

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall Minutes, 7.30 pm, Wednesday, 15 January 2014
Cherry Hinton Village Leisure Centre, Colville Road, Cherry Hinton

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall is a group that is concerned about the usage, environment, welfare and future of the Cherry Hinton Hall grounds for the benefit of those who use it

14 people were in attendance at the Village Leisure Centre. There were apologies from Mark Ashton and Robert Dryden.

1. Welcome

David Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the 20 November meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. Matters arising:

Sandra Day reported that the new play equipment would be installed in April, at the beginning of the new financial year. Also, work to uncover and re-establish the path from the tumblers past the front of the tennis court and on to the Daws Lane/St Bede's/Walpole Road gate has started.

3. Speaker: David Taylor: 'Women's Roles and Achievements in Aviation'

David introduced his talk by recalling that 18 months ago he had given a talk to the Cherry Hinton Local History Society on the Lancaster Bomber. I was also asked to give talks to other societies, this in turn led to one woman asking 'Could you provide our society with a talk on women in aviation' – so here we are.

David introduced the subject by talking about the Roe family from Manchester. Edwin Hodgson Roe was a Manchester doctor. Together with his wife Ann Sophia Verdon they had 7 children. One of the offspring, Edwin Alliott Roe, [named after his father, dropped his first name, and after the love of his mother, assumed her maiden name of Verdon to become Alliott Verdon-Roe] founded and gave the name to the AVRO Company. Alliott Verdon-Roe is the first Englishman credited with flying in this country, and it is around this time that the Royal Aeronautical Society was formed. Ann Sophie Verdon-Roe was a pioneer, and established standards for children's health by setting-up day centres in the area. Alliott's younger brother Humphrey married Marie Stokes (to become Humphrey & Marie Stopes-Roe). Their son Harry married Mary Wallis (daughter of Barnes Neville Wallis [of Dam Busters bouncing bomb fame] and his wife Molly).

However, Hilda-Beatrice Hewlett was actually the first British woman aviator to have a pilot's licence. Hilda had ventured to France to see the Wright Brothers, and actually set up the very first flying school in Britain. She then set-up a successful aircraft manufacturing business, and was given a licence to produce planes for use in WW1. After WW1 lots of the aircraft were civilianised and used

for delivery of goods across the UK, setting up flying schools and the famous Alan Cobham's Flying Circus.

David was able to show us photos of various flying clubs with AVRO 504s.

But women really came into their own in WW2. Women did most of the plotting of aircraft movements as the various engagements took place and instructions were given in the Operations Rooms; WAAFs became 'Armaments Assistants', loading 303s into Browning magazines; they did much of the fuelling of Hurricanes and Spitfires; they made parachutes; serviced cameras for bomb-drop reconnaissance; drove HGVs and air-ambulances; and they were set to work servicing and maintaining the Spitfire fleet, working very long hours on undercarriages, engines, propellers, and so forth.

Meanwhile RAF flights could be as long as 8-10 hours for patrols over the Atlantic, so women also made up packed-lunches for the aircrew. During WW2 AVRO employed 10,000 people – 4,000 were women. The Air Transport Auxiliary comprised 1,200 pilots and engineers, of these And about 168 were women pilots and 12 flight engineers. Together they were all responsible for ferrying the newly-built aircraft such as Lancasters from the factory and repair organisations to squadrons at the airfield. [The women's section of the A.T.A. as it was popularly known, was headed by Pauline Gower, a proficient pilot and daughter of MP Sir Robert Gower.]

David continued by telling us about many other prominent women, including Amy Johnson and Diana Barnato-Walker, both ATA pilots (who flew an English Electric Lightning and was the first women to fly supersonic, Caroline Grace (she and her husband had rebuilt a Spitfire which resided at Duxford), Anna Walker (Hurricane pilot), and Concorde pilot Barbara Harmer.

4. Maintenance Issues

- FCHB Watercourse Management Document

Stuart mentioned that the Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook had put together a document for the restoration of Cherry Hinton Brook, detailing plans to restore the flow of the brook to reduce silt and create more suitable habitat for wildlife. The Brook has been split into 4 sections and the idea is to identify discrete items of work that FCHB and the Wildlife Trusts can bid for funding for, just lifting them from the document and putting them into a grant application. We should consider a similar approach to the Hall, so we are ready whenever a funding source comes available which might help in delivering part of the master plan.

- Tree damage

David and Stuart had assessed much of the tree damage and reported back to Anthony, including photos of various damaged/felled trees.

- Purchase of equipment

Ian reported that we now have a £600 grant from Cambridge City Council for the purchase of maintenance equipment. We need to spend this by 31 March and produce a report to the Grants Department. We will buy hard shoes, safety hats, visors, gloves, a strimmer, and also get some training in its use. Ian asked for

advice, as we had budgeted for £220 for a strimmer, but we are concerned as to whether it will be powerful-enough to cut through the thick brambles. We could spend another £120 on a more sophisticated machine with a metal blade instead of a wire, but we would need to pay considerably more for safety training, plus our annual insurance would go up considerably too. *It was decided to purchase the nylon-cord strimmer, rather than the one with the blade.*

Meanwhile Anthony has confirmed that the Council will re-drill and re-seed along the lines from the Festival where the grass has stopped growing – apparently week-killer was used.

Judy asked if we could consider staining the benches too.

David said he would check with Guy as to when it is appropriate to cut back any ivy.

Judy also asked if we could ask Anthony to continue laying hoggin for the re-established path right up to the Daws Lane entrance as this area is very, very muddy.

- Ken Woollard Memorial fundraising progress

Sandra reported that a 4-person committee had been set-up to develop a plan of action. They have emailed all folk clubs, and set up a CBS bank account. Soon to come is a Website and Facebook page. Some provisional ideas for a memorial bench are for an open guitar case and a line of musicians (you would sit on their laps). So far the appeal has raised £2,500 but more will be needed for the bench, and also a further sum to maintain it. It has been agreed that it will be unveiled at the Folk Festival this year, positioned as close to the Acer as is possible.

5. 2015 FCHH Calendar

Emily and Sandra reported that we have been thinking of a ‘gallery’ for the Website, for use as a ‘rolling photo competition’. We will try and advertise this and use the best of the submissions to commission a FCHH 2015 calendar. This will need to be ready to go to a printers by October.

6. Events

- Community Action Day

We will hold a ‘Community Action Day’ on Saturday, 1st March. Please meet at 10.00 a.m. by the pond. We will be able to use our newly purchased maintenance equipment.

- Pet Day

Sandra proposed a summer dog show, perhaps where the block of concrete is. We could invite animal charities, have lots of stalls. Judy and Sandra agreed to do some work on the idea.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting 7.30 pm, Wednesday, 19 March, at Cherry Hinton Village Leisure Centre. The guest speaker will be Haley Bowers, who will present ‘*The life of a Special Constable*’. Please remember to bring a raffle prize.