

## **FRIENDS OF THE KEEP ARCHIVES**

### **Minutes of the 4th Annual General Meeting held at 5:30pm on Wednesday 9 October 2019 in The Keep**

Lady Teviot, Chairman of FoTKA, welcomed those present to the meeting, and invited Peter Field, Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex and FoTKA's President, to take the chair.

#### **1 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Casper Johnson, David and Jenny Tate, Suzanne Hinton, Barbara Abbs, Malcolm Pratt, Mr and Mrs Stevens, Karen French, Christopher Hobson, Sarah Stonor Mr and Mrs Downy, Elaine Macgregor.

#### **2 Minutes**

The minutes of the AGM held on 10 October 2018 were approved and signed as a true record.

#### **3 Chairman's report**

Lady Teviot reported as follows : As ever my thanks to our President Peter Field the Lord Lieutenant for coming yet again to take our AGM. A bonus for being a member of the Friends has always been our visits to places of interest not usually open to the public. This year was no exception and our first successful visit was to Eastbourne Town Hall. The next to Sheffield Park was very special as we had access to parts not open to the public which included the New Model Farm and the residential apartments. The talks given by Sue Berry and Christopher Whittick were much enjoyed.

My thanks to my committee are always long and heartfelt. Vice Chairman Bill Shelford for his knowledge and support. Diana Hansen as Secretary for her exceptional skill at minute taking and their prompt delivery. Colin French our Treasurer who copes so well with direct debits and standing orders paid and unpaid. To Annette Shelford, Sheena Parker and Philip Pople who have so successfully organised our visits. These may look simple on the day but a great deal of thought and work has gone on behind the scenes. We welcomed Philip Hamerton who became our Membership Secretary. To the other members of the committee who contribute to our meetings and it is very unusual to have apologies for absence. To Ian Hilder who keeps an eye open for any documents or archives which come up for sale on various websites and which should be housed at the Keep. To Casper Johnson and Christopher Whittick who are in attendance at our committee meetings.

This year I retire as Chairman. I think it was 1991/1992 that I first came onto the Friends committee. Then you served three years, had a year off and then returned. It has been a great privilege to have been involved with the Friends for so long. Most of the original members I served with are now aloft except for one lady who is 101, not myself I hasten to add. Charles and I have an equally long connection with the Record Office from the days in Pelham House. It was in 1971 when we were both working there the day our son was due to be born - to the relief of the archivists he was two days late.

Now with immense concern I would like to draw your attention to the very difficult position of the East Sussex Council, who are the important financial supporter of the Keep, with the cuts they need to implement. They are strapped for cash and for the next three years they will only be able to fund their statutory responsibilities for the keeping of records. These are quite limited in scope. The first cuts have meant the redundancies of the County Archivist Christopher Whittick and the Senior Archivist Philip Bye. They will be greatly missed for their vast knowledge of the archives gained over the years. Casper Johnson the Administrator has resigned and will take up another position with the Kent County Council. His replacement is Ceris Howard, who will shortly take over on a twelve month secondment. The vital position of Melissa Williams as Conservator was in danger of being lost but this has fortunately been relieved. The Sustainability Plan in Phases 2 and 3 will consider further cuts, the possibility of increased charges and a reduction in opening hours. There is also the prospect that if new accessions do not fall within the statutory responsibility of the Council they will need an endowment to cover the cost of their upkeep. The Friends with our limited resources would be unable to assist in this situation.

These are problems which most Record Offices face, an example is of the need for financial support of Surrey History Centre at Woking. Some are closed two days a week and one is only open three days a week. The ever increasing number of records on the internet will lead to a significant drop in footfall. I am reminded some years ago when being seated between two gentlemen from a company at a dinner when record searching was referred to as the Industry. How this can be overcome I regret I do not have any answers.

The Friends will do their level best to continue to assist in any ways we can and a meeting has been arranged in the near future with the East Sussex County Council to discuss the future plans.

In response to a question, Bill Shelford said that we will try to persuade ESCC that their "endowment" idea was fatally flawed. It was vital to ensure that depositors were not deterred from placing their archives at the Keep. FoTKA was in principle ready to help with costs of conservation, as we had in the past.

#### **4 Report of the Hon Treasurer**

Colin French presented the accounts. We had not achieved our aim to increase income to cover purchases, and he urged Friends to sign Gift Aid forms, and to encourage others to join the Friends. He proposed adoption of the Report and Accounts and reappointment of the Independent Examiner. The meeting was content. The Chairman of the meeting expressed his thanks to our Treasurer.

#### **5 Committee for 2018-2019**

The Chairman said that Mary Teviot wished to retire. Diana Hansen and Ann Norman retired by rotation and offered themselves for reelection. Clive Wilson, Penny Pursey and Ken Norman were nominated by the committee as new trustees. Lastly, the trustees were delighted to nominate Christopher Whittick as a trustee, following his retirement.

The nominees were proposed and seconded, and elected unanimously.

#### **6 News from The Keep**

In Casper Johnson's absence, Christopher Whittick read Casper's report. The redundancies entailed a significant loss of archival knowledge. Further savings would be required for 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. A formal Keep Collections Panel will meet monthly to consider and report on future additions and accruals; ESRO collection policies are being revised to reflect reduced staff resources and to prioritise work on archives for which the Council has statutory responsibilities. The University of Sussex will rent Keeps 1-3 for teaching 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

An exciting events programme was now supported by the Digitickets booking system. Preparation for Keep Accreditation review in November is under way.

Christopher Whittick added a personal note. Working with FESRO, and now FoTKA, had been a great experience, and together we had achieved amazing results for future generations.

#### **Any Other business**

Bill Shelford expressed his appreciation for the close interest being taken by Peter Field in developments at The Keep. It was vital to retain the confidence of existing and potential depositors.

He went on to pay tribute to Mary Teviot for her unique contribution to the work of FESRO and FOTKA over many years. Members joined in expressing their thanks to her.

Finally, the Lord Lieutenant said he knew the meeting would want to say a massive thankyou to Christopher Whittick for his service over 40 years.

The meeting was followed by the 4<sup>th</sup> Pam Combes Memorial Lecture, given by Professor Richard Coates on "The changing landscape of Sussex placenames".