

RHSO (Rivers Heritage Site and Orchard)

Minutes from the AGM

Wednesday 19th February 2025 @ 19.30

Sawbridgeworth Library

1. **Welcome** – Ruth welcomed everyone and explained the format of the meeting.
Present were: Adrienne, Eric, Colin, Steve R, Elizabeth W, Lanier, Geoff and Officers Ruth, Hazel & Nickie
2. **Apologies** were received from Eugene, Zara and Simon
3. **Minutes from last year** – approval of these was proposed by Adrienne , seconded by Steve R and agreed by all present.
4. **Matters Arising not covered elsewhere** – Geoff spoke of the problem of storage and Ruth agreed to pick this up with Rivers. Elizabeth W said that in principle this had been agreed.
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 picnic in the Orchard plus 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 . Ruth concluded by saying this year being the Anniversary was a great opportunity. A copy of the report is included in the appendix
6. **Maintenance Report** – Adrienne gave a very detailed report on maintenance in the Orchard between March 2024 and now. She explained and we all agreed about the importance of keeping detailed records of how things have been done on the Website but also of keeping a hard copy. She explained that the method adopted for planting the new trees is noted in the detailed report attached and provides a record going forward. She made a special note of thanks to Colin for leading this tree planting. We all agreed that Adrienne was doing a great job and all those present extended their thanks to her. The report is attached in the appendix and includes her thanks to all those who have helped maintain this site for its heritage value and the community.
7. **Treasurer's report** – Hazel explained the balance sheet for 2024 stood at £4041.89 which includes the ring fenced tree fund of £1000. Juice sales at Full of Beans is very successful with an income of £1008 and all present extended thanks to Matthew for all he does. Hazel reported that Lloyds will be charging £4.25 a month. A copy 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 was agreed wholeheartedly by all present, this is his last year so everyone agreed to getting him some wine to thank him. We thanked Hazel for her work. Hazel proposed the accounts and Colin seconded. All present raised hands to show approved.
8. **Election of Officers** – It was agreed that the amended constitution be adopted and the Committee would consist of Chair (Ruth) Treasurer (Hazel), Secretary (Nickie), plus committee members Lanier, Colin, Elizabeth, Adrienne and Eric (as Town Council Representative) all were proposed by Geoff & seconded by all present

9. AOB

Elizabeth spoke of the trip to Audley End

Lanier spoke of the Art competition and asked that everyone look at the 300 website

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

Ruth concluded by thanking those present for attending and closed the meeting at 20.20

Appendix

Chair RHSO report for 2024 AGM (written and read by Ruth Buckmaster)

Welcome everyone, and thank you for attending the Annual General Meeting. The AGM is to hear all the reports and developments of the orchard for the past year, 2024.

For this special year I'll mention a few things at the end.

2024s Wassail was a dry but cold day. The ground was muddy underfoot but we spread wood chipping to help prevent accidents. As usual it was a lovely evening with approximately 150 people attending. We were supported by a Ukulele group entertaining us and Zoe Dedman playing her flute and leading us in singing the wassail songs.

Our excellent small band of juice sellers held several sales throughout the year. These are held at the end of Bell St car park. Unfortunately we cancelled the March stall due to bad weather but arranged another later. We have to apply for licenses to be able to hold these juice stalls. They do help to raise awareness of the orchard and increase our revenue from the juice.

The family picnic in the orchard was very popular again and we were very lucky with the weather it was a glorious hot day. It would be good if this could become an annual event as it introduces the orchard to younger families who might not come to Wassail or Apple Day.

We attended the allotment show in Sawbridgeworth for juice sales but didn't go to the Scarecrow festival this year as we had very little juice left to sell. We needed what we had to sell on Apple Day.

This year we did not have the same amount of theft from the trees. There was still some large scale stripping but the general public are much more aware now and challenged various people. On Apple Day we had a very good turn out from the local community and it was a nice dry day. From the apples picked we have our usual three varieties of juice. As these bottles are being sold during our special anniversary year we had new labels designed with our special 300th logo.

During December we planted the first of our special trees. As mentioned in last year's report these trees were especially grown for our 300th Anniversary, they are the first of the new trees that we want to continue planting for the next few years to help continue with the sustainability and future of the orchard.

At the end of the year the group was asked to join in with the Christmas tree festival in Great St Mary's church. It was lovely to see all the different groups and organisations represented with their decorated trees. Thank you to the people who organised our tree.

As you can see we are very busy all year with various activities and events, this is on top of our monthly maintenance. Next year with the extra activities to celebrate the 300th anniversary we will be even busier. So as I say every year we cannot achieve any of these things without our volunteers so I thank each and every one of you who helps in any way to making our Orchard the fantastic vibrant place it is.

Looking forward to this year we have already had our successful launch at the Town Council Chambers, to start our 300th anniversary. We then held our fantastic Wassail. We continue throughout this year with many extra activities organised by the 300 group. This includes the Celebration day in April, Art competitions for adults and children and displays in the town. More details of these can be found in our brilliant new leaflets which also gives a map of the orchard.

Thank you again to everyone for all your hard work in making this possible.

Maintenance Report March 2024 – February 2025 (written and read by Adrienne)

This year in maintenance sessions we have continued with normal annual pruning, the feeding and mulching of young trees, the membrane removal programme, ditch clearance and most excitingly, the planting of new trees.

Weather not as dry as previous years. Rainfall spread more evenly throughout the year and has assisted good tree growth. Fruit crop was good for apples, pears and plums. However, the 'named' storms have caused more damage to old plum trees and they also claimed our only Tydemans Late Orange Apple.

From December to March there is a constant need to monitor apple trees for rabbit and deer damage. This year our practise of laying down apple prunings as a deterrent from December onwards wasn't possible. Emphasis on new plantings in December and very wet weather in January meant a good quantity of large apple prunings not available until February. These have since been well munched!! As a result, in Dec and Jan we saw damage both above and below the guarded trees. When detected at base we widened guard and pegged down securely; for damage above guard, we heightened and/or widened. Several low growing trees affected. We extended guard to a much larger squared area. This required a lot more guard material and four short stakes per tree.

Ant colonies still evident throughout site. Nests developing between guard and tree trunks an issue and should be dispersed. Nests seem larger in drier weather so hills not as large as 2021.

The annual grass cutting in September saw the contractors tackle whole site. Adrienne met contractor driving larger machine at site to point out new planting areas. We should consider contacting contractor at end of August if we are concerned about trees obscured by long grass and at risk of damage.

Volunteers mow paths through Orchard site between April and Contractors annual grass cutting to help guide public away from flattening flora so beneficial for insects and the biodiversity of the site.

Apples

In Spring we concentrated on feeding and applying a thick mulch to young trees already demembrated and fed the smaller membrated apples. This winter we were able to prune all young trees but only managed one session on larger apples in Feb. Reasons mentioned above.

Rabbit damage to apple trees mentioned above.

Many guards we had to hastily install in 2020 around the larger trees have become tight and need to be checked and altered if necessary this spring.

Not much achieved this year with regenerative pruning and tree shaping..

Apple crop was good. Coxes and Newton Wonder abundant. This year enough Bramley's to produce our COX/BRAMLEY juice variety.

A lot of mushy apples still evident on ground not usually seen before at this time of year.

Pears

No pruning this year, but most older pears are of manageable size and need little pruning. Very large trees may require expert guidance. Three small pears still membrated

Pear crop good. Still hope we can get better identification of varieties and their category of a 'cooking' or 'eating' pear. Adrienne did experiment with five pears for latter ID.

Plums

Younger plums pruned in July. Older plums still being damaged by storms. Programme of restorative pruning not yet implemented.. Summer and Autumn months, sadly, saw clearing away broken branches and making good.

The crop was good and damson and plum jam made by volunteers was sold to help swell funds.

Cherries

The young cherries that did well due to membrane protection in this drier area of the Orchard have had no attention this year. Grass now covers membranes and anthills causing damage at base of some trees. Important to tackle this issue and, for smaller cherries, if not enough mulch available for them we consider applying new membranes to protect these trees in driest area of the Orchard.

Some older cherries appear alright at present but many still have issues with disease.

Meadow

Little done here this year. We reduced one dead tree to a stump. Another ringbarked tree in poor condition.

Demembrating and Mulching policy for growth of young trees.

Only 5 trees had membranes removed this year.

Approx. 15 trees in apple and pear area still membraned due to small size. as well as young cherries, mentioned above.

Important to mulch thickly for grass suppression and water retention.

New plantings required heavy mulch for securing cardboard.

If woodchip supply low may have to prioritise needs.

Deciduous Woodchip still currently provided by Richard Newman free of charge.

New Plantings and method adopted for establishing good growth.

Colin Gill led project and Six new Rivers plums have been planted, namely, Archduke, Czar, Early Transparent Gage, Mallard, Monarch and Swan.

Method adopted

1. April 7th– identified positions and marked with stake. Trees 6m apart in rows 6m apart. Placed cardboard and mulch in 1m squared around stake to start process of killing off surrounding grass.
2. June 2nd Two 50litre bags of manure were spread over mulched area around each tree.
3. Dec 1st (two weeks before planting) raked back mulch, dug out area of 1m squared to loosen soil before replacing in hole
4. Dec 15th an eager party of volunteers assembled to plant new trees . These were planted in accordance with plum cultivar guidelines. Copy attached for record purposes.
5. A volunteer watering rota will be set up to support trees for the next two to three years until they are well established.

After planting volunteers celebrated the occasion with a shot of home-made calvados and damson gin!

Many thanks to Colin for all his hard work and time spent on this project and bringing it to fruition.

Other maintenance

From April to September we continue to maintain the paths within the Orchard ourselves. In June volunteers tackled the ditch along the eastern boundary and either side of the bridge. Between, June and September northern boundary hedge pruned to keep from encroaching on nearby trees and a lot of dead wood removed from trees around the whole site. In Nov the three willows were pruned and the grass around bridge ditch, cut.

Continue to remove ragwort from site when identifies itself in Aug/Sept.

Volunteer Support

One new regular volunteer this year. Five others have come along for one session but not returned. . Many established members still only been able to attend intermittently again this year, but we have an average monthly core attendance of 10. Need to try and attract new members.

Many thanks to all those who have helped maintain this site for its heritage value and for the community.

Plans for the coming year.

The 300 Year celebrations will see tours of the Orchard at various times throughout the year, so need to try and show Orchard at its best and to monitor safety issues. May need extra maintenance support in March and April.

Installation of two new noticeboards

Tackle young Cherries

Initiate Plum restorative programme

Attempt to attract more Volunteers.

Plum cultivar planting

- Remove enough soil from centre of hole to allow planting. Each individual tree will need to be looked at to establish depth of planting and removing or adding sufficient soil to fit. Once depth worked out the bottom of the hole will need loosening up and breaking up any clods of clay
- Two teaspoons of mycorrhizal granules to spread into centre
- Put two stakes into ground either side of where trunk will be positioned leaving about 10cm to 12cm between trunk and stake. The stake to be tied to the tree will need to be upwind so that wind blows trunk away from stake and therefore placed in a SW position with the other stake placed diagonally opposite
- Hammer stakes so that no more than 60cm is left above ground
- Place tree in the hole ensuring roots aren't tightly wound round base and then with the root collar mark level with the ground and the grafting union kept at a minimum of 7.5cm above ground. You can then start backfilling with soil, occasionally shaking tree to get soil around roots and ensuring trunk upright. Heel down carefully to bed tree in and minimise any air pockets. Overfilling the hole by 3cm to 6cm will allow the tree to settle and avoid a dip in the ground
- Fit tree tie onto the correct stake with spacer in between
- Guards to be positioned around stakes and tied with cable ties. A second guard to be positioned above lower one and tied together to bring total guard height to top of stakes
- Water trees
- Place cardboard with hole in middle over the top of the tree and the remaining ones around the 1m square but may need to rake back some of the woodchip to fit this in or maybe able to slide underneath
- Rake back woodchip ensuring gap left around tree
- Put down extra woodchip, if required

RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

ACCOUNTS

YEAR TO

31 DECEMBER 2024

RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

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 2024, 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.

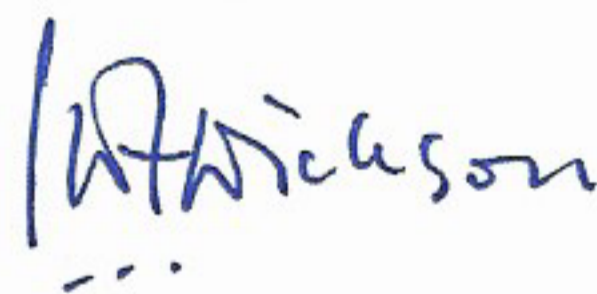
Basis of my report

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
27 January 2025
Sawbridgeworth



RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

Year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	2024 £p	2023 £p
INCOME			
Sales of Apple Juice	2		
Through Full of Beans	3	1,008.00	572.00
Other		234.00	633.00
		<u>1,242.00</u>	<u>1,205.00</u>
Sales of apple juice, less associated costs, at:			
Wassail	4	333.98	298.18
May Fayre	5	454.20	355.12
Teddy Bears Picnic	6	21.94	80.00
High Wych Scarecrow Festival	7	(20.00)	641.66
Allotment Show	8	-	41.90
Apple Day	9	104.28	(10.63)
Bell Street stalls	10	974.53	725.95
Lights on - November		301.60	-
East Herts Lottery Funds		161.50	166.50
Donations:			
- Murgatroyd & Co		50.00	-
- Barratt Wilson		-	750.00
- North Thames Sponsorship		-	500.00
- Other		-	21.00
Garden Club talk		27.00	-
Hatfield Heath Garden Club		50.00	-
Sheering WI talk		-	25.00
Sales of books		60.00	90.00
Grants for 2025 activities:			
- Herts County Council Locality		300.00	-
- Sawbridgeworth Town Council		500.00	-
- History Society		500.00	-
		<u>5,061.03</u>	<u>4,889.68</u>
EXPENDITURE other than that included above deducted from income (see notes)			
Apple juice processing, bottling and labels		2,447.20	2,431.00
Apple pickers		-	251.96
Tree grafting		-	240.00
Tree stakes		81.12	-
Pruning course		-	80.00
Tablecloth		175.20	-
East of England Apples & Orchards Project		15.00	15.00
First Aid course and supplies		-	200.99
Public liability insurance		129.10	99.31
Archive materials		-	81.86
Website		156.48	62.32
AGM		15.00	-
Other		167.71	8.00
Paid in advance for 2025 activities:			
- Embroidery framing		669.00	-
- Trees		74.87	-
- Rivers Nursery book reprint		1,540.00	-
- Leaflets		120.00	-
- Wassail 2025			
- Cups		63.41	-
- Licence		21.00	21.00
- High Wych Hall deposit		20.00	-
- Other		9.50	-
		<u>5,704.59</u>	<u>3,491.44</u>
EXCESS EXPENDITURE OVER INCOME (2023 Income over Expenditure)		(643.56)	1,398.24
Funds, brought forward		<u>4,685.45</u>	<u>3,287.21</u>
Funds, carried forward		<u>4,041.89</u>	<u>4,685.45</u>

RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	Notes	2024 £p	2023 £p
Fixed Assets			
Equipment	1	-	-
Current Assets			
Bank and cash balances			
Lloyds Bank		3,971.89	4,615.45
Cash float		70.00	70.00
		<u>4,041.89</u>	<u>4,685.45</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>4,041.89</u>	<u>4,685.45</u>
Funds, carried forward			
General Fund		3,041.89	3,685.45
Tree Fund		1,000.00	1,000.00
		<u>4,041.89</u>	<u>4,685.45</u>

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

For the year ended 31 December 2024

		2024 £p	2023 £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>2,842.33</u>	<u>3,094.63</u>
3	Sales of Apple juice through Full of Beans Sales of apple juice Gratuity	<u>1,008.00</u> - <u>1,008.00</u>	<u>657.00</u> (85.00) <u>572.00</u>
4	Wassail (January) Refreshments Expenses	<u>369.42</u> (35.44) <u>333.98</u>	<u>332.03</u> (33.85) <u>298.18</u>
5	May fayre (May) Sales of apple juice Expenses	<u>464.20</u> (10.00) <u>454.20</u>	<u>365.12</u> (10.00) <u>355.12</u>
6	High Wych Scarecrow Festival (September) Sales of apple juice Donation (2023 Cost of stall)	- (20.00) <u>(20.00)</u>	671.66 (30.00) <u>641.66</u>

include E/Mark Lloyds

RIVERS HERITAGE SITE AND ORCHARD

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

For the year ended 31 December 2024

		2024	2023
		£p	£p
7	Allotment Show (September)		
	Sales of apple juice	<u>-</u>	<u>41.90</u>
8	Apple Day (October)		
	Attendance income	357.43	312.68
	Van hire & other expenses	<u>(253.15)</u>	<u>(323.31)</u>
		<u>104.28</u>	<u>(10.63)</u>
9	Bell Street Stall		
	Sales of apple juice		
	- March	268.65	244.95
	- June	337.80	481.00
	- November	368.08	-
		<u>974.53</u>	<u>725.95</u>