

EWELL HORTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 14 March 2017 at 7.30pm

1. HON CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

The Chairman welcomed 42 members to the 2017 AGM of the Ewell Horticultural Association and thanked Margaret Angus for taking the minutes.

He explained that unfortunately the committee has had to make some very difficult decisions recently which he would expand on later in his address.

It was with deep regret that the Chairman informed all present of the death of our President, Yash Gorsoy, in April 2016 after a long illness. Yash will be best remembered as a prolific exhibitor of his roses. The committee have nominated Tony Field to be our next President, and Tony has gratefully accepted the nomination, his election will be confirmed later on in these proceedings.

The current membership is 1335. The Chairman thanked Roger Bellingham, our registrar, who does a marvellous job behind the scenes, keeping track of all our members and covering for newsletter deliveries where road stewards are not available.

Our membership has reduced significantly over the last 10 years, and so has our income, consequently we have decided to increase the cost of membership to £2 per annum, the first major increase in 55 years. This will be in effect from 2018.

The bedding plants sale will be on Saturday May 13th, many thanks to Les Smith and his overworked band of helpers. Order forms can be given to Les at the AGM, at the show on April 1st or posted to be received by 3rd April.

The Chairman thanked Lynne Mason for all her hard work as our Secretary, particularly as Lynne has taken on more work, in the absence of other committee members. Similarly he thanked Les Smith, as our treasurer.

The trips and outings continue to be very popular part of the association's activities. The Chairman thanked Brenda Allen and Pauline Horne, who organised four very successful trips during 2016.

The first trip was on 26th April, to the Savill Garden in Windsor and Warren House in Kingston and was enjoyed by 33 members. There was an interesting talk on the history of Warren House and then a talk by Andrew Fisher-Tomlin, a garden designer, about the Veitch Garden, created in honour of the famous plant hunter, whose nursery once occupied the Coombe Estate. Afterwards all were treated to a delicious afternoon tea in the house.

On 24th May, 38 members went to see Prospect House, Derek Jarman's garden in Dungeness, which has a unique shingle garden with salt-tolerant plants. That was followed by lunch and a look round Rye in the afternoon. On the way back there was visit to Madrona Nursery near Tenterden.

52 members enjoyed a 4 day trip to Suffolk from 23rd to 26th June, staying at the Best Western Brome Grange Hotel in Eye. There were visits to Beth Chatto's garden, East Ruston Old Rectory, Wootton Plants and an antique centre, among others, as well as a trip to Southwold.

49 members travelled to Arundel on 15th July to visit the castle, still occupied by the Duke of Norfolk. There was plenty of time to explore the interesting town of Arundel. This was the day before the Duke's son was to be married and the house and cathedral were beautifully decorated with flowers in readiness for the event.

Pauline and Brenda arranged a Christmas lunch for 8th December at the County Restaurant at the Abode Hotel in Canterbury. Everyone enjoyed the meal and were able to also visit the cathedral and Christmas market in this quaint old town.

For 2017, the 4 day trip will be to Derbyshire, staying at the Hallmark Derby Midland hotel for 3 nights from Friday 30th June to Monday 3rd July. Among the gardens to be visited are Haddon Hall, Felley Priory and Waterperry, as well as a couple of private gardens, plus a visit to Matlock and Bakewell on 2 days. 41 members have already booked.

Details and the booking form for the day trips this year are in the February/March newsletter.

Also planned are trips to Borde Hill in Sussex together with Southon Plants, a small nursery in Surrey, on 28th April. There are 38 bookings for this trip so there is still plenty of availability.

On 10th July there is a visit to a 5 acre private garden in Kent called Timbers and also Great Comp which has a well-known salvia nursery. This trip has proved to be popular and there are only 3 places left.

Finally on 23rd August there is a trip to Cranborne Manor in Dorset which also has a very good garden centre. 41 members have booked for this trip so there are some places left.

Brenda and Pauline also plan to book another Christmas lunch and they are currently looking at suitable venues. Brenda and Pauline hoped that everyone enjoyed the trips and they both appreciate all the thank-you notes they receive and welcome any feedback or suggestions from members.

The Chairman continued saying that Association staged four well-supported shows in 2016, with the attendances comparable with previous years, however the number of entries has diminished.

This brought the Chairman to another change that the committee has had to implement. The number of shows from 2018 onwards will be reducing from 4 to 3. This will be accomplished by cutting out the Late Autumn Show and moving the Autumn Show to the middle of September. This has been necessary due to the reducing number of entries for the October Show, a shortage of volunteers willing to work at all the shows and the greater workload on all the current volunteers during the year.

The Chairman thanked Terry Eddowes for all her hard work in the absence of a Show Secretary.

The quality of the catering at our Shows continues to be excellent and frequently commended, congratulations to Dawn Simms and her team. The Chairman personally thanked all those who help with the catering at the Shows.

He also thanked all the members of the committee for their hard work during the year. In addition, he thanked all the helpers at our Shows, flower distribution and Potting Shed. In particular, he thanked Tim and Thelma Goldsmith, who although not members of the committee, both have been a tremendous help to the Association, especially at the Flower Shows and Potting Shed.

As recorded at last years' AGM, Kathy Alexander wished to step down as Domestic Secretary and editor of the newsletter. Well, Kathy is still doing both and the Chairman thanked Katherine Alexander for her hard work in the single-handed preparation and setting out of the current newsletters and her dedication as Domestic Secretary at our Shows, however the positions are still vacant, so if anyone is interested in either post, please contact the Chairman or any member of the committee.

He went on to thank all those involved in the distribution of the newsletters, in particular Anne Salt and all the Road Stewards.

Thanks must also go to Jane Hoddy. Jane has been invaluable in finding speakers for our talks. However, although we no longer have a talk's secretary, we have a full programme of talks this year; please consult your membership card and newsletter; well done Jane!

Also a deserved mention and thanks to Beryl Smith and Tracey Ross, who provide the refreshment for the talks.

The Potting Shed continues to be reasonably competitive on certain lines and is open on selected Sundays between 10 and 12, details of the openings can found on members' current membership card. Many thanks go to all our helpers at the Potting Shed.

However due to circumstances beyond our control, it has been decided to cease trading at the Potting Shed at Ewell Court House in 2018. This difficult decision was not taken lightly and was due to a number of factors:-

- a) The decision by EEBC to raise our rent initially by 250%, which would mean eventually we would be paying more rent than income received.
- b) A significant decrease in sales at the Potting Shed with fewer members purchasing.
- c) Increased difficulty in getting suitable volunteers to man the Potting Shed, putting more pressure on the existing ones, none of whom are getting any younger!
- d) No longer able to compete with local garden centres etc. which open 7 days a week all year round.

Please keep an eye on your Newsletters for further details and 'Sales' on our existing stock.

Finally, thanks to Gordon Norris and Brian Angus for their behind the scenes activities and Margaret Angus as our Publicity Officer.

So in closing the Chairman re-iterated that the committee is always in need of people to join, in particular, the key offices of Talks Secretary and Domestic Secretary, but anyone just willing to join our now overworked committee and volunteers would be most welcome.

The Chairman invited questions on his report:

Bob Hancock was very concerned about the decision to close the Potting Shed and wondered what the Association would 'have left to sell if we got rid of the Potting Shed?' The Chairman replied that we will still sell plants at our Shows and the annual plant distribution which are both always well supported. In addition, we will be offering members discounts from local traders as well as the opportunity to attend the talks on a variety of subjects and trips to interesting places around the country.

The Chairman went on to explain that we will sell off most of the current Potting Shed stock during 2017 so as to reduce the space we occupy and that Vat is included in the rent we pay. Bob Hancock thought that if we increased our membership then it would mean more people would patronise the Potting Shed. The Chairman responded that with well over a thousand members now who don't use the Potting Shed we would 'be throwing good money after bad' and continue making a loss. One member interjected that it was clear that the Potting Shed was no longer viable. The Chairman continued that there were fewer volunteers willing and

able to help load. The Chairman emphasised that this matter had been thoroughly discussed by the Committee and all had agreed that closing the Potting Shed and cutting the Late Autumn Show had been very difficult but necessary decisions.

Following the AGM, the Chairman invited members to stay and hear a talk by Ian Tilbury, a member of the East Surrey Badger Protection Society, entitled "All about Badgers".

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM – 16 March 2016

Acceptance of Minutes: proposed – Dawn Simms, seconded – Mary Wood. Accepted

3 MATTERS ARISING

None

4 HON TREASURER'S REPORT AND ACCEPTANCE OF ACCOUNTS

Les Smith talked members through the Accounts for the year ended 30 November 2016 and explained that red ink indicated a loss. On the Income & Expenditure account he stated that the Potting Shed had a closing stock of £600 less than the opening stock and had made a loss of £461 with a lot of stock unsold. On 1 May there had been a sale when many less popular items had been sold off. On the Balance sheet he emphasised that the Committee's aim was to rundown the capital for the benefit of EHA's members at the approximate rate £1,000 pa.

The Treasurer continued that the subscriptions received from members had been £300 less than in the previous year. The good news this year was that membership was likely to stay at around the same level as last year. The Association had received the full year interest of £400 on the capital invested in a Building Society account, whereas previously we had received minimal interest from a Bank.

The Treasurer praised Brenda Allen and Pauline Horne who had balanced the books on the outings with a loss of only £46 on an annual turnover of £20,000. The Treasurer emphasised that as it was not the aim of the outings to produce a profit.

Overall EHA had an operating deficit of £1,284 in the year to 30 November 2016 and the Treasurer drew attention to the item under Exceptional Expenses. These were to celebrate our 150 years as a local community group, operating out of the dairy at Ewell Court House. The Ewell Court House Organisation (a local community Group supporting the house) had appealed for additional funding from local user groups to enhance the facilities by building steps to give direct access from the house to the lawn & lake.

The Treasurer was praised for all his hard work in managing the finances during the year and for his preparation of the Annual Accounts. Their acceptance was proposed by Tony Field and seconded by Gordon Norris. All in favour.

The Treasurer invited questions on the accounts:

A Lady member asked for an explanation about who took the decision regarding EHA's contribution towards the 'steps' at Ewell Court House. The Treasurer stated that this was agreed by the Committee in 2015 as a donation, but was not paid until 2016. The Lady was not familiar with the house and grounds so the Treasurer explained, to her and to other members not familiar with Ewell Court, that the steps were to be an additional feature for hirers but unfortunately they had taken much longer to build than had been anticipated.

Bob Hancock said that EHA should have promised to contribute to the steps when the work was complete rather than give the money upfront. The Treasurer responded that he had added a condition that EHA would require the return of their donation if the work was not completed within one year.

Brian Angus suggested that our funds would be better invested in purchasing suitable storage accommodation rather than renting a garage; the Treasurer considered that this might be worth pursuing.

Another member enquired about the cost of printing the Handbook. The Treasurer responded that half of the costs of printing the two year Handbook were posted to the Year 1 accounts and the other half to Year 2.

5 FLORAL ART GROUP REPORT

Sheila Stracy, Floral Art Group Chairman, read her report:

'The Flower Club continues to survive and 42 members have re-joined this year plus 2 new members. This is a good number for our club as we have mostly workshop evenings.

Last year we tackled making a 'Pot et Fleur', a topiary tree, pew ends and several other designs. We also had a visiting teacher showing us a Horizontal design and two demonstration evenings by Area Demonstrators. Those were entitled 'That will come in handy one day' and 'By Candle Light'. We also started off the year with a demonstration of flowers and poems by Sheila and Pete entitled 'Home and Away'.

The Horticultural Shows went well but I am still hoping for more Novices.

Elsie Price held her usual Garden Party and Doreen Chambers held a Coffee Morning, they were both blessed with fine weather and raised an incredible sum of money for their chosen charities. These Ladies work so hard to achieve this. Well done to both of them.

We took part in Floramania, the Wisley Flower Show and the Woking Area Show.

I hope our Flower Club will continue to grow and we will enjoy plenty of fun flowers and friendship.'

6 ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

The Committee nominated Tony Field, a long standing member, as Honorary President. The proposal was seconded by Tim Goldsmith and passed by the members present. Tony Field thanked members for electing him as Honorary President.

7 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Les Smith took the chair at this point; it was proposed by Lynne Mason that Dave Tarrant be elected as Honorary Chairman, seconded by Terry Eddowes. This was passed by a show of hands. Dave Tarrant thanked the members present for voting him as Association Chairman for another year.

8 ELECTION OF HON SECRETARY

Lynne Mason was proposed by Terry Eddowes and seconded by Gordon Norris. All in favour.

9 ELECTION OF HON TREASURER

Les Smith was proposed by Gordon Norris and seconded by Mary Wood. All in favour.

10 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The Chairman introduced Tracey Ross as the new Show Secretary and expressed his appreciation for coming forward and joining the committee. Tracey was proposed by Dawn Newman and seconded by Tim Goldsmith. The Chairman explained that Tracey had already put in lots of work setting up in computerising the Show entries so members would from now on be able to email their entries as well as enter by phone. This procedure would greatly assist the processing of points into prize money on the Show day for the Treasurer.

The following were elected en bloc:

Sales Secretary	Roger Sheffield	Equipment Officer	Gordon Norris
Registrar	Roger Bellingham	Publicity Officer	Margaret Angus
Catering Officer	Dawn Simms		

There were no nominations for Vice Chairman, Assistant Treasurer, Lecture Secretary, Newsletter Editor or Domestic Secretary. The Officers named above were proposed by Beryl Smith and seconded by Brenda Allen. All in favour.

11 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Terry Eddowes (Show Secretary's Assistant)

Sheila Stracy (Floral Art Representative)

Jane Hoddy

The Members named above were proposed by Beryl Smith and seconded by Brenda Allen. All in favour.

12 ELECTION OF HON AUDITOR

The Association no longer has an Auditor and it was confirmed that we do not need an Auditor.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Lady member enquired about the timing of the bedding plants collection in mid-May and asked why the plants could not be available earlier in the month. The Chairman replied that the Nursery Man would not deliver before the middle of May because of the possibility of frost.

Bob Hancock suggested that the Committee ought to charge for entry to the Shows as selling an event too cheap indicated that it would not be very good. The Chairman reminded members that people could contribute by purchasing raffle tickets on entry and considered that charging an entry fee would discourage visitors. Other members supported this view.

There being no further questions the meeting closed at 8.26pm.