



**Bridport Community Orchard Group**  
**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Bridport Town Hall**  
**on Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018 at 7.30 pm**

Present:

Jill Lloyd, David Hawkins, Tricia Hawkins, Councillor Gill Massey, Councillor Martin Ray, Councillor Maggie Ray, Anne Bark, Malcolm Drew, Christine Preston, Jenn Baker, Louise Finnis, Jim Binning, Ian Bark, Brian Parker, Paul Arthur, Hugh King, Barry Welch, Michele Read, Nick Gray, Ileana Shirley Smith, Chris Shirley Smith, Harriet Horniman, Rachel French, Rob Jayne, Jon Knorpel, Colin Baker, Stella Kenrick, Bob Gillis, Daryl Chambers, Jilly Chambers, Susannah Madigan, Sheila Hawkins, Lin Scrannage, Charles Marsh and Celia Marsh (arrived later).

A slide show of pictures from orchard activities through the last 12 months was shown as attendees arrived, and tea, coffee, soft drinks and biscuits were served too.

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

Jill Lloyd welcomed all to the meeting (34 people including the Chair, one further person arrived towards the end). Apologies from Mitch Burt, Yvonne Welch and Robin Boston.

**2. Minutes of Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

Approved and accepted as an accurate account of the meeting.

**3. Chair's Report**

Jill said that 2017 has been another good year for the orchard group, which besides all our regular activities gave us some memorable highlights.

In May we celebrated 'Spring in the Orchard' as part of the Bridport Museum Heritage festivities. George Streatfield gave a talk on farming methods, traditional and contemporary. The pop up tea and cake stall was also popular, as were the orphan lambs and chickens (in pens). The tree blossom was in full flower and glorious.

In June The Bridport Co-Housing Group held the local version of the National 'Big Get Together Bring and Share' in the orchard.

Early morning scything sessions with breakfasts, were held in July, and at Jubilee Green in August.

In the early autumn, prior to Apple Day we held 4 juicing sessions with supper, and well over 200 bottles of juice were produced. Thanks to a really wonderful crop, we pressed 89 bottles of juice from our 'own' orchard apples, compared to 29 bottles in 2016. We were again grateful for apples generously donated from other orchards.

Our 10<sup>th</sup> Apple Day in October, was the best ever, very well organised by Jenn Baker and team and with valued support from Bridport Town Council, local businesses and organisations. A great team of volunteers made it all possible and in addition to all the traditional fun, Martin Maudsley led a memorable Mummers play, with music and a most diverse cast. The No Limits Dance Group also gave a spirited and touching performance.

The Jubilee Green Medlar tree produced a large crop, which was made into Medlar 'cheese', a relish to accompany cheese. It is delicious and sold well at our Christmas Cheer stand, as did our hot apple juice.

Our monthly Sunday working mornings have been very well attended and we have more volunteers than ever before, as also has the gardening club on Thursday afternoons all summer in the Community Allotment.

We hosted a cheery Wassailing in January 2017, a sunny Allotment Open day in August, and attended the June Food Fair, and the Melplash show in August.

The new 5 year management plan has been published, with revised policies, and a detailed strategic plan, so many thanks to our Secretary and Vice Chair; our administrative affairs are now in excellent order.



The orchard has grown a great deal since 2008, it has become more complex and needs more maintenance. We have more equipment, more activities, more volunteers, more and larger events, so more expense. Some of our sheds and structures are showing signs of age, and will need replacing. The Treasurer has been very effective in applying for grants this year, and we now have enough funds to build a new shed. This will be the major project in 2018, in February and March. Detailed planning for that has already taken quite a lot of extra time, and will take more. We thank the Town Council for their support.

Many thanks to everyone who has shared in these activities, too numerous to mention by name, but who together keep a community project flourishing and maintaining this lovely green space in the Town Centre for the enjoyment of everyone.

#### 4. Treasurer's Report

David Hawkins presented signed Annual Accounts of BCOG for 2017, as audited by Bill Taylor. His full report has been published in Newsletter No. 24, January 2018. Key points David made were:

- We raised income from the four regular events of the year – Wassail, Allotment Day, Apple Day and Christmas Cheer. The significant financial event for the group is Apple Day where a net surplus of **£995.38** was raised; the big financial success being a new stall selling cakes, run by Alison Todd and her friend, which raised us a staggering £243
- Money raised at other events included Wassail - £67.00, Allotment Day - £118.85, Christmas cheer - £125.34 and the hiring of our apple press - £70.00
- We received a donation of £300 from the Powerstock Festival and a donation of £10 from Sheila Hawkins
- A new shed will be largely funded by grants. We were extremely grateful to receive grants of £300 from Waitrose, £325 from Palmers Brewery Fund, £300 from Bridport & Area Car Boot Fund, and £625 from Edith M Ellis 1985 Charitable Trust. The latter was particularly gratifying, as we had not approached this Trust before, and we are very grateful to them
- The remaining £200 grant from Bridport Town Council was used to acquire a second hand pasteuriser to make a full second set of apple juice equipment
- Funds retained at the end of the year amounted to **£3,233.99** (including £1,550 as restricted funds)
- We appreciate **C W Groves and Son's** continued sponsorship of our two issues of the newsletter each year

David was asked what the difference between 'restricted' and 'unrestricted' funds was, and he explained that 'restricted' normally applies to grants that are awarded for a particular purpose like building a shed, and cannot be transferred to other activities. Whereas 'unrestricted' funds can be spent on anything, as directed by the management committee.

#### 5. Election of Committee

As Jill had stood down from the committee, she was in a position to take the lead on the management committee election process, and Maggie Ray, who normally leads this, willingly stood aside. Jill said that in accordance with the constitution the entire committee of 12 people would stand down, and 9 people would be standing for re-election. Maggie Ray is the ex-officio member of the committee, appointed by the Town Council. Malcolm Drew and Jill herself were retiring. Two people had nominated themselves as new committee members, Rachel French and Michele Read. The 4 officers, Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer would be chosen by the new committee at their first meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February.

Jill then paid tribute to the retiring committee, by say that as with all orchard volunteers, they contribute according to their expertise, interest, and within the constraints of other responsibilities and employment.

Malcolm, who is retiring from the committee joined the group in the first few months, and had led all construction ever since. The first shed, with rainwater collection and water butts, the seats on top of the raised beds, the Polytunnel, the dipping platform on the pond, the bee enclosure, the pallet compost bins, the bug hotel, installing a redundant sink, the two notice boards, reinforcing the new top shed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> community allotment, and repairing the benches. In addition he taught many people to scythe, and often led the team, a staunch regular at work sessions, an energetic



and skilled juicer, with a knack for engaging young children. He offered his van on many occasions to ferry equipment, into and out of the orchards, and for Christmas Cheer. A committed environmentalist, he often offered a wise word at committee meetings. Jill thanked Malcolm for all he has given us, not least his friendship. He will be much missed.

Jill went on to thank all of the 9 people standing again, emphasising they all have different and invaluable skills and roles, and contribute to the working sessions with all the other volunteers. She accurately identified the key contributions each candidate 'brought to the party', and had very kind words to say about everybody.

Jill invited Michele and Rachel to say a few words. Michele said that although she had been living in Bridport for little over a year, she had been made most welcome at the orchard work parties and allotment sessions she had attended, and as well as bringing her cake making skills into play, was very keen to help in future management and event organising activities. Rachel said that she had been attending work parties for three years, and had also been made very welcome. She said she loves walking along the path through the orchard and admiring its tidiness and tree blossom, and that it was a particularly attractive location for children to enjoy.

The election of the 9 existing committee members, plus the two new candidates (Michele and Rachel) was unanimously passed by all those present at the meeting. Maggie will continue as ex-officio from the Town Council.

#### **6. Reflection on the first 10 years of the orchard (Jill Lloyd)**

Jill gave an insightful overview of the evolution of the orchard, beginning with a brief history of the various aspirations for the site. Initially, West Dorset District Council, who own St Mary's Church Field had tried to obtain planning permission for housing, or an indoor bowls club or a car park. As there is no road access, the Priory Lane residents, and the Bridport Environment Group, led by Charles Wild, opposed this, and eventually in 2006, in the Local Plan, it was declared "a green space in perpetuity for the enjoyment of the community".

The idea for a community orchard was suggested to the environment group by Kim and David Squirrel. The orchard group was then formed in September 2008, working in partnership with the Bridport Town Council, who leased the land from WDDC. The first Apple Day took place in October 2008, in partnership with the Symondsburry Apple Project, before there were even any trees.

The first 25 apple trees were planted in January 2009, with participation of individuals from about 30 local organisations; and was followed by the first Wassailing ceremony. The hedge between the orchard and the allotments was planted at the same time. Then in April 2009 the Town Council created the paths through the orchard, put up the fences to protect the newly created allotments, and built the raised beds in the community allotment. The gardening club was formed in May, and the pond dug in June. In February 2010 a further 35 trees, mostly apple, but with some pears, plums, a quince, a mulberry and cherry were planted with 50 different varieties of mostly West Country Heritage.

We settled into monthly working mornings, a management committee and regular events quite early on, and continue evolving as we mature as an organisation. It has always been a team effort. We moved from meeting in Mountfield to meeting in the George quite quickly. Looking back, I realise just how many people have contributed to and had an active part in the orchard over the past ten years. Some of the original group are still with us, but other people come for a while, and then move on to other groups, or activities, or as their lives change. Everyone brings their own skills, interest and experience and makes a valuable contribution. The level of enthusiasm, energy, hard work, and commitment is exceptional, and perhaps what makes being part of the group so rewarding.

We took on Jubilee Green, our second orchard at the top of Park Road in January 2012. We have always had enormous support from Bridport Town Council, especially Daryl Chambers and his team, from local businesses, other groups, and individuals, too many to mention by name, and it does feel as though the orchard really belongs to the community.



Other groups are welcome to use the public space, which is informally much used by the local community.

There have been school visits, pond dipping, yoga and dance classes, a jazz picnic, a hedgehog day, a Halloween bat event, (in appalling wet dark November weather) and a butterfly event. These last two were with the Dorset Wildlife Trust, and were led by Nick Gray. This involved a procession of people wearing their own creative butterfly wings, some very large, from Bucky Doo Square to the orchard on a Saturday afternoon. The traffic stopped.

Making the pond in the first spring was memorable. Digging was hard work but clay puddling huge fun for all ages. Sadly, the result didn't hold enough water, so two years later we had to put in a liner, also fun, and it has remained watertight.

Hedge laying days, and the accompanying bonfire, Wassailing in the rain, but with hot cider around the fire, the challenge of windy Apple Days, and wet volunteer sessions; but amazing how loyal the terrific orchard people are, giving up their time to volunteer in the orchard and staying cheerful whatever the weather.

Last Sunday in wet and windy weather, the team went ahead with the Wassailing, led by Wyld Morris and Martin Maudsley. 130 brave Bridport people came, and it stayed fine for an hour. AMAZING!

Everyone will have their own memories, and there are lots of photos on the excellent Website and Facebook to remind you.

But my abiding memories will be of laughter, fun, companionship, team work, kindness, friendship and a sense of achievement as things grow. The wild life flourishes, the fruit trees blossom gloriously and then fruit generously and we share it all with delight and a chat over refreshments. It has been a privilege to be part of such a team, working in such a lovely place, and it has been an important part of my life, but it is time for me to go and I am now glad to hand over.

Thank you all for all your support, and I wish the orchard group every success in the future.

## **7. Any Other Business**

Ian Bark took the lead on this item, as Vice Chair. He started by offering a very sincere vote of thanks to Jill from himself and the rest of the committee. He said that for 10 years Jill has been at the heart of everything that we know today as the Bridport Community Orchard, and seen it through from conception, through birth, childhood and adolescence to young adulthood. It is her guiding hand has been behind seeing it through all the challenges associated with each stage of its development. Some people think the orchard is simply a bit of green space in the heart of town with some apple trees planted on it. Thanks to Jill it is so much more and in so many ways the word community is the most important one to use when trying to describe it.

Ian finished – "So I am simply going to say one thing. Thank you. Thank you for everything you have done during the past 10 years. And thank you for simply being you. Thank you Jill."

There followed a very lengthy round of applause.

Bob Gillis from the Town Council gave a sincere vote of thanks to Jill, who he said "...had been a fantastic advocate for the group...".

No others matters were raised by anybody at the meeting.

Rob Jayne gave the first viewing of a film he has started to make on "A Year in the Life of the Orchard", which was extremely well received.

Finally, Jim Binning gave an excellent presentation on the art of bee keeping, focusing on the history of the bees and their unusual hives that he has established in the orchard. He talked of the successes, and occasional set backs over the years, and talked of challenges to come, such as potential diseases and the imminent Asian Hornet, which, unfortunately feeds on bees.

The meeting closed at 21.05.

Minutes written by Paul Arthur, approved by Jill Lloyd ex-Chair Bridport Community Orchard Group, and Ian Bark, Vice Chair  
27<sup>th</sup> January 2018.