

**THE THIRTY THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
THE FRIENDS OF LAUNDE ABBEY**

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019 7.00pm

**Venue:** The Chapel at Launde Abbey

**Present:** Members and Friends of Launde

**Apologies** Bart Hellier, Elizabeth Simpson, Jennifer Lady Gretton, Helen Playdon, Libby Leiper, Lorna Kirk, Alix Saleeb, Marian Higginbottom, Hazel Auken, Revd Paul Savage, Margaret Heaney.

**Item 1** The Chairman Revd Canon Brian Davis welcomed members and friends and paid tribute to Lizette Pugh for her service to the committee over many years. She had decided to stand down.

**Item 2** The minutes of the AGM held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 were accepted as a true record and unanimously approved.

a. **Retreat** A report of the Friends' retreat held in January 2019 was in Launde Leaves. It was successful. The next retreat for Friends would be in January 2020 led by Bishop Guli Chair of Trustees. Twenty two people had registered for the retreat and, as spaces are limited, there was a waiting list. Some people may be invited to return home each evening. Revd Mike Playdon was thanked for organising these retreats.

**Item 3 Chairman's Report** The Chairman listed the support that Friends had provided to Launde over the last year. These included:

a. **Pathway** A pathway to assist people coming in from the car park had been completed. The Friends had provided £22,000.

b. **Chapel PA System** The PA system had been installed in the chapel at a cost of £5,000.

c. **Lighting for the Library** Sensitive lighting had been provided for the library.

d. **Brown Directional Signs** The Secretary said that an application had been sent to the County Council for the erection of brown directional signs, which would assist people getting to Launde. He was concerned whether the case complied and highlighted direction from Government that the highway should be 'decluttered'. He agreed to make enquiries about when a decision might be made. After note: The Council wrote to the Secretary on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019 to say the application had been successful and we could now work with it to design and erect the signs.

e. **Parishes and Benefices** There was a move to encourage parishes and benefices to take out a corporate Launde membership. The cost was £50

annually, but bigger parishes are invited to consider giving more. Fliers would be posted out within the two dioceses. The Vicar of Oakham is now a Trustee and was keen that the Peterborough Diocese should be involved with Launde. This needs more work through the Deaneries.

f. **Graham Sutherland Painting** Friends had supplied stewards when the Graham Sutherland painting had temporarily been put on display in the chapel.

g. **900 Years Celebration** Many Friends had volunteered to help at the 900 years celebrations. This had been very much appreciated.

h. **Envelope Stuffing** The Business Manager thanked the Friends who had helped stuff leaflets etc into envelopes. 3,500 had been done in one day!

i. **Friends Support for Launde** Friends also gave help to Launde in the reception, and the gardens.

## **New Projects**

a. **Stable Block** Launde would like to extend the stable block to build an extra conference facility away from the main house. This would include a big room, kitchen and break out rooms. The project is still evolving, although there are some outline plans and some money towards the project has been promised. Some ideas for fund raising included:

(1). Noseley Hall; Lord Arthur Hazelrigg had offered to host a reception, perhaps with a concert afterwards in the large private chapel.

(2). Having an auction of unwanted antiques. However, several hundred lots would be required.

b. **Make Launde Greener** The Chairman, along with Simon Bentley who is one of the trustees, and Director of the Leicestershire Wildlife Trust, will be suggesting an Eco Audit for Launde at the next Trustees meeting. This has the encouragement of the Warden. There was thought this could be extended to the lifestyle of Friends! The Chairman reminded the meeting that there was to be a green retreat over the weekend 22<sup>nd</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> November called Signs of Hope (over 40 people had signed up for the w/e, with 7 others for the stand alone Saturday.

c. **Planting Trees** An article in the recent issue of Launde Leaves focussed on the idea of planting 900 trees in the grounds of Launde as part of the Launde 900. Mike Hind-Woodward, who belongs to the Melton Mowbray and Wissendine Rotary has offered 200 Oak trees and 50 Horse Chestnuts to start the project, which Rotarians could help to plant. He spoke briefly to the meeting. The Chairman on behalf of the Friends accepted this kind offer. The Warden explained that he would like to plant trees near the lakes. A suggestion of buying and planting trees in memory of friends and family was worthy of further consideration.

**Thanks** The Chairman thanked the Friends Office holders and those who volunteered to help for their work during the year. He drew people's attention to Launde Leaves which is an extremely well put together in house magazine with interesting articles.

#### **Item 4. Secretary's Report**

- a. The committee has met 4 times over the last year, working for the abbey. Friends continue to help in reception, and in the garden. Over 30 people led by Sister Rachel, the spirituality adviser for the Diocese of Peterborough, attended the Friends Retreat in January. It was a rich and rewarding experience and thanks goes to Mike Playdon for his painstaking organisation. The focus of the abbey events this year was the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Friends played an integral role in making the day a success and familiar faces were seen in the car park, waiting at tables, running stalls and perambulating. It was a lovely day. Beverley Lott continues to edit Launde Leaves and her work in producing this interesting magazine is appreciated.
- b. The Committee would love to attract more friends.

#### **Item 5. Treasurer's Report**

- a. Sarah Longhill presented the Financial Report, copies of which had been circulated at the meeting.
- b. The accounts show £5,145.36 in the bank at the end of April 2019 at the end of the Financial Year. This was considerably less than the previous year, but the Friends had paid for a number of improvements in the Abbey, some of which had been identified in the Chairman's report. Other work included refurbishing crosses around the garden, leaflets to encourage young people to visit Launde and in the past Friends contributed to the outside worship area. Since April membership fees have been credited and so there is more in the bank.
- c. The Accounts were proposed and seconded by members at the meeting.

#### **Item 6 Membership Report**

- a. It was reported that there are 269 Friends and 329 if couples are included. This was a slight fall from the previous year. 13 churches have taken out membership. The Membership Secretary said some friends are generous with specific projects.
- b. The report was proposed by Mary Weston and seconded.

#### **Item 7. Election of Officers for 2019-2020**

The following officers agreed to stand and were elected:

Chairman: Revd Canon Brian Davis

Vice Chairman: Revd Mike Playdon

Treasurer: Sarah Longhill

Hon Secretary: Patrick Rendall

### **Item 8. Election of Committee Members**

a. The following members had again agreed to serve on the committee and were re-elected:

Rachel Kellett  
Hon Mary Rose de Lisle – elected for another 3 years  
Bart Hellyer  
Beverley Lott  
Jane Thornalley – elected for another 3 years  
Stephanie Preston-Hall – elected for another 3 years  
Mary Weston  
Jan Zientek  
Ann Green  
Chris Watts

b. The following new members were elected for 3 years:

Frances Rendall  
Miriam Stoate

c. Ex-officio members serving the committee:

Ven David Newman – Warden  
Revd Chris Webb – Deputy Warden  
Ian Andrews – Business Manager

d. Representative of the Board of Trustees:

Madaleine Wang

### **Item 9. Warden's Report**

a. The main focus this year had been Launde 900. It was an ambitious weekend that had been blessed with good weather and over 2,000 people had visited. Some of these were new to the Abbey and represented a broad spectrum. Maintaining and indeed improving its profile had been succeeded.

b. The Warden spoke of the tensions that are raised by the expected increase in tourists wanting to explore Launde because of the exposure it would have in the third of the Hillary Mantel's trilogy on Thomas Cromwell, against detrimentally affecting its core purpose as retreat house. This would have to be

carefully managed. After note: it was suggested after the meeting that the website should be used to inform people when the house and in particular the chapel was open for visitors and when a retreat was being held. The warden agreed to explore this.

c. The Warden was encouraged by the numbers coming to Launde for spiritual reasons. In some cases retreats were over booked. Particularly the retreat with Archbishop Rowan Williams was a 'sell out'. A speaker of a similar stature was booked for the coming year and the Abbey was seeking to be more diverse. A retreat for cyclists is being arranged.

d. The Warden spoke about the commitment and loyalty of the staff often delivering more than their contract. To that end Trustees have asked for a review of staffing to check the shape going forward.

e. He also spoke of the continuous gifts to Launde, for example the 2 shepherds' huts, which have been located at the back of the stable block, and also the banners that were now on show in the corridor of the house. Mary Lawson, late Director of Education at Leicester Diocesan Board of Education had made a bequest.

f. Finally he said retreats were gaining in popularity, so people wishing to attend must plan ahead.

**Item 10. Any Other Business**

a. The Chairman thanked the Warden David Newman, his wife Helen and the Business Manager Ian Andrews for their commitment to Launde and for the superb work they were doing.

b. He wished everyone a safe journey home.

**Patrick Rendall  
Honorary Secretary  
Committee of Friends  
Launde Abbey**

**12<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

**Signed.....**

**Date.....**

**Chairman**