ANNUAL REPORT OF NAUNTON DOVECOTE TRUST TO THE NAUNTON PARISH COUNCIL

15 May 2023

There has not been a great deal of activity by the Naunton Dovecote Trust during the last 12 months.

However, on 16 July 2022 we held a Village Picnic with Duck Racing. The weather was furiously hot and we erected as many gazebos and marquees as we could to protect visitors from the sun. Considering the heat, the afternoon was well attended.

Ducks had been sponsored in advance for the first race – the Grand Jubilee Duck Race, the proceeds of which went to G.A.R.A.S. a charity in Gloucester which helps (in this case by request) Ukranian refugees placed locally. £925 was sent to them.

The second Race, the Arthur Mitchell Memorial Duck Race and a third Race were held in aid of the local Food Bank raising £293.50 plus a donation of £30. The Bar proceeds were also sent to the Food Bank – a total of £593.97 in all.

These sums were raised for other charities as the Dovecote Trust was well funded at the time and not raising money for a specific Dovecote project. It was made plain in advance that the monies would go to these other charities.

There having been a long gap since the last event at the Dovecote, several visitors commented on how they had forgotten what a lovely venue it was and hoped that we would do it again. We have planned a similar event for this summer 23rd July 2023.

A performance by the ‘Rain or Shine’ travelling theatre group was held on August Bank Holiday weekend.

20th Edition of ‘Dovetales’ our newsletter was published and distributed to Friends in January 2023. The main features related to the encouragement of wildlife at the site, particularly otters if possible as evidence of these as visitors has been found in the past. Confirmation that this is the case was received a couple of months later when a young, dead otter was found on the back path. We believe it had suffered an accident, but the good news is that these creatures are indeed visiting our part of the river.

Donna Renney (nee Hanks) has unfortunately moved away from the village and has therefore resigned as a Trustee. She has been involved as a Trustee since 1999 and was in charge of the restoration work at the Dovecote at that time. As a professional fund-raiser, she was invaluable to us in raising the monies needed to buy and restore the building.

Following the publication of ‘Dovetales’ we have been trying to enlist new ‘Friends’ of the Naunton Dovecote Trust both within and outside the village. There are quite a few newcomers who have been approached and we have managed to enlist a further 16 ‘Friends’ recently. Their annual subscriptions of £25 and upwards are, together with rents for the Units and the donation box, the basic income which covers the normal running costs of the site so we need to keep encouraging new supporters when existing ones die or move away from the village and cancel their subscription.

Little progress has been made on our next project to bring mains water to the stable block and convert the Unit nearest the entrance to a small kitchen area, disabled W.C. and storage unit at the rear. Permissions are all in place so this can proceed as soon as a suitable contractor can be found at a reasonable cost and some points regarding Building Regulations have been clarified.

The two gates between the ‘farmyard’ area and the outer grassed area by the river and to the west of the Dovecote buildings had become very shabby and it was decided to replace these. Ian Hanks suggested that we use ‘Cotswold’ gates and, as these seemed very appropriate to the Dovecote’s agricultural setting and look handsome enough to match the Grade II\* listing, the Trustees commissioned a local firm to fabricate these gates, one of which has already been hung. Mrs Charlotte Heber-Percy of Eyford House has kindly sponsored these gates in memory of her daughter, Serena Prest, who had long standing connections with Naunton.

This purchase reflects the Trustees’ wish to enhance the site without moving away from the farmyard/agricultural history of the building and its surrounding features. We hope that this is what our supporters in the village and further afield wish us to do.

The Trust is reasonably well funded at the moment due in part to various generous donations, legacies and grants and a build-up of normal income during the COVID period when no major projects have been undertaken. We are hoping that this will mean that we will have nearly sufficient funds in hand when our next major project has been finalized without having to recourse to serious fund raising in these rather turbulent financial circumstances.

P. A. Hanks

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