

AGM Minutes 29 Nov 2023

Attending 19 people:

APT – TW, NT, ER, BMcK, MG, IG, HS, SG, JMcS, LT (APUG)

Bernard Bourdillon, Graham Morrison, Neil Morkunas, Val Munday, Kate Harding, Richard Allen, Catherine Halcrow, Alison Bean, Sophie Cameron

AGENDA

1 Welcome and introduction, request to record meeting agreed

2 Apologies for Trustee absence – Cllr Susan Farjana-Thomas is engaged on council business

3 Conflicts of interest – none declared by Trustees

4 Approval of minutes of 2022 AGM – LT has sent some factual amendments to NT

5 Review of the year (April 2022-March 2023) TW's report shared as slideshow presentation

Questions invited:

BB – question about MOU – will this be a public document? TW say that this is the intention, MOU could be included on our website if agreed with Hackney Council. Keen for transparent operating model and to demonstrate what the Trust is doing to the public

LT asked if we know when the Stoke Newington High Street gates are opening? Will not be opening at the end of Nov 2023, works are still ongoing, Hackney Council will be making an announcement soon.

6 Abney Unearthed and Future Abney Park Trust events programme updates

Haydn – Abney Unearthed update.

Abney Unearthed project from 2016, has continued and been incorporated into the Restoration Project. Dedicated group of volunteers (11-15 per week) working on grave searches. Work in twos or threes and check locations of the plots in Abney Park, using existing plot maps to add missing people to the burial records by checking headstones. Last year added over 800 people, similar this year. This work helps with grave searches eg. added 330 people to burial records from 1970s. Researching the people in common graves to find their stories eg. an optical and scientific instrument maker. So far have covered two thirds of the site – the boundaries are more challenging as ground is so uneven.

Questions invited

NM expressed thanks for this project and asked about the long term survival of this project. HS stated that the project is currently supported by Hackney Council and the NHLF funding, this is being discussed with new Abney Park manager. Important to gather the history of working people buried onsite. TW – community space events in the community space will help bring the Abney Unearthed project to life and the Trust would fundraise to keep this project going if needed. HS talked about archive support with Hackney Archives and also links to upcoming Hackney History festival in May 2024. HS is linking with London Metropolitan Archives and Hackney

Museum as well as Hackney Archive. Older maps in Hackney Archive have added to the research.

LT congratulated HS and the volunteers on the ongoing success of this project. HS expressed thanks for the dedicated team of volunteers.

Steph – Presented overview of upcoming Activity plan programming and APT events for 2024.

Questions invited:

BB suggested open air films for our programming.

NM expressed concern about the appropriateness of events such as after dark tours, feels that they are a 'tasteless Gothic horror show'. Also asked about the Chapel management, will it be run as a 'cash cow' by Hackney Council. TW responded that the Chapel will be run in line with other Hackney Venues in Springfield and Clissold Parks and care has been taken with licensing to minimise the impact of Chapel events on wildlife and neighbours. The Trust has a number of dates over the year to programme community events such as films, lectures, and concerts. SG stated that the after dark tours are two-three dates over the year and are delivered in line with our other historical tours ie. referencing the life and work of the writers buried on site, who have written ghost stories. SG shared her email and working hours and said that feedback and questions about our programming are welcome.

7 Annual report and accounts April 2022-Mar 2023

TW added that we are running at an intentional loss this current year to engage new staff to develop our programming and deliver the activity plan. AGM approved the accounts and annual report.

8 Election of Chair and Trustees

BB checked that all Trustees and all people voting are members – this was confirmed.

The Chair and Trustees were all re-elected.

9 Appointment of independent auditors of accounts.

Re-appointment of Independent Examiners Ltd proposed - AGM approved this re-appointment.

10 Appointment of Company Secretary

AGM approved re-appointment of NT as company secretary.

11 Review of Articles

APT articles are standard format but complex to navigate and explain to new members. Aim to create a more plain English version of the articles to make them more clear and accessible. Membership model has not been refreshed in recent years and is due an update. Permission to proceed with this requested.

BB feels not need to be a motion to go ahead with this update. He is in favour of updating the articles but feels it does not need to be voted as a motion about the constitution. Asked if the purpose of the Trust different now, based on the evolving relationship with the Council?

TW as custodian of the Trust feels the articles are arcane and outdated and not easily understood. Asking at the AGM about reviewing them with the aim of being open and transparent and as a courtesy, not need to push this to a vote. Rephrased the proposal as follows: the Trust are intending to look at the Articles and will share any proposed updates with members.

SC has looked at the membership models of Magnificent Seven cemeteries in the past in her time as a trustee, and agreed that refreshing the Articles sounds like a good idea.

RA checked that Trust would be researching and reviewing the Articles and then give members a chance to vote on proposed changes to seek formal agreement. Consent and approval for this proposal was given.

12 AOB

BB noted that the display panels around the cemetery have been removed and replaced. Catherine Halcrow designed the original display panels to ensure unused funding was not wasted and they stood for ten years and he expressed thanks to her for that work.

CH showed appreciation for the thanks and wanted to state a heartfelt appreciation from the Dogwalkers campaign for more clarity about how to become a new member. CH offered to act as a liaison with the Dogwalkers campaign if that was helpful. Dog consultation has been extended by Hackney Council to 15 Dec and TW stated that the Trust will work on making it clearer to people how to become new members.