

## **Friends of Marble Hill**

### **Annual General Meeting Covering the year 1st April 2020 -1st April 2021 Minutes of Virtual Meeting 10th February 2022**

#### **Present**

John Anderson (Chairman), Alexandra Kingston , John Perry, Roger Hackett, Nick Jones, David King, John Batson, Vivienne Cove, Dorothy Gonsalves, Alexandra Madden, Sam Ball and 21 other members.

#### **In Attendance**

Rachel Morrison, Marble Hill Audience Development Manager.

#### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed the Members attending. He read his Chairman's Report which had been circulated and is given as Appendix 1.

Members noted the Report.

#### **RECEIPT OF THE ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2021**

The Treasurer introduced this item and referred Members to the Accounts which had been circulated and are given as Appendix 2 . He explained there had been little change due to Covid. Members were invited to ask questions .None were raised The Members noted that the Annual Accounts for the Year ended 31st March 2021 had been duly received.

#### **REVISED CONSTITUTION**

The Chair introduced this item and referred Members to the draft Constitution which had been circulated. He explained how the new Constitution had been developed. The meeting approved the adoption of the new Constitution.

A copy of the approved Constitution will be placed on the FoMH website.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE**

This item was introduced by the Chairman. The following were appointed:

Chairman - Alexandra Kingston (Officer)  
Treasurer - John Perry (Officer)  
Secretary - Roger Hackett (Officer)

## **Committee Members**

Nick Jones  
David King  
John Batson  
Vivienne Cove  
Dorothy Gonsalves  
Alexandra Madden

David King has agreed to act as Membership Secretary

## **MEMBERSHIP FEE EFFECTIVE 1ST APRIL 2022**

John Anderson introduced this item. The Treasurer explained the reasons for the proposals and referred to the Report which had been circulated. He explained that as Covid was finishing it was now time to introduce a fee and a simple and straightforward process that held minimal personal data and thus met privacy concerns. It was thought a £10 annual fee was reasonable. The funds would be used for the benefits of Marble Hill. Without a fee there could be doubt as to whether there was a Membership scheme in place.

In response to questions the mechanism for payment was explained. It will be publicised on the website and payment will be by bank transfer. In exceptional cases payment could be by cheque. It had been set as £10 having taken account of the fees of other local friends groups and because of the benefits already provided free by English Heritage. It was confirmed that there were 349 email addresses held. It was hoped to convert most of these to the new Membership scheme. If we can the Friends can really support English Heritage as there are always sponsorship opportunities that we can assist them with. The Committee also wanted to receive suggestions from the Membership for sponsorship projects. It was emphasised that it was important to utilise the funds for the benefit of all. It was clarified that the position regarding the objects had been dealt with in the constitution.

The Members approved the introduction of a Membership fee of £10.00 for the period 1st April to 31st March for each email address payable in advance between 1st April and 30th June each year commencing in the year 2022 until further notice.

## **APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS**

The Treasurer introduced this item. He explained how Blackwood Futcher & Co. Farnham had been selected to be proposed as auditors to carry out Independent Examinations of the accounts. Their fee was £180. The Treasurer explained the previous informal arrangements of the Marble Hill Society. This Committee thought that there should be a more formal arrangement ensuring the right level of assurance. The Treasurer explained he had used Blackwood Futcher & Co for a

number of years and had informed the Committee at the time of recommending them to the Friends. The Committee had agreed there was no conflict of interest.

The AGM approved the appointment of Blackwood Futcher & Co. Farnham to carry out Independent Examinations of the Association's accounts

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

John Anderson invited questions from Members. A Member asked what is the Vision for the Friends going forward? The outgoing Chairman had referred to a broader and narrower vision in his Report and that the latter would focus on community communications. Can the Committee say what is the Vision for the Friends going forward?

The outgoing Chairman explained that the narrower vision was being pursued as this complements the Marble Hill Revived Project. The new Chairman explained she had been speaking to English Heritage colleagues and saw the Friends' role as supporting English Heritage in their aims and making sure that community views about English Heritage and local activities are passed to them. The Friends, through raising fees, want to support the local English Heritage Team for example with the re-opening by handing out a leaflet that will be a guide to the site, rather than putting on events ourselves.

A Member asked how future working with English Heritage on events such as Arts in the Park would work? Alexander Kingston thought that English Heritage would take the lead rather than the Friends, and there would be clear plans for the management of such events. English Heritage had sent her a list of the planned events. She thought that with so many events lined up already that it was best that the Friends support these rather than run additional ones. A gazebo had been offered by English Heritage so that the Friends could have a separate presence and recruit new Members at these events.

The Treasurer explained that the Committee needed to be cautious about putting on events given the current regulatory framework that included for example Vetting and Barring Checks. The Friends were fortunate that English Heritage has all these arrangements in place and have done a brilliant job especially last summer. The Friends can see there is an opportunity to support and underwrite costs and help without being the lead or "doing the doing" ourselves. English Heritage have a need for active Friends with a wide scope that can reach parts of the community that English Heritage cannot directly reach themselves. Having a Friends group is very much part of the Heritage Lottery funding requirements. Friends are a means of getting engagement with the local and wider community. The Friends see themselves as being an active agent reaching out to these local and wider communities and the public generally. Later there may be opportunities for specialist events that are focused on community engagement rather than history or fundraising.

The Secretary suggested that, given that English Heritage wanted the Friends to lead on community communication that the Friends should be finding ways to proactively put ideas to the local community and get feedback from them. We need to encourage the local community through our website and possibly social media to tell us what they want from us or English Heritage and break down any communication barriers that there may be. It was important that it was not just the Committee's ideas but those of the community that were put forward to English Heritage. The Committee will need to find ways to do this. by exploring how we can become an effective community organisation that finds out and passes on the views of the community.

Rachel Morrison had attended the meeting as an observer. The Chairman invited Rachel to speak to the meeting. She thanked everyone for all the work that had been done and for the commitment of the new committee. She looked forward to working with them. She was clear that our communities are really important. We all love the House and Park for different reasons but we all care and that is why we are here, and that is what matters. She was delighted that so many Members had been able to attend. She felt that people can speak so much more freely to the Friends than to English Heritage. She was really looking forward to the future.

David King explained that the Friends of Fontainebleau were keen to be twinned with Marble Hill.

John Anderson made some closing remarks regarding the Marble Hill Society and his work with them. He wished the new committee well. He thanked those who in the past had done so much work. Much of this work was so good it was currently on the Friends' website. He wanted to thank the authors for allowing their work to continue to be displayed.

There being no other business the outgoing Chairman closed the meeting.

### **The Meeting Commenced and closed at 18.49**

The Date of the next AGM will be advised in due course.

Roger Hackett  
**Secretary**  
**25 February 2022**

## Appendix 1 – Chairman's Report

The Friends of Marble Hill were created in September 2019 when the members of the former Marble Hill Society elected a new committee, adopted a new constitution and agreed to transfer the available funds to the new group.

The new committee then began a process to think about what activities the Friends should take on and what implications that had for how the Friends should be organised. Encouraged by earlier discussions with English Heritage we identified our scope as covering community participation and engagement, fundraising, historical research and possibly volunteer management.

We looked around at how other Friends groups were organised and against an ambitious agenda thought we should aim to become a registered charity.

Over the course of the months of 2020 this approach looked increasingly uncertain. The Marble Hill Revived project had totally transformed the way the site was being managed with more permanent staff than before and a significant and active volunteers group covering a range of work. There was also a full range of events engaging a broad new audience. In general, it seemed to us that much of the sort of activities we had envisaged the Friends doing were being successfully carried out by English Heritage and that was likely to continue forward.

After further consideration and in discussion with English Heritage we decided to scale back plans and to focus on community communications. At the same time a number of new committee members were recruited to take the Friends forward.

The coronavirus pandemic had the same limiting effect on the Friends as everyone else. We were able however to put on a programme of free online talks which attracted good numbers of people. We are grateful to the speakers for their time.

I want to thank the committee for the very considerable effort they have given over the last year or more. I also wish the new committee and the Friends well for the future.

John Anderson.