

Minutes of the seventh winter meeting of the

Scythe Association of Britain and Ireland

held on 28th January 2017 at North Beach, Heacham, Norfolk

Present: Phil Batten, Richard Brown (chair), Colin Close, Simon Fairlie, Michelle Laine, Jim McVittie, Charlotte Oliver, Dave Oxford, Chris Riley (minutes), Lee Wharton.

Apologies: Mark Allery, Gill Barron, Roger Creagh-Osborne, Mary Ellis, Jez Hastings, John Letts, Daisy Parsons, Fiona Pollock, Andi Rickard, Beth Tilston, Steve Tomlin, and 25 apologies on the SABI Facebook page.

1	Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting Matters arising from the minutes of the AGM in June 2016 are deferred to the next AGM in June 2017.	[Actions shown in this column]
2	Committee members and executive RB said that after five years as Chairman he is required to step down according to SABI's constitution. However he is entitled to stand for re-election, which he would like to do. SF proposed that RB be nominated again, which was seconded by DO. Similarly BT will step down from the Secretary role, but does not want to stand again. An alternative Secretary will therefore be sought for nomination at the next AGM. CR offered to take over from BT managing the Google groups. BT will continue working on the newly re-vamped web site (discussed later).	
3	Treasurer's Report CR reported on the SABI financial year 1 st January to 31 st December 2016. A summary of the accounts had been presented to members previously (by email on 21 st Jan). A full double-entry ledger is available for inspection at all times. Income from subscriptions (£814.12) is down by about £200. The surplus of £364.52 for the year brought the total assets on 31 st December 2016 to £2,382.98. A new expense from September 2016 was bank charges. Unity Trust Bank now charge £18 per quarter. Options for using a different bank were discussed, especially Co-operative Bank, Nationwide Building Society and Ecology Building Society. <u>Use of SABI funds</u> ST had suggested that ideas be discussed for appropriate uses of funds, such as bursaries, making a promotional film, or inviting an expert to the festival. JMcV said that whatever it is used for should have as wide a benefit as possible. For example something connected with the festival will benefit many visitors to that event, whereas as a bursary may only benefit one person. Other suggestions included funding of events or equipment. With regard to instructional videos, SF said that there already some very good ones out there, for example by Neil Dudman on peening.	CR to investigate banking options.

	SF added that The Scythe Shop has donated to scythe promotional ventures in Africa and India.	
4	<p>Membership Secretary Report</p> <p>CR commented on the drop in membership subscriptions. The main factor was lack of renewals. There is not a system to remind members to renew, and he suggests using the regional co-ordinators to do this. As well as providing that reminder, it would involve the regional co-ordinators more. ML added that some feedback would be required of who has responded, if more than one message was proposed, to avoid unnecessary duplication and confusion. CO added that members should know their status, whether lapsed or not.</p> <p>Automated repeat payments were suggested, but JMcV said that standing orders can be problematic. It was suggested that non-paid-up members be regarded as 'associate members'. An on-line payment facility on the revamped web site would also enhance subscriptions, because it would be much easier to pay.</p> <p><u>Developing membership</u></p> <p>CR said that the leaflet is now due a revision, and he will be making suggestions for this in due course.</p> <p>The revamped web site should also help membership [discussed later].</p> <p>CR said that the total number of members, including 'associate' members, is now over 200. RB added that there are nearly 200 members of the SABI Facebook group, but these are a different set of individuals, including some from around the world.</p>	<p>CR to use network of regional co-ordinators for renewals reminder</p> <p>CR to draft revision of leaflet.</p> <p>CR to post sub reminder on Facebook.</p>
5	<p>Windrow</p> <p>SF said that he had not produced an issue of the Windrow in the autumn, so the next is forthcoming in the spring. CR said that to assist with production, an inexpensive alternative to Adobe's InDesign DTP programme (but compatible with it) was soon to be available, namely Affinity Publisher. CC said that he uses the free open-source programme Scribus, and offered to assist with the next Windrow. CR said it should include changes in camping arrangements for the Green Scythe Fair, information which CR will obtain.</p> <p>A call for copy (deadline mid-March) should go out on Google group and Facebook. CO suggested an article on a young scyther. There was a discussion of what went onto Facebook and what went into the Windrow.</p>	<p>CC to assist with the next Windrow.</p> <p>CR to get GSF camping info for Windrow.</p> <p>RB to post call for copy on Facebook.</p>
6	<p>Internet communications</p> <p><u>Facebook</u></p> <p>RB had done some analysis of the activity on the SABI Facebook group, and said it was encouraging. It shows steady year on year increase in activity with a significant amount of 'joining in': 74 of 178 members have posted as authors at some point, 95/178 have added a comment at some time, and 125/178 have liked a post. [Full details below.]</p> <p>The Scything Improvers' Forum Facebook group is USA based and has a different tone, due to the different individuals taking part in it.</p>	

	Posts	Authors	Commentators	likers	comments	
2013	60	11	21	43	92	
2014	75	22	33	44	184	
2015	150	34	46	67	312	
2016	221	53	74	104	395	
overall	507	74	95	125	983	
	<p><u>Google Group</u></p> <p>JMcV said that there had been some good discussions on the Google group. There was still a slight problem with participants not realising that pressing the reply button will reply to the whole group, but it is better than it used to be.</p> <p>CR proposed that he take over from BT managing the Google group, as it will (being Membership Secretary) be easy for him to add new members.</p>					CR to take on Google group admin
7	<p>Regional co-ordinators</p> <p>JMcV suggested that co-ordinators, when communicating with members, send a copy of communications to other regional co-ordinators, to spread examples of how things can be communicated. Types of events were discussed, in particular hay making.</p> <p>The 'Mowers and Meadows' Google map, set up by ST has not been a success as not many individuals have been added to it. DO said that if more people get involved it can get to have exponential growth, and it might be worth revisiting. Perhaps there could be a question on members' application forms, asking if they are willing to be on the map.</p>					
8	<p>Green Scythe Fair</p> <p>CR described revised camping arrangements for scythers at the June event at Thorney Lakes. A larger 'scythers camp' will be more managed, and cost £5 per night. The Fair organisers and landowners aim to reduce overspill from the Thorney Lakes official camp site on the Saturday night. CR will see that the necessary information is broadcast beforehand. CO said that cars and tents don't mix, and that parking should be organised accordingly.</p> <p>SF wondered if it was possible to introduce cereal mowing to the event. For example a stand of rye could be planted, which is quite tall. It was thought that this might be considered in the future, but would be difficult at Thorney Lakes, and that ideally it would be a separate festival later in the year. CO added that Landmatters are starting to grow grains, and that an event might arise from that. In Wales there is the Welsh Grain Forum.</p> <p>CR asked if anyone had suggestions for a better barrier than a single line of rope around the competition area. There is an increasing risk of competition plots being damaged by people, children and dogs, especially on the Saturday evening. Big bale wrap (a fine mesh) and electric netting were suggested, as well as multiple strands of rope, and putting signs up. Posts with tensioned wire were also suggested.</p> <p>SF asked for feedback on what music to provide on the Saturday night of the fair. After a switch from the scythe tent to the main tent, it was felt that others, especially the LWA were benefiting much more, so perhaps they should organise the evening.</p>					CR to broadcast info about GSF camping CR to explore types of barrier, & make signs.

<p>9</p>	<p>Web site</p> <p>RB demonstrated a draft revised web site, with a different smarter format and better layout, but still with Wordpress. It was set up by BT and developed jointly with RB. CR asked what the time scale was, and if there were costs associated with this. RB was not sure so CR to contact BT with regard to costs. RB said the hope was that we could get it live before the summer mowing season but that there was still some work to be done. RB said it would be shared with the SABI committee group for feedback before then. Once the site is set up and linked to the scytheassociation.org domain, then other editors can log in and provide content.</p> <p>At some stage an on-line payment facility will be added. CR reported that he had found two potential alternatives to PayPal, one of which was a UK company called Nochex. ML said we should see what is used by lowimpact.org. CR would like further opinions on these options, so that when the web site is ready an appropriate facility can be embedded into it. CO offered to help with this.</p> <p>Fiona Pollock had sent in some questions regarding the SABI website. Many of the points she raised are being addressed by the new website</p> <p>CR said he had taken over from JL as contact for the UK2 domain hosting service. This will be renewed in February, but it is not clear whether the associated email addresses, which now attract a small fee, will need to be renewed as well. CR will discuss this with BT.</p>	<p>CR to ask BT re. cost implications</p> <p>RB to progress development of new website format to share with committee group.</p> <p>CR to prepare PayPal alternatives.</p> <p>RB to respond to FP.</p> <p>CR liaise BT and RB about SABI emails.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Real Meadows</p> <p>RB pointed out an article in the January magazine of the Royal Horticultural Society, which criticized casual use of the term 'meadow'. The article by Mark Spencer in the Comments section echoes previous discussion in the Google group.</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p>Scythe teaching</p> <p><u>Accreditation</u></p> <p>RB described a format of scythe beginners' course which he had developed to be accredited by UKRS (UK Rural Skills – a not-for-profit organisation). The initiative originated in a requirement that Thorney Levels Internal Drainage Board have for their staff training.</p> <p>RB's schedule is simple and not too prescriptive. Participants would get a certificate of attendance, but there is no assessment. SF wondered if it might become a wider requirement amongst organisations. Other teachers have broadly agreed with the idea, so long as it does not preclude courses which are not accredited</p> <p><u>Web site courses page</u></p> <p>With the changed format of the teachers' course at Thorney Lakes, now being labelled an improvers' course, FP and ST had asked about the validity of the asterisk by teachers' names on the SABI web site. SF said it was more important that teachers engaged in the scythe community than attend a single course. It was decided to keep the asterisk, and that the wording describing the course attended should be broadened.</p>	<p>RB to feedback on progress of UKRS accreditation.</p> <p>ST review courses page wording (consulting committee group/ teachers as needed).</p>

12	Equipment At other times over the weekend there would be discussions of: - comparing whetstones (with the Saurat newly added to the range) - blade covers (DO demonstrating his new design of cover) - peening jigs from Slovakia (original vs ground and polished) - pricing of scythe equipment (as sterling is falling in value)	
13	Any other business RB was thanked for providing the venue for the meeting and general hospitality.	
11	Date of next meeting AGM at the Green Scythe Fair, Saturday 10 th June 2017 [Sunday 11 th June 2017 – Green Scythe Fair Sat/Sun 24 th /25 th June 2017 – Wimpole scythe weekend]	

Summary of Action Points

Minute no.	Actions:
3	CR to investigate banking options.
4	CR to use network of regional co-ordinators for renewals reminder CR to draft revision of leaflet. CR to post sub reminder on Facebook.
5	CC to assist with the next Windrow. CR to get GSF camping info for Windrow. RB to post call for copy on Facebook.
6	CR to take on Google group admin
8	CR to broadcast info about GSF camping CR to explore types of barrier, & make signs.
9	CR to ask BT re. cost implications RB to progress development of new website format to share with committee group. CR to prepare PayPal alternatives. RB to respond to FP. CR liaise BT and RB about SABI emails.
11	RB to feedback on progress of UKRS accreditation. ST review courses page wording (consulting committee group/ teachers as needed).