

**Minutes of the fifteenth Annual General Meeting
held at Christ Church, Newmarket Road, Cambridge and Online
on 11 October 2022**

The meeting was attended by approximately twenty-eight members in person, and a further six online.

1. Welcome and introduction

The Chair, Jeremy Francis, introduced the committee. The Secretary, Steve Cheek, was unable to attend as he was in the USA looking after his sick daughter. Also, the guest speaker, Rob Martyr, a biodiversity officer with the Cambridge City Council, was unable to attend due to illness. Fortunately, his presentation was available, and Kit Holland had volunteered to stand in for him.

2. Biodiversity of Orchards (Kit Holland, presenting Rob Martyr's talk)

This presentation focused on how the S.106 award from the Council could be used to improve biodiversity, as well as making the Orchard safer and more attractive to visitors.

Proposals already discussed by Kit and Rob include:

- new paths at both the top and bottom of the orchard,
- an extension to the shed for secure storage,
- more rainwater storage,
- more raised beds,
- bird boxes, and a bee bank,
- new signage and tree labels,
- a wheelchair friendly bench, and
- an improved structure for the hops.

Rob is preparing a detailed plan for all this work.

3. A Year in the Orchard (Kit Holland, Orchard Manager)

Produce: It had been a good year for all fruit, some of which had been donated to the Abbey Food Hub. The hops had as usual been donated to Calverley's Brewery, and we are hoping to have the opportunity to sample the result in due course. The herbs in the raised bed were also successful.

Wildflowers: We are trying to create a wildflower area near the hops and cherry trees. Some of the newly seeded yellow rattle had grown, and we hope that this will reduce the vigour of the grasses in future. Other wildflowers seen included knapweed, scabious and poppies, and we are planning to grow more next year.

Newmarket Road entrance: As agreed at last year's AGM, we have been creating a forest type environment, which has meant taking out some of the existing trees and shrubs as they were too crowded. The ground has been mulched and herbs such as lavender and rosemary planted

Water: this year's drought was challenging for all plants. On the basis that we can expect drier weather in future, we are investigating drought tolerant species for future planting.

Events: There were three events in the Orchard in the last year. Our first Wassail was a great success, as was Apple Day. We also experimented with scything the wildflower area, with instruction given by Vic Smith of Cambridge City Council.

There was an opportunity after this presentation for attendees to ask questions and raise issues. These included a request to put more news about Orchard events on the website, a request for an insect and other wildlife survey, and whether we could have more pear trees in the Orchard.

4. Treasurer's report (Peter Gotham)

Members present were provided with a copy of the accounts to 31 March 2022, which had been independently examined and approved. The main point to note is that we had £1,200 in the bank account at that date, which is enough to finance about half of our annual expenditure.

5. Secretary's report (presented by Jeremy Francis due to absence of Steve Cheek)

Minutes of the 2021 AGM: The minutes were approved.

New members: There have been 12 new members since the last AGM. This is fewer than the previous year when we had 24 new members, the reduction possibly being due to having only two newsletters in the year rather than three. There are currently around 200 members on our database.

Website: This receives about 250 visits each month, around 60% of these come via a search engine.

Newsletter: This has continued to appear two or three times each year. It is distributed to all members by email, and we also print up to 300 hard copies to put up on noticeboards and deliver locally in the hope of engaging new members.

6. Chair's report (Jeremy Francis)

Electric scooters and other electric vehicles: Jeremy reported that a meeting was held with the Council and the Police in November 2021, but since then little progress has been made, despite us pressing for action.

Anna's report: Earlier in 2022, Anna Gardner, a Cambridge University student, interviewed several members to help with her research into Cambridge's commons. An interesting takeaway from the results of her research was that Commons matter, not only for the health and leisure benefits, but also for their contribution to the heritage of the City, cultivating a sense of identity and attachment to place.

Events: We have been working closely with the Council, both preparing for and following up on events held on the Common. This has been successful, measured by the small number of

complaints received. Thanks in particular to Charlie Hattersley and Steve Cheek for their work on Midsummer Fair.

Website: Since the last AGM, a new website had been created by the Secretary, Steve Cheek, who had learned how to do this from scratch. Jeremy thanked Steve for his hard work on this. The result is a website that is more flexible and easier to edit. We were able to transfer all the excellent historical information created by our historian and former Chair, Dick Baxter.

Donations: We are heavily dependent on the annual grants received from the Council, for which we are most grateful. However, much of our discretionary spend comes from the joining fee for new members (£5) and donations. We encourage donations from anyone keen to support our work, and it is good to report that members present donated £37 in cash.

7. Question time

Members present and online asked questions on:

Electric scooters: a number of people stressed the potential danger to pedestrians (including children and dogs), and encouraged the committee to continue their efforts to control electric scooters etc.

Bonfire night: there was general agreement that the annual bonfire on 5 November should not be using pallets, which are said to give off noxious fumes when burnt.

Councillor Tim Bick kindly gave a response to both questions and undertook to follow up on both these issues.

8. Election of officers to serve until next AGM

The following officers were elected:

Chair: Kit Holland proposed by Jeremy Francis, seconded by Peter Gotham

Treasurer: Jeremy Francis proposed by Kit Holland, seconded by Steve Cheek

Secretary: Steve Cheek proposed by Peter Gotham, seconded by Kit Holland

The Chair thanked those attending and closed the meeting.

Jeremy Francis (Chair)

19 October 2022