



Maresfield Conservation Group

DRAFT Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 2 July 2019
Held at 7.30pm in Maresfield Village Hall

PP opened the meeting by paying tribute to Graham Altt and Ken Ogden, founder members of the Maresfield Conservation Group who will both be sadly missed. They remained great supporters of MCG and the Community and were always ready to address grass roots concerns. Condolences are sent to Jennifer, Betty and their families.

Present

The current Committee Members were introduced:

Pat Palmer, Chairman [PP]	John Smith, Treasurer [JS]
Stan Sadowski, Membership Secretary [SS]	Alex Clarke, Member [AC]
Rob Penfold, Member [RP]	Ian Shaw, Member [IS]
Dick Thompson, Member [DT]	

In attendance were:

Cathy Shaw, Jean Smith, Carole Wheeler, Adam Gibson-Brann, Jacqui Royal, Karen Tritton, Pat Bowler, Sheila Cumming, Bruce Milton, Jean Sallows, David Brown, Ann Thompson, Anthony Myers, Marion Myers, Dick Waterson, B Tarrant, Yvonne Minter, B Porter, W Porter, Ben Sear and Angie Welton.

PP welcomed those present. She advised that the objective was to make the meeting informative and enjoyable, and that, following the order of business, there would be several presentations. After the meeting Carole Wheeler will be serving teas, coffees and wine. PP reminded the group that only Members of the MCG can vote.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Nick & Sally Brown, Anne Seigne and Pat Langbridge.

2. Approval of the Previous AGM Minutes

The Minutes were proposed by Carole Wheeler, seconded by Cathy Shaw, and unanimously approved.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



4. Questions on Published Chairman's Report

There were no questions.

5. Treasurer's Report [JS]

JS displayed the MCG Accounts for 2018-2019 which are also published in the AGM Newsletter in the format preferred by the Charities Commission. He advised that the accounts have been audited by an Independent Examiner. In summary, net receipts were £3,822.07 which included £2,193 from subscriptions, £374.19 from Gift Aid, a gift of £629.00 from Dick & Ann Thompson representing proceeds from the Plant Stall at the Maresfield Village Fete, and £337.37 raised by the MCG Quiz Night. Total expenditure was £2,784.72 giving a surplus of £1,037.35. Outgoing funds included £246.85 spent on administration (ink, paper, the AGM Report, and Village Hall/Pavilion hire), insurance costs of £407.06, a £451.81 outlay on printing costs for the MCG Newsletters, and £124.21 spent on website hire. Village maintenance costs amounted to £1,487.21 which included restoration of the cemetery gate, replacement of the fence at Lampool Corner, and refurbishment of the signpost at The Chequers. However, these costs were offset by the £1,000 Parish Council Grant. A further £190.00 was spent on the Maresfield Christmas Tree, £369.00 on the projector, and £151.20 on the projector screen. In addition, the Footpaths Group spent £328.34 on petrol, equipment and refurbishment of the signs and styles along the Millennium Walk. There were no questions.

6. Website & Membership [SS]

- 6.1. **Website:** SS introduced himself as the new Membership Secretary for 2019, and the current manager of the MCG website which has been in existence for circa 5 years. In 2018 the website was moved to a different platform and redesigned by Gemma Hallin to make it more user friendly. Encouragingly, between 30 November 2018 and 30 June 2019 the website was visited 625 times by 264 different users who looked at over 3,000 pages (an average of four pages per visit). This indicates that the MCG website is now reaching a wider audience. SS has further refined it since and gave a brief demonstration of the content of the website which now includes an 'About' page giving a history of Maresfield (including links to the Maresfield Historical Society); an 'Our Activities' page outlining the work carried out by the MCG; an 'Events' page outlining forthcoming activities; 'Contact' and 'Membership' pages; and a 'Stay up-to-date' page which gives access to newsletters and committee meeting minutes. SS invited members to contact him with contributions, corrections, constructive criticism, complaints and compliments.
- 6.2. **Membership:** There are now 175 households who are members of MCG (an increase on the previous total of 167 households). The increase is partially due to the introduction in September 2018 of Welcome Notes delivered to incoming residents. Of the 27 delivered, 6 have resulted in new memberships. SS advised that, although standing order is the most efficient way to pay subscriptions, 75% of households do *not* use this method. This means that MCG is heavily reliant on the Collectors to collect subscription payments and deliver the MCG Newsletters three times a year. New Collectors are always welcome and should contact SS if they are willing to fulfil this vital function. SS also pointed out that 56 households (representing 32% of membership) have not signed Gift Aid forms (although he recognises that Gift Aid is only applicable to UK tax payers).



7. Update on Projects [IS]

- 7.1. **Victorian Lights:** IS advised that a year ago the MCG Committee decided to invest in a number of village projects. It was recognised that the three Victorian Lights (adjacent to the churchyard, the cemetery gate and The Rec) were in a terrible state of repair and, if not given some attention, were likely to be lost. This was initially expected to be an easy project, but complete refurbishment quotes returned at £2,000 per lamp. This was deemed to be excessive and instead IS opted to break the task down. He sourced a blacksmith who quoted £600 per light but electrical quotes proved more difficult to secure. However, an electrician has now been engaged and work on the lamps is due to start in August. The Victorian lamp at the churchyard is not electrified and a feasibility study is being carried out (with support from The Church) into potentially installing a solar powered unit.
- 7.2. **Cemetery Gate:** This lovely old Victorian gate was also in a poor condition and hanging from only one hinge. The MCG, supported by The Church, paid £750 to a local blacksmith who has done an excellent job of stripping, repairing and repainting the gate. Once the refurbished gate had been reinstalled, JS noted how scruffy the cemetery entrance had become and recruited the Footpaths Group to lay new flagstones and sleepers to smarten up the area. *IS invited MCG members to advise the Committee of any new ideas for projects within the village.*

8. Footpaths Group [JS]

- 8.1. **Activities:** JS advised that, as ever, the main activities of the Footpaths Group [FG] have been community work including clearing footpaths, cutting back brambles, removing fallen trees, repairing styles, replacing fingerposts, and putting in steps on sloped areas within the forest. When ESCC Highways declined to replace the fencing at Lampool Corner, MCG picked up the bill. About half of the 11 fenceposts were dug out by the FG in preparation for replacement, whilst the remainder were removed by the trainee officers from the Royal Corps of Signals during the Remembrance Weekend. FG have also been involved in replacing the boards on two of the footbridges in the Parish (reporting to ESCC each time). The FG are no longer allowed to repair the bridges but instead notify ESCC of any problems – on the back of which ESCC have already repaired the bridge at Lampool Edge. JS also contacted ESCC Highways about the fence on School Hill which the FG were willing to replace with a post and rail fence – ESCC declined. However, at Christmas they had a change of heart and repaired a small portion of the fence. Following representation from a concerned resident, ESCC have now agreed funding to replace the rest of the fence on School Hill. The Parish Council advised that the £1,000 grant covered Fairwarp and Nutley as well as Maresfield. Consequently, when the barriers adjacent to Fairwarp Village Hall were damaged by cyclists/riders, the FG were asked to replace them. In the end new barriers were sourced for free.
- 8.2. **Artistry:** The FG have steadily been replacing the six fingerposts within the Parish which are not the responsibility of ESCC. They started with the sign at The Chequers which was damaged, rotted and corroded. The overall cost of refurbishment for this signpost alone was £1,500 which included installation of new arms at a cost of £90 per arm, £200 for the joiner and new lettering at a cost of £85. The Parish Council paid for refurbishment of the remaining five fingerposts which totalled less than £70. They were each cleaned, the lichen was removed, the old paint



scraped off and any holes were repaired. Rather than replacing the arms, supporting rackets were installed and a compound was used to harden the wood before it was repainted. The Parish Council have been advised that they should last for another couple of years but will then need to be fully refurbished. Finally, the iron Fairwarp Village sign has been cleaned and repainted and the lettering has been highlighted in gold.

- 8.3. **Rewards:** JS reported that photographs of the work carried out by the FG found their way to ESCC Highways who subsequently awarded the FG a £500 grant. JS has also been alerted to an initiative called Community Match wherein ESCC will award grants matching money put into a project by the Community.
- 8.4. **Future Projects:** Permission from The Church will be required but the FG would like to repaint the churchyard gate. The gate was donated by men from the Officer Training Unit in Maresfield and should therefore be preserved. In addition, the bowbell milestones within the Parish (which are of historical interest) need to be stripped and repainted – JS suggested that the Historical Society may be able to pursue this.

9. Future Projects & Expenditure [PP]

- 9.1 PP reminded those present how lucky we are to live in such a beautiful village which has a number of services such as the village shop, a pub, the post office, Bonners School and Stepping Stones Pre-School, the Recreation Ground and play area, and various clubs within walking distance. There are a wide variety of village organisations, including MCG, which rely on volunteers. On behalf of MCG, PP thanked those people who help out on Clean-Up Days, who maintain the village planters, and who routinely help out with MCG events such as Quiz Night, the Winter and Summer Suppers, and the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. However, she appealed for more help particularly with collecting subscriptions (given the high percentage of members who don't use standing orders). She asked for members to provide email addresses where possible so that they can be used for communication and to advertise forthcoming events. There is also a vacancy for a new Minute Secretary to take the minutes at MCG Committee Meetings following the withdrawal of the previous incumbent due to work commitments. PP asked for volunteers to join the Footpaths Group, particularly anyone with skills such as joinery, painting or bricklaying who will be able to help with projects such as the refurbishment of the picnic tables at Bonners School. She added that there is still a need to recruit new membership to MCG, particularly younger people in order to ensure continuity. There are many skills within the Community and a lot can be achieved by working together. New ideas for worthwhile projects are always welcome, and the current Committee Members are happy to consider initiatives that may not be conservation in the purest sense but will contribute to maintaining and preserving village life.
- 9.2 Finally, PP advised those present that the Committee Members had provided the wine available after the AGM. She sought, and was granted, permission to use MCG funds to provide wine for subsequent AGMs.



10. Election of the Executive Committee

PP advised that she had received no nomination forms. However, the existing members of the MCG Executive Committee had indicated that they are all prepared to continue in their current roles. This was unanimously approved, and the Executive Committee was duly elected.

11. Any Other Business

- 11.1. Anthony Myers thanked the Executive Committee Members for their dedication and professionalism, expressing the sentiment "we are very lucky to have you".
- 11.2. PP reminded those present that the Summer Supper will be held on Saturday 13th July 2019 and tickets are still available. There will be a welcome drink in Ann & Dick Thompsons' garden followed by supper in the Village Hall.

The AGM closed at 8.47pm. The next Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday 7th July 2020.

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