing senior officers and developing joint work streams. And we are working on the alignment of various projects with the Combined Authority.

We have been successful in achieving huge savings over the last 7 years. The organisation is unrecognisable compared to the one I joined in 2006. There are still major challenges ahead, many of which are related to being the fastest growing County in the country whilst also receiving the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest funding. A 'fairer funding' campaign is ongoing. Our budget this year will be around £25m less than last year. With caring for the elderly and looking after vulnerable children our priority and consuming the majority of our budget, funding for Highway Maintenance is insufficient to arrest the decline in our roads. Potholes have been particularly bad this year due to prolonged periods of frost and an unusually high number of gritting runs. Their effective repair has been delayed by wet weather in early spring, but a full repair programme is well underway and showing noticeable results.

Shire Hall is no longer fit for purpose and as an asset could be put to better use bringing in long term revenue. New, much smaller accommodation will be built at Alconbury Weald, acting as a hub for smaller and in many cases shared offices across the county. Services are increasingly moving towards a locally managed and delivered, community based model.

## **6. PUBLIC FORUM**

### **Matters discussed were:**

Is there a programme of road surface repair work? For example, Parkhall Road needs a complete overhaul.

Cllr Criswell said yes there is a programme of work for Somersham but the money available is a 'drop in the ocean'. There is a priority list and Parkhall Road is very low on the list, but he will continue to try to see what can be done.

HCV weight limits were discussed particularly in relation to Parkhall Road

There was a suggestion double yellow lines should be painted down all one side of the High Street to help reduce congestion.

Discussion was held on promoting the parish councillor role and to get people to stand, it was recognised there is a need to encourage younger people to stand.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance this evening and for their work in the community which only benefits the whole parish.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.13 pm.

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Chairman

## **Harvey Feoffees Charity**

### **Summary of activity April 6<sup>th</sup> 2017 – April 5<sup>th</sup> 2018 (David Bonnett)**

No grants were made by the Charity during the year April 6<sup>th</sup> 2017 to April 5<sup>th</sup> 2018; however discussions have been ongoing regarding the safety of access to the roof of the Church tower for those people changing the flag and carrying out maintenance.

At the Charity's meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup>, the Trustees have agreed to grant £2,000 to the Parish Church to pay for the professional fees of the architect and structural engineer so that work could proceed to the tendering stage. The Charity is also committed to providing funding for the actual work of making the bell tower safe.

At the same meeting in April, the Charity also granted on a one-off basis £1,000 to Somersham Town Band towards a brass instrument teaching project at Somersham Primary School during the academic year 2018/19.

This year a major decision was taken to take out public liability insurance at the allotments. To cover most of the insurance cost, the rents at the allotments have had to be increased. Those that pay £17 per annum will now pay £20 and those that pay £15 will now pay £18 per annum. This is the first increase in some 10 years.

All allotments are occupied though one is currently under review and if it becomes vacant consideration is being given to splitting it into two.

### **Accounts (Judith Bullard)**

The Charity's accounts have been audited and in our statement of accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 we show:

Income from rents from allotments & 8 acres of land at Heathfield amounted to £835.80. Interest on investment accounts amounted to £2559.30. Together with the balance brought forward from the previous year of £5203.35 this totals £8598.45.

Payments amounted to £3614.52 (of which £3,000 was a transfer to the COIF Deposit Fund), leaving a balance of £4983.93 to be carried forward to next year.

**Somersham Victory Hall Management Committee**  
**Chairman's Annual Report for the financial year ended**  
**31<sup>st</sup> December 2017**

2017 has been another busy and successful year for Somersham Victory Hall.

**Trustees**

We have had a few changes on the committee during the year.

Notably **Ian and Rowena Johnson** left us after 12 years of very valuable service. They formed a core part of the fund raising team and helped to run many successful events such as New Year's Eve parties, discos, table top sales, Carnival stalls and especially the very popular music quiz which they have promised to continue to run. Ian had also faithfully mown the big lawn in the garden for many years and offered to continue to do so.

As we thanked Ian and Rowena at the music quiz in March, **Helen Johnson** (no relation) offered to join the committee bringing her expertise as an events manager with her. Her first big event for us was a very successful New Year's Eve party for families shared with the football club. Money raised was shared between us and the football club and Changing Lives which is organised by Lucy Bird, leader of Somersham Time Bank

**Teresa Clark** joined us in April as a regular user of the whole hall in her role as Youth Club Leader and Manager.

We had been missing a Parish Council representative since Guy Wakelin left in November 2016 and were pleased to be joined in June by **Kevin Hawkins** from the PC.

**Hirers**

We continue to have a large group of 27 regular hirers, some of whom have been coming for many years. They provide most of our income while involving over 400 people of all ages with a wide variety of activities for local residents.

Another group of people come to celebrate personal events with family and friends.

Each year the village carnival, the NHS Blood Donor Service and local and national elections bring most of the local residents through our doors along with some from further afield.

Our booking clerk, **Sara Claypole**, continues to manage the bookings, the hirers and the invoicing with both tact and efficiency. Our healthy bank balance reflects her success with this demanding role.

**Leases**

For some years the Parish Council has been planning to update our lease of the Victory Hall land. In April we received a letter from their solicitor outlining the suggested changes of our responsibilities to include the small kitchen, lobby, disabled toilet and the old ref's room at the Norwood end of the building and the garden. After consulting our solicitor, we agreed in principle and we are now awaiting the next draft of their proposal.

Communication with the County Council over lease of the Victory Hall Community Room continues to be rather difficult due to frequent changes of staff at Shire Hall. When Christian Wilson retired in the Spring we had what seemed to be a very promising visit from two people taking over from him but when I tried to contact them a couple of months later they had moved on.

After several phone calls and emails, and with help from our County Councillor, we did manage to get some major improvements and repairs organised by CCC to the lighting and fuse board upstairs that had been long overdue.

When we invoice CCC for their share of maintenance costs it is often difficult to get a response but even more puzzling is their reluctance to claim back money that we owe them after hiring out the Community Room. In spite of our emails explaining the amounts we owe them, they have not claimed what we owe them for over two years.

### **Banking**

Early in the year we decided it was time to start using online banking. In March the treasurer and the four signatories filled in the appropriate forms but the Lloyds online business banking department made endless errors including losing some of our papers and sending some highly confidential letters to wrong addresses. They admitted their errors and paid us sums of approximately £77 on three separate occasions as 'gestures of goodwill'. The online banking eventually became a reality in September after six months of problems and works well. However as a result of their incompetence we have lost confidence and have decided to move our account to Barclays in 2018.

### **Film Nights**

After a slow start and small audiences in autumn 2016, we continued to struggle to profit at the beginning of 2017. We tried showing a children's film in April in conjunction with the PTA at Somersham School but they only sold 7 tickets and after selling some tickets ourselves we again made a loss. For a second year we tried putting on a film for Carnival week but, after selling only two tickets, we were luckily able to cancel even though the licence company doesn't usually allow cancellation at short notice.

We decided to have a rest for the summer and give it one more chance in October after posting 'Last Chance' adverts around the village. Happily the last three film nights have made a profit and we have gathered a small core following. We plan to do some more film nights during the darker winter evenings in future.

### **Maintenance**

Our largest expense is for the maintenance of the building. Our two cleaners, **Jan and Martin**, continue to do an excellent job in keeping the whole building spick and span as well as reporting any problems they notice.

This year we have spent quite a lot on repairs to outside lighting and kitchen lights.

Our annual gas service was carried out in August by Rule and Parker and no problems were identified. However in September the boiler behind the kitchen heated only the radiators and not the tap water. The engineer eventually found a fault and repaired it with a new part only to find that the water was still not heating consistently. This second fault was with a part deep at the back of the boiler which could only be replaced by dismantling the whole unit. The service and repairs cost a total of nearly £1,000. This boiler is less than 6 years old and had a guarantee of 5 years!

In June we hired contractors to cut back our large thorny garden hedges.

Now that he has retired, we have agreed to pay **Ian Johnson** to continue to mow the lawn which he has done for many years until now as a volunteer.

After collecting three quotes, we arranged for John Macfarlane to redecorate all our internal woodwork during the winter. We suspect that most of the doors and skirtings have not been redecorated since the hall was built. John has popped in to work when the hall is not in use and fitted us round his other jobs. He is proving to be very obliging and doing a very thorough job.

### **Grant funded project**

We applied for grants from The Big Lottery and The Red Tile Wind Farm Community Fund to replace all our external wooden window frames and doors and the polycarbonate windows with UPVC frames and double glazing. After obtaining three quotes, we have arranged for installation to be done by Antares Installations Ltd from Yaxley in Spring 2018. In December we heard that both applications have been successful and we will be granted £18,516. We will pay the VAT from our own funds.

### **Health and Safety**

Our secretary, **Mary Slevin**, has worked hard to revise and update our Health and Safety Policy. It has taken many hours and several revisions. A copy is available in a cupboard in the main kitchen. We paid to have the building revalued and our insurance updated and increased as a consequence. After a visit from the Fire Service, the Parish Council advised us to move our Fire Assembly Point from the car park to an area away from traffic and fire engine access. After much discussion we agreed to choose the tennis courts where there is good lighting but to allow elderly and disabled people to assemble at the far end of the car park away from the gate. In 2018 we will ask all our groups to do an annual fire practice, and a termly one for the youth club who meet upstairs.

### **Appreciation**

Our busy facility could not operate as efficiently as it does without the help, advice and many hours of time from a wide variety of people and organisations.

**Somersham Parish Council** and **Cambridgeshire ACRE** are both valued sources of advice as well as practical help. We have also had help this year from several film night friends who have run the bar, made popcorn, provided background music and helped to set out chairs, etc.

Our wonderful team of Trustees have each taken on particular roles so that I only have to ask for one, or even several, of them to step forward to help out. In addition to attending and contributing to our monthly meetings they have taken on particular areas according to their interests, experience and available time.

**Eddie**, as vice chair, has taken over from me when needed as well as looking after the website and social media. He has dealt with several small electrical problems, and become our main film night projectionist even when he might have preferred some more exciting films!

**Mary**, as secretary, not only sets up agendas and records minutes but keeps us on our toes with updating of policies, employment details and reminders. She has applied for the less than easy TENS licences and stored ice creams between film nights. She is always willing to lend a hand; popping up to the hall to let in tradesmen, etc, etc.

Our treasurer, **Jenny**, has used her expertise as a chartered accountant to bring us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with online banking as well as dealing with insurance, utilities, invoices and a wide variety of payments. She has recently asked us to find a successor due to her very young family and work commitments, so we have advertised for a suitably experienced volunteer to become our treasurer.

**Roy** is a huge help with practical jobs, especially changing light bulbs, buying beer and often helping out when needed. His illustrated guide to setting up the film night equipment is a life saver.

We are delighted that **Sarah** has remained on the committee and she is a regular helper at film nights selling tickets and becoming star of the blackout curtains.

**Kathy** has looked after the stock of our three first aid boxes for a couple of years now and this year refurbished and improved our Christmas decorations. As a regular visitor to the Art Club and Needlecraft Group she is able to keep eyes and ears open for us.

**Teresa**, as manager and leader of the youth club, is familiar with the whole hall and often able to spot problems as they arise. She is also a valued popcorn queen!

**Helen** is busy with a young family and running corporate events so we are delighted that she has begun by organising the family New Year party in the hall and has some other ideas in mind.

**Kevin** has brought his expertise in IT security and Data Protection just in time to help us with the new laws coming into force in 2018. His interest and past experience is often useful in our wide ranging discussions.

Lesley Minter  
Chairman  
March 2018

*L. Minter* 13/3/18.

[www.somershamvictoryhall.com](http://www.somershamvictoryhall.com) FACEBOOK    [somershamvh@outlook.com](mailto:somershamvh@outlook.com)

**Somersham Victory Hall Management Committee**  
**Treasurer's Report for the financial year ended 31 December 2017**

**Financial review**

We are pleased to present our statement of accounts which show a surplus for the year to 31 December 2017 of £13,386.

We were very fortunate to have received a grant of £10,000 from the Big Lottery Fund which was specifically awarded to help fund replacement doors and windows, planned for installation in 2018. This funding will go a long way towards the cost of this project, and in addition we have been awarded a grant from the Red Tile Wind Farm of approximately £6,500 that will be received after installation. One drawback from this project is that it is not fully funded, so we will be required to cover the VAT cost. As we have planned to incur some other large maintenance costs during 2018, and in anticipation of the significant cash outflow for the VAT on the doors and windows, we have been conservative in our spending during 2017.

This has resulted in a small build-up in cash reserves and is therefore reflected in an unusually higher surplus in the current year compared to previous years. Consistent with 2016, we received income from Good Energy feed-in-tariff of £519 generated from the solar panels.

The main source of funding this year however, has been through the use of the hall by regular hirers. Income from our regular hirers amounted to £17,315, making up 53% of our total income. Income from private use of the hall continues to be steady with income totalling £2,622, compared to £2,699 in the prior year.

Our fundraising efforts were mainly concentrated on the monthly film nights during the year. We have had mixed results from these showings, but overall generated a small profit of £435. The music quiz, being one of our other key fundraising events, generated total profit of £581.

We did organise and co-host an extremely successful New Year's Eve Event that raised £200 for the Hall, however this will be recognised in the financial statements for 2018 when the cash was banked.

As with all community halls, the vast majority of our costs go into the cleaning & maintenance of the hall and its contents. These costs totalled £11,682 comprising 60% of total expenditure.

**Friends of Somersham Nature Reserve Group  
Chair's Report for 2017/2018**

I can't believe the Friends Group has now been in existence for 10 years! I would like to feel that the nature reserve has been transformed over that time many more people visiting and enjoying the site, much more wildlife and more people volunteering to help look after it.

During 2017/18 work of the Friends Work Party Group focussed on delivering the management 5 year plan (reviewed annually). The objectives being:

- 1) To maintain and enhance the important habitats and species found on site to achieve positive management
- 2) Maintain and enhance the lake area, jointly with Somersham Angling Club
- 3) Maintain and enhance public access to the site.
- 4) Enhance interpretative/educational opportunities of the site for local people.
- 5) Involve local people in the management of the site and encourage a sense of 'ownership'

**Events**

Over the past 12 months a total of 5 activities have taken place and have been attended by approximately 350 people.

**April**

**Annual site management walk** – attended by a small group of people to review previous year's management and discuss the coming years'

**May**

**Somersham Nature Watch** – a 24 hour bio blitz with local natural history experts to record as many species of wildlife as we can. This involved such activities as moth trapping, bat walk, bird walk, plant walk, pond dipping and small mammal trapping. A total of over 500 new species were identified on the day.

**June**

**Somersham Carnival Event - Nature Games** – our annual joint event with the Time bank. A number of 'nature' themed games/activities aimed at children of all ages.

**October**

**Apple Day** – Another joint event with the Time Bank held at the Community Orchard on the nature reserve and jointly organised with the Time Bank. This is an opportunity to celebrate local fruit and also to take part in the Great Somersham Bake-off. This event is growing in popularity and there were over 100 hundred people in attendance. Thanks must be made to Benni from All Under Cover who generously provided a marquee, and erected it and took it down all for free!

**Fungi Foray** – A walk led by Hunts Flora and Fauna helping us to discover some common and some unusual fungi species.

**December**

**Christmas tree Festival** – Big thanks to Felicity and Anne for being creative and entering another 'alternative tree made with natural materials, some from the nature reserve.

### **Site Management Work**

The main focus of the conservation management work is the maintenance of the wildflower-rich grassland areas along with cutting back vegetation to keep the pathways passable.

After a successful funding we have managed to purchase a pedestrian mower as a shared resource between 3 other Friends groups. This will enable a lot of the grass cutting work to be done by the Friends Groups. All users will be given training to achieve appropriate national recognised qualifications.

Grass Cutting – was carried out (this year) by a contractor with the grass raking done by the Community Pay Back Team.

Community Orchard Project – Alan and Adam are the Orchard Wardens and carry out ongoing management of the orchard. Adam is also a qualified bee keeper and has installed a single bee-hive in the corner of the orchard.

Social media – the FB page is proving very popular with currently 285 members.

### **Grants**

Following a successful application to the Mick George Community Fund we have been able to purchase a number of new hand tools and new brushcutter; improved access from the lake into the railway side of the nature reserve; produced 3 new interpretation boards and cut back vegetation from the Galley Drove footpath to improve the route for our programme of health walks.

### **The Year Ahead – 2018/19**

Ongoing plans for the coming year 2018/19 are in the attached annual management plan. New plans for the year ahead, include:

- Coppicing of a further section of the willow trees near to Station approach entrance. This is to encourage the regeneration of the wildflowers.
- Restoration of hedgerow along western side of the lake between Ibbott Crescent and the Lakeway.
- Start new mowing regime on Station land Field to encourage more wildflowers whilst still maintaining good public access
- Repair lake circular path on eastern side
- Develop a joint funding bid with local schools and youth groups to construct a 'sky-watching platform' and living willow tunnel in centre of Station land field

A very busy year again but a very enjoyable one and again it must be remembered that none of this would be achieved without the hard work, cheerfulness and commitment of all the volunteers that help with the management in many ways, from making breakfasts, cutting and clearing, putting up posters and making cups of tea. And a very special thanks to Lucy and the Time Bank members who have done so much to make the nature reserve events happen and run so smoothly! A big thanks to you all.

**Philip Clark (Chair)**  
**Somersham Nature Reserve Group**  
**May 2018**

## **Somersham Community Library (FOSL)**

### **Report for Annual Parish Meeting 2018**

This year we have delivered our successful Junior Library Enhancement Project. This has led to amazing outcomes in terms of number of books borrowed, new library members and number of active members.

Headline achievements in the last 12 months include:

- Successful Summer Reading Challenge
- Regular visits from the local schools – Somersham Primary every Friday and Whitehall School every term
- Increase in book borrowing – 35% in Junior stock and 10% in overall stock
- Kind donations from Waitrose Community Fund and Eversheds Sutherland

#### **Junior Library**

Thanks to our dedicated Junior Library Team our project has achieved amazing outcomes. Since the commencement of the project with a re-launch of the Young Adult section in September 2016, borrowing of YA items has more than doubled. 533 items were borrowed in 2017/18, which means on average every young person in Somersham aged between 10 and 19 years has borrowed a book.

The 2017 Summer Reading Challenge with the theme Animal Agents has been successful. Our volunteers visited local schools to promote this activity. This year we had the pleasure of the popular children's author Helen Moss presenting the medals to participants who have completed the Challenge. We made available her Treasure Island series in our Junior Library. This has been popular.

Working with Somersham Primary School we purchased books on the School's summer reading list which has proved popular. We involved the children themselves to inform our book buying decisions. In July 2017 we asked the pupils what their favourite authors and book series were. A very commendable 179 responses were received. We will update our book stock based on what they told us.

We thank Cambridgeshire County Council for the shelving units given to us free. We thank the Dulverton Trust for the £695 grant which enabled us to purchase subject dividers and new books. Most of all we thank our Junior Book Champions who led this project, working closely with the Head of Somersham Primary School. Without their dedication we would not have achieved these amazing outcomes.

## **Performance**

I am pleased to report that the book borrowing performance in the year ending March 2018 has been very encouraging, due to the Junior section. This is the third year running that book borrowing is on an upward trend. Our Junior Library Project demonstrates that targeted promotion has a noticeable impact on borrowing figures. The FOSL Management team is already looking into promoting adult books while keeping the good work going for the junior section. Of course performance is not just about number of books borrowed. Customers use the library for community activities such as the Reading Group, the Changing Lives programme and our Sunday social drop-in. With all these activities going on, our annual visitor number is stable.

This year we have not received performance statistics of other libraries yet. So we are unable to report on any benchmarking analysis.

## **Finance**

Our charity's financial year runs from 1<sup>st</sup> June. Our annual accounts will be audited and considered by FOSL at our Annual General Meeting in July. Therefore, the Trustees Report and Financial Statements attached are for the year ending 31 May 2017. In brief, the total income to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017 was £5,756 and expenditure £5,593 making a total net movement of £163.

We have a Designated Fund of £16,000 which we set aside for the boiler replacement. In the past year we have been investigating alternative heating options and have agreed on an infrared heating system. Our boiler failed eventually in March this year. We had to close the library for two days for the installation work but we have a good functioning system now. We are still finalising the costs, which will be included in our audited accounts for the year ending 31 May 2018. The Designated Fund will be adjusted accordingly.

## **Fundraising and Support**

In the year 2016-17 we received a total of £1,895 in grants. The next largest income is from local fundraising, which has been achieved with the dedication of our excellent fundraising team. However, what we do is not just about raising money, but also to promote the library and our services.

We currently have 48 FOSL members. Their support through subscription fee and donation is much appreciated.

## **Management and volunteers**

We currently have a Management Board of 11 Trustees. Lavinia Blackwood has taken over from Joke Whyment as Treasurer and Julyan Hunter has joined the Management Board with a special focus on junior library.

I must thank our loyal pool of volunteers. Without them we would not be able to operate this library service. Last year we have a few new volunteers. We have made them welcome. And we have provided training to enable them to carry out their library duties and to gain the most from their volunteering experience.

We also thank the Parish Council, the County Council and FOSL members for their ongoing support.

Elsa Evans  
Chairman  
May 2018

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