

## **RHSO (Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard)**

### **Minutes from the AGM**

**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2020 @ 20.00**

#### **Sawbridgeworth Library**

1. **Welcome** – Ruth welcomed everyone and explained the format of the meeting. Present were, Eric, Dave, Rob, Lanier and Steve and Officers Ruth, Hazel & Nickie
2. **Apologies** were received from Adrienne, Robinne, Geoff, Jude, Eugene and Neil
3. **Minutes from last year** – approval of these was proposed by Eric, and agreed by all present
4. **Chairs report** – Ruth gave an interesting account covering the purpose of the group and the events that the volunteers and community supported. She included how RHSO thanked the committee and volunteers. A copy of the report is included in the appendix
5. **Maintenance Report** – Rob, on behalf of Adrienne, gave a detailed and very interesting report including the programme of maintenance and how this was impacting favourably on the different varieties found in the orchard. He also talked about the volunteers saying that we had good support in general but we would like to try and encourage more interest. A copy of the report can be found in the appendix. We extended our thanks to Adrienne for her support
6. **Treasurer's report** – Hazel explained the balance sheet which had been checked and verified on 18/02/2020 by Jeremy Dickson FCA. The balance at the end of December 2019 stood at £2852.70 plus a cash float of £50. Which is a £241.69 less than last year but it was noted that we had purchased significant equipment including lights for the Wassail this year. It was noted that the Council do the grass cutting which we hope will continue, but that we should aim to ensure we raise sufficient to cover this as it's not guaranteed. Juice sales at Full of Beans is very successful and all present extended thanks to Trula for all she does. The sale of books continues to be successful and thanks extended to Elizabeth Waugh. We also acknowledged the significant support gained from the grants which Hazel had achieved and thanked Hertfordshire County Council, and Stansted Airport. A summary of the signed accounts is in the appendix with the full accounts available on the website. A vote of thanks was extended to Jeremy Dickson and Trula of Full of Beans and Elizabeth Waugh and was agreed wholeheartedly by all present.
7. **Election of Officers** – All three Officers are happy to stand again and were re-elected:  
Chair (Ruth), Proposed by Lanier & seconded by Dave  
Treasurer (Hazel), proposed by Ruth & seconded by Rob  
Secretary (Nickie), proposed by Eric & seconded by Rob
8. **AOB**  
A discussion on who would be best placed to be our Welfare Officer resulted in Eric Buckmaster being nominated by Ruth and seconded by Rob. Nickie will update the Approved Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy Statement and Rob will put it on the Website .  
Rob talked about the significant contribution which had been made by Elisabeth Crafer and a vote of thanks was expressed and supported by all.

**Ruth concluded by thanking those present for attending and closed the meeting at 2036**

## Appendix

### Chairs Report - Ruth

Ruth welcomed everyone here and thanked them for attending our AGM. Our last AGM was in April of last year (2019) and here is a report of our activities since then. The purpose of the Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard Group is to both maintain and raise awareness of the site of the last remaining part of the historic Thomas Rivers Orchard. The group has access to the site with the permission of the land owner Deville Estates. The volunteers meet on the first Sunday of each month to undertake general maintenance tasks and hold two main events each year Apple Day and Wassail. For Apple Day we invite the community to join us to help pick the apples, some of which they keep, and the surplus is sent for juicing. Wassail is a traditional community event which includes music and singing and a 'blessing' of the trees in anticipation of a good harvest in the coming year. This year's Apple Day was very well attended with many families and people coming to help pick the fruit. We sold out of Apple juice and all the cakes. We had a better harvest this year and had already had an early picking when we had enough fruit for 120 bottles of juice. Together with the late harvest of over 900 bottles we have a lot of juice to sell. This is always a very good community Day. Our Wassail was a fantastic event with probably about 200-300 people attending. The weather was good on the night but had been very wet the week leading up to it leaving it rather muddy underfoot. Again, we were entertained admirably by the Ukes of Hazard, and Zoe leading the wassail songs. This event has grown each year and continues to be a success.

Our juice is sold year-round by Full of Beans health shop, and we thank Trula for that. We also sell the juice at stalls on Bell St, Christmas lights switch on and at High Wych Scarecrow Festival.

All this takes time and effort and we thank everyone who has helped us in any shape or form. But the real work is in maintaining the Orchard which the volunteers take on each month. Without them there would not be an Orchard so for everyone who works in the Orchard I would like to thank each and everyone of them in keeping the Orchard alive.

### Maintenance Report 2019 – 2020 – Adrienne (read by Rob in her absence)

The Orchard continues in general to thrive, although weather conditions and certain mammals are having an effect on tree development. Warmer winters restrict the heavy pruning of apple and pear trees to no later than early February at present. We may have to resurrect a January maintenance day to cover all this pruning.

There is evidence of increased rabbit activity in the Orchard and this January evidence of their gnawing of both young and old apple trees that has not been seen for many years.

There is no evidence of Muntjac damage despite increased sightings of them in the area, but there may be evidence of vole/mice damage to some younger apple trees.

A spell of very dry weather late winter and spring had an effect on the younger trees. More watering may be required in future.

In August we had a visit from two fruit experts, Peter Laws and Paul Read. Paul Read set up traps in the Orchard to a) monitor in general the insect life around the trees and b) a pheromone trap to see if we had a Noble Chafer. Paul explained the importance to the site if this insect was found to be here. No evidence at present.

The Orchards East Project is continuing to run free courses on a wide range of issues concerning orchards which any member can attend. In January Rob and Adrienne attended an Orchard Management Course and following this Rob has prepared an Orchard Management Plan for the future.

**Apples:** This winter we tackled primary pruning of the Newton Wonders, Monarchs and other larger trees at the north end of the Orchard. The fact many of our members have been on the free courses

meant we tackled this challenge far more quickly and efficiently than before. All younger trees have been pruned but only a few of the other established trees been dealt with due to warm conditions.

In January rabbit damage meant we had to quickly erect guards around a lot of trees that we would not have felt needed protection. Bob Lever informed us that rabbits usually only attack apple trees and leaving freshly pruned apple branches in a nearby location may distract them from attacking the main trees. This is particularly relevant in frosty periods. We have adopted this practise.

We continue to believe our membraning policy, on the whole, is a success. However, late September, after the annual grass cut, we observed small damage at base of some young guarded, membraned trees. Expert opinion thought this was possibly voles/mice. We are going to review membrane policy and may experiment with some alternatives. Also, this year, after annual grass cut, we noticed many guards damaged at low level and volunteers quickly put another half-height guard layer around these trees. Unsure if this was strimmer or animal damage.

Apple crop was good this year.

**Pears:** Little has been done with pruning the established trees. However, the younger trees have been pruned, membraned and guarded. It is our intention to membrane some of the more established trees that are on dwarfing root stock in the hope of improving their condition. However, 2019 saw a reasonable crop of pears. Three young pear trees were damaged beyond saving.

**Plums:** Younger plums fed and look in good condition. Expert opinion was sought for larger trees. It is recommended we do not tackle this pruning ourselves, but look at cost of expert help.

**Cherries:** Little done with cherries this year. Older trees appear in good shape from radical pruning in 2018. Younger cherry trees suffered from lack of rainfall this year. Will consider watering these if suffer a long spell of dry weather.

**Meadow:** The trees on the row nearest the hedge continue to suffer due to the height of the hedge and presence of large trees. In 2019 we continued to cut back and reduce height of hedge as much as possible. The hedge near these trees includes at least one large sycamore that is too large for volunteers to handle.

**Other maintenance:** From April to September volunteers maintained the paths within the Orchard ourselves.

Ditches not tackled this year, but will be on the agenda for 2020.

**Volunteer Support:** We have a few new members this year to add to the regular maintenance day turn out. Attendance on such days range from 6 – 15, with an average of 9. An increase from last year. Many thanks to all those who help to maintain this site for its heritage value and for the community.

**Plan for next year** is to help shape trees, experiment with trying to encourage growth of younger trees, adding to Orchard stock and to look at cost of employing experts to tackle our large plum trees.

# RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Year ended 31 December 2019

	Notes	2019 £p	2018 £p
<b>INCOME</b>	2		
Sales of Apple Juice through Full of Beans		510.00	
Sales of apple juice, less associated costs, at:			
Wassail	3	(93.00)	
May Fayre	4	246.80	
St James Church High Wych Scarecrow Restival	5	405.90	
Allotment Show	6	69.00	
Apple Day	7	156.08	
Lights on Event	8	215.00	
Bell Street	9	212.00	
Grants			
Hertfordshire County Council Locality Budget		300.00	
Stansted Airport for equipment purchases		420.00	
Sales of books		112.50	
Insurance claim for loss of equipment in fire		961.98	
Income from lecture to another Society		60.00	
Building Society interest		7.75	
		<b>3,584.01</b>	
<b>EXPENDITURE other than that included above, deducted from income, and shown in the notes)</b>			
Apple juice processing and bottling		1,875.36	
Equipment			
Replacement of equipment lost in fire and other additions		1,613.43	
Orchard seat		237.60	
Public liability insurance		99.31	
		<b>3,825.70</b>	
<b>EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME</b> (2018, excess of income over expenditure)		<b>(241.69)</b>	906.09
General Fund, brought forward		3,144.39	2,238.30
General Fund, carried forward		<b>2,902.70</b>	<b>3,144.39</b>