

**Minutes of the
Chiswick Horticultural and Allotments Society
Annual General Meeting
held on Sunday 24 April 2016 at 3.00pm at
the CHS Trading Hut, Staveley Road, London W4**

In attendance:

President and Committee/Trustees

Henry Gewanter, Chairman

Alastair Britten, Joint Trading Hut Secretary

David Burton, Treasurer

Mike Flinders, Show Secretary

John Gill, Membership Secretary

Fran Goloway, Membership Secretary to be

Benjamin Jones, Secretary

Society Members

Brian Boothby, Angela Brown, Rita Chesney, Betty Cooper, Louise Di Duca, Lizzie Drake, Roy Forshaw, Sue Gewanter, Paula Leyburn, Pamela Mayorcas, Aileen Murphy, Brian Pow, Andrew Steele, Edward Thomas, Georgina Tritton.

1. Welcome

The Chairman, Henry Gewanter (HG), welcomed Society members to the meeting. Copies of the agenda, 2015 AGM minutes and the annual report were available at the entrance.

2. Apologies for Absence

Felicity Barwood, President; Dawn Walsh, Paul Lynch and Kurt Berger, Vice Presidents; Jill Morris and Dennis Flaherty, Committee members.

Chairman noted that Kurt is standing down as Vice President this AGM and thanked him for his service to the Society over many years.

Society Members - Sandra Burton, Caroline Gill, Catherine Meisels.

3. Minutes of AGM held 17 May 2015

These were approved. The Chairman noted that, at that meeting, we had reduced the necessary AGM quorum to 20.

4. Chairman and Committee's Report and Outlook for the Society

The Chairman opened his report by noting the Society's remarkable achievement of completing its 100th Anniversary.

He expressed his regret at the death of Judith Ormsby. It was agreed that she would be sorely missed.

He noted that during the year we lost both Andrew Steele and Everard Whitehouse, who resigned from the Committee. He thanked Andrew for his efforts for us over many years and was pleased to announce that Dennis Flaherty has taken on this position and is already distinguishing himself by his activity. Everard was a great asset to us in his short period on the Committee – organising many events and launching a competition among local schools with the prize of The Centenary Plate, a massive, 100-year old bronze plate given to the Society by Everard.

He pointed out that we have had the Trading Hut roof redone at a cost of approx. £7,000 and that, to ensure the Society maintained a suitable reserve for ongoing activities, he has offered an indefinite, interest-free loan of up to £7,000. In order to recoup the costs of the new roof, we have launched an appeal to our members for financial support for this and related work. We are also looking to see what outside money we could access. Lately we have added a used book stall to the Trading Hut merchandise.

He then handed over to John Gill for a review of membership.

Membership - John Gill, Membership Secretary

John noted that we changed over to a single class of membership this year and advised that Fran Goloway will be taking over from him as Membership Secretary so he can concentrate on wearing his other hats as joint Shows Secretary and joint schools co-ordinator.

Trading Hut and Events – Alastair Britten, Joint Trading Hut Secretary

Alastair introduced himself as Trading Hut Secretary jointly with Jill Morris.

He reported that the Trading Hut had a reasonable trading year and offered his thanks to those on the Hut rota and the greenhouse staff who keep it all going. He noted our pricing policy – to try to keep prices lower in most cases than the commercial competition, DIY and garden centres. He reminded members of the annual plant sale on 13-14 May, starting at 6 p.m. on the 13th of May.

He outlined the events held last year – the Christmas and Summer parties (organised by the Trading Hut with a barbecue for the Summer party, thanks to Andrew Steele), a superb centenary dinner at Linden House, a boat trip on the Thames, a very successful Quiz Night and a bonfire party. There is a talk coming up on 7 May in the Trading Hut about water usage. He asked for a volunteer to be Events Secretary, a position we badly need to fill.

Shows - Mike Flinders, Show Secretary

Mike noted that most of the members present for the AGM already participate in the shows and thanked all who entered the shows and urged everyone to participate. He felt that there are so many more allotment holders who could participate. Currently we get about 50 people providing 150 entries, which he would like to double to 100 people if possible. He thanked those who opened the show and gave the prizes. Snappy Snaps has offered a £50 voucher this year for photography classes.

5. Treasurer's report and adoption of 2015 Report and Financial Statement

The 2015 Report and Financial Statement for the Society was available for members prior to the meeting for their perusal. The Financial Statement had been examined and signed by an Independent Examiner.

David Burton, the Treasurer, reported on the financial condition of the Society.

In 2015, he reported, there was a small loss of £1,600, but the accounts remain in a healthy state. HMRC decided to scrutinise our accounts for the last seven years which

produced, after negotiations with our independent examiner and treasurer, a fine, but one reduced from the amount HMRC had first proposed.

Income was up at £16,500, including £1,760 from advertisers in the handbook. Expenditure was also up at £18,000, mostly due to centenary events, but the committee felt this extra expenditure was justified by the special occasion. Trading remains the main source of income, thanks to the hard work of the trading hut and greenhouse teams.

He noted that this will be the last time the accounts are presented in the long form that they are presented in this year's annual report. Next year they will appear in a shorter form, designed to be comprehensible to all members, not just qualified accountants.

Gift aid recovery is still lower than it could be, but every little bit helps. He reminded members that the Society can reclaim 25p from HMRC for every £1 they give, which costs the donor nothing, as long as they are a basic rate taxpayer. They will need to give us a gift aid declaration form.

Last year, he noted, members were promised a full review of the membership fee system. After much discussion the Society decided to unify membership fees at a standard £8 per member. This will be continually reviewed during the coming year to see if it might be possible to reduce it, bearing in mind the Society's financial needs.

The Committee is committed to the maintenance of the Trading Hut which, as the recent roof work shows, may require considerable work. This may be expensive but needs to be done properly to ensure the Hut's future. A roof fund has been set up to assist in financing this work and to date £1,850 has been donated (which, with such gift aid as is recoverable, should result in £2,240). He expressed thanks to each and every donor.

Finally, he noted that last year we had spoken of the possibility of benefiting from solar energy though placing panels on the Trading Hut roof. It appears that, at this time, the full cost would be way beyond anything we could afford, even with applicable subsidies. However, the committee will continue to look at this option to see if changing costs make it viable at some future time.

Andrew Steele proposing and Aileen Murphy seconding, the annual report and financial statements were unanimously approved.

6. Election of Committee members for 2016/2017

All existing Committee members had put themselves forward for re-election. Those present were asked to approve the re-election of Committee members for the next twelve months. This approval was duly given by a unanimous vote.

Those thus re-elected were Alastair Britten, David Burton, Dennis Flaherty, Mike Flinders, Henry Gewanter, John Gill, Fran Goloway, Benjamin Jones and Jill Morris.

Those present were asked to approve the appointment of the Chairman (Henry Gewanter), Secretary (Benjamin Jones) and Treasurer (David Burton). Each was approved unanimously.

7. Election of President and Vice Presidents for 2016/2017

Those present were asked to approve the election of President and Vice Presidents for 2016/2017. This approval was duly given.

Felicity Barwood, President

Paul Lynch, Vice President

Dawn Walsh, Vice President

8. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2016/2017

Members were advised that Wayne Hirst has agreed to serve as our independent examiner for another year. He was unanimously elected by those present.

9. Any Other Business

The Chairman reminded members of the discussion at last year's meeting about the possibility of the Council devolving management of the allotments. Since then, he has met with representatives of the Council to discuss options. At present no decision has been made by the Council, but we will advise members if anything changes.

Andrew Steele thanked members for all the support they have given him in the course of his former duties as allotment secretary and expressed his best wishes to Dennis Flaherty in that job. Members gave Andrew a warm round of applause for his work for the Society.

A question was asked about the plans to expand the cemetery into the Burial Ground allotments. They were advised that formal notice has been given to the Council of their intention to do this, but no schedule has been set. Allotments in the back corner by the wall would be taken first and expansion would move outward from there. The Council has said that tenants of allotments taken over for this purpose would be compensated by other allotments in this area.

Pamela Mayorcas asked if the Council is going to repair the damaged fence along Staveley Road. She was advised that it is being attended to shortly.

A question was asked if we have a good working relationship with Carillion. Henry advised that Dennis used to work for the Council and his son also knows the people involved well, so we expect a good relationship.

A member asked if we could get Hounslow to put up signs along the Staveley Road allotments telling bus drivers to turn off their engines when parked there.

A member asked if the suggestion book could be placed in a more obvious place, since no one seems to use it!

Another member asked why gardening books do not feature in our new book stall. Alastair responded that there are already gardening books in the book shelves in the back room, some of which could be for sale. It was agreed to look at those gardening books and decide which can be offered for sale (which will then be moved to where the other books are displayed in the front) and which will be kept for reference. One member volunteered to donate books on gardens, which was accepted.

Mike Thomas asked if we could serve tea and coffee during Trading Hut hours. Alastair felt that the volunteers manning the Hut are generally too busy to take on this function, so Mike volunteered to do it himself!

The Chairman highlighted the events currently planned for 2016 as set forth at the bottom of the agenda.

Finally, the members in attendance were thanked for coming to the AGM and there being no further business, the meeting was called to a close.

Ben Jones

28 April 2016