

Minutes of the sixth winter meeting of the

Scythe Association of Britain and Ireland

held on 30th January 2016 at Collings Hanger Farm, Prestwood

Present: Kevin Austin, Gill Barron, Phil Batten, Richard Brown (chair), Mary Ellis, Simon Fairlie, Jez Hastings, David Kuegler, Simon Lamb, Jim McVittie, Charlotte Oliver, Dave Oxford, Arthur Richards, Andi Rickard, Chris Riley (minutes), Beth Tilston, Steve Tomlin, Lee Wharton.

Apologies: Mark Allery, John Letts, Gary Mason.

1	Matters arising from the minutes of the AGM (June 2015) RB confirmed the list of members of the Committee (first three being the executive officers): RB – Chair BT – Secretary CR – Treasurer and Membership Secretary ST – Training Co-ordinator Simon Damant – Safety Advisor Chris Hayes – Republic of Ireland representative MA PB JH JMcV JL AR	
2	Treasurer's Report CR reported on the SABI <u>financial year 1st January to 31st December 2015</u> . A summary of the accounts had been presented to members previously (by email on 16 th Jan). A full double-entry ledger is available for inspection at all times. Income from subscriptions at £1,010.00 is similar to the previous year. The surplus (£320.11) is down to almost half of the previous year, due to spending on promotional materials. These comprised of Sailflag banners, leaflets, and a further batch of enamel badges. A vote of thanks was given to the Treasurer.	
3	Membership Secretary Report CR reported that although the income from <u>subscriptions</u> was similar in 2015 to that in 2014, £240 of that is in effect additional income, due to the scheme offering 5 years membership for £40. The numbers of paid-up members (both new and renewed) is down by 23%. There also another 142 lapsed members, due to the lack of a good system to invite members to renew their membership. CR will be working on this, but also suggested that there should be a more convenient way of paying via the web site. JMcV mentioned the convenience of PayPal on the APT web site (www.bodgers.co.uk). CR has in 2015 put a new <u>membership information page</u> on the web site, and redesigned the membership card. RB asked what route new members were coming to SABI. CR replied that many were via courses run by (for example) RB where leaflets were distributed.	Action CR Invite lapsed members to renew.

	<p>GB added that a leaflet goes in every complete scythe kit sold by The Scythe Shop.</p> <p>SF wondered if the <u>benefits for members</u> were sufficient to keep members renewing, and what do new members get apart from a badge. RB said it was mainly the 'buy in' to the aims of SABI, and we should not be too worried about chasing renewals, as we have enough income at the moment to do what we need to do. CR said that if The Windrow was members only (it is received by many who never were members, totalling over 2,000 people) it would be a big incentive for people to join. BT said she has not heard of anyone not renewing because they were not getting sufficient from it.</p>	
	[Subsequent agenda items follow the core aims of SABI, on which discussion was invited.]	
4	<p>To enhance communication amongst mowers and between mowers and landowners and other sectors</p> <p>RB said that the email group (<i>ie</i> <u>Google group</u>) was good for longer discussion, whilst the <u>Facebook group</u> was good for short topical comments, photos and news of events. The Facebook group has seen a lot of activity, and it's inclusivity means it includes non-SABI-members and people from around the world. The total number in the group is over a hundred now. SF commented that the email communications have declined considerably. It is thought that the increased activity on Facebook is not detracting from use of the Google group. Further contributions to the group were invited to stimulate discussion.</p> <p><u>The Windrow</u> was voted the favourite method of communication by members. Sharing editing has been suggested in the past by SF, but would be dependent on them having and using the InDesign application. However contributions of copy, photos etc were eagerly sought.</p> <p>ST set up a <u>Google map</u> called Mowers and Meadows. It doesn't work properly and ST does not know why. For comparison the Heritage Craft Association run a similar map that does work. A google account is not required to pin your details on the map.</p> <p>SF thought that the <u>regional co-ordinators</u> should be more prominent on the web site. However ME added that expectations of what the regional co-ordinators do might be too high. There was a discussion of the role of the co-ordinators, how they relate to members, and their distribution around the country. ST suggested that co-ordinators report on activities more often, with articles on the web site blog page.</p>	Action BT set up a replacement map for SABI, linked from the web site.
5	<p>To promote the use of the scythe throughout Britain</p> <p>An improved <u>web site</u> has been proposed, mainly in terms of its organisation and look. Currently we already own the domain name, and the site is built on the wordpress.com platform. BT said that the plan was to move to wordpress.org, which allows for greater freedom and potential. There will be a cost involved in this. Options were discussed of front page layout, images, and page length.</p> <p>Scythe <u>festivals</u> now include the Scythe and Cider Festival at Wakehurst Place as a regular event.</p> <p>CO commented on the paucity of female scythers competing at the Green</p>	Action BT produce a proposal for revised web site

	<p>Scythe Fair in Somerset last year. Many females were active but not keen on competing. The 'Slow-Mow' team was cited as a good example of a demonstration of quality mowing and style, rather than competing on speed. A major hinderance to this kind of demonstration is the shortage of grass available at Muchelney. SF said that also it must be a good show for the public, and suggested synchronised mowing. How to get spectators close to the action was discussed, whilst balancing safety considerations. SF suggested repeating the scythe-versus-strimmer event in four different scenarios.</p> <p>CO said that the small loudhailer system was inadequate at Muchelney. A more effective tannoy system will have a cost, but would help with safety announcements as well as entertainment. SF is already looking into this.</p>	
6	<p>To promote the advantages of the scythe to government, local authorities and national organisations</p> <p>RB said that actually SABI members have achieved a lot, in terms of publicity, with opportunities brought on by TV exposure having been exploited .</p> <p>A 'publicity event' was suggested at the last meeting in June, but many individuals are already doing local shows etc, representing SABI and promoting the scythe.</p> <p>JH proposed that two new Sailflag banners were purchased, which was approved. GB should decide on the colours again.</p>	Action GB acquire two new banners
7	<p>To improve mowing skills through training and the broadcast of information</p> <p>A previously proposed <u>teachers' workshop</u> has not yet occurred. The aim of such a gathering would be to share experiences, and best done at an event separate from existing festivals, before or after the main season. DK offered his land as a venue.</p> <p>RB dealt with an issue about who should be teaching in a particular area, and whether any teachers were approved by SABI. As a result RB produced some guidelines, which he suggests now go on the web site.</p> <p>ST will be re-doing the <u>courses page</u> on the SABI web site, so up-to-date entries are requested from course teachers for 2016. Teachers providing entries on this should be SABI members.</p> <p>DK said that ST should be congratulated on the publication of his book 'Learn to scythe', and that acknowledgement be made for its contirbution to scythe teaching.</p> <p>[SF said that the <u>masterclass</u> at the Green Scythe Fair last year was unsatisfactory and lost money. There will be a fuller discussion of this at the meeting on the following day (31st January) which will be minuted separately.]</p>	Action RB to liaise with ST & DK
8	<p>To maintain standards of manufacture and supply of scythes and ancilliary equipment</p> <p>[Falci blades and various whetstone supplies will be discussed a the meeting on the following day (31st January) which will be minuted separately.]</p>	
9	<p>To promote the study of the history of the scythe and allied technologies</p> <p>[No further items for discussion on this core aim.]</p>	

<p>10</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>10.1 CO made a request for letters of support for renewal of planning permission at Landmatters in Devon. The site includes 23 acres of meadow some of which is scythed, and there are scythe (and other) courses.</p> <p>10.2 There was a discussion of visits to Transylvania, as a model of haymaking and wildflower meadows.</p> <p>10.3 RB has been developing a hybrid snath based on English snath, but to fit continental blades. He will have examples available for inspection and discussion after the meeting.</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>AGM at the Green Scythe Fair, Saturday 11th June 2016</p>	