

Friends of Soqotra

Third Annual General Meeting

Sunday 21 September 2004

Commonwealth Hall, University of London

MINUTES

Present: John Farrar, Francine Stone, Kay Van Damme, Peter De Geest, Robert Guesten, Wolfgang Schneider, Wolfgang Wranik, Friedhelm Krupp, Hugh Morris, Miranda Morris, Rebecca Klaus, Edoardo Zandri, Martin Corrie, John Dickson, Ben Lawton, John Shipman, Andrew Kembell, Neil Oakman, Roderic Dutton, Sue Christie, Peter Land, Andrea, Rowan Salim, Michael Gwynne.

1. Apologies: Richard Porter, Sandy and Morag Smith, Lorraine King, Nick and Sue Morris, Phil Haines, Ed Milner, Tony Miller.

2. Minutes of the Second AGM, 21 September 2003. Approved.

3. Matters Arising. None raised.

4. Annual Report 2003 – 2004. Activities were summarised and the report approved by those present.

5. Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts. The annual accounts were presented and show the organisation to be in net £3257 which is an increase over the year of £800. This is from membership and some donations, including for the Sewing Machine project. Due to fluctuating exchange rates it was agreed that the USA rate should be increased to \$40 as a closer approximation of the UK rate and the higher cost of servicing.

6. Election of Executive Committee and Officers. Due to the Constitutional limit of any person holding one office for three years, the Secretary and Treasurer must retire. They were thanked for all their work. John Dickson was proposed (Sue) and Seconded (Wolfgang W) as Secretary. John Farrar was proposed (Neil) and seconded (Miranda) as Treasurer. Roderic (Sue, John F) and Miranda (Neil, Francine) were confirmed in their respective roles as Chair and Vice Chair. Rebecca is retiring from the Executive. Two new nominations were made to the Executive; Martin Corrie (Sue) and Nick Jeffries (Miranda). All present affirmed their support for the proposed Officers and Executive Committee.

7. Appointment and Remuneration of Auditors. Lynne O'Connor, the Accountant at Beales Hotel has been auditing, and is thanked for her efforts and will be provided with a basket of Aloe products in appreciation. A new auditor will be sought in proximity to the new Treasurer.

8. RBGE Exhibition. See notes below.

9. Other Projects and Activities.

- a. Sewing Machine Project. The funding will be provided by FoS but it will be integrated with the Women's Development Programme group. This is a pilot exercise, and will investigate the mechanisms by which we can

work symbiotically with SCF; if successful FoS could raise money for other projects.

- b. Marketing of Soqotran Products. SCF/SCDP is developing a line of approximately 10 products and looking into marketing them in 'equitable markets' groups. They could be marketed at the Exhibition, and FoS members can look into local marketing e.g. through Fair Trade shops. We can also help with e.g. labels and other aspects of marketing. Miranda will meet with them to discuss co-operative working when she visits in October – December.
- c. We should 'label' FoS donated materials (e.g. sewing machines. We should see about producing 'permanent' labels for donated goods.

10. Any Other Business

- a. Late September to early Oct 2005 there will be a workshop on Biogeography of Soqotra, bringing all scientists with an interest in biogeography and paleogeography together in Senckenberg. FoS is delighted to be able to help in this by identifying appropriate people, publicising it, etc. The conference will be purely scientific, but will hopefully give an impetus to biodiversity conservation.
- b. BRISMAS Conference, Durham 12 – 16 September. They are interested in having a Soqotra Session/day. This will be followed up.
- c. Soqotra – Man and Environment – Conference 19 April in Belgium, invited speakers and published papers. Kay and Peter main contacts.

11. Date of Next Meeting. Approximately September of 2005, perhaps around the time of the BRISMAS conference or marking the end of the Exhibition.

RBGE Soqotra Exhibition Discussion

Following the formal end of the AGM a discussion was held about the RBGE Exhibition. The current situation was summarised by Roderic.

The Soqotra exhibition will be the major in house exhibiton for RBGE in 2005. They have a design team in the garden, and have proposed some concepts to the Steering group, consisting of four 'partner' organisations of which FoS is one (BYS, SCF and Yemeni British Friendship Association being the others). The next meeting of the groups will be 18 October when we hope to see some concrete design ideas and good progress. The Exhibition will emphasise inspiring people, with literature to support the Exhibition. The idea will be that certain 'stories' will be developed which exemplify the three main themes (emphasising their inter-relationships). It is still the aim to have the Exhibition travel after its time in Edinburgh is finished, and that there will be supplementary events to accompany/amplify the Exhibition.

A number of points were raised in deiscussion:

- The museum in Leipzig has a good collection of people and culture – contact Lothar Stein.
- The exhibition may have '2 parts ' – one of which can be easily travelled, the other specific to RBGE.

- Reproductions – animals, fish traps, can be very costly and take time to produce.
- Where do things that are donated for the Exhibition go after?
- A new museum in Darmstadt will have a diorama on Soqotra.
- Well- done casts of invertebrates are preferable to paintings/pictures.
- Beware of Kitch!!
- Beware of designer taking over, losing science.
- Include archaeology – houri story (Julian)
- Timescale ludicrous!
- Must be high quality.
- People need to know what of their time and materials will be required now!
- Maybe just do one thing (Aloes) but do it brilliantly.
- Given time – either broad and shallow or narrow and deep – can't do it all.
- Modular? Do some now, some later.

Discussion then shifted to the difficulties of putting on such an exhibition. RBGE can't put it on without us, and the Members stated that they feel the timescale is very short; if action is not forthcoming on design specifics then FoS cannot be involved. Either a smaller exhibition in 2005 or a delay to 2006 are options. It would be worse to have an Exhibition that says the wrong things or doesn't give the right impression than NO exhibition. FoS must be in control, not a designer who has not visited the island.

These thoughts were consigned to the FoS reps on the Steering Group to use to ensure that either the Exhibition is right or is delayed.