

Minutes of WATP AGM
Tuesday November 9th. 2021

Present: Cllr. H.Kane, Cllr J.Lea, T.O'Connor, J.Law, D.Bensted, R.Walters, P.Messenger, D.Haslam, M.Sheffield, D.Evans, M. Horton, M.Boyce

Apologies: Rev. P. Smith, C.Simpson, T.Gurnett, B.Elliott, P.Clegg.

Chair: Paul Violet
Minutes taken by P. Violet

Minutes of the AGM 10th. Nov.2020 were agreed.

Matters Arising: Cllr Kane explained the Gunpowder Mills Management has undergone a change. A new Manager is in place. Paul will make contact and invite her to future WATP meetings.

Presentation of Accounts:

Total income for the year is £4000, made up mostly from grants for the signage and our annual grant for admin. (with a nominal amount of 32p from the savings account)

Total expenditure for the year £4046.39. made up of £3007.18 for signage, £300 for admin fees to Paula, £126 for printing leaflets and cards, and other for website fees, Insurance and accounting (which was for 2 yrs)

Current account balance is £810.25 with £3331.82 in the savings account total funds available £4,142.07 as of 31st August.

Using the online banking facility is working well other than the safeguarding review that has taken place this year which has taken a lot of time and phone calls to sort out.

Diana commended the accounts to the meeting, and they were unanimously accepted. Paul thanked Diana for her work .

Chairman's Report (attached)

Paul commended his report to the meeting, and it was unanimously accepted.

Tourism Report:

I have never thought of myself particularly as an optimist, but this is how I ended the 2020 Annual Report to the WATP AGM: *“But the day will come when we can enjoy our freedom again and when we and others can take the risk of booking events and performers and incurring costs. In fact, planning has already startedAnd then we shall be able to welcome back visitors to our beautiful area and our town centre businesses.”*

Well, I I got that wrong, although there were some hopeful signs in the second half of 2021. You see, I'm not a pessimist either! When I reported last year, we had started holding monthly virtual meetings by Zoom and these have continued to date. Attendance varied depending on things like members being furloughed, but overall, we had a higher attendance than with face-to-face meetings. So much so, in fact, that we have decided to meet virtually even when conditions return to normal. We believe it helps tourism providers as they save time by not having to travel to the Town Hall, can remain at their offices/homes and just break off temporarily to deal with any business visitors or telephone calls which arise. The Tourism Sub Committee continues to enjoy membership from many of the tourism attractions of the town and surrounding area. We have new representatives from two of the larger attractions which has been useful. We decided to strengthen the membership by recruiting three new members who would represent residents/businesses in the town. This has led us to welcome

Nicola Nokes and Mark Boyce to our meetings, and we are in negotiation with a third person. The Waltham Abbey Tourism Group Facebook page which I started in early 2020 has a high membership and reader statistics. During the lockdowns previous photographs of our tourism attractions and scenery were published every day, with a weekly "Who is This?" featuring notable faces from around the town. Nicola has become my indefatigable lieutenant in running the group. She is clever and tireless both in promoting events happening in Waltham Abbey and district and providing a great service for our residents by highlighting nearby tourism attractions that they might like to visit. The regular What's On leaflets remained suspended for much of the year, but a bumper edition appeared in August picking up a considerable number of events as clubs and societies started to open up again. Many thanks to Richard Walters and his team who returned to their delivery routes to re-stock the leaflet holders at local businesses. It is hoped to have another edition of the leaflet for all the December events

As always, we have worked closely with the splendid Manager of the Tourist Information Centre, Vikki Wood, who provides us with tourism statistics at our meetings and is involved in several of our projects. The TIC itself had a difficult time being closed during each lockdown, but telephone callers and internet inquiries were handled by staff working at home. Since the restrictions were largely lifted in July visitor numbers have picked up, with the TIC being busy and several arranged tours taking place, one led by Canon Christopher, a costumed well-known local figure.

We were very sorry indeed to learn that Peter Frost, who had been Waltham Abbey's Town Crier for many years, died in February 2021. His voice and his jolly personality will be much missed by us all. The Waltham Abbey Tapestry stitching team have worked from home throughout the pandemic, although with a smaller number of stitchers. They are now finishing the final two panels and working on the backing to all panels.

The Town Show was able to take place at the end of June and attracted many appreciative comments. The Horticultural Show and Waltham Abbey in Bloom prizegiving also took place. As regards the larger attractions, Lee Valley Regional Park held the very successful music festival on the Showground at the end of August and plans to hold a similar event in 2022. The White-Water Centre was also open for the summer season and some of the usual runs and sporting events have been held. The Royal Gunpowder Mills opened on Sundays, free of charge, for outside visits, but had to suspend the programme before the August bank holiday because of a lack of volunteer helpers. Copped Hall was able to put on some of its open days and other events and will be having its usual Christmas carol concerts. The Abbey Church has pursued a policy of cautious and gradual opening for services, as advised by government guidelines and the Church of England. It is only in recent weeks, however, that visitors wishing to see the inside of the Church have been able to be admitted. EFD Museum had to cancel the National History Museum's Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition but hopes to hold it in 2022. Other exhibitions were held. The Cultural Festival was held with much of the content on-line. In fact, the numbers viewing the various parts of the Festival were much higher than expected. Holy Cross Day and the Art Trail were both cancelled as they would have been early in the year whilst restrictions were still in place. The Arts Council funded performances of the play about Princess Gytha, "The Falcon's Flight", (reported last year), were postponed from the spring until August, but then five performances were held around the Abbey Churchyard. Despite some bad weather, they were well attended and attracted excellent feedback from the audiences. The King Harold Commemoration took place on 14th October, kindly led by Waltham Abbey Historical Society. Chairman Chris Sumner and the Revd. Peter Smith both spoke and flowers were placed on the King Harold Memorial, with as usual some being sent from considerable distances.

The Town Council's Cavalcade of Light will take place on Friday 26th November with an amended route. A new initiative for this year is the Festival of Light, led by Mark Boyce, which will include the Cavalcade but will have other events both on that evening and the following week until the Christmas Market on

Saturday 4th December. Mark has put a tremendous amount of work into this project, which it is hoped will grow to a much larger event next year.

With optimism again, plans are being made for 2022 and hopefully by the time the season starts in April we shall have an impressive calendar of events.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of the Sub Committee for their support and commend this report to the meeting. (T.Gurnett)

The meeting accepted it unanimously and Paul thanked Tricia for her detailed report.

(In the absence of Tricia, Paul read highlights of the report to the meeting and then distributed copies to the Meeting to enable it to be read in detail and fully appreciated).

U3A:

Waltham Abbey u3a resumed monthly meetings in August 2021 with an attendance of over 100 members at each meeting. We will continue to hold monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of each month unless further restrictions are introduced. Many of the interest groups have started up again and there are plans for others to restart.

In October, we worked with the WI and the Town Council to run a coffee morning for Macmillan. We hope to run some joint more events in future. (H. Wilson).

LVRP:

The Pandemic had major impacts on Lee Valley Park, removing approximately 70% of the annual income due to the various sports and leisure facilities being closed for most of the previous summer, whilst at the same time increasing footfall within the open spaces with an approximately three-fold increase. This is probably an underestimate, as visitor usage changed, with many more people walking to sites and not activating the visitor counters. The increased usage also had the effect of increasing the amount of litter within the Park, at times skips were being filled up to five times as quickly as previously. The contractors and rangers would not have coped with this without the fantastic help of numerous volunteers, who we hope will continue to support the Park going forward. Volunteering opportunities outside of litter picking were also suspended until June in order to protect the health of participants and have since been gradually picking up both in frequency and numbers of participants. Similarly, mass participation events are returning to a more normal pattern, with a number of endurance runs and a couple of music festivals (all based at the Showground), with 25,000 participants over two days at the festivals alone. These events are organised by external organisations as site hires, bringing valuable income to the Park. Several years ago, there was a proposal put to the Park by the Historical Society to improve the marking out of the Abbey, which has been slowly progressing and developing over the years. This has now become a potential Heritage Lottery Fund funded project, with LVRPA working in partnership with Epping Forest District Museum (Lead organisation), English Heritage, WATP and a variety of other organisations. An Expression of Interest has been submitted and, if this is accepted by HLF, a detailed bid will be submitted next year.

After a delay of lockdown restrictions, the Wildlife Discovery Centre is fully opened., staffed by volunteers. It is hoped to be able to employ a member of staff to run it.

Despite a very difficult two years, the Park continues to be a well-used and generally appreciated local resource. (D.Evans).

Waltham Abbey Church:

A year ago, the country had just gone into the second lockdown and public worship at the Abbey Church on Sunday and Wednesday mornings, which had restarted in the previous July, had to be suspended; the church could open only for private prayer (which it did on three mornings a week) and for funerals, emergency baptisms and weddings with restricted numbers. Starting with the Remembrance Day service, services were pre-recorded and streamed on the Abbey Church website for a week. There were also two Zoom services each Sunday morning for the Waltham Holy Cross benefice from High Beach and Upshire churches. With the end of lockdown and transfer back to Tier 2 public worship was restored with a maximum number of 50 attending and advance registration. The church was open for private prayer on three Saturdays and the Friends of Waltham Abbey shop in the Lady Chapel was also open. When Epping Forest entered Tier 4 later in December and acting on the advice of the Diocese of Chelmsford, the clergy and churchwardens decided to close the church to the public except for funerals with a maximum of thirty attending. This situation continued into the third lockdown. Services, including Christmas services, were pre-recorded, and streamed and the Zoom services continued. After further advice the Abbey Church re-opened on Good Friday, 2nd April, for private prayer and on Easter Day for three Eucharist services at 8.30, 10.30 and 12.30am, with strict Covid restrictions in place. The on-going pattern of worship is 8.30am and 10.30 am services on Sunday and (from late May) 10.30am on a Wednesday. Funerals continue, on Saturday 29th May the first wedding took place in the church since 2019, and Baptism services have restarted as well. A Vigil Service for HRH Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh was held on the eve of his funeral. The Abbey Choir returned to lead the worship at the 10.30 Sunday service and Sunday evening services at 6.30pm resumed on 26th September with the first Choral Evensong for eighteen months, but these services are currently fortnightly rather than weekly. Bellringing was not permitted during the lockdowns and Tier 2. Service ringing recommenced on Sunday 23rd May and weekly practice on 9th June with safety precautions in place; the bells have also been rung for weddings. Since Friday 6th August the church has been open to visitors on Fridays and Saturdays 10am-4pm and on Sundays 12 noon-4pm, and since 3rd November on Wednesdays from after the 10.30 service until 4pm; the Friends' shop is also open at the same times. Saturday Music for Lunch recitals at 12.30pm restarted on 16th October, and the autumn season runs until Saturday 27th November. Due to on-going Covid restrictions refreshments will not be served and audience members will be asked to wear a face covering unless exempt. The upcoming programme is: 13th November - Yohei Nakajima viola and Rimantras Vingas piano; 20th November – Chamber music programme, Trinity Laban Conservatoire; 27th November - Organ recital, artist to be announced. Felicitas are giving their Christmas concert "Rejoice and sing!" at the Abbey Church on Saturday 4th December at 7.30pm. Our sister church St Lawrence, Ninefields, has a Coffee Morning at Hillhouse School next Saturday, 13th, from 10.30am, and the Waltham Abbey Mothers' Union are providing Bacon rolls and coffee, with a CD and book sale and raffle, on Saturday 20th from 11.30am-2pm at the Abbey Church Centre.

The Civic Service of Remembrance will be at 10.45am next Sunday (14th). (R.Walters).

Election of Officers

Resident: D. Bensted Nominated by T/O'Connor. Seconded by J.Law. Unanimously agreed.

Chairman: Paul Violet Nominated by J. Law Seconded by D. Bensted. Unanimously agreed.

Vice Chairman Tony O'Connor Nominated by Cllr. J.Lea. Seconded by J.Law. Unanimously agreed.

Treasurer: Diana Bensted Nominated by Cllr. H.Kane. Seconded by J.Law. Unanimously agreed.

Publicity: Richard Walters Nominated by J.Law. Seconded by T.O'Connor. Unanimously agreed.

Minutes Paula Violet Nominated by J. Law. Seconded by T.O'Connor. Unanimously agreed.

U3A Representative Martin Sheffield. Nominated by Cllr. J.Lea. Seconded by Cllr. H.Kane
Unanimously agreed.

Other Steering Committee members remain unchanged.

A list of all Steering Committee members as attached to these Minutes.

Paul thanked everyone for being willing to stand and for their support.

Date of AGM 2022 Tuesday November 8th.

Paul closed the Meeting of the AGM, and the monthly Steering Committee meeting followed.