



# WARWICKSHIRE FARMERS MARKETS LTD

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## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting on Monday 15 July 2008** **At Hilltop Farm, Hunningham Hill**

**Present:** Under the Chairmanship of **Mike Wilkes** were the following members of the working party: Helen Simpson and Anne Beaumont

**Also Present:** Gary Whitcombe, Gill Barber, Grenville Barber, Jayne Mckay, Roger Dick, Linda Ridgley, Bob Wagstaff, Maureen Carter, James Carter, Russell Dean, Gordon Bull, P Drinkwater, Richard Rawlings, Ian Robertson, Richard Lainchbury, Wendy Lainchbury, Robert Peachey, Mr & Mrs Mulholland, Angela Skears, Alex Chambers, Tony & Lynn Drane, Sarah Edwards, Lynda Whitcombe, John Pilsworth, John Ellis, Nigel New, Karen New.

**Apologies** for absence were received from: Tom Fox

**Minutes** of the previous meeting were signed as a true copy by the Chairman following their publication and distribution in May 2007.

### **Chairman's Report**

Mike Wilkes begins by explaining why the AGM is later than normal this year: around Christmastime the Group discovered new regulations which increase our liability so the accreditation process has had to be reviewed in detail and everything needs to be detailed, documented and follow a process. Liability extends beyond the producer concerned to members of the committee. Mike is standing down as Chairman because accreditation has become even more important. Tighter times may be coming and producers need to be extra sure that when the customer purchases from our markets that they are getting exactly what we say they are. MW says that we need to accredit everyone again which will carry a cost, more of that later. MW feels that public confidence is waning, not in Warwickshire but elsewhere so producers need to look at themselves closely and see what more they can do.

At last year's AGM, Anne Beaumont talked about a "Shop Window on Farmers Markets" at the Kenilworth show. It was a success last year and at this year's



Kenilworth show, Sarah Edwards won an award for the stall with most appeal. Our attendance at the show is one example of how much has been done to support Kenilworth FM. A great deal has also been done to support Warwick FM, including the new banner, and there has recently been an increase in number attending. MW mentions the Stratford Food Festival and thanks EG Skett & Co in particular for ensuring our prime position. We launched the “SuperSock” recycling initiative for plastic bags at the Food Festival but dropped it after about a month of putting up the socks as most of our customers already use their own bags. MW says that his plastic bag usage has gone down a lot.

Leamington FM is ticking over quite nicely. There will be a 2 day Food Festival in the town at the end of August and if anyone has ideas for a headline grabber for that event, please to let us know.

Southam FM is unfortunately still struggling with customer and stalls dwindling. John Ellis is invited to comment and says that he thinks the town council has lost interest in the market. MW thanks John for his continuing hard work to support Southam and leaves the decision about whether or not to continue Southam FM which John.

Mike finishes with his usual request for more volunteers to come forward either to help or even just to supply new ideas.

### **Secretary’s Report**

The secretary, Helen Simpson, introduces her report by summarising promotional and marketing activity for the year 07/08. She mentions:

Our own produced calendars  
New Banners, where permitted  
New A Board  
Road signs, erected by E G Skett and by producers  
Rugby FM radio advertising for 7 months  
Kenilworth show  
Warwickshire County Council website and libraries  
Stratford Food Festival  
Jute Bags

She then says that [www.warwickshirefarmersmarkets.co.uk](http://www.warwickshirefarmersmarkets.co.uk) has recently been updated and all details should now be correct. If anyone’s are incorrect then they should please let her know.

Finally, HS talks about accreditation statistics for the past year. Accreditation is constantly evolving but we continue to have a fairly consistent 60 accredited producers. 1 is pending and approximately 15 new producers have joined the group in the past year. Not all producers who join necessarily attend markets though; some are on waiting lists.



## **Financial Report**

Anne Beaumont presented the accounts to the chairman for approval which were duly signed, seconded by Gary Whitcombe

We started the year with a balance of £4260.20

Income consisted of levies on your stalls, which came to £8579.75 in the year and accreditation to £3310.00 and the profit made on the popular jute bags which came to £280.00

Expenditure was made up £4038.28 on promotional material and advertising including the calendars, banners, putting out and taking down of signage and seven months of radio advertising for Rugby. £6135.00 went on office costs and staffing, £70.00 for the alcohol licence for Stratford upon Avon market and £30 for the annual return to Companies House. Public liability insurance was £463.05 and the rental of the hall for the Promotions Committee meeting cost £15.

We finished the year with a balance of £5678.62

In the year 07/08 income remained about static although for the first year ever, we received no contribution from public bodies. Expenditure upon advertising and promotional activities rose by a whopping 74% over the previous year whilst operational costs decreased by 23% year on year.

In conclusion, I think any individual or company would be proud to claim the same efficacy and efficiency that has been shown by Warwickshire Farmers Markets this year and I hope you will join with me in thanking the trustees of the company for their careful management of our precious resources.

In addition, AB proposed that the accreditation fee be increased to £60 p.a. This was seconded by Gordon Bull and carried by vote. The fee has not been increased since April 2005.

AB also proposes to do away with seasonal variations in accreditation. This is seconded by Grenville Barber and passed by vote.

A final point of financial housekeeping: when accreditation invoiced are sent out, prompt payment would be appreciated. There will not be any reminders and late payers will forfeit their membership of the group which will be enforced by market operators.



## **Market Operators Report**

Rugby Market Operator's Report from William, read out by Mike Wilkes:

“In general I feel the farmers market in Rugby is doing very well. In this present financial climate it is gratifying to find out that all (most) traders are reporting doing a good trade. I have long believed that the people of Rugby will spend their money on quality and the farmers markets traders provide just that.

I would like a few more stalls selling products that we don't have at the moment but Mike Wilkes knows that I will not duplicate anything we already sell.

Knowing how much the local people appreciate and support the farmers market I would like suggest that we run two markets per month rather than one. I'm sure that if enough traders were to support this notion, in time, it could prove successful. I believe I could influence Robin Richter of Rugby First to a trial period where a reduced rent could be applied in order to get such a market established. There are a number of issues that would need to be agreed but I do feel it is worth exploring and I would suggest the second Thursday of each month would be the ideal day for us. Please mull it over.”

Jayne McKay reports on behalf of E G Skett & Co. She says that in the new accreditation producers will be asked to state a “primary product” and secondary products. When a producer wants to bring along a secondary product they will have to ask the market operator for permission.

Also:

- Skett vehicles are being converted to run on LPG.
- New jute back sheets will soon be available to sell to the producers for them to keep.
- E G Skett will be updating all the details they hold on producers.
- Pre-payment of stalls is required 7 days in advance of a market and is non-transferable.
- Stratford and Leamington are both great FMs.
- Kenilworth is down to 4 stalls. There has been feedback that producers would support a Sunday market. Suggests September to Christmas trial. Thinks the market would attract the professionals who are not there weekdays and who go to bigger towns on Saturdays. WDC would help with the re-launch.
- Warwick FM is up a bit but still needs more support from producers. Market will move around the corner from where it is at present to a better location.
- Parking in Stratford has to stop and will be stopped with immediate effect.
- Leamington Food Festival replaces the Stratford Food Festival this year. Would like to see producers attending.
- Next year will be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Farmers Markets in Warwickshire and we should all plan to do something big to mark that.

Chairman thanks Jayne.



## **Open Session**

Richard Rawlings spoke about the possibility of Kenilworth FM being on a Sunday. He says that a large café bar will be opening there. The café supports local food procurement so there may be a possibility of cross-promotion. The café is a customer of Bread & Co so Richard volunteers to speak to them about this.

Brendan Mulholland relates an incident which occurred in Kings Norton to emphasise the importance of maintaining accreditation standards to create good business at a FM. He also compliments E G Skett on good running of their markets.

Alex Chambers says that he is often asked about about more variety on FMs and says he doesn't think customers know what accreditation means and what it involves.

Gordon Bull asks about accreditation certificates. Mike Wilkes says that it is in progress.

Bob Wagstaff suggests that the group changes its name so that we differentiate ourselves from other FMs.

Richard Rawlings suggests that we call ourselves "accredited" on all our literature whilst Gordon Bull suggests that we refer to all unaccredited markets as something like "Community Markets".

Gary Whitcombe compliments Stratford FM in particular for maintaining its ethics since its inception and Jayne McKay says that anyone who is unhappy at Kings Norton FM should come to Kenilworth instead as it is on the same day.

Bob Peachey asks why we would want to change the day of Kenilworth market rather than support the few producers who have supported that market all along. Mike Wilkes explains that we have been doing that but it is now down to four producers and E G Skett can't afford to keep it going in its present state.

Grenville Barber suggests that if Southam ceases to operate then maybe we amalgamate Kenilworth and Southam FMs.

Alex Chambers observes that more and more weekday FMs are either ceasing trading or moving to the weekends.

John Ellis expresses the opinion that Sunday could work as that is now a shopping day like any other and Karen New also speaks in support of a Sunday FM.



## **Elections**

As required by the memorandum and articles of the charity, Gary Whitcombe offered his resignation as a Director. Anne Beaumont then proposed that Richard Rawlings be appointed a director in his stead which was seconded by Gordon Bull.

Mike Wilkes resigns as Chairman and Richard Rawlings proposed that Bob Wagstaff be elected Chairman, this was seconded by Richard Lainchbury.

A Vice-Chairman was still required and Mike Wilkes was nominated for this by Bob Wagstaff, seconded by Karen New.

## **Close**

Mike Wilkes thanked Gordon Bull for fantastic support as Vice Chair in the beginning and ever since. Thanked Steve Dawkes in absentia for his work at the outset. Also Tom Fox in absentia for support in the early days and Caroline Ellis for lots of hard work as the secretary when it was still a voluntary position. Gary Whitcombe as Vice Chair then as a director at a time when it was a real struggle to get people interested. Ian Fowler in absentia and Karen New spearheaded a new involvement of producers in the running of the group. Roger Dick has always been supportive of us and contributes to all our meetings helping us to look outside our scope as producers to see other, bigger issues. Anne Beaumont for invaluable support and her passion for farmers markets. Sarah Edwards, Bob Wagstaff, Richard Rawlings, a good relationship with Sketts in general and Russell in particular – to all of these, a big thank you. William at Rugby helped with the re-launch of Rugby when it moved to its present location, which was quite difficult and William consistently has 16/17 stalls, all of them selling something different, all of this on a Thursday, that is quite an achievement. Finally Mike Wilkes thanks Helen Simpson for all that she has done to support him and encourage him in the 6 years that they have worked together.

Gordon Bull asks to respond by saying that Mike has been Chairman for 7 of the 9 years of Farmers Markets existence. That we owe him an enormous debt. In the beginning he was a “rookie, unconfident chairman” who has transformed into “a very cool customer indeed”. Hear hear.

Mike Wilkes thanked everybody for attending and the AGM was declared closed.