Twyford & Ruscombe Horticultural Association

Minutes of the 68th Annual General Meeting

Held on 29th January 2025 at Loddon Hall Twyford RG10 9JA

Present:
Myrddin Jones (MJ); Diane Thirtle (DT); Bridget Carr (BC); Jenny Wager (JW); Graham Starkie (GS); Sarah Darby (SD); Paul Humphreys (PH); Christine Gerzon (CG) and 29 others as shown on the register appended to these Minutes.
The current Chairman, Myrddin Jones opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from the following people: Jean Moody; Richard Trorey; Prabha Lacey; Judy Halligan; Karen Lloyd; Carol Sandom; Frank Moore

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the AGM held on 31st January 2024, which were published on the website, were approved and signed by Myrddin Jones.

3 Matters arising.

There were no matters arising.

4 Officers Reports.

i. Chairman's Report

Myrddin Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that, although this was the 68th AGM, there were two years when we could not meet because of restrictions. He then gave a resume of activities in 2024 as follows:

2024 was a good year, filled with a variety of activities and events, all made possible by our dedicated Committee and hardworking volunteers. He thanked everybody who contributed, whether it was in the Trading Store, at Shows, delivering newsletters, or working behind the scenes. MJ personally thanked the Honorary Secretary and the Treasurer for their advice and assistance and ensuring that full and proper records and accounts are kept.
The standout achievements from 2024 were:

- Trading: Ten months of record trading at the Store.
- Newsletters: Ten newsletters were published.
- Shows: There were three successful shows in Spring, Summer, and Autumn.
- Trips Two enjoyable trips to places of interest were made.
- Children's Events: Potato and bulb planting events for children were held at the Store and local schools.
- Plant Sale: The plant sale event was very popular and successful.
- Community Events: TRHA participated in Twyford in Bloom, the Donkey Derby, Twyford Fete, and activities at the Age Concern venue.
- Charity Quiz Night: The quiz evening raised over £400 for local charities.
- Talk: We co-hosted a Talk on Seeds in collaboration with TATA.

In 2025, we aim to maintain, or even increase, our membership and participation in the Shows. We saw growth in both these area in 2024 as will be demonstrated by the reports from Jenny Wager (Membership) and Sarah Derby (Shows) which follow.

JW also organized the successful plant sale and planting events for children at the Store and local schools.

The two coach trips were organised, one to RHS Hyde Hall and the other to Kingston upon Thames Christmas Market. While feedback was very positive, we struggled to break even. In 2025, different approaches will be tried. A trip arranged on a Saturday and one in collaboration with the History Society for a trip to an historic house and garden trip will, hopefully, attract more people. A History Society trips is planned for the 8th May. Other dates will be announced soon.

It is hoped that two gardening talks given by expert speakers will be arranged this year. Any suggestions for topics and speakers should be relayed to the committee.

The 2024 Quiz night was a huge success, raising over £400 for two local horticultural charities. The same is planned for 2025 at a date and venue to be announced soon.

The Newsletter, edited by Graham Starkie, is vital for communicating with members. Any items of interest must be relayed to GS before the 27th of each month. GS was also responsible for the publication of the 2025 Members' Handbook. The advertisements he canvassed from local businesses paid for the cost of printing.

The Sunday Trading Store has been bustling under Jenny Benger as Manager. 25 pallets of composts, the equivalent of nearly 50 tonnes were sold in 2024! Legislation on prohibiting composts with peat did not materialise, so we will continue to offer members a choice. However, we encourage members to try peat-free composts in 2025 – they are better than you think! The Store volunteers including Malcolm Bray, Marion Jones, Olivier and Katya Drap, David Barnett, Mike Yeates, Paul Humphreys and John Everson who help us out in all weathers. Trading re- commences Sunday 2nd February.

In 2024, time and money were spent on Store maintenance. Much of the work was done and, or, organised by Paul Humphreys. Maintaining such an old building is a continuous effort and more work will be needed in 2025.

PH also manages the Website and is constantly updating and improving it. It shows the latest price lists, event information, show guides, and more. His report will follow.

Our social media presence is growing, with 430 followers, up 40% from 2023. It is a great way to let people know what we are doing and attract more members. If you are on Facebook, X, Instagram, or Threads, please follow us.

In 2025 TRHA will be celebrating its 70th birthday! To mark this special occasion a proposal was made to BBC Radio 4 to host an episode of "Gardeners' Question Time." We are excited to announce that the recording date will be March 18th, just before the Spring Show. Doors will open at 5pm and they will record two episodes between 6pm and 8pm. The rules do not permit entry to be restricted to TRHA members only so demand is likely to be high. Tickets will go on sale in February and details will be made public soon.

We have much to do and need more volunteers and committee members. Whether preparing press releases, organizing events, or weighing out bags of birdseed, we would love to hear from you. Please talk to us after the meeting if you can help.

ii. Treasurer's Report

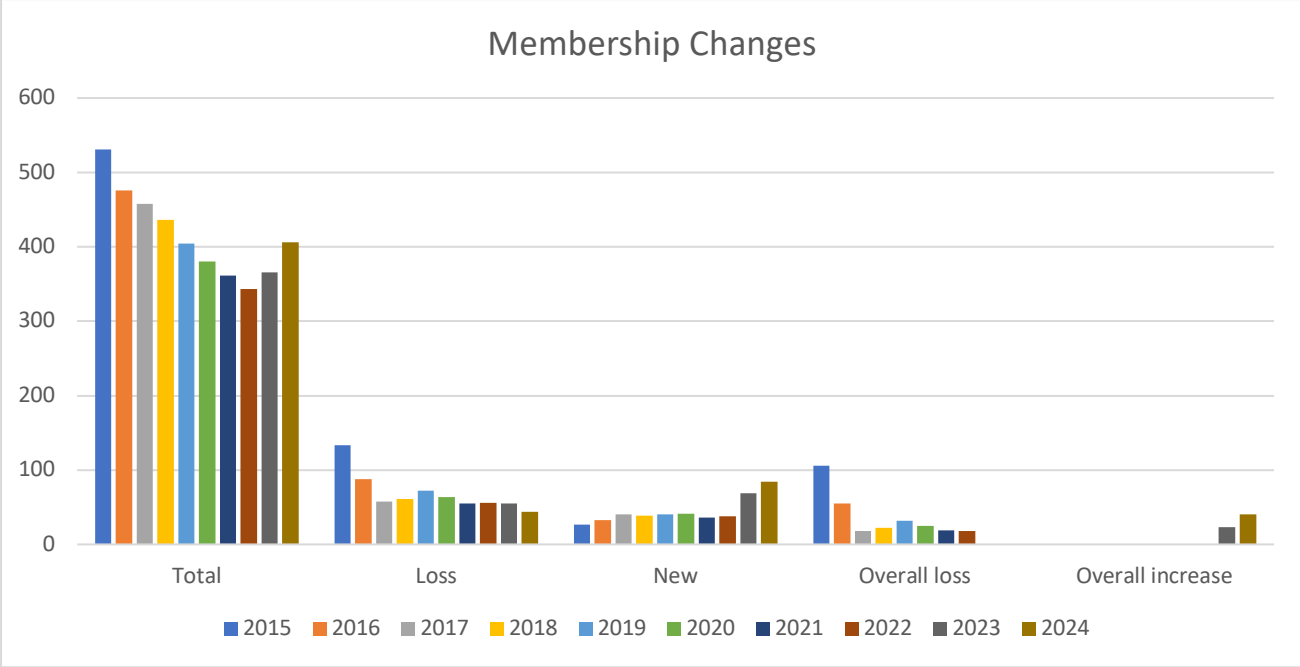
Bridget Carr presented the audited accounts to the meeting. A copy is appended to these minutes.
BC said that the accounts show that we had a good year financially.

In response to requests, and as interest rates have increased, she has, with the approval of the Committee, transferred a proportion of the balance to a NatWest deposit account, known as a Liquidity Account.

iii. Membership Report

Jenny Wager, Membership, Secretary reported as follows:

- The final total membership for 2023 was 406 *(2023- 366)*: an overall increase of 40 members (in 2023 there was a small overall increase of *23* members). This is a significant change for the better! There were a record 84 new members and number of members who did not renew was the lowest since 2015! AND we have had an overall increase for two years in a row.



- **Despite the good news we still need to work at finding new members and to keep members** to support the running and work of the TRHA. A good target for 2025 would be to increase the membership to 440.
- The total income through membership in 2023 was £2,593.
  The Committee recommend that there is no change in membership fees for 2025 other than to increase the cost of P&P for members who received their newsletter by post: increase to £9 (from £8).
  The membership included 215 Senior members, 121 Standard members, 54 exempt members plus 16 late joiners. Over the course of the year there were 84 new members.
- The number of people who receive their newsletter by email currently stands at 330 (81 %).
- Thank you to Graham Starkie who sends me the email version of the newsletter promptly, to David & Maria Bright who distribute the newsletters to the TRHA Reps. A very big thank you to all the Reps who delivered the Newsletters, Handbooks and collected subscriptions.
- Other community involvement, through membership:
  Last year the following schools took part in daffodil and potato growing:
  Colleton Primary School, Charvil Piggott Primary School, Polehampton Infant School and Happy Hours Pre-School and they are planning to take part again this year.
  All four took part in the “Schools Challenge Cup” in the Summer Show.

iv. Trading Secretary's Report

Paul Humphreys gave the following report on Trading at the Store maintenance on behalf. He has recovered from his accident and has enjoyed working with JB and the team of volunteers again.

The Store was very busy in the Spring period, with queues to be served. PH said that we try to provide the products our members need at competitive prices in an environment that develops community spirit.

We had to change one of our suppliers as the old one closed down. There have been challenges with the new one, but now we have a good working relationship and a better service. The supplier has a large catalogue and we are unable to stock everything but, if there are any special requests, Members should speak to JB or PH.

The use of the contactless payment service continues to grow and is now up to 80% of sales now.

The Team thanked the Membership for their custom.

v. Store Maintenance Report

Several tasks have been undertaken this year to sustain the structure of the Store and improve its appearance including the following:

Exterior

Remedial repairs to, and repainting of, the front door.

A new back door which will be painted with top coat in the spring.

Several weatherproof panels have been installed to replace the existing panels in the false windows and other areas of the exterior of the Store. These were painted green in advance. New artwork will be ordered for the "window" areas.

Repairs around the front door frame, to replace rotten wood, has been done, and a primer coat applied. This and the rest of the frame to be painted with a top coat next spring.

Interior

The metal shelves in the store have all been painted with green Hammerite, which is rust eating, and this has improved the appearance of the inside of the store.

A roll holder has been built to hold the rolls of various items, such as weed suppressant and fleece, to allow us to measure he lengths required more easily.

A table has been built for the weighing area to keep the bags of chemicals and fertilisers off the floor. New storage bins, for the bird and grass seed, will replace the black dustbins and will fit under the table.

An attractive cart, which is on loan from TATA, now holds our weighed bird seed.

vi. Website Update

A Proper release cycle, including formal testing, user and admin guides has been released. This ensures the stability of web site. The goal is to be able to keep the website content up-to-date with minimal technical knowledge. A new release is undergoing testing now. Contributors must copy text files, or images, to specific folders and the content then appears on the site. This includes Posts, Events, Shows and the News ticker page. For Posts we are mirroring content put on the TRHA Facebook page. Unused content is streamlined and removed.

Show Entries

There is now an Online form for entering shows in addition to the paper version. This will be used for the first time for the Spring Show.

Any ideas for future development of the Website will be gratefully received.

vii. Show Secretary's Report

Sarah Darby said that she was pleased to report that the all shows last year were a great success. The number of exhibits across all three shows broke the record for the second year running, with a total of 783, which is around 14.5% increase on 2023. The number of exhibitors also rose by around 10.5% to a total of 221, (not including schools), which may be the result of opening the shows up to non-members as well as increased publicity.

Last year we also changed the look of the shows by adding table coverings, bright red dividers between the exhibits, new class labels in Perspex holders, and new black table

coverings and niches for the floral art displays. SD was pleased to say we have had some positive comments about the new look of the shows, and we will continue to improve this where we can. Last year we also introduced Best in Show certificates in the Floral Art and the Horticultural classes, and gave out medals for first, second and third places in the Children's classes.
For this year's Show Schedule, we consulted with some of the volunteers, and families of whose children regularly exhibit, during the planning stage to get a wider view of what should be included. To encourage more children to exhibit, we have changed some of the classes for the 7 to 16 age group to make them a bit more "grown up".
The total number of Classes has increased again this year and we have added a few more trophies.
This year for the first time there is an online entry form. Exhibitors will have the option to complete and submit the entry form and pay the entry fee on the day of the Show. We will be trialling this for the first time for the Spring Show. The paper forms can still be taken to the florist.
We are lucky to have a fantastic group of volunteers and committee members who put in a huge amount of time and effort to make sure the shows run smoothly.SD thanked them for their hard work and dedication

viii. Newsletter Editors Report

Graham Starkie said that he had little to report as he talks to the TRHA Membership ten months a year in the TRHA Newsletter editorial.
Hugh Ranscombe's loss was devasting and we are going to miss him. An Obituary written with the aid of Hugh's daughters will be in the next Newsletter.
GS issued an appeal for a volunteer to write the Gardening Tips for the Newsletter. Applicants should contact him via the usual channels.
GS has the notes written by a professor from Reading University who gave the recent talk to TRHA and TATA, which he is going to precis for the Newsletter.
GS intends to take Hugh's past contributions and put them into an almanac.

5 Adoption of Audited Accounts

The accounts were prepared by Bridget Carr and Audited by Sayam Namalewa.
The adoption of the accounts was proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Jenny Wager and adopted by the floor.

6 Election of auditor.

Bridget Carr said that Sayam Namalewa would be unable to audit the accounts next year but BC would undertake to get a replacement in the meantime.

7 Election of Officers

Diane Thirtle proposed Myrddin Jones as Chairman saying that during 2022, as restrictions were lifted, Myrddin offered to become Chairman. He was officially elected in 2023 and again last year. He has worked hard to make the Association a vibrant part of the community again. In addition, he has been involved in the Store maintenance and improvements and he has supported Sarah Derby in improving the look of the Shows. More than one judge has commented on how good the Shows look and the high standard of exhibits.
It is entirely due to Myrddin's efforts and persistence that the BBC Gardeners Question Time is coming to Twyford.

i. **Chairman**: **Myrddin Jones** was proposed by Diane Thirtle, seconded by Paul Humphreys. Elected.
ii. **Hon Treasurer**: **Bridget Carr** proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Jenny Wager. Elected.
iii. **Hon Secretary Diane Thirtle** proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Malcom Bray. Elected

iv. **Vice Chairman**, Post not filled
v. **Minutes Secretary**: **Paul Humphreys**, proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Malcolm Bray. Elected.
vi. **Membership Secretary: Jenny Wager** proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Olivier Drap. Elected
vii. **Trading Secretary: Jenny Benger** proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Paul Humphreys. Elected..
viii. **Show Secretary: Sarah Derby** proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Richard Eyles. Elected
ix. **Newsletter Editor:** Graham Starkie proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Jenny Benger. Elected
x. **Social Secretary:** post unfilled
xi. **Store Maintenance Secretary: Paul Humphreys** Proposed Myrddin Jones, Seconded Jenny Benger. Elected.

Committee
Christine Gerzon and Richard Trorey, who was not present at the meeting but said he would stand as a Committee Member. Proposed by Diane Thirtle, seconded by Paul Humphreys. Elected en bloc.

Election of President. Jean Moody was unable to attend the meeting but said she was willing to stand as president. Proposed by Diane Thirtle, seconded Myrddin Jones. Elected.

Vice Presidents
The current Vice Presidents are:
Mr. W Barnes; A. & C. Beck; Mrs. Broughton; Mr. W G Crane; Mr. J Evason; Mrs. J Jones; Mr. B Maule; Mr. J McMahon; Mrs J Moody; Mr. N Patchin; Mrs. C L Potterton; Ms. J Pusey; Mrs. G Roberts; Mr. G Shillabeer; Mrs. R J Spivey; Mrs. Sumner; Mr. R Trayling;

Myrddin Jones said that the title Vice President was not widely understood but it had originally been taken from the RHS Model Constitution. It is given to members of the Association in recognition of their past contribution to the Association. They become Life Members rather than Annual Members. To avoid confusion in future the title will officially be changed to Life Member at the 2026 AGM.
For this year it is proposed to elect four new Vice Presidents namely, Mick Yeates, Malcolm Bray, Gerry Wise and Chris Wise. The proposal was put to the floor and they were elected.

8 Amendments to the Constitution
None

9 Membership Subscriptions
JW said the standard household subscriptions were £8 and £7 for Seniors. She proposed they stay the same for 2025. This motion was carried by the floor.

10 AOB
i. MJ appealed for any volunteers, to work in any capacity, to contact him saying experienced Committee Members will be happy to pass on their knowledge. The Committee meets nine times a year with the dates and times adjusted to suit the members.
ii. The Store opens next Sunday, 2nd February and is fully stocked.

The meeting closed at 20.54
Signed as being a true representative of the Annual General Meeting 2025:

Name: _____ Date: _____