

## RHSO (Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard)

### Minutes from the AGM

Tuesday 8th March 2022 @ 20.00

By Zoom

1. **Welcome** – Ruth welcomed everyone and explained the format of the meeting. Present were, Eric, Dave, Lanier, Adrienne, Geoff, Colin and Officers Ruth, Hazel & Nickie
2. **Apologies** were received from Rob, Robinne, Monique, James and Steve
3. **Minutes from last year** – approval of these was proposed by Eric, and agreed by all present, no matters were arising
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 and special thanks to Trula for the Apple Juice sales. A copy of the report is included in the appendix
5. **Maintenance Report** – 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. 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
6. **Treasurer's report** – Hazel explained the balance sheet which had been checked and verified on 9/02/2022 by Jeremy Dickson FCA. The balance at the end of December 2021 stood at £3612.42 which is £600 up on last year. It was noted that we are now self-sufficient with all the equipment we need for events so no need to borrow anymore. Juice sales at Full of Beans is very successful and all present extended thanks to Trula for all she does and it was decided that Hazel should buy her some flowers. Hazel will also do a letter of thanks to the Memorial Hall as without their storage for the juice we would be in major trouble. 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
7. **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 Lanier & seconded by Adrienne
8. **AOB**  
**Management of Young Trees**  
Geoff presented the proposal (included in the appendix) and a discussion took place with special reference to 'how to avoid bringing disease into the orchard' and not introducing acidity from the woodchip used. Geoff talked about these and also about the need for maintenance to top up and rake up the woodchip. Geoff proposed a trial using a control group of the more mature young trees. Some of which would have their membranes removed and some not, (to act as a control point. Eric suggested he supported a trial and that it could potentially be shared as best practice and all present agreed. Geoff was thanked for his research into the issue.  
**Educational, outreach and archive issues**  
Lanier talked about how she was happy to undertake these with the help of Elizabeth Waugh.

Adrienne explained that Rob had done many talks and Eric said it would be good to have a script on the history so others could help. Colin suggested U3A could be a good audience and potential volunteers.

Chris Hunt needs to be informed of anything happening of an organised nature in the Orchard. It was suggested that all requests for talks be sent to the RHSO email and Nickie communicate them to others

Lanier talked about the difficulty of getting archive materials from Sayesbury Manor and asked if they could be kept in the library. Lanier to find out the volume to enable us to explore further as space in Library is limited.

#### **Equipment Storage**

Dave spoke about the idea of having a container near the hospital to hold all our equipment.

Eric agreed to explore with Ramsey Health

Hazel said that we are now registered with the E. Herts Lottery. May Fayre is booked for juice sales and she will apply for further information on the Queens Green Canopy

We agreed to not run a stall in April

**For our 300 year anniversary** we discussed an area at the top for planning young trees but we would not be able to fence it off

The Approved Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy Statement is due to be reviewed and Nickie will circulate for any comment

**Ruth concluded by thanking those present for attending and closed the meeting at 2109**

#### **Appendix**

# **RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD**

**YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021**

## **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**

9 February 2022

Sawbridgeworth

# RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Year ended 31 December 2021

	Notes	2021 £p	2020 £p
<b>INCOME</b>	2		
Sales of Apple Juice			
Through Full of Beans	3	590.00	682.50
Other		403.00	974.12
		<u>993.00</u>	<u>1,656.62</u>
Sales of apple juice, less associated costs, at:			
Wassail	4	-	212.20
St James Church High Wych Scarecrow Festival	5	526.00	-
Allotment Show	6	128.24	-
Apple Day	7	45.78	(94.33)
Bell Street	8	923.62	-
Grants			
East Herts District Council		-	294.00
Sales of books		65.00	50.00
		<u>2,681.64</u>	<u>2,118.49</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE other than that included above deducted from income (see notes)</b>			
Apple juice processing, bottling and labels		1,631.26	1,205.05
Equipment (2021 gas urn and fire pit; 2020 apple pickers)		384.99	395.94
East of England Apples & Orchards Project		15.00	30.00
Meetings		-	20.00
Card payment facility		-	49.00
First Aid course and supplies		-	259.86
Public liability insurance		99.31	-
		<u>2,130.56</u>	<u>1,959.85</u>
<b>EXCESS OF EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME</b>		<b>551.08</b>	<b>158.64</b>
(2019, excess of expenditure over income)			
General Fund, brought forward		<u>3,061.34</u>	<u>2,902.70</u>
<b>General Fund, carried forward</b>		<u><b>3,612.42</b></u>	<u><b>3,061.34</b></u>

# RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

## BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	Notes	2021 £p	2020 £p
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			
Equipment	1	-	-
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Bank and cash balances			
Lloyds Bank		3,542.42	3,011.34
Cash float		70.00	50.00
		<u>3,612.42</u>	<u>3,061.34</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b><u>3,612.42</u></b>	<b><u>3,061.34</u></b>
<b>GENERAL FUND</b>		<b><u>3,612.42</u></b>	<b><u>3,061.34</u></b>

## NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

For the year ended 31 December 2021

	2021 £p	2020 £p
<b>1 Accounting Policies</b>		
The accounts are prepared on the cash basis; the cost of purchased equipment is written off in the year of purchase.		
<b>2 Apple juice</b>		
Total sales of apple juice	<u>2,815.86</u>	<u>1,958.82</u>
<b>3 Sales of Apple juice through Full of Beans</b>		
Sales of apple juice	590.00	712.50
Gratuity	-	(30.00)
	<u>590.00</u>	<u>682.50</u>
<b>4 Wassail (January)</b>		
Sales of apple juice	-	272.20
Equipment hire	-	(60.00)
	<u>-</u>	<u>212.20</u>
<b>5 St James Church High Wych Scarecrow Festival (September)</b>		
Sales of apple juice	541.00	-
Cost of stall	(15.00)	-
	<u>526.00</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>6 Allotment Show (September)</b>		
Sales of apple juice	<u>128.24</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>7 Apple Day (October)</b>		
Sales of apple juice	230.00	-
Van hire	(101.08)	(94.33)
Refreshments	(83.14)	-
	<u>45.78</u>	<u>(94.33)</u>
<b>8 Bell Street Stall (April, June, October)</b>		
Sales of apple juice	<u>923.62</u>	<u>-</u>

## RHSO report for AGM 2021

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

This is the Chairman report for 2021.

We started the year in another lockdown and Covid restrictions continued throughout the year. We were able to carry on with the maintenance of the orchard of which you will hear more from Adrienne's report.

A lot of volunteer time and energy was spent looking after the membranes at the expense of other work that needed doing. Because of this we are now looking into other methods of protecting the trees. We also need to look at the sustainability of the methods we use e.g., plastic membrane or wood chip.

The group welcomed new members during the year, and we thank them for joining the group. That also raises another issue of the sustainability of the group. We need more of the members to take on some extra responsibilities, i.e., first aid training, pruning training. We need to look to the future and the best way we can keep going, some of us aren't getting any younger! Please always spread the word the more the merrier.

Apple Day was held in October and was open to the public this year. Even though it rained all day we had a good steady turn out of helpers from the community. The apples are then taken to a juicing company, and we have 847 bottles of juice this year.

The juice is sold throughout the year at 'Full of Beans', a shop in Sawbridgeworth. The volunteers also run stalls through the year at the 'Scarecrow Festival' and in Bell St car park.

A Wassail was held this year after not being able to do so last year. I think everyone agrees that it is a very popular event with approximately 150 people attending. This is technically the start of the Orchards year as we bless the trees for a good harvest.

I would finally like to thank everyone for all their hard work in keeping the orchard a very special place going and thriving, and also to all the committee members for all the hard work they put in. Hopefully next year we can hold the AGM in person and raise a glass.

Ruth Buckmaster Chair

## Maintenance Report 2022 – March 2022

The management of the Orchard this year started with restricting assistance to regular volunteers only because of Covid restrictions, but as restrictions eased in the Autumn we encouraged new helpers. We have seen several new additions in recent months.

The proposals in the 2020 report for getting expert advice on pruning the old plum trees was shelved again and recent February storms have now taken their toll on these trees. Some have been severely damaged.

The weather was more consistent this year. Not such a great contrast between wet and dry. A lot of the trees seem healthy in that respect. However, this January saw the start of a major attack on all the apple trees – young or old – by rabbits and possibly deer. We were made aware of this by a local dog walker in mid January. At least 5 trees in the Meadow and 4/5 in the Orchard have been totally ringbarked and time will tell whether these survive. Many others were attacked. It was decided to buy whatever amount of guard was required to place around all the apple trees, whatever their age. This has been achieved with volunteers helping outside the normal monthly maintenance days. Some pear and plum trees have been guarded when there was evidence of fresh damage.

The February storms did not cause any damage to the apple, pear and cherry trees. Only the plums suffered, so far!

There are more sightings of deer, but little evidence of damage to trees above the height of the guards.

We have more ant colonies, than last year. However they are not necessarily all under membranes. When the annual grass cutting took place in September the contractor's machine struggled with the ant hills. He cut the grass around the apples for Apple Day but said he would have to get someone with a different type of machine to help slice through the anthills to complete the other half of the Orchard. To date this area has still to be cut.

In general maintenance of the trees has primarily been removing dead and diseased wood, maintaining and repairing membranes and guards already in place, pruning and reshaping.

### Apples

The reshaping programme that was started in February 2020 has borne fruit and this will continue in the future. This year more of the older trees will be targeted. Pruning started in December. All the younger trees have been pruned and February and March dealt with some of the larger trees. I believe that with the apple pruning season being so short now it is important for us to consider pruning in January, despite it being usually set aside for Wassail.

Apple crop was reasonable. More dessert varieties (an abundance of russets) than cookers. A contrast to last year. This probably accounts for this year's sweeter tasting Mixed Juice. Laxtons were plentiful, but perhaps not ripe enough on Apple Day.

### Pears

Little done except pruning damaged branches. Crop reasonable.

## Plums

Younger plums fed and look in good condition. Expert opinion still needed for larger trees, although storm damage reveals many may be getting too old and rotten.

## Cherries

Little done except tidying up dead branches. Seem in reasonable condition.

## Meadow

No pruning. Five good healthy trees totally ringbarked and may not survive. Hedge near trees cut back 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.

There is discussion among the group that too much time is being spent on dealing with these trees and suggestions are being considered as alternative possibilities. Several years ago the group discussed how to best encourage growth and health of younger trees, particularly as they were struggling to compete with being planted direct into grass. It was considered that suppressing the grass with membrane and feeding annually with chicken manure under the membrane was best approach. This is a current discussion among group and changes may be made to our policy.

## Other maintenance

From April to September we continue to maintain the paths within the Orchard ourselves. In November the ditch around the bridge and along the eastern boundary was maintained and water is flowing well.

## Volunteer Support

In recent months we have attracted a few more volunteers and are beginning to average 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 consider the maintenance of membraned trees, pruning window for apple trees and problems with cutting site. Rob believes some of the older plums may be tackled with pole saws and this would be a good project for the Summer if cherries don't need too much attention. Also, consideration for planting of new trees for 300 Anniversary.



The priorities for all young trees are:

- Establishing good growth.
- Formative pruning / training to establish the shape.

If these are met, it should be easy to restore the tree even if neglected for several years.

Trees that are not competing with grass should have the grass removed / suppressed from around the base. Currently this is done with membranes which control the grass well, but can lead to vole damage or damage from ant nests.

Once the grass is suppressed by the membrane, a trial of membrane removal for a year could be considered, although even semi-vigorous MM106 rootstocks can require lifelong grass suppression. Mulching would be a suitable alternative, but ensure the mulch does not carry disease.

Feed the trees with organic fertiliser (e.g., chicken manure) in the early years. Remove fruit from trees.

#### Proposal by Geoff Williams

Currently many maintenance days are spent caring for the young trees, cutting away grass growing on the edges of the membranes, repairing damaged membranes and digging out ant nets.

Following Wassail we have a big pile of woodchip available to utilise and given the above management plan we could trial for a year (or two) re-mulching the young trees by removing the membranes and replacing the membrane area with woodchip.

A thick layer of woodchip (2 – 3 inches) will block sunlight from weeds, insulate the soil and reduce the amount of water evaporating, it also has the advantage of being bio-degradable and will hopefully enable an easier maintenance. A concern that it would reduce nitrogen could be lessened by the use of chicken manure, as recommended by RHS

Future maintenance of the young trees surrounds should be less strenuous. However, the woodchip may get scattered by animals and birds and require topping up regularly. Also, the woodchip will gradually rot down and will need replacing at intervals. We will need to ensure the mulch is not in direct contact with the stems as they could cause the stem to soften, making it vulnerable to diseases. To avoid any nutrient deficiency (such as nitrogen) they should be fed with chicken manure as we do now.