



## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, 20 November 2023

**Apologies from:** Sara Caley, Kim Dudko, Ali Wisbeach, Tessa Bayliss, Dawn Fleming, Georgina Wright and Joanna Jerrard-Dunne.

**1. Chairman's Welcome.** Marcus Bicknell affirmed the good health of the Association; as a service to riders, as a going concern in financial terms and in playing a role in the community. The Minutes of the last AGM were adopted without them being read out as they have been available since the last meeting at <https://hodgemoor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/agm2022.pdf>.

**2. Election of Officers and Committee .** Kirsti Hummel was standing down from the committee. Liza Faircloth (who runs Manor Farm Livery Yard) and Dani Barrie (Francesca Jones' sister who helps with social events and who would encourage more walker members) were proposed and seconded. The new committee was elected unanimously as a single group:

Marcus Bicknell (Chairman),	Dani Barrie,	Sheila Grimshaw ,
Susie Bicknell (Secretary,)	Liza Faircloth	Francesca Jones,
Geoff Gudgion (Treasurer),	Dawn Fleming ,	Charlotte Perry

**3. Approval of Accounts.** The Chairman thanked Geoff for the reliable work on the accounts over the year. Geoff Gudgion reported that funds currently stood at a credit of £28,289.19 and distributed the accounts in full. The accounts were attached to the agenda and available at <https://hodgemoor.org.uk/hodgemoor-agm-20-november-2023/>.

Charlotte asked why there was the over £8000 difference in event receipts between 2022 and 2023. Geoff said it was because there had only been the Trec event in 2023 whereas in 2022 there had been both the dressage series and Barn Dance in addition to the Trec. In addition, the £8,780 gross income for events in FY 2001-2 came with £5,272 of costs, largely due to the barn dance. Net income from events in the previous year was £3,508. Liza Faircloth asked if this large amount was on an interest-bearing account and Geoff replied that now interest rates were rising it was worth exploring an interest bearing account and he would do this.

**4. Membership subscriptions.**

- Geoff had noted in his report that subscriptions were down from around 300 to 235. Susie said she had got behind with chasing up members who had one-off rather than recurring PayPal subscriptions. Some people actually cancel their PayPals, others pause, and it was time-consuming sorting out the reasons for this. Susie also had not chased up the yards recently for a current list of their liveries and she'll endeavour to do so. Francesca at Widmer annually sent an updated list which was very helpful.
- Anna Martin said that when she joined her yard, she had no idea that she had to join the Association to ride in the woods. Liza Faircloth said that all new liveries were made aware that they had to join in their contract with Manor Farm. Diana Bunyan said all yard managers should make it clear that liveries had to join if they rode in the Woods. Susie to ask yard managers for an updated list.
- Marcus took on the task of making a poster to put in the yards' tack rooms or coffee corners. He proposed A3 on light board so that they would be visible and last a year or more. Susie and

committee members will distribute these posters to the yards and put some in the wood. Francesca suggested that committee members when riding should wear a tabard saying "Riding Membership Check" or "Are you a member?"; then ask riders they meet if they are members and refer to Susie afterwards to check if they actually are.

- Marcus and Susie would check on why some members did not seem to be getting the Mailchimp emails. Emma Baker said there were ways of ensuring delivery. Geoff said he would look out for a app that could facilitate keeping track of membership.

## 5. Events

- **Hodgemoor Trec 2023:** After two postponements the annual Trec event had taken place on 30 April 2023 with 26 entrants, making a profit of £471.28.
- **Winter Dressage Series:** First in the 2023/2024 series would be on 17 December 2023 at Manor Farm. Widmer and Highclere will also hold one. Susie was waiting to hear from Oldefields. Geoff will ask Waylands. In response to a question Susie told Emma Baker that events were covered for 3<sup>rd</sup> party liability by the Association's adherence to the BHS Bridleways Association scheme (just at the event, not travelling to or back). Hodgemoor Trec 2024 would be on Easter Monday again, at Homefarm Orchard.
- **Quiz Night at Pub and/or Barn Dance.** Francesca had kindly volunteered to organise one or both of these events. She suggested doing a poll for members to see what they wanted. For the quiz Francesca proposed the White Hart Pub in Chalfont St Giles or the Magpie on the A355: the latter would give a better deal but Charlotte felt it would be better at the White Hart or one in one of our villages and that we know. Francesca would research for a possible February or early March evening. The meeting thought Jane Braithwaite's idea of making the quiz competitive between the yards could be a good motivation. Action Francesca

6. **Works on the Trails in the Hodgemoor Woods in 2024:** 370 metres of trail repairs were done in October 2019 costing £29,800 to which the Association contributed £15,300, about half. Forestry England agreed to pay half in 2019 because of their new regulations imposing on us a contractor which was more expensive than our regular one. With around £28 000 available, the Association could in 2024 repair 350 metres, if the rate is still £80/metre (unlikely).

- Marcus went through the **map with the 15 possible places for repairs**. See the attached map and a description of sites a through o. In principle the meeting agreed. Marcus asked the meeting if they felt a 2 metre width was really necessary. It was agreed to stick with 2 metres as not possible to go 2 abreast with one, and with the required camber for water run-off, a 1 metre width might wear out more quickly.
- An estimate of the number of metres would now be done, and a works proposal, established on the basis of priorities, sent to Forestry England for a **quotation**.
- Geoff, knowing that it was easier for contractors to focus on one area, suggested **priority** be given to the south-west corner at the Waylands entrance (site f). Liza agreed, particularly to get rid of the large puddle between the two posts which can be dangerous with a horse spooky about water.
- In respect of the corner on **Wickham Way** which gets so flooded (site a), Jo Read, the land owner, noted that Buckinghamshire Council is responsible for bridle path upkeep. As she had recently made contact with the correct person at the council, the Bridleways officer, she agreed to ask them if they could take on the work.
- **Repair of Badger and Rabbit holes on Wickham Way.** These repairs (the result of 6 years lobbying and interfacing with a dozen authorities including Natural England Badger Set Protection and Buckingham Badgers Group and paid for by Buckinghamshire Council, thank you) had worked well, making winter riding along the Wickham Way much better and safer (badger tunnels had been so close to the surface that horses hooves had been breaking through, at great risk of broken legs and death of the horse) .

- **Clearing of Grips.** The water run-offs were cleared for us by Frank Everest (Waylands Equestrian) and doing very well in keeping the paths free of water and therefore free of churned up mud.

7. **Volunteering.** Marcus said that although response to calls for volunteers was poor (only 3 or 4 each time), clearing parties had done well. We thanked Sheila Grimshaw and Adam Collier for their help.

8. **Collaboration with Cyclists and Walkers.** There were now 13 cyclist and 16 walker members. Francesca hoped there were ways of educating cyclists not to come quietly up behind. It was better to call out rather than ring a bell. Emma Baker said as so often both horse-riders and cyclists wore headphones, nobody could hear anything! She suggested that in the school cycling proficiency tests, how to treat horse-riders should be covered.

- Adam Collier, a keen cyclist, said for most cyclists, Hodgemoor would be just a small part of a much longer ride, so it would quite difficult to target those using the woods. He presumed it was a problem common to many areas. Marcus and Susie will meet with Adam to see if a communication plan could be set up, and with which cyclist groups.
- Dani Barrie, just elected to the committee, would prepare a leaflet targeting both walkers and cyclists, which she, as a frequent walker in Hodgemoor, would hand out. Marcus offered to handle the printing of the leaflet.

9. **Bicknell Cross Country Field and Tree Planting.** Marcus and Susie have decided to reduce the number of jumps in the XC course behind Homefarm Orchard. Keeping all the jumps in good condition is not worthwhile for the little use it has. Members can use it still, at no charge. Marcus and Susie were thinking of planting trees on their land. <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/> to increase the amount of CO2 converted back to Oxygen and Carbon, and thereby to contribute to saving the world. Liza said 800 young trees had been planted at Manor Farm under a similar scheme. Adam Collier offered to forward a link to additional information on tree planting schemes and has done so: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table>

10. **Any Other Business.**

Francesca asked if anyone wanted to be on her WhatsApp group that warned members if she was to be out with her **pony driving**, as she knows many horses are alarmed at the sight. Marcus and Susie yes please.

Susie said the Association had been holding its AGM on miserable November evenings for over 20 years: why not have it in early or late summer to encourage more people to come and make it even more of a social event? The meeting agreed so it was proposed to hold a general meeting at a suitable moment each spring. The Bicknells could host it at Homefarm Orchard although their living room would not be big enough for the sit-down part of the meeting if there were more than about 15 people. Does another member have a more spacious home to propose?