



Association of Friends of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent Court

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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

**Held on Wednesday 22nd November 2023
at Prince Edward Duke of Kent Court. Commencing at 3pm**

Present: Trustees Barry Stedman, Clive Dunnico, David Badger, Nigel Oldacre, Karine Oldacre, Graham Elvidge, Andrew McLeod and Association Members Robert Whittingham, Chris Caine, Robert Vine, George & Claire Lambeth, Derek & Jeanette Burrell

Apologies

Trustees Lloyd Harris and Graham Larke; Association Members Dennis Baum, John Smoothy, Ken Birnie, Brian Heasman, MC Black, Peter Nash, David Branch and Margaret Paul

The President, Barry Stedman, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Conflicts of Interest.

Any will be covered when matters arise.

To approve the Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 23rd November 2022.

The Minutes were unanimously approved and signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising.

These were covered under their respective Headings.

President's Report.

It has been a challenging year, but with many positives. One of the highlights was the Tea Party we organised for the residents, their families and carers. It was attended by the RW Provincial Grand Master and many members of the Provincial Executive. The Tea Party proved to be such a success that we had been asked to stage it annually, which we intend to do. We shall also be holding the first Garden Party in some years, and it will be a welcome comeback. I have had extensive meetings with the RMBI regarding refurbishing the Home and, in particular, the DSU garden. Talks are ongoing, but there are items that fall within our remit, and we are happy to help finance them for the direct benefit of our residents. Nothing is for ever, and so changes are inevitable. One of them is the retirement of Andrew McLeod as a Trustee. Andrew has been associated with the Friends since day one – certainly as long as I and possibly a

little longer! Andrew's support and advice has been invaluable and, on behalf of the Friends, I thank him most sincerely for his many years of service and wish him well.

That brings me to our Chairman's decision not to stand for re-election. Clive has been such a rock. His enthusiastic support of the Friends' work has been an inspiration. On a personal level, I am so grateful for his support for me. I know he played a role in the Deputy PGM's decision to appoint me President and I shall always be grateful. Thankfully, Clive has decided to remain as a Trustee, so we shall look forward to his valuable input in future.

To the future: I approached WBro Robert Whittingham as a possible candidate for Chairman, Robert agreed. My fellow Trustees who know Robert were in favour so we approached the PGM, who has sent a letter of endorsement. Many of you may remember Robert as Assistant Provincial Grand Master for Essex. I am delighted to recommend him and, should he receive your approval, we look forward to welcoming him as Chairman.

In closing I would like to thank the Trustees for making my role so pleasurable and fulfilling.

Chairman's Report

As Chairman of the Association of Friends of Prince Edward Duke of Kent Court, during the past 12 months I have witnessed at first-hand the dedicated work carried out by my fellow Trustees, the staff and other volunteers who give of their time in so many ways to create a most happy atmosphere in our wonderful Home at Stisted.

During the past year the President and I have spent much time in an attempt to have the Tall Walled Garden, which is overgrown and in a mess, to be converted into a garden with hedgerows and flowers, and with a small area to be used as an allotment for those residents who may wish to participate. We are

aware that many residents do miss their own gardens in their former homes. Plans had been drawn up with pictures of how it might look. Parts of the wall are likely to drop at any time. Everything looked rosy. At the last minute the RMBI has decided not to go ahead. They now have other plans. It will be interesting to know what they are.

Our neighbour, the Braintree Golf Club, take great care of their grounds, which provide a magnificent panoramic view from the Home for our residents. The entrance road to the Home passes through those grounds giving a most welcome scenic experience to our residents and visitors.

The Mauchline House Garden continues to be a place of contentment for those residents who enter the twilight of their lives with dementia. It is a place of beauty where other residents, too, are able to enjoy a visit. There is a plan for some interior doors in Mauchline House to be made to resemble shop fronts of yesteryear. This is just one idea which will add to the residents' wellbeing.

Each resident is made to feel that Stisted Hall is their own Home and that they are an integral part of one happy family. This Christmas Michelle and her staff will ensure that it is another happy one for our residents.

Finally, I also express my thanks to David Badger for the invaluable contribution he makes to the work of the Association as our Secretary.

It has been a pleasure and a great honour to have been Chairman of the Association of Friends for 12 years. I have witnessed a caring staff and Trustees of the Association who continue to work for the benefit of our residents. During that time the Association has a good relationship with the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution. In particular I mention MC Black and Chris Caine, who have been ready to give the Association guidance and support, when needed. I thank them most heartily for that.

At the age of 82, I have decided to retire as Chairman of the Trustees and I wish my successor, Robert Whittingham, every success and happiness in his new role. Subject to election, I hope to be remaining as a Trustee for some years to come.

"There is no place like Stisted Hall. There is no place like Home."

Treasurer's Report.

The accounts will be uploaded to the website, but GE noted they had not yet been audited, due to the auditor being off sick. He said if we had requested another partner at the firm to do them it would have meant the association incurring another fee. When they are audited, they will be signed off.

In the figures to June '23, donations were £24,000, which included a notable £10,000 from the Province and £2,500 from Haven Lodge. Overall, the year resulted in a deficit of some £6,000. However, the balance sheet shows a surplus of some £114,000,

"plenty to spend on useful projects".

The Chairman thanked GE for his efforts on behalf of the association.

Almoner's Report.

At present there are 36 residents at Stisted Hall, 23 in the main house and 13 in Mauchline House, but, during the year, some people have come in for respite care for short periods of time.

Since the last AGM, 46 residents have celebrated their birthdays, three of whom are 100 years or over. The average age at the Home being 87 years. On their birthday, each person receives a birthday card and present from The Friends. I am constantly looking for birthday gifts, but it is difficult to come up with fresh and suitable ideas.

Sadly, there have been 16 deaths, the oldest being Ethel McMillan who was the great age of 103. Cards and messages of sympathy were sent to the next of kin and, where possible, a donation in their memory made to their chosen charity, which this year included Guide Dogs for the Blind, the Alzheimers Society, Essex and Herts Air Ambulance Trust and MacMillan Nurses. However, it is proving to be rather difficult to always get this necessary information.

On St Valentines Day, each resident was given a box of chocolates to make the day a bit special. On Easter Sunday, attractive boxes of Lindt small Easter eggs were given to each person to enjoy and help make the day a happy one.

It will soon be Christmas again. Last year, after all the Covid scares, the Trustees were able to join the residents for their Christmas party and lunch. Nicky and Neil of Clearer Productions came to sing and entertain us all in the Essex Lounge. This year's party is on December 3rd and we look forward to this occasion and to hosting the residents' lunch with, of course, a glass or two of wine. Nicky and Neil will be coming that morning to entertain us with carols, seasonal songs and poems etc, for us all to enjoy. At times, Nicky, in her many changes of lovely dresses, walks around the lounge and sings independently to some of the residents, which they love.

The Home has kindly offered again, on behalf of the Friends, to buy each person a suitable Christmas gift to the value of £35. I am very grateful and thank them for doing this for us.

Nigel and I hope to call in on Christmas morning to help hand out some of the presents and to wish everyone a happy Christmas.

Residents' Activities Representative's Report.

With Covid now almost clear from the Home, normal service has been resumed with only a few hiccups along the way. Coffee mornings are now regularly held, with Alan Reynolds' singing proving very popular with the residents. The number of residents' families coming, however, continues to be disappointing. Alan enjoys singing and does not charge a penny for his

'services'. We are therefore extremely lucky. For Christmas 2022, as agreed, only one tree was ordered, but this year we are reverting to two, which should be delivered to the Home anytime soon. Clearer Productions came in as planned on both 11th December and Easter Monday, but later on in the year we had to delay them twice due to Covid rearing its head with a couple of residents. They eventually managed to entertain the residents at the end of October. The Christmas entertainment for 2023 has had to be brought forward a week due to a rather late booking at the Home, so we were lucky that Nicky and Neil could fit us in at the last minute. Nonetheless the Friends will be paying for the residents' lunch and supplying the wine. The Provincial Grand Almoner, Gary Hostler, and/or his Deputy, John Hardisty, have held some sessions with the resident masons, although the feedback has been somewhat muted at times. The manager, Michelle Sims, had unearthed an old (1902) auction catalogue of the whole Stisted Estate which local mason and bookbinder etc John Plunkett repaired, rebinding all the rather tatty pages. It is intended that this will be put on display, probably in the Stone Hall. The Stisted Hall Charity Golf Day was again a happy and successful occasion, enabling £1,000 to be given to the Association of Friends as a result. This was due to the untiring efforts of Derek Burrell, who took over the reins from me this year. He was very ably supported/helped by David Badger, Graham Larke, Eric Broadbent, Andrew McLeod, Mike Saffill and Peter Hollingsworth, the latter being responsible for a very lucrative raffle. A residents' tea party was held out of doors in lieu of a fully-fledged Summer Fete, which was largely organised by Paul Palmer. It was a lovely day, blessed by the presence of the PGM, Paul Tarrant, and the Provincial Executive. The local brass band was there to entertain all of us, along with an ice cream van and an array of outdoor games. A working party was held in the Mauchline walled garden, with good support from some local masons as well as three others whose parents are residents at the Home. With coffee and bacon rolls to sustain us, the whole place looks much tidier. NO also noted that that Alan Reynolds had received a gift of wine to thank him for his efforts; and that coffee mornings would be held on the second Sunday of each month, except for November, as it would clash with Remembrance Day services. The Chairman thanked Nigel and Karine for "their invaluable work on behalf of the Trustees".

Home Manager's Report

1. Staffing:
Staffing levels are very positive.
Internal staff - 1 x new senior who is being interviewed for a Team Leader position.
Sponsorship – no sponsors

Agency – Zero for 3 months
Covid Update: Zero
2. Residents / Occupancy: We currently have 37 residents. We have quite a few enquiries that are always followed up within the first week, resulting in a number of respite admissions and permanent admissions; unfortunately, we have lost several residents as well.
Bookings for respite over the Christmas Period: 3 residents
3. Property / Environment:
Walled garden, wall has been repaired – Solar Panel area. Refurbishment to start in January, meeting held 22.11.2023 to discuss final preparation.
The gates to Mauchline garden – this work will be started today, where they will be removed and the groundwork will be started, Hopefully new gates will be in place by the middle of next week.
TV in Miles Lounge and Reception – Barry S is going to put together a DVD loaded with residents' photos, so visitors can see their relatives taking part in various events held.
Staff notice board is now in place to allow staff to look at shifts that need covering; this has worked really well, and has definitely helped decrease agency use. Training is advertised, as well as events for the staff to attend.
Wellbeing Board is now in place, displaying information for Breast Cancer, Prostate Cancer and Cervical Cancer, to make staff aware of self-checking your body for changes.
Wellbeing area – the visiting pod now has a garden area with fencing around to allow the staff to have their breaks outside.
Bedroom renovations, 5 bedrooms have now had a full refurbishment including the bathrooms; all offices have been decorated, as well as the entrance. Several bedrooms have also been decorated.
Caterplus: We have been with Caterplus since 22nd June. A meeting with residents was held, for them to be involved with the new menu. This pleased the residents, feeling like their opinion was taken into consideration, and they were allowed to make changes. Food is better quality with minimal complaints from residents.
Entertainment:
Jo Jingles have started coming monthly – this is a toddler group, who sing and dance along with the residents.
Monthly Almoner meetings continue. Gary Hostler and John Hardisty chaired the meeting with our gents, along with Nigel. The gents said it was very positive and are looking forward to the next one. I felt it was good for those that cannot attend meetings at a lodge. Our aim is to have these once a month.
Christmas entertainment: as well as Clearer Productions, we have a pantomime booked, Elf Day, Christmas Jumper Day, a visit to a Country Music gig in Witham, a Christmas party at Earls Colne Village Hall and staff talent show,

Thank you to you all for your help and support, it is much appreciated.

The Chairman, in turn, thanked Michelle for her comprehensive report and all her efforts on behalf of the residents.

It was noted that the Friends has been requested to pay for three special baths. Further details are being obtained.

Garden Party/Fete Report

Organiser Paul Palmer submitted the following: The tea/garden party went ahead as planned on Sunday 16th July 2023. With much relief, I'm delighted to report that it went perfectly well - better than expected in several aspects - even the sun put in a guest appearance. With the invitation list being deliberately restricted in this first post-pandemic year of the event's revival, we still had an estimated 150 attendees. This being made up of residents & their families, the home's staff, Craft & RA Provincial Executive and our Friends' committee & partners. The large marquee, tables, chairs, urns, and toilet Portakabin had all been delivered 1-2 days in advance. Likewise, all sundries and cream teas which I'd ordered and had delivered directly to the home into Michelle's safe keeping. Arriving on-site early-doors with a small army of volunteers of Provincial Grand Stewards (present and past), the setup of the marquee, tables, chairs, bar, cream teas and gazebos was swift. Each volunteer was allocated to a location with specific duties and a walkie-talkie. Guests started arriving a little early, but we were ready, and the whole operation passed off incredibly smoothly.

The PGM formally opened the event and the Bocking Brass Band struck up, playing a mixture of traditional and contemporary tunes. The Abba songs were particularly popular with the residents, and it was a sheer joy seeing many of them up and dancing with the staff. Our President's daughter then arrived with a car full of sandwich platters, having so kindly used her Costco card for the purchases. The band then took a break after their first hour-long set, and lunch was served inside the marquee, with all guests helping themselves to the free sandwiches, cream teas, hot and cold drinks and alcohol.

During the lunch break, singer Alan Reynolds kept everyone entertained outside, with the ice cream van and the "bowling for a pig" sideshow – all three elements arranged by Nigel. The ice cream van was very popular and, having tested it for quality (of course), I would recommend this returns in future years. The band then resumed for their second session, and the home staff circulated in the field and marquee selling raffle tickets. Once the band was finished, the raffle was drawn for 35 prizes and raised a sum in excess of £500. Additionally, although we did not charge for entry, lunch, or any drinks, we made a last-minute decision to place donation boxes both by the bar and the food. Lucky that we did, as we raised

roughly £600 in donations. I would definitely repeat the inclusion of donation boxes every year.

I also strongly recommend the Friends or volunteers take ownership of raffle tickets, moving forwards. Our experience of running these so frequently has maximised our efficiency in selling/folding/drawing etc. Given the large number of prizes, we ideally needed the raffle to conclude sooner than it did.

Logistics-wise:

Many guests provided feedback on how nice the toilets were, some commenting they were better than their own at home!

Regarding the tea urns, Crocs had left these on the grass the day before (albeit inside the marquee). As a consequence, ants found their way into one of these, so we couldn't use it, and this slowed down hot drink production. We did receive a discount however, so a lesson to learn for future as an additional delivery instruction.

Meanwhile, Colne Valley Marquees were extremely helpful. They did erect a second, smaller, marquee as a band weather shelter on the Saturday, before returning later to dismantle it due to the wind. They returned again on the Sunday morning to put it back up, but deemed it too windy. As such, they have offered a partial refund, which I am discussing with them.

The walkie-talkies were an absolute godsend, allowing me to co-ordinate all 10 volunteers effortlessly and to tackle any issues quickly. We now own eight of these for future use, which can be added to by buying more of the same if/when required.

The quality of the sandwiches from Costco was exceptional and, although it was a challenge to only be allowed to collect from midday on the same day, it would make sense [for the Friends] to purchase corporate Costco membership to give us more flexibility in future, and to repeat the huge savings we made.

Likewise, it was a lot more economical to bulk-buy scones, mini-jars of jam and clotted cream portions online, compared with prices offered by local bakers – and the quality was good.

My amazing team of volunteers worked tirelessly, from two hours pre-event to an hour after closure. Daniel Broyd supplied and ran the bar, while the following all deserve a special mention for covering all other locations and duties: Dean Richardson, Joe Curtis, Marc Spurrell, Mark Evans, Mark Jones, Mark Lawrence, Michael Dougall, Paul Williams, Richard Swan and Simon Harvey.

I would like to propose a token thank you gift (eg, a bottle of something) is considered for each, albeit considerably after the event. It would be a nice gesture of thanks, and encouragement to support us again in future years

We should record our sincere thanks to Peter Haycock, of Regency Hire, who donated use of the toilet cabin, entirely free of charge to help us get back

on our feet post-pandemic. This was extremely generous, especially as their largest unit has a hire value of more than £700.

The band was excellent, and secretary Gordon Hemingway was a pleasure to work with. He has already been in touch to ask if we intend to book the band next year, but this is currently undecided. I would personally use them again, but maybe after a few years' break. Not for any negative reason, but would be nice to give each year's event a unique element so people remember it distinctly (eg, "that was the year of the brass band").

Michelle made my life a lot easier, having safely stored all pre-ordered items in her office or cold store, confirming as each was received. This made reconciliation and setup on the day a breeze. She and her team were constantly on hand throughout the day, and there was no ask too big for them to assist with. I also want to record my personal thanks for Nigel for his ongoing tutelage, based on his past years' experience, valuable contact details for suppliers and for the singer/sideshow/ice cream van, all of which he arranged.

Moving forwards, we have agreed to run both the tea party and the garden party in future years. The tea party remaining invite-only for residents and families (as per this year), and the wider garden party for all freemasons, their friends and families, to be promoted to all lodges and chapters (as in former years) with tickets sold at £10 each. We will also get great economy from all hires (marquees, toilets, urns, etc). By having the two events back-to-back on the Saturday and Sunday of the same weekend, we will only incur one set of hire fees. In fact, Regency Toilets has already offered us 2024 hire for 50% off, which is unbeatable value (and we already know the quality).

Finally, we have onboarded Rob Vine to support the running of these events. Rob will take more of a leading role heading into the 2024 events. This is due to my Provincial commitments having increased with a recent promotion to ProvAGDC, so this takes up a lot of the spare time. Plus I am currently adjusting to a new medical regime (the details of which I won't bore you with). But I do hope to return to full capacity in time for the 2025 events, as I will once again be able to offer the time and energy this role deserves. Until then, I shall assist Rob as much as possible, don the straw boater I wore at this year's event and raise a glass to you all, grateful for all the support and encouragement you have and continue to provide.

It was proposed by BS and seconded by CD that a case of wine be purchased and bottles be presented to PP's volunteers (as named in the above report) as a token of thanks. This was agreed.

Election of Officers/Trustees

These Officers/Trustees were elected en bloc, nem con, to serve for the next year:

Chairman: Robert Whittingham
Secretary: David Badger
Treasurer: Graham Elvidge
Membership Secretary: Lloyd Harris
Almoner: Karine Oldacre
Residents Activities: Nigel Oldacre
Trustees: Clive Dunnico and Graham Larke

Declaration of Acceptance by Trustees.

Declarations were signed by all but Lloyd Harris & Graham Larke, who will sign at a future meeting of the Trustees.

Appointment of Auditors.

It was agreed that that Azets Audit Services (formerly Wilkins Kennedy LLP) of 1 Nelson Street, Southend-on-Sea, act as Auditors of the accounts for the next financial year.

Membership Officer's Report

LH had submitted the following:

In this reporting period, there are limited updates to share regarding new memberships.

Membership Status: The following figures cover the period from 2022 to 2023:

- Grand Patron: 29
- Grand Patron Deceased: 4
- Vice Patron: 16
- Vice Patron Deceased: 1
- Life Member: 44
- Life Members Deceased: 2
- Ordinary: 729

Bank Statements:

I kindly request the monthly bank statements to facilitate the update of pending payments. I am still awaiting the bank statements for the period 2021 to 2023.

Outreach and Membership Drive:

I have initiated a mailshot campaign targeting potential new members, reaching out to a total of 40 individuals. The membership documents have been included in the mailshot to facilitate a streamlined joining process.

In closing, I apologise for the brevity of this report. I extend my best wishes to you and your families for a joyful Christmas season.

GE agreed he would send LH the statements he had requested.

Any other Business.

It was agreed that Rob Vine be co-opted to the Trustees committee to act as Fete/Garden Party organiser.

It was agreed to try and revive the Newsletter to help

the members of the Association stay up to date with events at the Home. DB will produce some examples. DB will update the contact list for the Trustees and also prepare a new membership brochure.

It was noted that Nevson Smith of the RMBI had advised of the installation of a number of solar panels at the Home. There were queries over the location of the storage batteries. BS would contact the RMBI.

GE reported on the Association of Friends conference he had attended at Gt Queen Street. He said the RMBI had requested Zoom meetings with Chairs and Presidents to provide updates. Cornwallis home's Friends had apparently spent around £100,000 on a garden only to see it demolished as part of an RMBI redevelopment some six months later. GE said there was a general feeling that the Friends associations were not being kept up to date with RMBI plans for redevelopments. It had been confirmed by the RMBI at the conference that it would only undertake one home redevelopment at a time.

Information on a special chair Michelle had requested had been circulated among the Trustees and it was agreed this should be purchased. This could be funded via the £2,500 from Haven Lodge.

It was also noted that from the £1,000 donation from Imperial Cadet Lodge, being held for special purchases, it might be useful to the residents in Mauchline to buy some patio heaters for the outdoor area.

GE noted that the small minibus had accumulated 10 years' depreciation and would need replacing. It was noted that £25,000 has been ringfenced for this purpose.

Date of the next AGM.

Wednesday 20th November 2024 at 11am. Date and revised time also to be publicised via the Provincial 2nd Rising download.

The meeting closed at 4pm

Signed _____

Date _____