

FRIENDS OF DOWNE ORCHARD COMMITTEE MEETING no 10 – minutes (draft 2)

22 October at 18:00 (The Queen's Head)

1. **Attendees:** John Fisher (JF), Zoe Knight (ZK), Paul Knight (PK), Steve Barnes (SB),
2. **Apologies:**, Julian Moore, Declan Wells, Kay Tremain, Paul Gubby, Mike Bingold, Mark Sear, Yvonne Barnes
3. **Financials** – ZK reported opening balance of £737.65. Outgoings to be deducted:

£96.54 - first aid box
£71.36 - first aid products
£28.50 – Apple Day expenses (cups/cordial)

Income to be added is £173.40 (Apple Day income). Apple Day itself made a profit of £144.90 (£173.40 - £28.50).

Closing balance after deductions/additions above is **£714.65**

Additional outgoing costs to be paid in due course upon invoice receipt:

£118 - 2 x apple wizards (JF)
£180 - press and scrapper (JF)
£25 - petrol (PK)

2017 Harvest - PK reports that the 2017 harvest give back from The Orchard Project was:

32 cases of 12 x 75cl (26 stored with JM and 6 with PK/ZK)
8 x 75cl Hub give back
8 x bottles of apple juice (think litres)

4. **2018 Harvest** – Apple Day resulted in harvest of 350kg juice apples and 350kg cider (windfall) apples. PK reported on negotiations with production facilities (potentially replacing Orchard Project). Larkins had declined pressing, Owletts would take the juice apples only. The meeting **decided** to split suppliers:

- Owletts to be used for juice pressing/bottling (350kg)
- PK (**action 10/1**) was authorised to lead on a deal for cider making (350kg). This would be one of the following three options:

Bethlem - pressing only/ own containers - need to then find fermentation facility

Orchard Project – current deal would be 1 x 330cl bottle per 3kg apples

Christmas Tree Farm – potentially has equipment/facility

ZK (**action 10/2**) to investigate 2018 labels for cider & juice

5. **2019 (and remainder of 2018)** - discussion led to the draft calendar of events - see Appendix A
6. **AOB**

- JF to discuss orchard maintenance schedule for 2019 with Idverde (**action 10/3**)
- PK mentioned Chris Tremain may be willing to carry out orchard hay cut (instead of Idverde). PK will talk to him (**action 10/4**)
- Pruning - JF will mark up branches with paint as before
- Statistics - need to keep these for year end report. To include events (people numbers) activities, minutes, meetings etc
- Tree identification - this is part way through (JF), with more to be done
- Inventory of tools - these were checked, and agreed – being held by PK, JF and SB
- Downe or Downe orchard calendar - discussed. Was taken offline for ZK/SB to work up ideas (**action 10/5**)

7. **Next meeting – Thurs 10th January 2019**

8. **Previous actions**

- 6/5 JM to investigate the creation of a Downe Orchard booklet (**C/F**)
- 6/8 DW to investigate creating an apple box-making workshop (JM has a source of appropriate wood) **C/F**
- 7/3 ZK to purchase an orchard first aid kit (**C/F**)
- 8/1 meeting to be called to discuss 2017 cider/juice (**C/F**)
- 9/1 ZK to circulate alternative options for apple pressing for 2018

9. **This meeting actions**

- 10/1** - PK lead on juice & cider making
- 10/2** - ZK to investigate 2018 labels for cider & juice
- 10/3** - JF to discuss orchard maintenance schedule for 2019 with Idverde
- 10/4** - PK to discuss hay cut with Chris Tremain
- 10/5** - ZK/SB to work up ideas for Downe or Downe orchard calendars

Appendix A – 2019 draft calendar

Month	Day	Activity
November 2018	TBA	Rookery Road end hedge cutback – runs into Dec/Jan
January 2019	Saturday 12 th	Wassail + pruning day
March 2019	TBA	Spring grass cut
August 2019	TBA	Hay cut (+ event ?)
September 2019	2 nd week	1 st harvest
October 2019	2 nd week	2 nd harvest
October 2019	TBA	Apple Day (avoid half term)
November 2019	1 st week	3 rd harvest
November 2019	2 nd week	Grass cut post harvest
November 2019	TBA	Rookery Road end hedge cutback – runs into Dec/Jan

Appendix B – John Fisher – draft Downe orchard report – October 2018

1. This report has been produced for the October general meeting of the friends of Downe orchard. In previous years only an annual report has been produced. It now makes sense to take stock after the harvest and before winter pruning and boundary work.
2. What has been achieved so far year
We have delivered the majority of our management plan including:-
 - The hay cut. A new contractor was employed this year and where the field was cut this was of a decent length and the majority of the cuttings were removed. In an ideal world we would like to see the following improvements:-
 1. Far too much bramble and other uprisings [e.g. hogweed] was left on the field between the trees and around two thirds of the boundary. Both upper and bottom ends of the field were not touched at all.
 2. This was mitigated by use of a brushcutter prior to harvest/apple day – but cuttings have been left on the field [the management plan calls for these to be taken off as the field should become what is known as semi-improved grassland.
 3. The haycut should take place some weeks before the harvest [late August cut for preference] this year the cut was late in September and communication about the due date was poor.
 4. The HLS stewardship plan for this site talks about a spring cut and a November cut. Neither of these takes place.
 - The apple harvest – now up to over 800kg with additional apples donated to Bethlem hospital, down house and High Elms. An Apple day held, 2017 cider received [at last], baking competition held.
 - Tree id – we have started – but so far only have confirmation of 17 trees and hope to complete the rest this winter
 - Restocking – 5 pears and two greengages introduced – all but 1 greengage appear to have survived well despite the scorching summer
 - In terms of equipment we have acquired all that we need – we now have our own press and scrapper for apple day demonstration and two apple wizards that are great for windfall collection.
 - The residents association have purchased and installed a bench for people to sit upon.
3. What has been learnt
 - A survey of the rookery road boundary will inform what work takes place there this winter – this will include the relocation of the bench to be nearer the boundary
 - That tree marking speeds up the pruning task immensely [under 10 person work days to complete the lot] – we will do that again this year
 - 'Radical' Pruning last winter has significantly improved the crop in a number of trees.
 - Copparding the blackthorn has led to our goal of a lower, thicker and bushier stand of trees for nesting birds. Its also led to a host of blackthorn suckers. These have been brush cut but need mattocking out.

- There has been encroachment [bush and bulb planting] onto the orchard at the rookery road end and this will be addressed with the resident concerned.
4. What has been produced and who has been involved
- This will be published in line with the friends forum reporting cycle.
5. Relationship with the Orchard project.
- We received a significant amount of help from the orchard project as we set up the friends group and started to renovate the orchard. This help was mainly training and advice. It was mainly delivered by Ella, Bob and Stephanie. We want to place on record our appreciation for that help.
 - Over the last year we have reviewed our relationship with the Orchard project. We understand that they are a social enterprise and funding is tight. It is fair to say that this has fed through to a significant deterioration in the amount of our harvest we get to share, less choice in terms of containers for cider in the future and hardly any apple juice at all. In addition the relocation of the project to Walthamstow will cause some additional travelling cost and time to deliver our harvest in 2019.
 - A cost benefit analysis has been conducted and it is clear that other providers of pressing and bottling services will enable us to increase both the yield and value of our apple harvest. The decision to move supplier has now been made and will be worked through over the rest of the reporting year.
6. What next
- A clear up of the field and pruning as 'normal'
 - Working on the rookery road boundary
 - Completing fruit tree id and remapping/marking up the orchard
 - Putting on traditional events – the new year Wassail
 - Finding wider opportunities to engage villagers in the orchard [e.g. photography competition for a potential wall calendar]
 - Updating the management plan

Appendix C - Zoe Knight - Apple Day report – October 2018

Downe Apple Day with the 'Great Downe Apple Bake Off', cider and apple juice tasting was on Saturday 20 October 2018 - From 10am to 3pm

A great big effort by more than 30 villagers resulted in the harvesting of just short of 700kg of apples (separated into hand picked and windfall) - a tremendous achievement by all - and we were joined by enthusiastic visitors from Beechwood Avenue (Shire Lane)- thank you! (They found us on Downe Village Facebook)

The harvesting followed by the Bake Off at mid day.

There was a fantastic standard of entries: apple cakes, apple and almond cake, apple and fruit loaf, apple cookies, apple and chocolate cake, apple lattice cake, stout and apple wheaten bread, apple and custard fairy cakes, sage and apple sausage rolls.

The under 21 trophy was deservedly won by Ben with his very tasty apple cookies- runner up was his sister Esme with a very beautiful apple lattice cake. Sarah won the over 21 category with the stout and apple wheaten bread- Bake Off judge, Jayne, noted that this bread would be a great accompaniment to home made soup! Mary's runner up apple and almond cake was beautifully presented and tasted delicious.

Thank you so much to Jayne, managing to get to the orchard on crutches- and to give us such valuable feedback on each of the contestant's entries.

Thank you to Geoff who masterminded the cider tasting and to Paul who got the scratting and pressing going so we could all taste the apple juice from the morning's harvest.

Thanks to:

- Nigel and Jackie, Queens Head, sponsoring the trophies
- Wendy and Geoff whose encouragement, support and commitment made sure that the Apple Day would happen
- Friends of Downe Orchard on the day: John, Mark; Kay, Declan, Paul and Zoë

Net donations received on the day: £144.90