

RHSO (Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard)

Minutes from the AGM

Tuesday 23rd April 2019 @ 20.00

Sawbridgeworth Library

1. **Welcome** – Ruth welcomed everyone and explained the format of the meeting. Present were Adrienne, Eugene, Eric, Robinne, Dave, Rob & Officers Ruth, Hazel & Nickie
2. **Apologies** were received from Geoff
3. **Minutes from last year** – approval of these were proposed by Eric, seconded by Adrienne and agreed by all present
4. **Constitution changes** – i) It was proposed by Hazel that our accounting year should run from January to December this was seconded by Eugene and approved by all
ii) Nickie proposed that only 14 days' notice for an AGM & this was seconded by Dave and approved by all
So our AGM next year will be in February. We thanked Rob for making the changes on the web which he will do this evening when Nickie has sent them to him.
5. **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
6. **Maintenance Report** – Adrienne gave a detailed and very interesting report of the programme of maintenance and how this was impacting favourably on the different varieties found in the orchard. She also talked about the volunteers saying that we had good support in general but we would like to try and encourage more interest. Everyone discussed how we might do this in AOB. A copy of her report can be found in the appendix. We thanked Adrienne for her support
7. **Treasurer's report** – Hazel explained the balance sheet which had been checked and verified on 30/1/19 The balance at the end of December 2018 stood at £3094.39 plus a cash float of £50. It was noted that the Council do the grass cutting which we hope will continue. Juice sales at Full of Beans is very successful. A spreadsheet of the varified accounts is in the appendix
8. **Election of Officers** – Chair (Ruth), Proposed by Eric & seconded by Dave
Treasurer (Hazel), proposed by Ruth & seconded by Rob
Secretary (Nickie), proposed by Eugene & seconded by Ruth
9. **AOB**
A discussion on ways to attract more volunteers included the greater use of Facebook, (target pruning) the Flyer & the Church Times with potentially an article in the Bishops Stortford Independent. Herts Help include case studies of two of our volunteers (Robinne & Geoff) as well as details to encourage anyone exploring that media. Extra laminated posters will be put around town by Adrienne & laminated by Robinne. We will also explore holding joint events with other like-minded groups e.g. Pishiobury Friends

Appendix

Chair Report

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 years Apple Day was well attended and I'm sure everyone enjoyed it. We thank all the people who turn out to help us pick the fruit and we could not do it without you. There was not so much fruit this year as others due to a hot dry spring so we were able to produce just over 400 bottles of juice. We are at the mercy of the weather and the harvest for our income. The income from the sale of the juice from the harvest goes back into funding equipment and new trees for the Orchard. So all the help we get for this event is truly welcomed.

RHSO Had been unable to hold a Wassail in 2018 so we were pleased to reinstate it very successfully in January 2019 and had a good turnout. I'd like to thank our committee and volunteers and the musicians Ukes of Hazard, a local ukulele band and Zoe for entertaining us and leading the wassail songs. The children make as much noise as they can while the adults drink mulled cider and Apple juice.

I'm sure you'll agree everyone enjoys this even in the freezing cold of winter.

The volunteers also attend many of the local events in Sawbridgeworth not just to sell the juice but to inform people and raise awareness of what we are trying to achieve. We always welcome new volunteers.

The events we have attended in the last year are the May Fayre, Fun on the Field, High Wych Scarecrow Festival, the Town Selfie Walk and the Christmas lights.

These are the lighter sides of the groups activities which raise much needed finance, but the important work is the monthly maintenance mornings. More of which when Adrienne gives her report. The maintenance work is the heart and soul of our group it is the reason all the volunteers are here, to give their time and energy in keeping this vitality important Orchard alive. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them for all the work they do.

Maintenance Report – Adrienne

The Orchard continues to thrive and our programme of membraning and guarding the younger trees appears to be a success.

Apples

Last winter we continued primary pruning of the larger established apples and this winter started secondary pruning of some trees. Unfortunately this winters weather restricted the amount of work we would like to have achieved this year. The Orchard East project ran free courses this year for

secondary pruning on established apple trees which was attended by five of our regular volunteers. Orchard East intend to continue these courses next year.

All young apple trees were pruned in 2018 and we completed the membraning, staking and guarding of all the younger trees that were planned. This spring we have had to widened or heighten some of the lower guards because of rabbit damage.

We believe our membraning policy, on the whole, has been as success. We have had to replace a few that have been damaged by grass cutting and animal activity. We have replaced some of our initial smaller membrane size to a larger 1.5m x 1.5m.. However, there are a lot of large ant colonies under the membranes, but little evidence of any vole tunnels.

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, 2018 saw a good crop of pears of all varieties.

Plums

Most are well established trees, but little been done with pruning and many show evidence of fungal disease and have been wind damaged.. Orchard East are running a course in July on pruning established plums and we hope some volunteers will attend. We also hope to seek advice from Paul Reed on how to tackle matters.

Cherries

In 2018 we continued with pruning out diseased wood and burning the branches. Pruning was radical at times but it seems things are in check and the younger cherries look healthy.

Meadow

Some of the plum trees that showed strong evidence of disease here have been radically pruned. The trees on the row nearest the hedge have suffered due to the height of the hedge and presence of large trees. In 2018 we tried to cut back and reduce height of hedge as much as possible. Hedge trees to big to handle. Apple trees here cropped well.

Other maintenance

From April to September we maintain the paths within the Orchard ourselves. This can take over an hour a session and depending on rainfall may need to be done twice a month. Fortunately for the volunteers last years' two months of drought meant little work. However, lack of rainfall was not of benefit to the trees!!!

Volunteer Support

Good support in general in 2018, but would like to try and encourage more interest. Attendance on maintenance days range from 4 – 13, with an average of 8. 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 continue in a similar vein and attempt regeneration work on the plums with advice and guidance.

RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

Balance Sheet 23.02.2018 – 31.12.2018

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Opening balance from Sawbridgworth Town Council	2188.30	May Fayre	10.00
Juice sales	1767.20	Goods	93.17
Books	145.00	May Fayre	6.00
Trula juice sales	400.00	Scarecrow festival	15.00
Interest	4.18	EEAOP membership	15.00
	<u>4504.68</u>	Van hire	79.00
		Town Council	155.00
		Juice invoice	847.62
		Insurance	99.31
		Fuel	25.41
		Apple Day expenses	<u>64.78</u>
			1410.29

Less expenditure
Balance

Cash float in hand

50.00

Accounts Checked & Verified



30/1/19