

# Surrey Tree Warden Network

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2015 at The Harrison Room, Old Barn Hall, Church Road, Great Bookham, Surrey**

### WELCOME

Jon Stokes welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded us that this year is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Surrey Network.

He then went on to give his talk “*Britain’s Heritage of Trees - the big, the small and the frankly bizarre!*” The talk included many interesting anecdotes on notable and remarkable trees throughout the UK and, as always, Jon’s talk was very well illustrated. Of particular interest was Jon’s discovery of an ancient yew in Wales comparable to the Fortingal yew in Perthshire.

It was pointed out that it was not really possible to give an accurate age to a yew, because of the species’ propensity to stop growing for some years and then restart again, so ring counting can’t be relied upon – it was thought that the both the aforementioned Welsh and Scottish yews were probably 4000 years old or more.

Jon mentioned that the Crowhurst Yew is recorded as having been measured by John Evelyn 1664 as 33ft 3in, in girth and it still measures that today!

Jon said tree wardens should also be concerned to note local varieties of fruit tree in Surrey and gave examples of the Bramley and lesser known Claygate Pearmaine.

All agreed that this was one of the best talks they had heard from Jon.

### **25 Best Trees in Surrey**

During the break at 11am, 25 trees from a total of 36 were selected by means of a tick sheet for possible inclusion in a booklet to celebrate 25 years of tree wardening in Surrey. The possibility of funding for this project is currently being investigated.

Liz Ramsay and David Pope were thanked for identifying and preparing photos and descriptions of the trees to be selected.

**Bats and Trees** – Another excellent talk followed at 11.15am, was given by Nik Knight Chairman and Recorder of the Hampshire Bat Group, on how to identify bats including roosting requirements, which often were holes or crevices in trees. While many would expect these to be large mature trees, surprisingly small trees hosted bats. The information Nik gave on the legal necessity not to disturb bat roosts, was a good weapon in the tree wardens armoury to protect endangered trees, so it behoved all tree wardens to get a working knowledge of identifying possible bat roosts.

Both speakers were thanked in the usual manner.

### **Attendance**

See list.

## **Annual General Meeting**

### **Election of Chairperson**

Chris Pead, Secretary was appointed to Chair the meeting.

### **Apologies for Absence**

Warwick Hutchinson, Paul Beard, Anthony Mills, Mike Lidstone, Peter Fischer, and Jane Plant

**Lawrence Hole** was thanked for arranging for what proved to be an excellent venue.

### **Minutes of previous Annual General Meeting**

The minutes had been circulated and were unanimously approved, with no matters arising.

### **Annual/Secretary's Report**

Firstly, many thanks for taking part in this AGM, which is essential in order to maintain our charity status, and this will be gone through with as little delay as possible to allow plenty of time for the more interesting part of the programme.

I would also like to thank Lawrence Hole, for the sterling work he has done in sourcing this venue at a reasonable cost and in an interesting area with Polesden Lacey just down the road from here.

We are still looking to fill the post of Chairman and Treasurer but as to date no suitable candidates have come forward.

Again in the absence of a chairman, the committee is very grateful to the Tree Council for their tremendous support and especially in the person of Jon Stokes who after a day's work travels many miles in order to attend and chair our committee meetings.

Thanks also to Don Henderson for acting as treasurer, while the post remains vacant and for the excellent job he has done in keeping our accounts in good order and in preparing the yearly return of accounts for this AGM and the Charity Commission.

Mention must also be made of Peter Fischer our web master who has continued the work in simplifying STWN web site.

Liz Ramsay continues to do a great job in getting the Newsletter out. It would be a great help to her and indeed to the network, if those who are on e-mail, would provide details, if you have not already done so.

The group is grateful to Anne Richards for funding she has obtained from Lingfield and Dormansland Parish Councils. Anne has also been working on Surrey County Council and we are optimistic that the SCC councillor responsible will prove unable to resist Anne's gentle pressure.

Thanks are due also to Sue Henderson for her work as membership Secretary and for organising the raffle for this year's AGM.

Sally Pemberton, our events' organiser has been very busy organising willow coppicing events in the Spelthorne area for which the group is very grateful.

Thanks also to Dave Pope for his work in raising money for the group and for keeping us supplied with tea, coffee and biscuits at our meetings and events.

I am pleased to report that there has been good attendance at some of last year's events especially the tree ident., held at Nutfield last year. Thanks to Don Henderson contact was made with the Surrey Tree Officers, who agreed to have Jon Stokes address them on Ash Dieback disease last February, with 4 members

of the committee attending as well. The meeting was very well attended. The outcome was that the STO saw the STWN as a useful ally in monitoring Ash Dieback and bodes well for possible funding and a brighter future for the STWN.

Although there has been success in raising funds, funding is still a serious concern but, with your support, I am confident that we will continue to go from strength to strength and to this end I again would make a plea for more members to take an active role in the group.

### **Financial Report (Acting Treasurer)**

Don Henderson reviewed the STWN accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2014.

Expenditure for the year exceeded income by some £435. At 31 December 2014, however, cash at bank was almost £1,791 and after deducting liabilities of £267, the net cash balance was almost £1,524, so our current financial position remained reasonably healthy. The acting Treasurer briefly explained each of the figures in the accounts.

Don highlighted that the bulk of our income for the year continued to come from one off donations and we could not rely upon these being repeated each year. Ideally, we needed to identify regular sources of income, but that was easier said than done. As ever, the committee would continue to focus on fund raising in the current year. Specifically, we would continue to seek to develop better contacts with our County and District authorities. Some progress had already been made in this area by our recent attendance at a meeting of the Surrey Tree Officers and Arborists Group.

The Committee would be using part of the funds in hand arranging further training days later in the year.

The acting Treasurer summed up by saying that STWN was in a comparatively healthy position for the coming year, but we needed to continue to seek to strengthen our financial base.

### **That the reports be approved:**

**Proposed** Sue Henderson   **Seconded** Peter Herring

There were no objections

## **Election of Honorary Officers**

No nominations had been received by post, Chris Pead was reappointed as Secretary, together committee members listed below, with the posts of Chairperson and Treasurer remaining vacant.

## **Election of Executive Committee Members**

Peter Fischer, Michael Lidstone, David Woods, David F. Pope, Anne Richards, Liz Ramsay, Sue Henderson, Sally Pemberton, Edward Davis and Andrew Draser

**That the Election of the above mentioned officers and committee be approved:**

**Proposed** by Don Henderson **Seconded** by Mike Smith

There were no objections

Following the end of the Annual Meeting, a fundraising raffle was held raising????.

After lunch members met at the Polesden Lacey reception area for a guided tour round the grounds, led by the ranger and his assistant. Most were surprised at the vastness of the estate with some 600 acres of mostly natural woodland. The ranger pointed out that they are busy felling the more unnatural species such as conifers. Such trees after felling are not removed, but left to regenerate naturally.

Lots of other interesting aspects of Polesden Lacey were pointed out, and it was great to have Jon's knowledgeable input on the trees viewed.

After expressions of thanks to the leaders, at 4.30pm it was time to depart for home and it was agreed a good day was had by all.