

WITNEY TALKING NEWS

MINUTES OF THE 41st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 2019 AT 7.30 PM IN THE RADFORD ROOM OF THE HIGH STREET METHODIST CHURCH, WITNEY.

Present: Shirley Rawlings, Eric Imeson, Gavin Smalley, Sheila Rickwood, Valerie Palmer, Penny and Peter Brading, Doreen Turner, Peter Bee, Doris Burton, Brian Hare, Malcolm Bradford, David Burton, Alan Revell, Nigel James, Vernon Coles, Martyn Smith, Jan Butler, Barbara Barringer, Barbara Haldman, Gedgwa Edwards, Lynne Harding, Mike Grantham, Rob Oxspring

The Chairman, Peter Brading welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting.

1 Apologies: Received from Debi Diacon, Alan Bailey, Frances Ashling, Bridget Walton, Aidan Franklin, Mike and Gloria Grantham, Graham Diacon, Liz Edgell, Barbara Baigent, Alison Grainger, Ruth Lapworth

2 Minutes: The Minutes of the 40th AGM held on 12th November 2018 were read by Valerie Palmer. It was Proposed by Penny Brading and seconded by David Burton that they be approved and this was agreed unanimously by those present.

3 Matters Arising:

Doreen Turner mentioning the Chairman's Report said that listeners had increased to about 80.

4 Reports:

Chairman:

2019 has been a landmark year for WTN. On the evening of Friday, 29th March, we held a party in the Pavilion of Witney Town Bowls Club to celebrate exactly 40 years since our first edition was VIPs across West Oxfordshire. 76 listeners, volunteers, partners and friends attended what was a thoroughly successful and enjoyable occasion, and my thanks to all those who were involved with organising it.

In May, we distributed our 40th anniversary magazine, with the theme of our own birthday celebrations, other anniversaries occurring this year and notable events of 1979. The co-editors were Peter Bee and Alan Revell – thank you both.

Peter and Alan are also organising the production of the next magazine that will be distributed in December, and will have the theme of 'Help'. A lot of time and effort goes into producing these magazines, and on behalf of us all I would like to express our thanks to Peter and Alan for co-editing them, and to everyone else who has contributed towards their production and distribution.

I am pleased to report that our weekly productions have continued well, with distribution to around 80 listeners. We have seen a small decline in numbers over the year, but I think this is inevitable for a number of reasons, not least being the improvement in medical treatment for eye conditions that is now available, which is good.

During the year, our Treasurer, Rosemary, had to resign from the the committee – her husband, Mike, also an active volunteer with WTN, underwent major surgery. I am pleased to say he is

recovering well, and our best wishes are with him and Rosemary. Rosemary had been Treasurer for 13 years – at least she says! - and we owe her a big debt of gratitude for keeping our financial affairs in such good order for all of that time.

We were very fortunate to have Malcolm Bradford pick up the reins, and he has competently kept our finances under control. His report is in front of you, and I'm sure he will be pleased to take any questions you may have. I will just say at this stage how grateful we are for the generous donations that we have received during the year.

Our Technical Consultant, Gavin, will be reporting separately a little later. Gavin has continued to look after all our technical equipment with his usual thoroughness and expertise; and I'm going to say here again exactly what I said last year: Gavin continues to maintain what I think is an absolutely brilliant website, and I do urge you to keep an eye on it – wtn.org.uk. Each weekly edition, and magazines, are uploaded on to the site immediately, so that anyone can listen to them and be aware of the services we offer. There is much else to see on the website as well, including our latest news and events.

We were sorry to learn that one of our long-time listeners, Ken Price, had died. He used to run a music shop in Witney, and his wife, Mary, has been of great help at our AGMs for many years, and will be missed.

Four of our volunteers have come off the rota from October this year – Tim Partridge, Jason Boyd, Madeline Henderson and Sarah Oliver. Our thanks to them all for their support and contributions to WTN over the years. In April, WTN hosted a meeting between the six Oxfordshire TNs, which was held at the offices of Oxtalk in Oxford. Once again, we had a very useful exchange of information, and another meeting was arranged for 28th October, but unfortunately this has had to be deferred to another date when more people would be available.

Speaking of Oxtalk, they too celebrated their 40th anniversary this year, and I was pleased to attend their party on 20th July.

Once more, I wish to express my/our grateful thanks to all the Volunteers, who contribute towards the production of each weekly edition and bi-annual magazines, whether editing, helping, reading, contributing to the Reflection spot, recording or copying and packing. Also to my wife, Penny, for producing the rota of duties twice a year, and to Eric Imeson for his ongoing help with outside recording. And of course to my fellow Committee members for their continuing help and support with the administration of WTN, and to everyone here at the Methodist Church for looking after us, and our pouches, so well. Thank you.

At this point I would now like to present Barbara Barringer with a TNF Long Service Certificate recording her 40 years of service as a reader for Witney Talking News and thank her for her continued support.

Treasurer: Malcolm Bradford presented the figures for the year to 30th September, 2019. There was a considerable increase in income compared to the previous year. Whilst Listener Donations increased to £515, the main increase was from Special Donations including: £1000 from the Bartlett Taylor Trust, £615.68 from Cokethorpe School and £1648 from WODC. Malcolm also noted that various donations had been received from Committee Members and volunteers for work they had done and gifts they had received. There was also a donation of £500 on line from the estate of one of our late listeners. The account with Lloyds Bank was only set up in July, with the purpose of receiving online donations. £1425 was received for the 40th Anniversary Celebration in March from sponsorship, two individual donations and £85 on the night from those attending. In all income was £6371.90 (£768.97 in 2018).

Expenditure for the year was slightly up on 2018. In addition to the recurring costs for room hire, insurance, etc., the main costs were for Capital and Consumer Equipment for a Hand Held Recorder, Headphones and a new Duplicator and for the Celebration, which after sponsorship actually created some income for WTN. Total Expenditure was £4326.51 (£3956.79 in 2018).

Bank Balances at 30th September were: Nationwide Building Society £7099.65 and Lloyds Business Account £507.51 making a Grand Total of £7607.16, substantially more than last year (£5561.77).

The Accounts were audited and signed off by Mr Richard Hodges.

Peter Brading thanked Malcolm for stepping in at short notice to take on the Treasurer role and commented that the balances look healthy.

Gavin Smalley proposed and Peter Bee seconded acceptance of the report, which was agreed by all attending.

Martyn Smith asked if the Countryman subscription is to be renewed and this was agreed by all.

Secretary: Peter Bee reported that since the last AGM WTN has been involved in a number of things other than the weekly recordings.

In December we had a visit from Gareth Davies, an RNIB representative, who had been selected to represent England in the VIP Rugby World Cup in Japan. Before moving to Wales Gareth was educated at Witney County Primary School and Wood Green and we recorded a very interesting interview with him.

We visited Cokethorpe Junior assembly and gave them a short talk about WTN and they presented us with a cheque for £615.68; then 3 pupils read pieces for our December 13th recording.

For the Christmas magazine the Batt School recorded some carols and we organised a story writing competition and the three winners read their stories on the magazine.

We attended the Civic Awards evening on March 1st when Peter Brading received a well deserved award for outstanding service to the community. On 13th March we were invited to attend the annual Town Meeting and put up a display in the entrance to the Corn Exchange enabling us to advertise WTN and talk to several interested people, but the meeting itself was poorly organised and practically inaudible. We were presented with a cheque for £250 at an event at Burford Masonic Hall. Talks were given to the Witney Macular Society and to Witney Day Centre. Local MP Robert Courts sat in on a recording session in June and read several news items for us. We were invited to attend Cokethorpe Junior Speech Day and to the Batt School's superb production of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, both in July.

The Committee has met 4 times during the year and a subcommittee met several times to organise the 40th Party. The Magazine team met to plan the 2018 Christmas magazine, the 40th anniversary magazine and is currently working on the next magazine to be distributed on 12th December.

Peter Bee echoed Peter Brading's thanks to the volunteers without whom there would be no WTN, with special reference to the 6 editors who work extremely hard to a very tight deadline to produce each weekly edition. He also thanked all committee members, and of course to our very special listeners.

Peter Bee finished by stating the WTN owes a huge debt of gratitude to Peter Brading, our chairman and instigator of WTN.

Peter Brading added his thanks to Peter Bee for talking to other organisations, often resulting in donations to WTN.

Technical Consultant: Gavin reported that he would like to thank the whole recording team (old and new) who have maintained a consistently high standard and reliable service for the past 12 months. After weeks of deteriorating performance a new duplicator was purchased, the high cost of which was offset by a WODC grant. Thanks to Alan Revell for his persistence in obtaining the funding.

The 'Talking Newspaper' smartphone app from British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF) was introduced and WTN has been available there since the start of trials and feedback from BWBF reports that the app is quite popular. The take up of the various online services has grown over the year and Gavin gave detailed statistics for the website.

We launched the ability to take donations on the website both as single payments and regular monthly giving.

A plea regarding USB sticks. Over the last two years we have lost best part of 100 USB sticks, some have gone faulty, some possibly lost in the post and some lost by listeners. All volunteers who may have taken a stick home were asked to return them if not done already. As we are losing an average 1 a week and they cost approx. £5 that becomes a significant cost. Gavin again urged all volunteers to listen to the editions on the website which enables all to listen free of charge. To spread the word, it is important to have experienced what our listeners receive. It is also the only way to get feedback and to monitor our quality, whatever function we have as volunteers.

Publicity

Debi Diacon reported it had been an enjoyable year to publicise WTN with the 40th Anniversary celebration on 29th March and she thanked all those who helped organise it. Unfortunately Robert Courts, our MP, was unable to attend at the last minute as he was required in Westminster that evening, but he sent a message of support which Peter Brading read out. We had a window display in Witney Library during the last two weeks of March with information inside. She hopes this practice will continue, perhaps with the addition of Carterton. We also recorded a 45-second 'SHOUT OUT' for WTN for BBC Radio Oxford, which went out periodically over a few weeks. Thanks are due to Eric Imeson for recording Debi and Mike Grantham. A number of people have sent texts or messages mentioning they had heard it. Thanks are also due to Gavin for bringing all Publicity things into the 21st century and enabling hard copy items to be available digitally and on-line. We have encouraged volunteers to take a small pack of leaflets and a poster to any venue where people might pick up a leaflet, eg doctors' surgeries, notice boards, libraries, village halls.

Debi is stepping down from the committee to devote more time to her family (including 15 grandchildren) and said she leaves WTN in the very good hands of the committee.

- 5 **Election of Committee:** The Chairman reported that 1 nomination, for Nigel James had been received and that the following are prepared to stand again for the coming year:

Peter Bee, Peter Brading, Doris Burton, Michael Grantham, Valerie Palmer, Alan Revell, Sheila Rickwood and Doreen Turner; Malcolm Bradford having taken over from Rosemary Day as Treasurer part way through the year also agreed to stand for the committee.

There being no other nominations it was proposed by Shirley Rawlings and seconded by Brian Hare that they be elected and it was agreed by all present.

Peter Brading thanked Debi for 9 years' service on the committee during which she has done a lot to spread news of WTN. Peter Brading will write and thank her.

- 6 **Any Other Business:**

Martin Smyth asked if we know the average age of the listeners. Doreen will work it out – we have one nearly 100 and another about 40 years old. Also do we get feedback from listeners. There is an occasional note in pouches, particularly after magazines. We have not done a specific survey and listeners are not inclined to reply to surveys. There are two listeners at the AGM. It was suggested we ring up listeners to ask specific questions – the committee will consider this at their next meeting.

Referrals are mainly from Abingdon Visually Impaired Unit.

Doreen noted that following the donation from Cokethorpe School, one listener built 2 birdboxes and insect hotels, he was so impressed by the children.

- 7 **Date of the Next AGM:** November 2020.

Peter Brading thanked everyone for their reports and concluded by thanking everyone for attending and thanked Doris Burton, supported by David, for the refreshments provided.