

MINUTES OF THE 31st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
THE EMMER GREEN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
HELD AT ST. BARNABAS CHURCH HALL, EMMER GREEN ON APRIL 15TH 2015
MEETING COMMENCED AT 7.30 PM.

Refreshments were available on arrival. There was wine, soft drinks and snacks. Over 80 people attended.

APOLOGIES The Chairman asked the secretary to give the names of any apologies received.

Annette Fairweather, Pat and Bill Rawlings, Sandy and Paul Cosh, Helen Lambert, Sue Drayton, Sally Judge and Steve Mardell.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and introduced herself, the Treasurer and Secretary at the table and then asked each member of the committee who are prepared to stand for re-election, to stand, as she introduced them. She then introduced the speaker, Rachel Sanderson of the Chilterns Conservation Board.

MINUTES OF THE 2014 AGM

These were agreed as a true record. Proposed by Barry Prior and Seconded by Jill Verran
The minutes were available on the website and paper copies would be available on request.

MATTERS ARISING

None.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The report had been circulated and was available on the website. www.egra.co.uk

The first half of our year focussed on how EGRA could be managed in the future and reshaping the committee to ensure key roles were covered.

The second half of the year had been dominated by The Heights School location consultation. EGRA has endeavoured to provide as much information as possible and would urge people to complete the online survey. Some paper versions were available at the meeting, together with a folder with the photographs from the EGRA website. Survey spares of the forms are available at Caversham Library. The survey ends on May 1st 2015.

With regards to membership, this is currently 500 households. The more members we have the stronger the voice. She asked that we encourage friends and neighbours who live near us to join. She told those present that they would be welcome to join EGRA at the AGM.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer, Bill Harper circulated the financial report at the meeting. He said that once again, he could report that EGRA was in a healthy situation. There had been a few changes in administration and that had reflected in a slight drop in membership. We had been given a grant from Reading Neighbour Network, to cover our insurance of £75.53, which was greatly appreciated. We had also received a donation from the Bugs Bottom Action Group of £500. When they disbanded their funds were divided between EGRA and other local groups. Again, this was much appreciated. The funds we held in safe keeping for the Blossom Fund was cleared in 2014. It is thought that Brooklyn Drive may undertake another project in 2015.

The Treasurer concluded by thanking Janette Joyce for certifying our accounts.

Acceptance of the report was Proposed by Linda Glithro and Seconded by Vera Bodman.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND AUDITOR

The Chairman announced that there were to be four resignations. Mark Hutchings, who was moving from the district, Doris Hiscox, Vera Bodman and Jane Handley.

Margaret said that she had thought long and hard about her decision to stand down as Chairman and felt that it was time for "new blood", after so long. She intended to continue on the committee.

She spoke of Vera who had been a reliable and longstanding committee member since 1999 and Jane who joined the committee in 2011, and had been Minutes Secretary, Notice Board Co-ordinator and Tradesmens' List Editor. She thanked all the people who were resigning and wished them well. She then presented bouquets to Vera and Jane, with cards signed by all the committee members.

The Treasurer, Bill Harper, then spoke of the contribution that Margaret Ormonde had made since 1997 to EGRA. She had been secretary and then Chairman and been a backbone of the organisation and also the local community. She had a wealth of knowledge and contacts and had been a valuable asset to EGRA for a long time. While appreciating her reasons for standing down after so long as Chairman, he said that the

committee were glad that she would be continuing as a member of the committee, as she was a linchpin of the organisation. He then presented her with a card and potted plant. The audience applauded.

Margaret then thanked Diane Hartrup who continues to help manage the newsletter team. Members are encouraged to help without the commitment of serving on the committee.

After an appeal, several new volunteers had come forward to offer help.

Michael Denoon-Slater will be the new editor of the Tradesmens' List and Roland Wiles is the new Notice Board co-ordinator.

The voting then took place for the committee. Barry Prior, Vice-Chairman, Bill Harper, Treasurer, Linda Glithro, who edits our Newsletters, Annette Fairweather, Membership Secretary, Veronica Leeke, Planning, Liz Lyke and Margaret Ormonde. The voting "en bloc" of the committee standing for election, was unanimous. The election of the committee was Proposed by Diane Hartrup and Seconded by Jack Stamford. The new roles on the committee will be discussed at the next committee meeting on the 6th May. The Chairman also thanked Janette Joyce, our auditor and Clive Ormonde for managing our website.

REPORTS BY LINDA GLITHRO

Linda Glithro, who is also on the committee of the Dunsden Owen Association, told members about the opening of the Dunsden Owen Trail on Sunday, 17th May from 12.00 noon, at the village green and hall in Dunsden. The trail will be available both as a Smart Phone App and as paper copy and highlights the places in the area, including Emmer Green, that were important in Owen's life. The trail will be opened by poet, Martin Malone at 2pm and will be preceded by music, maypole dancing and other entertainment on the green. Teas will be available at the village hall. Linda asked everyone to take an advertising postcard about the event and encouraged them to come along. Further details are available on the website www.owenindunsden.org.

Linda also outlined a proposed EGRA outing to the RISC Roof Garden in Reading on Saturday, 6th June at 12.00 noon. The roof garden, which is now ten years old, has a huge variety of plants, all of which are either, edible, medicinal or useful in another way. The tour will be led by Dave Richards, who designed and planted the garden. Anyone interested in the visit was asked to add their name to a list and Linda will contact them with full details. There will be a modest charge of £3 which will go to RISC.

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS

None

PRESENTATION

Margaret then re-introduced the speaker, Rachel Sanderson, from the Chilterns Conservation Board. Rachel spoke passionately about her role as the leader of the four year Chilterns Commons project, made possible by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which aims to increase public awareness of the commons within the Chilterns area, to spread the word about the value of commons as important wildlife refuges, often also with a historic heritage, and to get more people involved in understanding and caring for them.

In medieval times, any land, especially in upland areas, which was of little or no agricultural value was often regarded as 'waste of the manor'. Poorer people would be allowed to use this for purposes such as grazing a few animals and collecting firewood. These became established rights linked to properties and such 'Common Rights' are often still in existence today.

Rachel explained the concept of 'strip parishes', which extend up the west facing escarpment of the Chilterns, and how they came about, eventually leading to the development of separate 'daughter' communities on the plateau. The threat of enclosure became very real and many commons were lost to development until the 1965 Commons Act gave protection to those remaining, provided they were registered in time.

The main threat to commons today is through neglect. The project has encouraged many people to take an active interest in their local common, even where it is no more than a small pond, and it has provided resources where necessary to carry out restoration work.

She showed some fascinating slides and her talk was inspirational and very enthusiastically received.

The meeting concluded at approximately 9.30pm.