



Oxen Park Reading Room: Minutes of 2026 AGM

Monday 27th April 2026, 7pm

Attendees:

Committee: Clare Farnworth (Chair), Mandy Lane (Secretary), Lynn Sly (Treasurer),
Carol McNeill

Others: Colin Barr, Rachel Hauser, Christine Jackson, Tamsin Kidwell, David Kidwell, Peter VanHinsbergh, Zella Slater, Bronwen Still, John Watson

1. **Apologies:** Sarah Emslie, Rick Emslie, David Jackson, Margaret Postlethwaite

2. **Minutes from last meeting:** Approved.

3. Chairman's Welcome

Clare welcomed everyone to the meeting. She thanked the Committee and all the friends of the Reading Room for their support over the past year, with help and expertise, running events, joining the lottery, and fund-raising.

4. Secretary's report

Mandy reported on the period since the last AGM (April 2025); the report is attached to these minutes.

5. Treasurer's report

Lynn presented the annual accounts; the report is attached to these minutes. The bank balance was currently £16,250.87 (plus £399.63 in petty cash). The Chairman signed the bank statement. The balance sheet for the year showed a profit of £729, which was a reassuring second year of profit after the significant losses in 2023/24. A new community bank account with HSBC had been set up this year without monthly bank charges. The Committee and the community were thanked for their efforts.

It was acknowledged that the OPRR now had a very healthy bank balance (some of which was due to the government's COVID-19 grant) and that some of these funds should be put into a savings account to generate some interest. ACTION: Treasurer

6. Election of officers for the year 2026/27

There remained a vacancy on the Committee. Mr Peter VanHinsbergh was elected as a new member (nominated by Colin Barr, seconded by Lynn Sly). The remaining members were elected unanimously en-bloc for 2026/27: Clare Farnworth (Chairman), Mandy Lane (Secretary), Lynn Sly (Treasurer), Sarah Emslie, Carol McNeill and Margaret Postlethwaite.

The Secretary acknowledged the contribution of past Committee member, Sheila Rotherham, who had sadly passed away. She and her husband John had helped enormously with the hall refurbishment, for which everyone was very grateful.



7. Hire Charges for 2026/27

After discussion, it was agreed that formal hire charges would remain as last year - per session (morning, afternoon, evening):

- Organisations/private hire: £20
- Local residents of Oxen Park and Bandrake Head private hire: £15
- For one hour hire only: £6.

Joint local community events would continue to ask for donations of £1 per person to cover electricity costs and the Winter Quiz evenings £2.50 per person. There was some discussion about whether charges were made for setting-up time. At the moment, this was discretionary; the Committee would try to monitor this over the year.

8. OPRR Lottery Draw for 2026

The first prize-winner (£50) was won by Annie Shaw, and the second prize (£25) by Colin Barr. More lottery subscribers would be very welcome and all were asked if possible to pay by Standing Order to reduce the work-load on the Treasurer having to chase payments. Standing order information is available from Lynn or in the Reading Room.

9. Fund-raising

The Secretary reminded the meeting that the Reading Room needed about £1K per year just to maintain it, to pay for insurance, water rates, electricity standing charge and H&S issues like fire extinguisher checks. The success of all the fund-raising efforts during the year had meant that the Room had again ended the year in profit, rather than eating into capital reserves, which represented a great community effort.

All were in favour of a re-run of 'JARFEST' this year, now that the format had been established, although it was felt that related activities either in the hall or the surrounding area would attract more people. Colin Barr agreed to take the lead in organising again. Winter talks at the Cinema and winter quizzes were always popular.

Other event ideas (fund-raising or community) were as follows:

- Walks: Guided Greenwood Trails, Archaeology, Fungal foray, Short fell-race
- Hosting a meal by a local chef
- Another Pie 'n Peas night with table quiz
- BBQ in the summer
- Farming open day?
- Doggy fun-day

It was felt that an event of some kind should be held quarterly. The Committee would consult on these ideas soon.

10. Open Forum/AOB

- Induction Loop: The Committee would discuss this with Christine Jackson to assess how helpful it might be to install. ACTION: ML/CJ
- Lawn-mowing: Colin Barr offered to organise the lawn-mowing rota. ACTION: CJB

The meeting closed at 8.14 pm.



OPRR Secretary's Report – AGM 27th April 2026

The Reading Room continues to be used for local events and meetings as follows:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 Colton PC Meetings• 3 WI Meetings• 3 Private Events• 1 Fund-raising event ('JARFEST')• 4 Winter Quizzes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 Cumbria Wildlife Trust Rusland Local Support Group events• 2 Community Events (Winter Picnic, Burns Night)• Table-tennis and Cake! Sat mornings
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Hiring the hall: the website now includes a 'live' calendar so people can check if the hall is free for booking. Go to <https://oprr.org.uk/hire/>.

Fund-raising:

- 'JARFEST'! - a new venture for an autumn celebration raised over £500 for the hall, through entry funds, tea and cakes and a raffle with some very generous prizes from local people and businesses. Despite the torrential rain, the event seemed to be much enjoyed by all who came. We should acknowledge that it represented a huge effort by the 'friends of OPRR', for which the Committee is very grateful.
- Eight winter talks at the Cinema organised by Committee member Carol McNeill, raising £425 in total (£225 of this will appear in the 2026/27 accounts). Our thanks go to the Cinema Club for their reduced hiring fee.
- Winter quizzes: Four Colin Barr 'specials' which are always much enjoyed. We were prompted to raise the entry to £2.50 pp this year which all helps to keep the hall viable.
- Sale of the 3 school benches raised £150 – many thanks to our Treasurer for organising this via 'Seek and Sell'.

Electricity costs are always a concern, but the Committee did negotiate a very good fixed price (which lasts until December this year) with help from ACT and 'Utility-Aid'. Our Treasurer has changed the bank account to a 'community' account with HSBC, which has no monthly bank charges. Cheques are still charged for, so hall hire needs to be paid for via BACS or cash where possible. Various Health and Safety requirements and checks are 'on-track'. However, please do report anything that looks concerning to the Secretary or a member of the Committee. We are grateful to Adam Jackson for doing the PAT testing free of charge for us.

The front door step was re-modelled and a new slate step put in to make the threshold a lot safer. We are grateful to Colton Parish Council for a partial grant for this.

Very sadly, we lost our fellow committee member and friend to all of us, Sheila Rotherham this year. We are grateful for all of her efforts and those of her husband John over the years with the refurbishment of the hall.

Many thanks to the 'Friends of OPRR' volunteers once again for looking after the hall and surrounding area, and organising community events. This support for the Committee makes it possible to keep the hall running and the costs as low as possible. Fund-raising events make a big difference to whether we keep our finances 'in the black', so as ever your ideas are very welcome.

Mandy Lane, OPRR Secretary



TREASURE'S REPORT 2025/2026

BANK BALANCE £16,250.87 AND WE HAVE £399.63 IN PETTY CASH – BOTH UP FROM LAST YEAR

MAIN ITEMS OF INCOME HAVE BEEN:

- **£1436 RAISED BY COMMUNITY EVENTS SUCH BURNS NIGHT AND INCLUDES £200 FROM THE CINEMA TALKS**
- **£420 RAISED BY OUR LOTTERY - THANK YOU TO ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BOUGHT ADDITIONAL NUMBERS AND THE NEW PEOPLE WHO HAVE JOINED**
- **£206 RECEIVED FROM PARKING AND SALE OF MAPS – THIS REMAINS A SIMILAR FIGURE YEAR ON YEAR**
- **£190 IN ROOM HIRE – THIS IS UP ON LAST YEAR**
- **£150 FROM SALE OF BENCHES**
- **£120 GRANT FROM COLTON PARISH COUNCIL TO HELP COVER THE COST OF REPAIRS TO THE BACK ENTRANCE STEPS**

GENERAL EXPENSES ARE DOWN AGAIN THIS YEAR

- **WATER RATES AND INSURANCE HAVE INCREASED BUT NOT BY THAT MUCH COMPARED TO LAST YEAR**
- **OUR ELECTRIC IS LESS THAN LAST YEAR BY ALMOST £150. WE CHANGED TO CHEAPER SUPPLIERS LAST YEAR**

OUR PROFIT IS SLIGHTLY UP ON LAST YEAR