



Bridport Community Orchard Group
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Bridport Town Hall
on Wednesday, 23rd January 2019 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Ian Bark, David Hawkins, Tricia Hawkins, Councillor Gill Massey, Councillor Maggie Ray, Anne Bark, Christine Preston, Jenn Baker, Louise Finnis, Jill Lloyd, Brian Parker, Paul Arthur, Barry Welch, Yvonne Welch, Michele Read, Rachel French, Rob Jayne, Jon Knorpel, Colin Baker, Charles Marsh, Mitch Burt and Robin Boston.

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

Ian Bark welcomed all to the meeting (22 people that included the Chair). Apologies from Nick Gray, Jim Binning and Celia Marsh.

2. Minutes of Meeting 24th January 2018

Approved and accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Chair's Report

What a year. The Beast from the East was followed by a long hot, dry summer making this a most challenging time for the orchard. And yet not only have all the trees survived they somehow managed to produce a bumper crop from which we were able to produce a record volume of apple juice. We are not out of danger though; the stresses placed on the trees to survive the climatic extremes of 2018 may manifest themselves in one form or another in 2019. One benefit of the hot weather though, was our bumper harvest of grapes, giving our allotment area a very continental feel.

Our three big celebrations, the January Wassail, August Allotment Day and October Apple Day were once again enjoyed by increased numbers of people despite the adverse weather conditions that prevailed on two of the occasions. These events are only made possible by a great deal of behind the scenes preparatory work, and the support of local businesses, the Town Council, musicians and performers, and our wonderful volunteers for which we are extremely grateful.

Volunteer numbers at each of the work sessions have been consistently higher than in previous years with over 20 present on virtually every occasion. Whilst the old adage of many hands making light work runs true it is also true that as the orchard develops there is naturally more work to be done. It also means that old hands are able to spend more time with new recruits in passing on their knowledge and skills.

As the trees have steadily grown over the past eleven years, so too have the quantity of tools, equipment and other resources required not only to tend them, but also to maintain the whole site, and deliver our Wassail and Apple Day celebrations. Pressure on tools and storage had become increasingly critical. In order to solve this problem the Orchard Management Group submitted several bids for funding support from local sources. The bids must have been extremely well written because we were successful in generating much needed capital funding from each of the bids submitted. The new shed, tools and equipment are just some of the items we have been able to purchase, and as a result the orchard is in a well-resourced position for the foreseeable future.

Other notable occasions during the year include, attending the Bridport Food Fair in June, Melplash Show in August and the Christmas Cheer in December. However, the highlight for many is the early morning scything session in late July when the wild flower meadow area resounds to the sound of swishing blades as it is mown in the traditional manner.

Many thanks to everyone who has joined us in these activities; you are the lifeblood of our wonderful community project that is a haven at the heart of our town.



I nearly forgot to mention the construction of the Hibernacula and wonder what creatures will be taking shelter in it this winter.

4. Treasurer's Report

David Hawkins presented signed Annual Accounts of BCOG for 2018, as audited by Bill Taylor. His full report has been published in Newsletter No. 25, January 2019. Key points David made were:

- Of our regular community events Apple Day is the significant one where the amount of money raised was a record high, at £1,122
- The production of apple juice is a very important area for us and this raised around £400 for the Orchard funds
- Grants of £1,575 in 2017 paid for the new shed
- In addition to the grants, we were very fortunate to receive a Section 106 Award of £3,460 in 2018. This also contributed to the new shed, as well as tools, and an interpretation board. £1,048.77 remains to be used
- A Mummers play was produced by Martin Maudsley for entertainment at the Wassail
- The allotment group remains mainly self-funding when excluding the rent
- We appreciate C W Groves and Son's continued sponsorship of our newsletter each year.
- The surplus of BCOG funds amounts to £2,430.82.

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

5. Election of Committee

Maggie took the lead on this item. She stated that the committee (now 10 members) had effectively stood down, and all would be pleased to continue to serve on the committee. She asked the meeting to confirm that they were happy for the re-election of all committee members, and there was unanimous confirmation from all those present. All 10 members were present, and each introduced themselves and stated their role.

6. Any Other Business

Louise asked if any consideration had been made about charging a membership fee. Several people spoke about this, the consensus being that it has been the long-term philosophy that we are a community 'service', and it is good if these come for free. Also, there is currently no financial incentive to have any extra income, as public events and grants raise sufficient revenue for the routine upkeep of the orchard, as well as 'one off' purchases such as the new shed. Finally, it was pointed out that lots of volunteers put in an awful lot of their time, and it is only fair that they should benefit from 'free' membership. Also, if people paid it would formalise membership, and this in turn could have unexpected consequences such as safeguarding issues.

7. Short film, "A Year in the Life of the Orchard" by Rob Jayne. This was introduced by Ian, who explained that this was work in progress for Rob, but that this would give a flavour of how the orchard works. Rob said that he had included activities from November 2017 to July 2018. Much of the commentary was by Ian, but Rob also interviewed several further people later in the year, and these would appear in the final version of the film. He was aiming for the final version to be about one hour in length, and so far it was about 35 minutes. The meeting was unanimous in its praise for the film, which was a good balance between recording the day to day activities that keep the orchard ticking over, and the key events such as Wassail.

After the film, there was discussion on how the film could be made available for general public consumption. Rob suggested that it could be available on YouTube, and there could be a public showing at the Arts Centre. The committee agreed that various suggestions should be discussed at a future committee meeting.

The meeting closed at 21.15. Minutes written by Paul Arthur, approved by Chair Ian Bark.

28th January 2019.