Twyford & Ruscombe Horticultural Association

Minutes of the 66th Annual General Meeting

Held on 26th January 2023 at St Mary's Church Centre, Twyford

Present:
Myrddin Jones; Diane Thirtle; Bridget Carr; Jenny Wager; Jenny Benger; Graham Starkie; Sarah Darby; Richard Eyles; Irene Starkie; Marion Jones; Malcolm Bray; Olivier Drap; Ken Fostekew; Jean Fostekew; John Wager; Lynn Povey; Claire Clark; Scott Clark; Maria Bright; David Bright

Apologies
Apologies were received from Hugh Ranscombe; Mick Yeates; Neil Patchin; Janet Robson; Frank Moore; Paul Humphreys; Carol Rose; Richard Trorey; Jessica O'Connor; Prabha Lacey

2 **Minutes of the last meeting**
The Minutes of the 2022 meeting were approved.

3. **Matters Arising**
Diane Thirtle opened the meeting by saying that in January 2022 the Association had no elected Chairman and she had been chairing meetings until we had a volunteer.
In February 2022 Myrddin Jones joined the Committee and in July agreed to become Chairman. He had since been acting as chairman and Diane proposed that, unless there were any volunteers from the floor, we should vote to formalise the position. The motion was seconded by Jenny Wager a vote was held and the motion carried. Myrddin then proceeded to chair the AGM.

4. **Report from the Chair**
Myrddin Jones thanked the Association for electing him as Chairman and gave special thanks to Diane Thirtle and the whole Committee for their outstanding support whilst he was still learning the ropes. He then spoke about our achievements in 2022 and aims for 2023 as follows:

In 2022 we were able to return to a near normal programme of activities thanks to the Committee's commitment and hard work. I'd also like to thank all the other volunteers who are not on the Committee but who help us in the Trading Store, at Shows, delivering newsletters & doing important work behind the scenes throughout the year.

A number of similar Associations around the country ceased to exist after the pandemic. We have been complimented by independent judges and affiliated organisations that we are still here and back with new ideas and enthusiasm.

Our main activities in 2022 included:

- Ten months of trading at the Store
- Ten Newsletters
- Three Shows in Spring, Summer and Autumn
- Two Day Trips
- Potato and Bulb planting events for children
- A very successful Plant Sale event

For 2023 it's vital that we maintain or increase our membership and our show participation - both of which have been declining over a number of years. We are not here to manage decline and we are keen to try new things and understand what other Associations are doing that may be effective. Bridget Carr has been invaluable as our Treasurer and without her we wouldn't be able to operate. It's vital that Bridget continues as Treasurer and the change to the Constitution that we'll discuss later will ensure that she can continue in the role.

We are very pleased that Sarah Darby became our new Show Secretary and she will be leading the 2023 shows. We are trialling that all three of our 2023 shows will become “Open” to all (open to members and non- members). This is a significant change and we believe it will encourage new

entries from people who have not entered our shows before. Our longer term aim is to elevate the shows from “Association Shows” to “Village Shows”. We hope that this will make them more fun, more dynamic and benefit the Association and its members in the long run.

Jenny Wager, on top of her major role as Membership Secretary, organised a very successful plant sale as well as potato planting and bulb planting events with a focus on attracting families to engage with the Association. We will be doing these again in 2023. Jenny will be talking about these in a few minutes.

Jessica O’Connor took over responsibility for our Events and organised successful Wisley and Winchester trips in 2022. We are planning a fuller season of events in 2023 including a Quiz Night in May, an RHS Wisley trip in July and a Waterperry Gardens trip in September. If you have any other ideas, please suggest them to Jessica to consider.

Malcolm Bray, from the floor, suggested we circulate details to other organisations in the area.

Our Newsletters are edited by Graham and it’s a significant piece of work each month. Newsletters are a vital way for us to communicate with our members whether you receive the electronic, or paper copy. In particular, I know that Hugh’s regular articles are greatly appreciated by readers. Graham’s deadline for inputs is the 27th of each month so if you have an item of interest, please contact him before the deadline.

Our Trading Store is a meeting point for members on Sunday mornings as well as offering over 120 products to members at fair prices. This is all thanks to Jenny Benger who does an outstanding job alongside a team of volunteers including Neha, Marion, Malcolm, Olivier and Mick. This year we’ll have over 20 pallets worth of various composts and grow bags on sale. What else should we be stocking – please let us know. We also introduced a card reader at the store last year and over half of sales are now done electronically. As a member you can now pay for items by cash, cheque, cards, phones and smart watches!

The store needs some urgent additional work to make it weatherproof. After heavy rain, water leaks into one corner of the store and this has to be fixed to prevent long term damage. We can report that the building facias were replaced in 2022 and we thank Mike Perry for his outstanding work.

We are continuing to develop the website by keeping it useful to members and up to date with latest price lists from the store, information about our events, show guides, hints and tips for show entrants and sign-posting events from neighbouring associations. We had over 8,000 website visits last year.

We have around 250 followers on social media and it’s a quick and easy way for us to let people know what we are doing. The aim is to grow the numbers and attract more people to join the Association. If you are on Facebook, or Twitter, or Instagram please follow us.

In September 2022 Paul Humphreys moved to Greece and we miss his many skills from Secretary to web designer to store maintenance. He still takes an interest and we hope he’ll be back one day. Thank you, Paul.

Finally, we have lots to do and we need more volunteers. We need volunteers to join the Committee in several unfilled roles. Experienced members on the Committee are happy to pass on their knowledge to new people so it’s not as daunting as it may seem. We also need volunteers at shows and in the store. Volunteers who don’t want to sit on the Committee are very welcome because we need people who can help us at a practical level. Please talk to us if you can help.

5. Treasurer's Report

Bridget Carr reported that she was pleased to say we made a surplus of £3,011 year ending 2022. We are still needing to undertake maintenance work on the Trading Store but as with all buildings this is ongoing. The balance of funds as at December 31st 2022 was £19,140.00.

Membership

Net income from members after costs of newsletters was £1,822 and I am sure Jenny Wager will talk us through the membership for the year 2021/2022.

Trading Store

The store made a profit of £736. The store is particularly important to the community, is our public face and brings in new members. We must remember keeping the store running is hard work by a small cohort of people not least Jenny Benger who does all the ordering of the stock to ensure our members are well served.

Shows

As many of you will know we managed to have three shows in the year 2022, which were well attended and overall, we made a profit of £402.

Trips

This year under the guidance of Jessica O'Connor we have been able to start our trips again and enjoyed two trips, one to RHS Wisley, what a beautiful day is was too, and to the Christmas Market at Winchester, again we were blessed with the weather. I am sure many of you enjoyed the trips and, if you did not attend last year, make sure you do this year. We made a profit of £381, which will be used to subsidise further trips, which are in the planning stages.

Maintenance

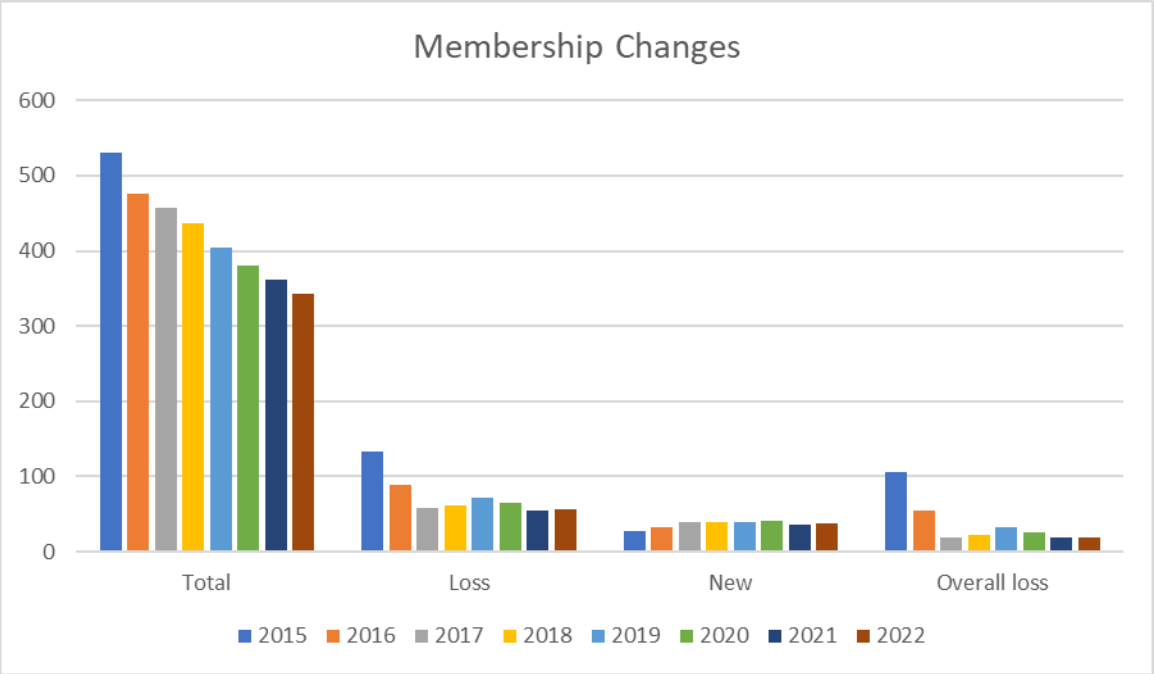
Last year Bridget outlined the investment we had made in maintenance, which was considerable. We have been working with one of our members on further improvements to the structure of the Trading Store and we hope this work will be completed in the early part of 2023. At our last meeting we discussed the costs of replacing the doors as they are wooden and the recent weather has not been kind to them.

A copy of the audited accounts will be found in Appendix 1.

6. Membership Secretary's Report

Jenny Wager reported that:

The total membership for 2022 was 343 (2021- 361) 95 % of the previous year: an overall decrease of 18 members (in 2021 the decrease was 19).



- **A recruitment drive is still very much needed for new members and to keep members** to support the running and work of the TRHA. The membership has still decreased mainly through the number of people who choose not renew their membership.
- The total income through membership in 2022 was £2,195.
  For 2022 the Committee agreed a small increase in the membership subscription to reflect increased costs: £8 for Standard and £7.00 for Seniors with £7 charge for P&P when requested. The Committee recommend that there is no change for 2023.
  We introduced online payments during 2020 and continued to offer it in 2022. The membership included 185 Senior members, 94 Standard members, 57 exempt members plus 7 late joiners. Over the course of the year there were 38 new members.
- The number of people who receive their newsletter by email currently stands at 259 (75 %).
- Thank you to Graham Starkie who sends me the email version of the newsletter promptly, to Sarah and Colin Lawley who have distributed the newsletters. A very big thank you to all the Reps who delivered the newsletters and collected subscriptions. We have had a number of changes to NL Reps and we would like to especially thank:
  Mrs Moody (R1), Mr Humphreys (R27) and Mr Ranscombe (R35) for all their hard work and support over the years. We do have new reps for: Round 1: Mr Penn, Round 27: Mrs Gywnn and Round 35: Mr Wilks. We also have new newsletter distributors for 2023: Mr & Mrs Bright – many thanks to them for volunteering to take this on.
- Other community involvement
  Last year the following took part in daffodil and potato growing: Colleton Primary School, Charvil Piggott Primary School and Happy Hours Pre-School and they are planning to take part again next year. We were very pleased to have Charvil Piggott and Happy Hours join as members.

  The Twyford Art Group and the Twyford & Ruscombe Floral Art group have been affiliated groups for a number of years. Next year we have 3 more groups who have agreed to be affiliated: Twyford Growers, Charvil Art Group and the Berkshire Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers. We hope that this will bring more entries and visitors to the Shows.

7. Election of Auditor

Bridget Carr had employed a Sayami Namalwewa, ACCA, a qualified accountant, who has been known to Bridget for some years to audit the accounts. Diane Thirtle proposed using her as auditor for 2023, seconded by Sarah Darby. A vote was held and the motion carried.

8. Election of Chair, Officers and Committee

i) **Chair** Myrddin Jones was voted as Chairman at the start of the meeting.

ii) **Officers and Committee**

Bridget Carr agreed to remain as Treasurer. She was proposed by Malcolm Bray and seconded by Claire Clark. The motion was carried.
Diane Thirtle agreed to be temporary Secretary until a volunteer could be found. She was proposed by Claire Clark and seconded by Jenny Benger.
The following Committee Members were proposed and elected en bloc:
Jenny Benger agreed to continue to manage the Store
Jenny Wager will continue as Membership Secretary
Graham Starkie will continue as Newsletter Editor and Show Schedule/Handbook publisher.
Sarah Darby will continue as Show Secretary
Jessica O'Connell, who did not attend the meeting agreed to be Social Secretary
Other members of the committee: Richard Trorey

9. Election of President and Vice Presidents

i) **President**

Jean Moody was unable to attend the meeting in person but wanted to thank everybody for their hard work. She agreed to continue as President if elected. Jean Moody was proposed by Diane Thirtle and seconded by Jenny Wager. The floor voted to accept the proposal.

ii) **Vice Presidents**

The current Vice Presidents are:
Mr R Trayling; Mr J Sumner: Mrs C L Potterton; Rev Pugh; Mr W Barnes; Mr Broughton; A & C Beck; Mr N Patchin; Mrs J Jones; Mr I Simpson; Mrs G Roberts; Mr W Crane; Mr B Maule; Mr H Ranscombe; Mrs S Spivey; Mr G Shillabeer; Mr J Evason; Mr J McMahon; Mrs J Puzey;

10 Constitution

The following changes to the Constitution were proposed:

Clause 6.2 The Officers and committee shall be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting (herein called the AGM) and shall hold office until the next AGM. They should not serve for more than three years.

Proposal: That the length of time an officer can serve is removed. Proposed Marion Jones; Seconded Jenny Wager. Motion carried.

Clause 13.7 Annual subscriptions shall be paid in advance no later than twenty-eight days after the start of the Membership Period. Members joining the Association after this time shall pay their annual subscription on joining except that new members joining after 30th September shall be deemed to have paid their subscription up to the end of the next following Membership Period.

Proposal: Sentence two to be changed to: Members joining at or after the Autumn Show shall pay a small donation to be agreed annually by the Committee.

Proposed Jenny Benger; Seconded Malcolm Bray. Motion carried.

11. Membership Subscriptions for 2022

Jenny Wager proposed that the Membership subscriptions should remain at £8.00 per household per annum for a standard subscription and £7.00 per household per annum for seniors. A vote was taken and this motion was accepted by the floor.

12. Any Other Business

None

The the meeting closed at 8.45pm
Signed as being a true representation of the Annual general Meeting 2023

Name: ---------- Signature: ---------- Date ----------