

ABINGDON HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Northcourt Centre, Northcourt Road, Abingdon on Thames on Tuesday 16th January 2024 at 19:30 hours.

PRESENT:

Cllr Gwyneth Lewis, Mayor, in the Chair.

Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Show Secretary, and 34 members of the Society.

The chairman, David Bingley, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming out in the cold weather. He handed over to the Mayor, Gwyneth Lewis, to chair the meeting. The Mayor thanked the club for inviting her. She said her family had links to the club as her parents used to be members.

1 APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from Michael Matthews, David Hastings, Shirley Trafford, Dawn Elson, Hilary Bradley, Ian Shepherd, Anne Smith and Jean and Guy Thomas.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

The Minutes of the AGM held on 17th January 2023 were approved by the meeting and signed by the chairman and the mayor.

3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES:

No matters were arising from the minutes.

4 SECRETARY'S REPORT:

The Secretary, Linda Berry, commented on how 2023 had been another challenging year due to the ever-changing weather. Over the year we enjoyed 6 talks, 2 trips, a holiday, 2 shows and 1 plant sale along with a Christmas lunch.

The talks started back in February with a tour of the Gardens of the Cotswolds by Richard Harvey followed by an interesting talk in Plant Health by Angela Joyce from the Animal and Plant Health Agency. April saw a talk on baskets and planters by Andy from Purely Plants, so I hope there was some inspiration for this year's Spring Show. In May Kate Burtonwood took us on her journey of becoming the Head Gardener at an Oxford University. After the summer break the final 2 talks of the year saw a focus on adapting to the changing environment and changes to gardening practices including the removal of peat from compost later this year. It would be good if members could share their experiences of this change for the next Newsletter.

March saw another Clubs and Societies Day; this time it was held in the Guildhall. Thank you to all those that supported us on the day and welcome to any new members.

May saw us hold our 3rd big plant sale in the Northcourt Centre carpark. This led to us raising an amazing £436.10. Thank you to everyone who helped and donated. Please remember to get growing and dividing for this year's sale.

Finally Christmas lunch was held at Cosener's on 12th December. 48 members attended and there was lots of sparkle, festive jumpers and jolly ties on show.

We are now looking forward to a full programme of events for the coming year.

5 TREASURER'S REPORT:

- a. The Treasurer, Karen Fisher, hoped that everyone had had a chance to see a copy of the accounts. The books are currently with the examiner as the end of year has been moved to December 31st on advice from the examiner.
- b. The year started with a total of £11,312.80. This was the Lloyds current account plus the National Savings account.
- c. Our National Savings gained £5.27 in the year 2022. The amount for 2023 doesn't become available until after the AGM. The floor commented that the interest rate paid on the N/S savings account is very low, and the committee should move the money into an account with a decent interest rate
- d. Subscriptions raised £1,774.50, and meetings cost £1,058.41. This included the speaker and the hire of the hall. Miscellaneous expenditure, which is kept to a minimum, covers items such as lanyards for the committee, refreshments at the Clubs and Societies Day, Auditor of the books and gratuities.
Again there was a loss at both shows - Spring Show £86.47 and Autumn Show £73
Teas and raffle raised a good amount, and the plant sale raised a fantastic £436.10. There were two trips which raised £73. The holiday was a great success with a donation of £100.
- e. The year ended with a total of £6,958.66 in the current account. Total in both accounts stands at £12,621.71.
- f. There was a reminder that subs are now due. Thank you to those who have already paid.

6 MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT:

- a. Karen Fisher reported that 2023 ended with a total membership of 142. This was 88 single and 54 family members. There were 15 resignations and 15 new members. Two new members have signed up tonight, welcome.
- b. There is one new member who has paid by BACS with the name Meacey but no details. If anyone knows this person please let Karen know. Please remember when making payment to include your surname and postcode as the reference.

7 SHOW SECRETARY REPORT:

Barbara Bingley reported that 2023 saw 2 successful shows with a good number of entries and both were well supported by visitors.

The majority of members access the show schedule via the website and the others receive it by post. The 2024 schedules are now available on the website or have been posted. If members do not wish to print the entry form, please write out your details the class number and the total number of entries and send to Barbara.

Barbara said she enjoys receiving the entries and the more the merrier! If you haven't entered before, please have a look as there is bound to be something of interest.

Due to a lack of entries to some classes in the past there will be no whole garden or wine class this year. But please consider entering baskets or containers or making a cordial.

The shows are the showcase of the society when members and visitors can see the society in action. The exhibits may be the main attraction, but these are enhanced by the raffle, the refreshments and the plant, cake and produce tables. There is also the opportunity to recruit new members.

Barbara thanked all the committee members for their support in making the shows possible. Also, thanks to the judges, and other members who help out. The shows this year are April 13th and September 7th.

8 OUTINGS REPORT:

Trips – Robin Carter reported that the 2 trips in 2023 were well supported and both enjoyed good weather. Unfortunately the coach company, Heyfordian, ceased trading, which left a last-minute search for an alternative company. This, alas, was more expensive.

For 2024 2 trips have been booked. The first on May 30th is to Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, near Romsey. Cost is £37 per person and the application details will be sent out soon. The second trip is to Kew gardens on 22nd August. Cost is yet to be confirmed. But will be around £45.

Costs have unfortunately risen with the coaches costing around £900 per trip. The more members attending the trips the better and if insufficient numbers sign up trips will be cancelled.

Holiday – Suzanne Hamblin reported that June 2023 was the holiday to Chester, RHS Bridgewater and National Trust properties. 33 people took part and enjoyed good weather. Everyone looked out for each other and circulated at dinner time to make new acquaintances, we were very fortunate with the hotel and staff, the choice and food at mealtimes were excellent and with Josh our coach driver who was very calm and patient. My thanks go to the ladies at Just Go for their assistance with the logistics and everyone who came along and made it a lovely holiday.

In June 2024 we have our holiday to Colchester, visiting RHS Hyde Hall, Cambridge Botanical Gardens, Beth Chatto's Plants & Gardens and National Trust properties. Currently 31 people have booked for the holiday, with numbers fluctuating due to people's change in circumstances. If anyone is interested in attending, we do have some twin and double rooms available, please feel free to contact me.

9 CHAIRMANS REMARKS:

David Bingley, Chairman, said he would like to thank the committee for all their hard work and support he has received throughout the year.

This evening we have heard reports from various members of the committee. I hope the members appreciate all the hard work and time involved with these roles. He went on to highlight some of the other work the committee members do to support the society often with the help from family and friends. For example the communications team – David Hastings continues to keep the website up to date, Linda sends out the news and reminder emails and Suzanne and Linda co-ordinate and edit the newsletter to keep us abreast with society events. Show days are a real team effort to stage, steward and tidy up at the end of a busy day. Thanks also to Barry and Diana for organising the raffles and keeping us guessing

with his quizzes. Thanks to Charlton Park Garden Centre for their continued sponsorship. Bryan has been busy organising speakers for 2024 and would welcome help with possible speakers or topic ideas. Of course our cups of tea – Angie has kept us hydrated at meetings and fed and watered on show days. Angie has decided to step down as a committee member. David thanked Angie for all her support and tea making and presented her with a bunch of flowers.

Looking forward there is now a vacancy on the committee which fortuitously has seen a member come forward tonight. There is also the vacancy for refreshments team leader.

The next meeting is Tuesday 20th February when Peter Skeggs-Gooch will be talking about and hopefully selling Clematis. Bryan Hitchman added that Peter won gold at Chelsea for his clematis.

10 ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

The election of officers:

Chairman: David Bingley nominated by Peter Girling, seconded by Pat Powell. Agreed by the meeting.

Secretary: Linda Berry nominated by Bryan Hitchman, seconded by Susan Hammersley. Agreed by the meeting.

Treasurer: Karen Fisher nominated by Jean Knight seconded by Liz Pole. Agreed by the meeting.

11 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Angie has resigned and Susan Hammersley has agreed to stand. Nominated by Chris Waite and seconded by Maurice Tubb.

12 APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINER:

It was proposed that Fiona Shadbolt be the examiner. Proposed and carried by the members.

13 SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CHARGES FOR 2025

- a. David Bingley reported that the committee had decided to leave the subscription unchanged for 2025 but they will be discussed this year, and a proposal brought to the next AGM.
- b. Charges for visitors are currently £1 entry to shows and £2 for talks. It is proposed to increase these to £2 and £4 respectively. No objections received and agreed by the floor. It was confirmed that entry for children will remain free.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- a. David Bingley proposed a change to club rule 8 /show rule 1 to increase the distance from 10 to 15 miles for members able to enter the shows. There was some discussion but on voting it was carried by the floor with 1 opposing. This change will be tried for a year.
- b. David Bingley asked the members for their thoughts on alternative trips. A suggestion was a ½ day visit to Dhalia Beach pick your own flowers at Millets Farm with members using their own cars. Car drivers would not be able to charge. Members were generally ok with this idea of a more local trip i.e. within 20-25 miles and using their own cars. This would give Robin more flexibility when organising trips.

- c. Bryan Hitchman said that Mays speaker had now been confirmed as David Busby, talking about bees. Octobers and November's speakers are yet to be confirmed. If members have any subject ideas, please let Bryan know.
- d. Robin Carter commented on the low subscriptions and the increasing costs of events, so the club relies on funds raised from raffle, plant sales etc. In addition £1.000 is Muriel's Legacy.

No other business was reported.

15 CLOSURE OF THE MEETING BY THE MAYOR

Gwyneth Lewis said that in a previous life she was a doctor in charge of women's health. She first came across the health benefits of plants in St Thomas's Hospital Garden for women in labour. Living environments are found to give benefit to all. In this instance women in labour who used the garden required less pain relief to those who had not.

In 2023 she said to go to judge the allotments where there were over 400 to judge. She was impressed by not just the vegetables on show, but the mental health benefits derived. So much so she now has a part share in an allotment.

For 40 years she has been renovating a house in Cyprus and the garden has its own citrus trees from which she makes marmalade. We are all aware of climate change and some of the old olive trees are showing signs of stress. Venerable trees of the Mediterranean are suffering. We are all going to face challenges in the future. With the change in mind she has an apricot tree in the garden in Abingdon. In the 10 months of being mayor she has attended numerous AGM's and there are over 190 clubs and Societies in Abingdon. She has been overwhelmed by the people in Abingdon and is proud to be from Abingdon. Her parents were part of society.

The AGM was brought to a close at 20:30.

**Meeting closed at 20:30.
Date of next AGM Tuesday 21st January 2025 at 19:30**