

EWELL HORTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 14th March 2023 at 7.30pm

PRESENT: David Tarrant (Chairman), Leslie Smith (Treasurer), Lynne Mason (Secretary), Tracey Ross (Show Secretary), Dawn Simms (Catering Officer), Jane Hoddy (Talks Secretary), Roger Bellingham (Registrar), Beryl Smith (Domestic Secretary) plus 27 members

1. CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen. Welcome to the 2023 AGM of the Ewell Horticultural Association.

My thanks to Lynne Mason for taking the minutes to-night.

Our current membership is approximately 950. I would therefore like to thank Roger Bellingham, our registrar, who does an incredible job behind the scenes, keeping track of all our members and covering for newsletter deliveries where road stewards are not available. But where Roger has covered for Road Stewards, he cannot be expected to carry on indefinitely, so an appeal has been issued for new Road Stewards and Distributors in the current newsletter.

I would like to thank Lynne Mason for all her hard work as our Secretary, similarly I would also like to thank Les Smith, as our treasurer.

We had only 2 shows in 2022. Both shows were well attended with a good number of entries. However, we unfortunately had to cancel the Summer Show, due to a "Covid Infection" amongst the majority of our committee members and helpers.

Many thanks must go to Tracey Ross for all her excellent work as our Show Secretary. I would also like to thank Tracey for her invaluable help with the single handed collation of the newsletter for onward distribution to the road stewards. Unfortunately Tracey is moving away from the area, but will be continuing as Show Secretary for rest of the year. We have issued an appeal for a replacement in the current newsletter. We wish Tracey all the best and "Bon Voyage" and we will miss her greatly.

The quality of our catering at the shows continues to be excellent, congratulations to Dawn Simms and her team. I personally would like to thank all those who help with the catering at the shows.

I would also like to thank all the members of the committee for their hard work during the year. In addition, I would like to thank all our volunteers and helpers at the shows. In particular, Tim and Thelma Goldsmith, although not on the committee, both have been a tremendous help to the association, especially at the Flower Shows and other events.

Also thanks to Katherine Alexander for her hard work in the single-handed preparation and setting out of the newsletters, however we have recently issued an appeal for a volunteer to take over the role.

Many thanks to Beryl Smith, our domestic secretary, for all her preparation and help at the shows.

Additionally thanks to all those involved in the distribution of the newsletters and all the road stewards.

Thanks also to Anne-Marie and Fred Evans for their help, particularly for their involvement in the society's Christmas Cards sent to all our Road Stewards and distributors.

Many thanks to Jane Hoddy. Jane has been invaluable in finding speakers for our talks, Jane hopes to organise more talks for later in the year, however we have temporally suspended the talks programme due to recent poor attendances. We are reviewing the situation, so please keep an eye on your newsletters and our website.

Finally, many thanks to Brian Angus for all his help at the shows and behind the scenes activities and Margaret Angus as our long standing Publicity Officer and Minutes Secretary, unfortunately Margaret has decided to retire from these posts and consequently will be greatly missed.

So in closing, we are, as always, in great need of people to join the committee or just volunteer to help in whatever capacity they feel best suited, especially at our shows. Thank you.

Dave Tarrant.

Total 35 people present at AGM.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM – 8th March 2022

Acceptance of the minutes from the 2022 AGM was proposed by Beryl Smith and seconded by Roger Bellingham. All were in favour.

3. MATTERS ARISING

None.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT AND ACCEPTANCE OF ACCOUNTS

Copies of the 2021/22 Income & Expenditure Accounts and the Balance Sheet, all of which had been approved by the Committee, were available at the meeting. The Treasurer talked members through the finances.

The Potting Shed used to make a small profit but we are now in the position of needing to sell off the remaining stock below cost price, thus converting stock into cash.

Getting speakers for the Talks has become increasingly expensive and lower attendance recently means that these run at a loss. We lose money on the Shows as well. As shown on the Balance Sheet, we are subsidising these and slowly running down the money held in the Building Society account.

A couple of questions were asked. Firstly, what would happen to the finances if EHA were to fold? The Committee would make a decision as to what should happen to the money (most of which was originally a donation), and this would be put to the members. Secondly, was it possible for us to find cheaper venues? We need to be based in Ewell, the venues we use are an appropriate size for us, are convenient and there is adequate parking.

The Treasurer was thanked for all his work in managing the finances. Their acceptance was proposed by Dawn Simms and seconded by Clive Long. All in favour.

5 FLORAL ART GROUP REPORT

Sheila Stracy, Floral Art Group Chairman, was unable to attend. The Floral Art Secretary gave a brief report. The group meetings have changed from evenings to afternoons as Sheila Stracy can no longer attend in the evening. Prior to Covid the group had about 50 members, now there are around 30. They are all encouraged to enter for the Shows, even as beginners. It was noted that virtually all recreational groups have lost members since the pandemic.

6. ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

The Committee has nominated Tony Field, a longstanding member, for a sixth year as our Honorary President. The proposal was seconded by Dave Tarrant and approved by all the members present.

7. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Les Smith took the chair at this point; Dawn Simms proposed that Dave Tarrant be elected as Honorary Chairman, seconded by Roger Bellingham. This was passed by a show of hands.

8 ELECTION OF SECRETARY

Lynne Mason was proposed by Beryl Smith and seconded by Dawn Newman. All in favour.

9 ELECTION OF TREASURER

Leslie Smith was proposed by Dave Tarrant and seconded by Roger Bellingham. All in favour.

10. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following were elected en bloc:

Registrar	Roger Bellingham	Publicity Officer	(vacant)
Catering Officer	Dawn Simms	Show Secretary	Tracey Ross (for 2023)
Talks Secretary	Jane Hoddy	Domestic Secretary	Beryl Smith
Vice Chairman	(vacant)		

The Officers named above were proposed by Dawn Newman and seconded by Caroline Lang. All in favour.

11. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The following were elected en bloc:

Diana Carpenter p.p. Sheila Stracey (Floral Art Representative)
(vacant) (Minutes Secretary)

The Committee Members named above were proposed by Dave Tarrant and seconded by Dawn Newman. All in favour.

A query was raised as to whether members could be co-opted to the vacant posts at any time during the year? The answer was yes.

12. ELECTION OF HON AUDITOR

The Association has no constitutional requirement for an Auditor. The Treasurer had brought the Association's Bank Statements to be viewed at the AGM.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The past years have been extremely difficult for the Committee as key members have been lost or will shortly need to stand down, for very understandable reasons. A major appeal for help had gone out in the last newsletter and members had been encouraged to attend the

AGM to express their views and ask questions. The floor was now thrown open for an open discussion and questions were invited. The following points were raised.

a) Tracey Ross offered to collect details from anyone wanting to help. There is a possibility that a member in the audience might consider becoming Show Secretary from 2024 and Tracey will talk things through with her.

b) Another member expressed interest in becoming our Publicity Officer. The Chairman took details from her and will put her in touch with Margaret Angus.

c) A query as to why subs cannot be paid by BACs? The difficulty is the very small amount involved (£2/year) and the fact we have over 800 members. Checking everything would create a huge amount of work.

d) Who does our website? Currently this is our Treasurer. The audience were reminded that since the end of last year we no longer have our @ewellhortassn.co.uk email domains; the reason is that the provider was implementing changes which were not acceptable to us and in any case there was very little use of these. Each Committee member who had one reported receiving far more SPAM than genuine emails.

Roger Bellingham reported that his domain still appeared to be 'live' and he was receiving dubious photographs on it. This is worrying as it should be defunct and needs to be investigated. Roger will forward the emails to Leslie Smith for further investigation.

e) Dawn Simms stressed that anyone with any ideas, particularly with regard to what they would like to see at the Shows, is welcome to contact us. The current Handbook was given a major overhaul last time around and will be checked again for 2024 onwards, with unpopular classes being removed. Suggestions for new classes are always welcome.

f) A member advised us that she has experience with databases and she will be in contact with Roger Bellingham to see if she can give him any help. She suggested we ask people attending Shows to keep us informed of email address changes (this would be particularly important for next renewal as it will then be four years since subs were last collected).

g) The Chairman raised the issue of Talks and asked the audience how they felt about attending these. In January we had regrettably decided to pause them for the foreseeable future as attendance has declined significantly since the pandemic and it is embarrassing when talks are poorly attended. At a show of hands, most of the audience said they would attend, though most of these have always been our 'regulars' anyway. One person said that we are getting older and there can be less inclination to go out in the evenings, particularly in the colder months. Some would therefore prefer an afternoon talk, but this would rule out attendance by those who work so might not help the attendance issue. A mix of both could be a possibility.

h) The Committee were thanked for all their work, particularly over the recent difficult years.

There being no further questions or comments, the meeting closed at 9 p.m.