

Minutes of the 91st Annual General Meeting of The Wirral Society held at Wallasey Golf Club, Bayswater Road, Wallasey on 7th March, 2019 at 7 p.m.

The President, Professor John Tarn OBE DL, opened the 91st Annual General Meeting welcoming everyone.

19/1 Present: There were 40 members and 1 non-member in attendance.

19/2 Apologies for absence had been received from 5 members.

19/3 The Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held at Wallasey Golf Club on 1st March, 2018 The minutes had not been circulated at the meeting. These will be circulated on line. Any member not on line, and requesting a copy, will receive it by post. The Meeting was happy for the Committee to ratify them at the next Committee meeting on 13th March 2018. The matter of future distribution of the Minutes will be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

19/4 Matters Arising from the previous Minutes. This item was not applicable. (see 19/3 above.)

19/5 Chairman's Report The Chairman's Report had been circulated at the Meeting. Rod Tann spoke to his report **adding the following comments** to clarify some of the matters covered. He reported that the Committee had increasing worries about the **green belt**, especially in North Wirral and that the matter had predominated meetings for twelve months. At this stage he was not sure that the threat to it was going to recede. There was a six week consultation period regarding making eight and a half square miles of green belt into land without protection. Basically the Government was not happy with Wirral Metropolitan Borough's response and put the Authority in "Special Measurers" requiring it to report monthly to the Secretary of State. The Government made it clear that Wirral MBC had to decide on the number of houses to be built. The need was significantly under 12,000 houses required. The whole matter was very frustrating. The Wirral Open Spaces Alliance had been formed bringing together groups worried about their areas and concerns. This is a motivated group which the Wirral Society is able to support through financing some of its work. The Chairman hoped that the group will be maintained. Regarding the proposed **golf resort**, Rod Tann reported that the Council met two weeks ago and there was massive support present against the project. Voting was closer than expected and he felt that things may change in our favour and the golf project dropped. The **Saughall Massie Fire Station** was nearing completion, 5 years after West Kirby had closed. Regarding the development at **Storeton Hall Farm**, the Council refused planning permission for the houses because money was going to be spent on re-locating the riding school instead of restoring the listed building. However, an appeal was upheld and the green belt land there will be developed. In addition to his report, the Chairman invited Alan Passmore to report any further news on **Burton Manor** plans. Alan reported to the Meeting that the house is to be turned into offices, the current businesses will continue and the garden will also still be maintained by the Friends group. Also in South Wirral, he hoped the continuation of building at **Ledsham** on greenfield land would take the pressure off other protected areas. A question was asked from the floor whether a bird group on Wirral could reinstate the **Gilroy Scrape**. The Dee Birding Group was very active on this issue, but the prospect of any re-instatement was now very slim.

He said the Committee had not been as active as it had planned in celebrating its 90th Anniversary, as it had been pre-occupied in trying to deal with the Green Belt threat. However, we had been able to produce the Booklet and here he paid tribute to Kenneth Burnley for his masterful efforts in the design work he undertook for it. He also referred to the 4-year Hedgerow project at Woodchurch being run by the Wirral Countryside Volunteers, which the Society was pleased to be associated with. He thanked the organisers and also complemented Mr Miles Duncan for his willingness to allow this work to be undertaken on his land.

Rod Tann then expressed thanks to all who had helped the Society during the year, especially to the President, Professor John Tarn, for his involvement and interest. He also thanked Alec Potter for the regular arrangements made to enable us to use Wallasey Golf Club for our meetings. The President responded by thanking the Chairman and reporting that Rod Tann's job had grown over the year largely due to the increase in the demand for responses from outside organisations. The President could not see this aspect changing. He thanked Rod for keeping the Committee on track, knowing that it was doing its best.

The Chairman's report was accepted by the Meeting.

19/6 Treasurer's Report The Treasurer's Report was circulated at the Meeting, being enclosed in the Chairman's Report booklet. Peter Bowler, Treasurer, expanded on his report to give clarity on certain points. He reported that income had largely remained the same but expenses had gone up significantly as shown. This increase was largely due to expenses regarding the Local Plan consultation (£1800) and the production of the 90th Anniversary booklet (£2700) by Ken Burnley. Under "Donations", regarding the golf resort, the item should read, "Stop Hoylake Golf Resort Committee". The support given to the Wirral Countryside Volunteers was in aid of a four-year programme of hedge-laying referred to on page 5 of the Chairman's Report. This support is likely to continue. "Wirral Matters" had been produced three times during the year. Sundry expenses were up largely due to the development of the website. Thus, the Treasurer had explained why the deficit for the year stood at £3,855. Referring to the Balance Sheet Peter reported that investments were down due to the current state of the market and the current account drop was due to his earlier explanations. The accumulated funds stood at £40,280. The Treasurer completed his report.

Questions were invited from the floor and there was one regarding the production of the booklet as to why it was not shown as a separate item. This point was accepted as a fair comment. There being no further question the President thanked Peter Bowler for keeping the accounts in good order and for all the precise work involved. The accounts were accepted by the Meeting.

19/7 Election of Officers and Committee The Chairman had expressed his thanks to Audrey Platt, in his report, for the enormous support she had given to the Committee in so many ways over her years of service. The Chairman made an appeal for a successor to Avril Wilmshurst who had regrettably felt she needed to stand down as Membership Secretary. He was very sorry she felt unable to continue, but was pleased she had indicated she was willing to continue until a successor was found. It was proposed that a letter be sent to Avril expressing how grateful the Committee was for what she has been doing for the Society over the years. The Chairman then thanked all members of the Committee for all the work they do. He then proposed that all the Current Officers be re-elected en bloc. This was accepted by the Meeting.

19/8 The Wirral Society Civic Award Vice Chairman, Terry Edgar, spoke to the Meeting explaining details of the annual award and that this year it had been presented for modification of an otherwise neglected site. This site was now magnificent and certainly worth a visit. The award has been made to The Williamson and Priory Friends for developing "The Green Gallery" at the Williamson Art Gallery, Slatey Road, Birkenhead. The Chairman of the Friends, Mary Rickett, was present to receive the award and cheque from President John Tarn. Mary spoke to the meeting explaining how the work had developed and thanked the Society for the award.

19/9 Election of Scrutineer of Accounts The Meeting accepted the proposal from the Chair that Ailsa A. Cowdell be re-appointed as Scrutineer of Accounts for the coming year. This was accepted unanimously by the Meeting.

19/10 Any Other Business

- i) The 90th Anniversary Celebrations. The Chairman pointed out that due to the workload during the year celebrations for the anniversary had been somewhat reduced. However, the splendid booklet, produced largely by Ken Burnley, that everyone should have received, was freely given out widely as a means of interesting the wider public. There had been a trickle of new members as a result. It was proposed that a letter of thanks be sent to Ken Burnley.
- ii) The matter of copyright deposit was raised and would be looked into together with the possible creation of an ISBN number for the booklet and further publications.
- iii) Chairman: The four-year hedgerow project will be supported.
- iv) Farmer Miles Duncan spoke to the Meeting praising the work of the Wirral Countryside Volunteers saying the splendid work they were doing on his hedgerow was much appreciated.
- v) Chairman: The Wirral History & Heritage Fair to be held on Saturday, 9th March at the former Birkenhead Town Hall from 10am to 4pm was highly recommended to the Meeting.

The Meeting closed at 8pm. This was followed by a W. Victor Smith Memorial Lecture. It was an excellent illustrated talk by Matt Thomas, the Ranger for West Kirby and Meols entitled "Hilbre – Inspiration Island". His presentation showed scenes of, and from, Hilbre Island and many close-up photographs of the birds and Atlantic Grey Seals visiting the island.