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**Park Farm Community Cherry Orchard Group**

**Chairman’s report 22 February 2023**

A brief recap of 2022:

**The year** began quietly with our AGM in February. Life was not quite back to normal & we were a small gathering of orchard group committee members only in the upstairs room of the Black Lion.

Then followed a series of busy and successful events in the orchard:

There was **Blossom Day** on a warm Easter Sunday in April, perfect for a picnic under blossom laden trees, hunting for Easter eggs or feeding the hand reared lambs.

**July** was particularly busy:

**Cherry Day** on 9th was very popular, with something for everyone. Live music by Rocking Badgers and a beautiful solo performance by Evelyn White. Andy Bosco entertained children and adults alike with circus fun for all. Marisco Morris gave a fine performance. There was a bar, BBQ and a variety of stalls. The cherries were not so good. They ripened very early and many were unfortunately affected by the drosophila fly which has become an increasing problem.

Then the new Orchard **Welcome Boards** were finalised and delivered. Thanks go to Sally Evans of Kent Downs AONB for guiding us through the design process and funding the project. So far one board has been installed between the drive in entrance to the orchard and footpath kissing gate. Have a look if you are walking past and try out the new QR code linking directly to the orchard website.

**Kent Downs AONB** chose the orchard for a farewell picnic on 15th, for **Pippa Palmar,** community orchards adviser who was retiring. Bob Baxter and I joined the party. We were delighted to welcome the Chairman of Kent Downs AONB and staff to the counties most attractive heritage cherry orchard.

Our popular **Halloween** party took place on Saturday 29 October. Families and friends gathered to enjoy ghoulish games, Dylan’s amazing costume parade, bonfire and music with Rocking Badgers. Wild Classroom provided hot pumpkin soup, and fun making & cooking flat breads in their fire cauldron.

The last event of the year was on a damp Saturday in early November. Martin Newcombe lead a fascinating foray into the magical life of **fungi** in the orchard. 23 different species were identified – there is a list which will be available on our website. Afterwards, fungi enthusiasts gathered in the church for a warming cuppa and a slice or three of cake and further chat on the subject of fungi!

Now to **orchard events for 2023:**

According to a recent report by the RHS we can expect fabulous blossom and fruit. They say conditions in 2022 were perfect for bud formation and the cold in early February this year will delay flowering. All of which bodes well for a glorious Blossom Day in April and a bumper crop of delicious cherries in July.

In August we are planning a special summer evening concert of **‘Show-stoppers’ presented by Cameo Opera**. Details will be circulated shortly. For now, if you are interested please note the date for the concert is Saturday 5 Aug.

Finally, my **thanks** to all involved in Orchard activities. Pip and Sue who allow us to use the orchard, the people who help us set up for events or tidy away, helpers on the day and the core group on the Orchard Committee. As you can see this evening we really are a very small group and could do with new members. Please let us know if you’d like to join our group either as a committee member or simply to help with events. We’d be very pleased to hear from you.

Thank you

Lizzie Spilman, 22 February 2023