

Townsend Community Orchard - Opening Ceremony

Saturday 21st October 2017

Good morning everyone. Thank you all for turning out on this windy day and let us hope we can avoid the rain!

My name is David Greaves and I am chair of the committee charged with developing and maintaining this community orchard.

On behalf of the committee we extend a warm welcome to those present of our donors, of our orchard volunteers, Village Society members, District Councillor Judy Brandis, our village publicity machine Keith Milmer and Rev Margot Hodson.

As you know this residue of the Farrar Bell field was given to the Parish Council by Rectory Homes following a planning refusal for it to be used for additional properties to be built. A consensus amongst the villagers in 2014 came down in favour of the area to be used as a community orchard.

The orchard design was created in that same year by Andrew Howard of the Heritage Fruit Tree Company, the cost of which was met by a local Sales and Marketing company Cosine for which we are very grateful. The layout you see now is based on old varieties of fruit ripening early to late over an extended period of the year so that all the fruit will not be ready at the same time. In addition the fruit trees in the columns (A, B, C etc) were designed to be self pollinating. To encourage further the pollination of the trees by the local bee population the committee decided as well as actively managing existing meadow flowers and grasses to plant additional wild flowers. Those of you who have walked through the orchard this year will have enjoyed the natural environment that has both been created and has evolved.

Our committee was established in 2014 to oversee the development and planting of the orchard and respond to the Environment committee of the Parish Council. Its main activities in the early days was to ensure the Parish Council had acceptable operating paperwork in place. This took a long time with many revisions before acceptance was gained from the Parish Council. Finally everything was agreeable to the Parish Council and so during the first half of 2015 requests were made for donations to fund the purchase of the fruit trees. The initial budget for the project was soon met and for this we are extremely grateful to all our donors.

The trees and bushes were planted in two periods during the autumn of 2015 with the help of volunteers, parties of school children and members of Cosine. All these groups have evolved over time into maintenance teams who meet up approximately once a month to weed, trim and mulch to leave the orchard as you see it today. The committee would like to extend their thanks everyone who has committed themselves to the orchard maintenance program, often giving up their Saturday mornings. A special note of thanks should also be extended both to Diana Wetherall who is our resident orchard inspector and Graham Taylor

who has been extremely generous in his supply of material and technical support. The Parish Council's contractor Aspire has been very responsive to our exacting requests for grass cutting of the orchard.

This year the finishing touches to the orchard were made. These were the welcome and orchard layout boards together with the individual tree plaques. The Core too was finished off with log benches and it is hoped that village societies and schools will be able to use it for external education and meetings. The funding for all of this was provided by the village's 106 fund .Our application for a grant from the fund was supported by the District Councillors for which we are grateful.

This Community Orchard venture has attracted a lot of goodwill from a diverse range of individuals and local companies and it would be extremely difficult to thank and name everyone and every organisation so I hope you understand if your name has not been mentioned.

Before we get around to the official orchard opening and cutting of the tape I would like to thank the current committee of Diccon Proctor, Greg Smith, Dr Sylvia Benjamin and the PC representative David Lyons for all their hard work . In addition I would like to commend those past committee members Elaine Pickup, Emily Rowbotham Dr Ron Peach and David O'Hanlon for their contribution to this project. We are currently a small committee in terms of numbers and would like to enlist the help of a further two members. If you feel you can contribute especially in PR work please talk to any of the present committee and find out what is involved. It meets formally at the PC office every 6 to 8 weeks and our thanks go to Sue and Jane for their minute taking and typing up of our decisions.. Our informal meetings which are much more interesting however and are at the Rising Sun!

The official cutting of the tape will be by Sophie and Otis, grandchildren of local resident Diana Wetherall, who is our orchard checker and kindly provides monthly reports on the state of the trees, paths, litter, dog fouling, etc.

David Greaves

Chairman, Townsend Community Orchard