

Wood Norton Community Orchard Annual General Meeting 2014

This took place on May 8th. It was chaired by Paul Marchant, secretary, in the absence of the Chair, Mary Sheridan, who was unwell. There was one member of the public and we welcomed additionally Clive Haywood whose bee hives are sited at the Orchard. All current post-holders (Secretary, Chair and Treasurer, Steve Piggott) were willing to continue for the forthcoming year. This was proposed by Carol Robson and seconded by Tim Lidstone -Scott.

The minutes of the previous AGM were published in full in the June 2013 edition of the Parish Magazine.

Four committee meetings were held during the past year, and fund-raising activities took place at the Village Fete in June and the Craft Fair in November. We held our second Apple Day in October. During the year we welcomed Carol Robson as a member of the committee.

Our Group Commitment to Equality and Diversity policy is due for review at the next committee meeting. In accordance with insurance stipulations, TLS has compiled a Risk Assessment for the use of the brush-cutter and will provide another for general activities when working in the Orchard. Copies can be viewed on the website.

We were successful in our grant application to the Norfolk Community Foundation who directed our request to the Bernard Matthews Community Fund. It was used to provide 3 low-maintenance benches, grass-cutting equipment, 4 replacement trees and better protection for all the trees.

With mown paths and benches, the orchard is beginning to provide the kind of village amenity we had envisaged: a focal point for a stroll round the village or even an end in itself; a secluded spot to sit and read, or paint - or have a picnic.

The majority of the fruit trees, planted 2 years ago, are thriving. We have concerns about 2 plums which are still alive but struggling! This year we planted 3 replacements plus two others: a Miller's seedling donated by Eric and Jayne Miller and a Norfolk Dumpling donated by Terry and Diana Stevens.

Our fundraising events have been well attended and we feel that the Orchard, now entering its third year of existence, is becoming an appreciated and integral part of the village scene.

Our support group is growing all the time and we are most grateful to everyone who has attended our events, shown interest or offered encouragement. We should like to mention by name the following people who, over and above, have generously given of their time and/or donated to the project in the past year:

Ian Dive, Dorcas Henderson, Jane Lidstone-Scott, Hugh Kennedy, Miff Leedham, Eric and Jayne Miller, Jan O'Reagan, Anne Sheridan and other members of the Sheridan family, Terry and Diana Stevens, Anthony Thomas and Angela Wells.

SP gave a financial summary. We raised £306.88 through fund-raising and received donations of £77. Our major item of expenditure was £269.26 for insurance. The grant received was for £1848.98 and after the purchase of the benches, the brush-cutter and scythe, the trees, netting and stakes there is a balance of £29.75. This may go towards providing permanent labels for each of the trees. Miff Leedham has kindly agreed to carry out an independent audit of our finances, which will take place shortly.

TLS outlined the work that had taken place in the orchard over the past year. Besides the general maintenance of trees during the year, he and PM had mown around the fruit trees and benches, and begun to mow a designated area for a wildflower area. At the end of February there was a good turn out of volunteers to help plant, prune and improve protection for the trees, and they have

subsequently been mulched with well-rotted horse manure.

CR outlined ideas for developing the wild-flower areas following advice given by Andrew Mugford. We hope to concentrate attention for this summer on the area already designated, which needs to be kept closely mown and raked until the end of June. Yellow Rattle is recommended as a good initial plant as it inhibits grass growth.

JM spoke about future events: a presence at the Scarecrow Weekend; the Orchard Party on July 12th and an 'Orchard' Day in October.

Finally Clive Haywood gave an interesting progress report on the hives. They all survived the winter well and one in particular is thriving. It has been agreed that he will site some other hives in a different part of the field.