

Chairman's Report for 2013-14.

Our year commenced with the AGM, held on 28th February and attended by 23 local supporters and friends from adjoining parishes. The Hon. Treasurer reported a healthy balance of £3,613. Mr P Taylor was thanked for acting as Independent Examiner, and duly re-appointed.

An amendment to the Constitution was agreed creating the post of Events Coordinator. Lizzie Spilman was elected to the position, unopposed. Otherwise the Committee's composition was much as before.

Following the formal business, Dr Nikki Gammans of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust presented a fascinating illustrated talk on the life cycle of bumblebees, their value in pollinating crops and the reasons for their recent alarming decline. She finished by explaining her own project to re-establish extinct species in the UK.

Our activities for 2013 again centred around the 'big three' events of Blossom Day, Cherry Day and the Halloween Children's Party. This year a start was made in transferring tasks that the chairman had assumed or accumulated over the nine years of the community Orchard's existence, to other members of the Committee.

We were blessed with warm sun for our Blossom Day on 14th April. Fruit expert Gavin Maclellan took a group on an explanatory heritage tour of the bloom-laden orchard. Children enjoyed the art and craft activities laid on by Colin Barnard and Sioux Peto or tried their luck at skittles, wordcraft and roll-a-penny. This year poets Barry Fenteman and Mark Holihan regaled us with verse and Bob Carling sang to his guitar. The Lynsted and Teynham W I provided cakes, tea and delicacies. The bar did brisk business and music was provided by Derek and his Jazz Friends.

Cherry Day, after a reshuffle of dates to suit the slow-ripening fruit, was held on 14th July. Pick-your-own cherries was, as ever, a main attraction, and Kay Wreford was there with her Lynsted honey stall. A new music venture was the first out-door public appearance of the lively Doddington Ukulele Movement. This climaxed in a joint rendition of 'Candy' with resident band Frayed Knot. Delicious food was provided by the WI and the barbecue, and the bar sold out. It was warm enough for families to picnic under the spreading branches and enjoy the craft stalls and the community atmosphere. The children's games were housed in a new marquee, just one of several items of equipment purchased from a grant from the Swale Borough Council Members' Localism Fund. The support of ward councillors Richard Barnicott and Lloyd Bowen in securing this is gratefully acknowledged.

On Bank Holiday Monday we shared a marquee with The Lynsted with Kingsdown Society at the annual Village Fete. This was a useful chance to explain the Community Orchard project to Fete visitors. Pots of Lizzie's special home made Park Farm cherry jam, sold out within minutes.

We heard from cherry expert Pippa Palmar in early October that her bid for funding for an 'Orchards for Everyone' project had been successful – with she herself in position as project officer. This project will involve 13 community orchards across Kent, including us as one of the longer-established projects. We look forward in helping with this bold scheme to raise the banner for traditional orchards in our county.

The now traditional Halloween Children's Party took place on 25th October. The weather was kind, and a good crowd of children and parents enjoyed the usual mixture of spooky costumes, carved

pumpkins, games, competitions and a roaring bonfire. Music was provided by 'Dropout' a newly formed local duo. Lynsted and Teynham WI provided hot soup, chocolate and toffee apples. Tasty sausages and burgers were sold from the barbecue, and there was the usual queue at the bar.

The final event of the year was a Fungus Foray held between rain showers in Toll Wood. Mushroom expert Martin Newcombe returned to identify and describe specimens of 41 different species that our party discovered growing in and around the live and decaying timber. Lisa Candy is thanked for allowing our crowd of over thirty into the ancient wood. We all returned to Hillside House, where Lizzie and Paul, aided and abetted by the WI, provided hot soup and home-made bread in their delightful garden.

In concluding my account of yet another busy year, I would like to thank, on behalf of the Committee, all those who have helped to keep this project going: to Pip and Sue Neaves for allowing us into their fantastic Orchard, and for their continued support, to Gavin for his tours, to the Lynsted and Teynham WI for their creative catering, to Julie, Kevin, Doug, Peter, Bridget, Jenny B, Jim, Graham, Jenny S, Clive and all who have acted as site crew; to everyone who has helped on stalls at events and to members of the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership for their support and advice. I offer my personal thanks to my colleagues on the Committee for their support through out the year, and wish the new committee the best of good fortune for 2014.

Finally, this concludes my fifth year as chairman of the Committee. The constitution requires that I stand down as chairman. I offer my sincere thanks to all who have helped, advised and encouraged me over the last five years, and indeed before that when we were a committee of the parish council. It has given me great satisfaction to have enjoyed a leading role in turning what was just a gleam in the eye into a genuine and sustained community project. Long may it thrive!

Bob Baxter,
Chairman.
February 27th 2014.

ChairRep.141