

20 THINGS YOU DIDNT KNOW ABOUT TRUSTEES

by Yvonne Rowe, with help from Peter Matthews, Malcolm Cotter and Martin Rowe

Why is there a sudden interest amongst members, in the role of the Trustees? At the last AGM, two related issues were discussed which appeared to be the concern of the Trustees. One was the issue of the level of cottage fees and whether the Group could afford to reduce, or even abolish, fees. The other question was how the Group could ensure that its surplus funds keep their value in future years.

Who are the Trustees and why do we need them - can't we get rid of them? The Trustees are Malcolm Cotter, Peter Matthews, Ron Saunders and Pat Walsh. There are several reasons why the Group needs Trustees, but the simplest is that we are legally required to do so. Briefly, the Trustees were appointed i) to enable the Group to register as a charity at law and ii) to purchase the freehold of the present cottage. The Constitution assures that the Group must always remain a charity and have Trustees. The Group cannot change this position.

What do the Trustees do - after all we already have a Committee to do things? Firstly, the Trustees hold the assets of the Group. Secondly, they ensure that the Group complies with its charitable status and does nothing to change this position. Should the Group ever become defunct, then their most important role would be to wind up the Group and dispose of its assets. At this stage we probably wouldn't have a Committee. Broadly, the assets can only go to another charity; any remaining members cannot benefit from the situation.

That seems hardly fair? One must remember that the Group has enjoyed enormous tax advantages, rate relief, grant aid etc over the years and would not have much to show without the benefit of charitable status.

What influence do the Trustees have? Do the Trustees have any power if, say, a future Committee steps out of line in compliance of our charitable status? The Trustees have no influence, the Group is administered by the Committee, elected for that purpose. However, they would be obliged to inform the Charity Commissioners if the Committee acts improperly. In serious cases, Trustees may take the Committee to court.

Why not have more active members as Trustees? Why not, but would there be any advantage? The Trustees are only interested in the long term interests of the Group. The Group needs Trustees that will continue to be available and can be relied upon. Our "junior" Trustee has over 20 years membership, another is a founder member - where will you be in 20 years time?

Going back to the AGM, what did the Trustees decide about cottage fees, and investing the Groups funds? The Trustees thought that cottage fees were outside their province. It was thought that the Trustees were the appropriate holding body for invested funds. The Constitution is rather ambiguous eg. "the property of the Group (other than cash which shall be under the control of the Treasurer) shall be vested in them (the Trustees)...". Minor modification of the Constitution may clarify this.

How much surplus money does the Group have, and how should it be invested? How will the investment be controlled? About £5000 is available for investment. The Trustees advised that £4000 should be invested in the Growth Fund of the Charities Official Investment Fund and £1000 in M&G Recovery Fund. Investment should be in the names of the four Trustees who would hold funds under direction of the Committee or a general meeting. Funds would be released on demand of the Committee unless unconstitutional purposes were suspected when the Charity Commissioners could be brought in.

What else could the Group do with its funds? As a charity we can support other charities, offer bursaries, waive subscriptions in cases of hardship eg. students. We could have special terms for retired members. All should be encouraged. Some alteration of the Constitution may be needed. Special funds can be set up to support purposes such as cave entry protection, expeditions etc. These funds may not necessarily be funded from central resources but could come from donations, legacies and bequests.

Do the Committee agree with the Trustees? Yes, the Committee has agreed to put £4000 in Charity Trust. The Committee agreed that the money should be split, ie. not all in one fund. They will continue review the idea of £1000 in a Unit Trust and report back.

STOP PRESS: Members may have noticed that Phil Ingold was not at the half yearly meeting and barn dance. This was due to an illness affecting his leg muscles. We wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing, and hearing, from him soon. YR.

ON THE MOVE

Vanessa Gill and Mark Buck have moved to: Everick House, 2 Dursley Road, Cambridge, Glos., GL7 7AG

William Headington has moved to: 69 Cambourne Ave, West Ealing, London, W13 9QZ
Tele: 01-566-1487

PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

The following applications for probationary membership have been received:

Steve Albino, 69 Cambourne Ave, West Ealing, London, W13 9QZ
Tele: 01-566-1487
Proposed by: G. Lister, M. Cotter

Richard Whittington, 27 Lyvedon Way, Long Ashton, Bristol, BS18 9ND
Tele: 0272-392751
Proposed by: J. Crowsley, V. Gill

CONGRATULATIONS...

...to Kathy and Dave Baxter on the birth of Michael (Mikey) on 11.08.89, weighing 6lb 13oz ...to Helen and John Miriam on the birth of Katie Louise on 22.07.89, weighing 6lb 12oz ...to Joy and Paul Merron on the birth of Emily Victoria on 31.08.89, weighing 7lb 2.5oz ...and to Kate and Steve Taylor on the birth of Benjamin George on 08.08.89, weighing 6lb 14oz

FIRST AID FOR CAVERS

MRD are planning a series of First Aid courses, open to all. The intention is to have monthly meetings from November. The first is arranged for 7.30pm 04.11.89 in the longroom of the Hunters. Contact Vince Simmonds (0761-221552), MCG Rescue Warden, for more details.

LONGHOOD/RHINO LOCKS

...have been changed. The new key will fit either padlock. An ammo box has been fitted inside each entrance and eventually this will hold a tin of WD40 for regular application. Replacement keys from CCC will cost £10. It is suggested that a £10 deposit be taken when lending these keys to visitors.

RESERVATIONS...

...for dinner on 02.12.89 at The Restaurant At The End Of The Universe, Daren Cilau, are now being taken. Details from Vince Simmonds, again.

NEW COTTAGE KEYS

The committee have decided to change the locks to the cottage, the library and the tackle store with effect from 31st January 1990. The new key will be available to members from 01.01.90 only on receipt of the appropriate annual subscription. This will also have the advantage of bringing subscriptions in early! Details of how to obtain the new key will be published in the next newsletter (November '89).

MCG AGM AND DINNER

The Annual General Meeting of the MCG will be held at 10.30am on Saturday 31.03.90 in the longroom of the Hunters Lodge and will finish no later than 1.30pm. Nominations for office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules shall reach the Secretary at least 21 days before the meeting. The committee may grant a postal vote to any member who applies in good time to the Secretary.

The annual dinner and entertainment will be at the Webbington Hotel, Loxton, Axbridge, Somerset on 31.03.90. The cost is likely to be £11-£13, price and menu to be finalised. There will be a coach from the cottage to the Webbington, returning 1am.

For those wishing to stay at the Webbington (Tel: 0934-750100), there is a special rate of £23 per person for bed and breakfast, which allows the use of: gym, swimming pool, snooker, sauna, solarium. If you book, mention that you are from the MCG attending the function.

MCG SURVEYING GEAR

With a Journal planned and new discoveries to survey, the committee would like to know where the MCG surveying equipment was left for safe keeping. All information (in confidence) to the secretary.