

**Minutes of the Fairfield Association Annual General Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2009 at the Friends Meeting House.**

**Present:** Andrew Brennand, Margaret Burtonwood, Oliver Fulton, Helen Hicks, Henry Hicks, Deirdre Jacks, Jean Mussell, Jude Naish, Jane Sellars, Hilary Short, Mick Short.

**Apologies:** Ruth Haigh, Mary Ridley, Aileen Torday.

**Matters Arising:** None

**The Minutes for the last AGM,** held on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008, were accepted.

**Chair's Report:** Once again it has been a busy year for the Fairfield Association. We have maintained our existing commitments, taken on new ones and worked hard to develop our new project whilst ensuring that our income is healthy and our membership and wider community is well served.

The Fairfield Green and playground area continue to be incredibly popular and well used. The addition of some shrubbery has enhanced the area and we have experienced minimal damage through vandalism or wear and tear. I would like to thank Sid Duncan and latterly Henry Hicks for their vigilance and support on the maintenance of the equipment.

Our membership has continued to be healthy and we continue to average over 100 paid members as well as the support in word and action from a far larger group of friends. I would like to thank Ruth Haigh for her efforts as membership secretary in establishing this important role and developing our members' ownership of the association and encouraging their participation in our wide range of activities.

I would also like to thank Ruth for her contribution to the success of last year's Fun Day in July which she and Mandy Bannon put the vast majority of effort into organising and once again managed to defy the weather forecast to deliver a warm and sunny afternoon, even though it was still raining five minutes earlier!

In addition to Fun Day, we have once again managed to run a great diversity of fund raising efforts this year, some focused around our new responsibility for Fairfield Orchard, some more general, some old friends, some new. Apple Day, the Bonfire Night cakes stall, the Green Fair stall, Christmas Carol singing both in town and around the Fairfield area on Christmas Eve, Easter Egg Hunt, Teddy Bears' Picnic, Wassailing and Go Wild Week were all great successes and drew stalwart supporters and new friends to enjoy what we have on offer. I thank Simon Gershon, Andrew Brennand, Tony Finn and so many others for organising the events that were so enjoyed this year and that helped to fund and promote our green spaces.

Only a year ago we witnessed the final AGM of the Fairfield Millennium Community Orchard Trust and the Fairfield Association took over responsibility for the running of the Fairfield Orchard. The Trustees and membership rapidly realised that it was too ambitious to manage this large new responsibility through the main Fairfield Association meetings, especially as the outgoing Trustees of the Orchard Trust had as their final act, succeeded in gaining a £10,000 Breathing Spaces grant for equipment, training and educational activity in the Orchard. It was decided to set up a working sub-

group chaired by Mick Short. He and other members of this sub-group have worked at great length to renew the vigour of the Orchard and to ensure that a wider group of local people and especially through their work with local schools, local young people are enjoying and appreciating this invaluable resource. With the support and oversight of our Treasurer Jude Naish, they have the specific responsibility of ensuring the Breathing Spaces money is properly managed and spent effectively and in accordance with the terms of the grant. I wish to highlight Simon Gershon's efforts in organising the volunteer sessions that along with his own personal efforts are the main reason the Orchard is looking so well looked after and Tony Finn for his work developing relationships with schools and organising tours and talks.

We continue to aspire to the development of the Fairfield Association Urban Nature Area in the area between the Orchard and Aldcliffe Road. We believe that, whilst ambitious, this is an essential project for the Association to undertake to preserve and develop this natural area and the natural linkage of our existing green spaces to the countryside. Oliver Fulton's efforts in progressing this project have been considerable and whilst we have yet to see the fruit of his labours, they are very much appreciated. Because of the possibility that this project may not be realisable we have carefully undertaken some limited spending which has successfully been offset in part by funding from other organisations wherever possible.

This has all taken a deal of administration, communication and general keeping track of and the work of Hilary Short as Secretary and Jude Naish as Treasurer in making sure this was done well, is appreciated.

I regret that, for work and family reasons, I am no longer able to continue this level of commitment to the Association and am therefore stepping down as Chair. However, I will remain a Trustee and actively involved in the work of the Association.

In conclusion I feel this has been a year when we have successfully managed the merger of two charities, improved the use and condition of our assets and in doing so have increased the organisations capacity to deliver through improved membership participation and significant learning.

**A vote of thanks** was proposed for Michael for all the hard and successful work he has put in over the past years. He was presented with a bunch of flowers.

### **Orchard Report:**

Mick short reported that we now have a Management Plan drawn up by Jon Barry and an enthusiastic group of around 9 regular volunteers and others who come along from time to time.

Andy Lee has completed a survey of the trees in the Orchard and completed the work which was needed.

The Breathing Places Grant was transferred and we have already bought a small marquee and a large mower. The money will also pay for extra signs in the Orchard and educational visits from our local schools which are being coordinated by Tony Finn.

We now have a regular programme of events in the Orchard which are proving very popular. These include Wassailing, an Easter Egg Hunt, Go Wild Week and Apple Day.

There are pages on the website which are dedicated to the Orchard and Mick thanked Helen for providing many of the photographs.

## **FAUNA**

Oliver Fulton described progress over the year towards our goal of establishing a nature reserve opposite the Orchard as characterised by 'much grinding of cogs but little progress'.

On the positive side, the site is designated as a Nature Reserve and was not put forward for housing .

The land swap between Lancaster Girls Grammar School and Robin Loxam, who farms the land, has now been successfully completed. The area now has some new hedges and fences, marking out the new boundaries and Robin Loxam has new grazing rights but little else has changed.

Issues relating to the white cottage and the paddock to the south of it have been in a state of flux for some time. The current situation is that the City Council would like the cottage to go to the Fairfield Association and we are currently talking to an architect about what we might do with it. There will be a public consultation once we have clear ideas to put forward. Suggestions being considered include a meeting place, storage for tools for both the Orchard volunteers and the allotments, toilets and an educational centre. It would be helpful if at least some of it could be residential. It has already been decided that any buildings should have the key feature of being as sustainable as possible and money is currently available for 'green conversions' and nature reserves. Robin Loxam will continue to graze his cattle after his lease is terminated and our relationship with him remains cordial and positive. Deirdre Jacks asked why Lancashire County Council was prepared to pay for the new plans for FAUNA. Oliver replied that there is a small environmental fund and we have been successful in getting money from this.

Margaret Burtonwood said that she thought that the idea of a small urban farm was attractive in that it maintains links with the farming heritage of the land. A number of people felt that the responsibility for such a farm would be daunting.

**Treasurer's Report:** Jude presented the annual accounts to the meeting. She said that the lottery grant for the Playground was now all spent. She is in the process of collecting Gift Aid on as many donations as possible and this will be back dated.

Mick Short asked what was happening about the money which The Borough collects for us as 5% of every portion of bangers and mash sold. It was suggested that we might have a display in The Borough to let people know what kind of things the money was spent on and to encourage the consumption of bangers and mash.

It was agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to Alan Burton.

## **The Election of Officers:**

Andrew Brennand was proposed by Mick Short, seconded by Oliver Fulton and duly elected as Chair.

Hilary Short was proposed by Andrew Brennand, seconded by Oliver Fulton and duly elected as Secretary.

Jude Naish was proposed by Mick Short, seconded by Andrew Brennand and duly elected as Treasurer.

Ruth Haigh was proposed by Helen Hicks, seconded by Andrew Brennand and duly elected as Membership Secretary.

### **AOB**

Mick Short announced that a Kwik Cricket Match will take place on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September. Despite the serious nature of the sport, this will be a fun event with the traditional cricket tea of cakes and sandwiches. The event is being run by Geoff Orr and more details will be available on Fun Day.

Oliver Fulton proposed a vote thanks for James McDowell who maintains our website.

It was suggested that leaflets describing local walks should be drawn up and put on the website. Helen Hicks said that, since some people do not have a computer, we should also produce fliers.