

RHSO (Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard)

Minutes from the AGM

Wednesday 15th February 2023 @ 19.30

Sawbridgeworth Library

1. **Welcome** – Ruth welcomed everyone and explained the format of the meeting, explaining that she was glad we were all able to meet in person.
Present were: Eric, Dave, Adrienne, Colin, Steve R, Elizabeth W, Cherith and Officers Ruth, Hazel & Nickie
2. **Apologies** were received from Rob, Robinne, Monique, Geoff and Lanier
3. **Minutes from last year** – approval of these was proposed by David, seconded by Adrienne and agreed by all present.
4. **Matters Arising not covered elsewhere** – Elizabeth W discussed the archiving of Rivers material which are currently stored at the Council building but are not easily accessible. The possibility of keeping a copy in the Library for use by the general public was discussed and Ruth will take the proposal to the Library Committee as if it were accessible in the reference section the public would be able to view it. Funding could be explored to pay for copies thus preserving the archive material with the Council.
Equipment storage was bought up and the possibility that we may need to find storage for juice as well as equipment as the current storage in the Memorial Hall is only on a favour basis and limited. If we did have a container it would need to be insulated,
5. **Chairs report** – Ruth gave an interesting account covering the purpose of the group and the events that the volunteers and community supported. This included Apple Day, Wassail & the numerous juice selling opportunities. She included how RHSO thanked the committee and volunteers (both active volunteers caring for the trees & those who did other tasks in support of the Orchard and gave special thanks to Trula for the Apple Juice sales. Ruth concluded by briefly talking about how we aim to run 3 events for the community a year. A copy of the report is included in the appendix
6. **Maintenance Report** – Adrienne gave a detailed and very interesting report including the programme of maintenance and the unpredictability of the weather. She talked about how we had shelved the idea of getting expert advice and how we had focused on restorative and regenerative work. She explained the management of young trees and our plans for the coming year. She also talked about the volunteers saying that we had good support with about 10 – 12 volunteers turning out on a regular basis. A copy of the report can be found in the appendix. We extended our thanks to Adrienne for her support
7. **Treasurer's report** – Hazel explained the balance sheet which had been checked and verified by Jeremy Dickson FCA. The balance at the end of December 2022 stood at £3287.21 which is £325.26 down on last year, mainly owing to the higher cost of juice and how we had purchased more equipment. The card reader was a worthwhile expenditure. Juice sales at Full of Beans is very successful and all present extended thanks to Trula for all she does. 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 was agreed wholeheartedly by

all present. We thanked Hazel for her work

8. **Election of Officers** – All three Officers are happy to stand again and were re-elected: Chair (Ruth) Treasurer (Hazel), Secretary (Nickie), all were proposed by Adrienne & seconded by Steve R

9. **AOB**

Bell Street will be booked for juice sales on 11 March. May Fayre is booked for juice sales

It was agreed that at the meeting on 7th March we would discuss the thoughts for planting new trees

The Approved Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy Statement was agreed and will be updated by Nickie and posted on the web.

Ruth concluded by thanking those present for attending and closed the meeting at 20.06

Appendix

RHSO AGM February 15th 2023

Chair Report for 2022

Welcome everyone and thank you for coming to the Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard AGM.

It has been a good year with us being able to meet in person and get back to having a 'normal' year in the orchard.

The weather was very good for fruit trees with a dry warm spring that enabled the fruit to set. It continued dry and very hot at times during the year which led to a bumper crop of fruit. We had another successful Apple Day, it was warm and sunny and many families from the community came to help pick the fruit. It was held in September this year because the hot dry summer caused some of the fruit to ripen early and it was felt prudent to bring apple day forward by a week. We had such a good crop that we couldn't pick it all and the harvest filled over 70 crates and made approximately 1000 bottles of juice.

The juice is sold at 'Full of Beans' in Sawbridgeworth throughout the year. We hold Juice stalls in Bell street car park several times a year. Juice is also sold at the Allotment Show, May Fayre, and the Scarecrow Festival. We will be holding the juice stall in Bell St again sometime this year.

Wassail in January this year was probably the wettest one that I can remember. It didn't rain during the evening but was very wet underfoot. Unfortunately, the Ukulele band were not able to perform due to illness. About 150 people attended the event and Zoe led the singing as usual and everyone enjoyed the blessing of the trees. Even though it is hard work for the volunteers.

Forward planning for the orchard will include looking at more sustainable methods for looking after the orchard and planting additional trees.

We are thinking of holding an extra event, possibly in spring, making three during the year to help sustain people's interest in the orchard.

It is always very worrying when we don't know what the future will bring, as we don't own the land the orchard is on.

Finally I must thank all the members of the RHSO group without your support and hard work over the year we could not keep the orchard in such good shape. Thank you

Chair Ruth Buckmaster

RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

ACCOUNTS

YEAR TO

31 DECEMBER 2022

RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE

I report on the accounts of the Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard for the year ended 31 December 2021, which are set out on pages 2 to 4.

Respective responsibilities of the Committee and the Examiner

The Committee is responsible for the preparation of the accounts. It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts, and
- state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of my report

An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as the Committee concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and my report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Jeremy Dickson FCA
25 January 2023
Sawbridgeworth



RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Year ended 31 December 2022

	Notes	2022 £p	2021 £p
INCOME	2		
Sales of Apple Juice			
Through Full of Beans	3	555.00	590.00
Other		304.00	403.00
		<u>859.00</u>	<u>993.00</u>
Sales of apple juice, less associated costs, at:			
Wassail	4	330.43	-
Wassail 2023 (payments in advance)		(37.00)	
May Fayre	5	368.00	
High Wych Scarecrow Festival	6	559.00	526.00
Allotment Show	7	86.95	128.24
Apple Day	8	140.71	45.78
Bell Street Stall	9	393.14	923.62
East Herts Lottery Funds		73.00	
Ladies Group Talk		35.00	-
Sales of books		99.50	65.00
		<u>2,907.73</u>	<u>2,681.64</u>
EXPENDITURE other than that included above deducted from income (see notes)			
Apple juice processing, bottling and labels		2,064.00	1,631.26
Equipment (2022: Tree guards, Table, gas equipment)		497.67	384.99
Flag pole		260.40	-
East of England Apples & Orchards Project		15.00	15.00
Card payment facility		94.80	-
First Aid course and supplies		96.00	-
Public liability insurance		99.31	99.31
Website		45.76	-
Great St. Mary Flower Festival		60.00	-
		<u>3,232.94</u>	<u>2,130.56</u>
EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME (2021, excess of income over expenditure)		(325.21)	551.08
General Fund, brought forward		<u>3,612.42</u>	<u>3,061.34</u>
General Fund, carried forward		<u>3,287.21</u>	<u>3,612.42</u>

RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2022

	Notes	2022 £p	2021 £p
Fixed Assets			
Equipment	1	-	-
Current Assets			
Bank and cash balances			
Lloyds Bank		3,217.21	3,542.42
Cash float		70.00	70.00
		<u>3,287.21</u>	<u>3,612.42</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>3,287.21</u>	<u>3,612.42</u>
GENERAL FUND		<u>3,287.21</u>	<u>3,612.42</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

For the year ended 31 December 2022

		2022 £p	2021 £p
1	Accounting Policies The accounts are prepared on the cash basis; the cost of purchased equipment is written off in the year of purchase.		
2	Apple juice Total sales of apple juice	<u>1,963.09</u>	<u>2,815.86</u>
3	Sales of Apple juice through Full of Beans Sales of apple juice Gratuity	605.00 50.00 <u>555.00</u>	590.00 - <u>590.00</u>
4	Wassail (January) Refreshments Expenses	454.34 (123.91) <u>330.43</u>	- - <u>-</u>
5	May fayre (May) Sales of apple juice	<u>368.00</u>	<u>-</u>
6	High Wych Scarecrow Festival (September) Sales of apple juice Cost of stall	574.00 (15.00) <u>559.00</u>	541.00 (15.00) <u>526.00</u>
7	Allotment Show (September) Sales of apple juice	<u>86.95</u>	<u>128.24</u>

RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

For the year ended 31 December 2022

		2022	2021
		£p	£p
8	Apple Day (October)		
	Attendance income	326.05	230.00
	Van hire	(166.49)	(101.08)
	Refreshments	(18.85)	(83.14)
		<u>140.71</u>	<u>45.78</u>
9	Bell Street Stall		
	Sales of apple juice	<u>393.14</u>	<u>923.62</u>

Maintenance Report April 2022 – March 2023

This year has been free of any restrictions and new members from last year have become regular volunteers with a few new additions.

The weather is becoming more unpredictable. Wet early on, but a very long dry spell in late spring and summer. A few trees have been lost as expected for their age, including, sadly, our one apricot. However, no storm damage this year.

The proposals in the 2020 report for getting expert advice on pruning the old plum trees was shelved again.

Damage to tree bark by rabbits, so far, appears to have been contained by last year's guarding of all the apple trees and the practise of laying apple prunings between the trees. The cold spell and frosts have seen these prunings severely attacked! It is too early to tell if the ringbarking last year, particularly in the meadow, will prove fatal to these relatively young apples.

No evidence of deer damage and the ant colonies have not appeared as prolific and active as 2021.

The annual grass cutting in September saw the contractors tackle the half not cut in 2021 as well as the Apple Tree section. This was done by a larger machine which did result in damage to membranes around the young cherries and pears.

This year we have continued with normal maintenance of the Orchard with a good deal of work on restorative and regenerative pruning.

Apples

This year the reshaping programme targetted the older trees and work on these will be part of our programme for the next few months. This year we pruned in Dec, Jan and Feb and with a good strong workforce of knowledgeable volunteers have dealt with all the younger trees and made excellent headway with many of the older varieties.

2022 saw a **spectacular** show of apple blossom and the apple crop was abundant!! So many left on the trees after Apple Day.

Pears

Some pruning this winter of the younger and shorter trees. Crop reasonable.

Plums

Younger plums fed and pruned in July/August and look in good condition. Membranes removed and some trees mulched. Expert opinion still needed for larger trees.

Cherries

Young cherries fed in spring, but membranes damaged with grass cutting in September. Older cherries - little done except tidying up dead branches.

Meadow

Most trees here maintained and pruned in January. The five good trees totally ringbarked last year are still with us. Work continued on hedge near trees to prevent light encroachment. Still not able to deal with the very large hedge trees. Trees too tall for volunteer intervention.

Maintenance of membraned trees and future practise for younger trees and new plantings.

Matters considered..keeping trees fed, grass at bay, moisture retention, environmental issues of membraned material, level of maintenance required re volunteer numbers.

Action agreed:-

- a) Remove membranes completely from more mature established trees and allow grass to return e.g. all the young plums and some apples.
- b) Remove membrane from 8 maturer young apples, but fed with chicken manure pellets, mulch with woodchip for moisture retention and suppression of grass.
- c) Rest of membraned trees leave at present and feed and maintain as usual.

Type of mulch material researched by Geoff and discussed. Best cost free material is woodchip from Richard Newman, but acidity of chippings could be an issue. First chippings used were from beechwood. Delivery received in September of conifer origin. Decision to use will be made this spring.

Currently, trees that were fed and mulched had little disturbance from animals (dogs and wild life seeking out chicken pellets): little evidence of grass growth (early days and hot weather): moisture retention at first good, but the lack of water for at least two months saw both membraned and mulched trees very dry.

It is current policy to continue with action b) for more of the maturer young trees and to observe and record.

Observation on some young tree development:-

- a) 7 saplings on correct root stock planted 5/6 years ago have not developed despite being regularly fed, membraned and well watered initially. Assumption – needed better preparation of soil and site situation. Some competing with large mature trees.
- b) Some young apples that have been in for 10 years + have seen little growth. Rob says difficult to analyse – incorrect root stock/earlier grass suppression needed/soil preparation/initial water supply etc..
- c) Young cherries did suffer early on but membraning improved growth.

New Plantings

Any new plantings on site should take note of past problems

Other maintenance

From April to September we continue to maintain the paths within the Orchard ourselves. Volunteers also worked on cutting hedge on southern boundary to allow better light to nearby plum and cherry trees.

Volunteer Support

Many of the volunteers that joined us in 2021/22 have become welcome regular supporters with a few new faces and we are still averaging 12 a session. Many thanks to all those who have helped maintain this site for its heritage value and for the community.

Plans for the coming year.

Will continue to observe strategy undertaken for feeding/ mulching/membraning of the younger trees. Also, under Colin and Lanier's guidance, consideration for planting of new trees for 300 Anniversary.