Twyford & Ruscombe Horticultural Association

Minutes of the 69th Annual General Meeting

Held on 28th January 2026 at Loddon Hall Twyford RG10 9JA

Present:
Myrddin Jones (MJ); Bridget Carr (BC); Jenny Wager (JW); Jenny Benger (JB); Graham Starkie (GS); Henry Marchant (HM); Diane Thirtle (DT)
and 31 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; Sarah Darby (SD); Paul Humphreys (PH); and eight others as shown on the register.

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the AGM held 29th January 2025, 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 reported that 2025 was a very good year for the Association, filled with a variety of activities and events, all made possible by our dedicated Committee and hardworking volunteers
He thanked everyone who contributed at the Trading Store, at Shows, delivering newsletters, or working behind the scenes. The standout achievements in 2025 were:

- Membership continued growing.
- Hosting BBC Radio 4's "Gardeners Question Time" with over 200 attendees.
- There were ten months of record trading at the Store.
- Ten newsletters were published.
- There were three successful shows in Spring, Summer, and Autumn
- We organized two enjoyable trips.
- Potato and bulb planting events were held for children at the Store and local schools.
- Our plant sale event was very popular and successful.
- We supported the Donkey Derby, Twyford Fete, and held bulb planting events at Age Concern.
- Our quiz event raised over £700 for local charities.

Trips
The trips to RHS Wisley and Woodlands House near Bourne End broke even but we found that being organised on a Saturday did not attract more people.
In 2026, we plan two garden trips and details will be announced as soon as confirmed.
Talks
A talk from the Wokingham & District Beekeepers Association followed this AGM.
A talk on Hostas is planned in April and another later in the year.
Quiz Night
Our 2025 Quiz night was a huge success, raising over £700 (plus a sizeable donation from TATA) for two local horticultural charities.

The 2026 Quiz night is scheduled for Friday March 27th at Charvil Village Hall.

Newsletter Show Schedule and Handbook
Our Newsletter, edited by Graham Starkie, is vital for communicating with members. MJ asked for any items of interest to reach the Editor before the 27th of the month.
Graham has completed the editing of the 2026 Members' Handbook and Show Schedule The paid adverts from local businesses covered the cost of printing. It will be circulated next month.

Trading Store
The Sunday Trading Store has been busy under the management of Jenny Benger. She investigates horticultural suppliers, taking time to find the best prices for our members. She ensures that the Store is always fully stocked and is available, with her team, to take deliveries often at unsocial hours.
We sold 30 pallets of composts in 2025, our highest yet.
MJ thanked our Store volunteers including Malcolm, Marion, Olivier, Katya, Vivien, Dave, Paul and John who help, not only on Sundays, and in all weathers.
The Store re-opens on Sunday 1st February.

Maintenance
In 2025, we continued to invest in Store maintenance, much of the work was done and organised by Paul Humphreys. MJ thanked Mike Perry for making the doors at the Store stronger, better looking and more secure. The Store is looking better and is more watertight. Maintaining such a building is a continuous effort with more work needed in 2026.

Website and Social Media
Paul Humphreys also developed the online Show entry system that we first trialled at the Spring Show. This made it easier to place entries and the majority were made online in the Autumn Show.
Our social media presence continues to grow, with 512 followers, up 20% from the previous year. It's a great way to let people know what we're doing and attract more members. MJ asked those on Facebook, X, Instagram, or Threads, to follow us.
The website, which will be getting a visual update soon thanks to PH, received over 9,000 website visits from 7,000 unique visitors in 2025.
Volunteers
MJ stressed that we need more volunteers and committee members.
A Newsletter and Show Schedule and Handbook Editor will be needed because Graham Starkie wants to resign this year and give ample time for a smooth handover. Experience with desktop publishing software is highly desirable to help streamline editorial tasks.
An Events and Trips Organiser Is needed and someone to champion our Children's Activities.
New volunteers at the Store and at Shows are always needed and MJ asked that anybody interested in volunteering to speak to a committee member. They would be welcome to join a committee meeting to see what goes on before committing.
MJ thanked everybody for their continued support and hoped for another successful year for the Association.

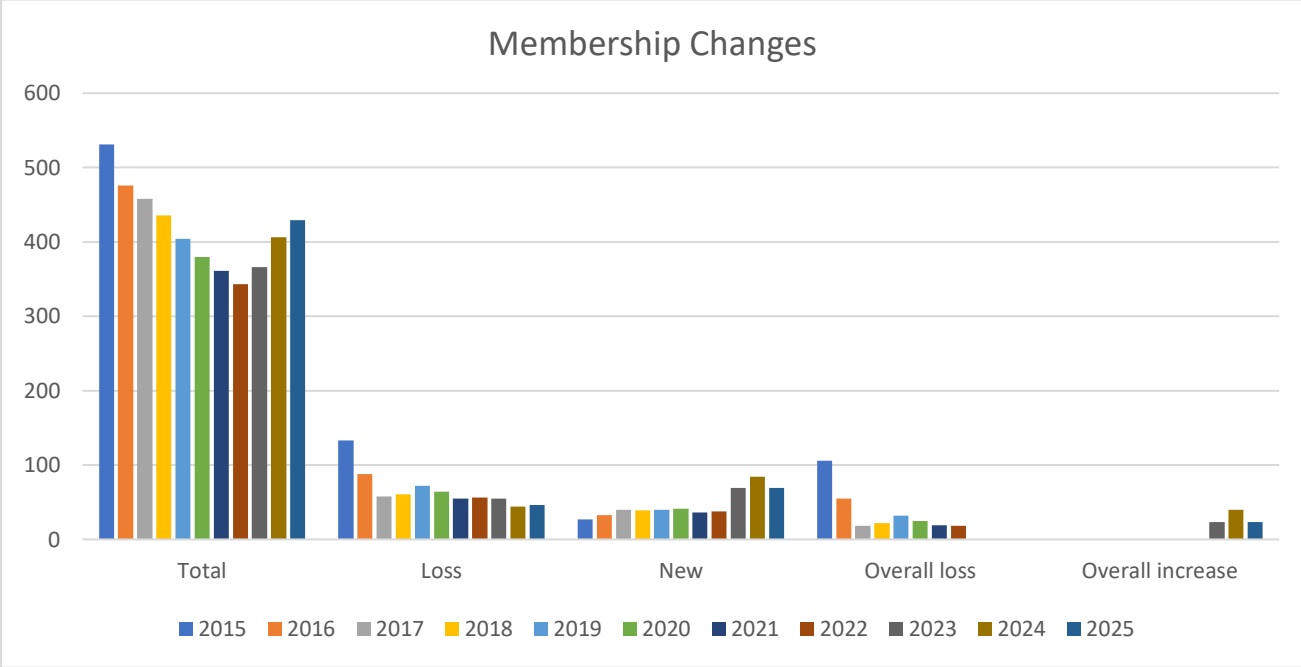
ii. Treasurer's Report

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 and made profits on most activities allowing us to make sizeable donations to Horticultural Charities based in the area.
The BBC Gardeners' Question Time was a very successful evening and, although it did not make a profit, neither did it make the loss anticipated.

iii. Membership Secretary's Report

Jenny Wager, the Membership Secretary reported as follows:

- The final total membership for 2025 was 429 *(2024- 406)* : an overall increase of 23 members. This is continuing the trend of an overall increase in membership.



- The total income through membership in 2025 was £2,804.50
  The Committee recommend that there is no change in membership fees for 2026: £7 for Senior members and £8 for Standard members and £9 for P&P where requested. The membership included 247 Senior members, 130 Standard members, 52 exempt members. There were 69 new members. The number of people who receive their newsletter by email currently stands at 358 (83 %).
- Thanks went to Graham Starkie who sends the email version of the newsletter promptly and gets the paper copies printed and to David & Maria Bright who distribute the newsletters to the TRHA Reps. Thanks went to all the Reps who delivered the newsletters, Handbooks and collected subscriptions.
- Other community involvement, through membership:
  In 2025 the following took part in daffodil and potato growing: Colleton Primary School, Charvil Piggott Primary School, Polehampton Infant School and Happy Hours Pre-School. All four took part in the "Schools Challenge Cup" in the Summer Show.

iv. Show Secretaries report

Henry Marchant reported he and his partner Polly Catchpole, were privileged to be the double-act that is the new Show Secretary. Polly unfortunately could not attend the meeting because of prior commitments and sends her apologies.

He thanked Sarah Darby for all her hard work as Show Secretary in the previous years and for the comprehensive handover she provided to them before and after the last Autumn Show, as they were inducted into the role. He hoped to maintain the high standards she set.

No doubt helped by a revitalised show schedule, the ease of making online entries, opening the shows to non-members, and increased promotion, all three shows in 2025 were again

very well supported. While the number of exhibitors at 213 dropped back nearer to 2023 levels, the overall number of exhibits of 840 hit an all-time high, with the Autumn Show generating a record 304 entries. Takings for the year were broadly the same as in 2024, partly due to lower visitor numbers at the Summer Show, though it was noticeable that sales of tea and cake were up on the previous year by 10% and nearly 30% for the Autumn Show year on year, and for that reason we are going to be experimenting with providing more seats and tables in the adjoining Polehampton Room for people to enjoy their teas comfortably.

As Sarah reported last year, much of the entry process is now automated, with only small amounts of manual data entry being necessary, and this is down to the pure genius and technical expertise of Paul Humphreys. When time allows, HM and PC will be working with PH to automate further aspects of the entry and judging processes to speed things up further. I am pleased to say that by the Autumn Show 67% of exhibitors were using the online entry form, and for those who still prefer to use the paper form, you will discover that we have brought the form more into line with the online version to make the manual data handling simpler for us. If you haven't used the online entry system yet and could do so, HM encouraged everybody to try it this year. It's quicker and easier for everybody.

For the coming year, as well as introducing more variety into many of the judged and people's vote classes for both adults and children, they are also looking to promote cashless payments at the shows as much as possible, for example for entry fees, refreshments, raffle tickets and other purchases, so we hope that these improvements will help to draw more exhibitors and more visitors to our shows.

HM and PC are very happy to be working with such a friendly and dedicated group of volunteers who help set up and run the shows and give so freely of their time, knowledge and experience, so he would like to record their gratitude for their help throughout the past year and in anticipation of their continued support for the coming season.

v. Newsletter Editor's Report

Graham Starkie said that editing the Association's newsletter for the past decade has been a genuine privilege. When he took on the role, he underestimated both how enjoyable it would be and how reliably the monthly deadline would arrive. Much of what was achieved is down to the contributors, whose encouragement, reliability and good sense made the task far easier. With their help, he achieved one of his main aims: a consistent monthly publication date which is not easy.

He was also grateful for the freedom he was given to develop the role and the publication's style. That freedom allowed the newsletter to evolve and also enabled him to achieve a personal goal: learning to use Adobe's InDesign software, which he had recently acquired and then felt obliged to justify.

He thanked his team of proofreaders—especially his wife, Irene and neighbour Mary.

The reprographics department at the Piggott School were thanked for their consistently sterling service, especially Jana, who was unfailingly helpful and patient.

After ten years GS is looking forward to a rest and to handing over to some new blood. The role is not insignificant, and he hopes his successor will be given the same freedom he has enjoyed He offered help and guidance if requested.

5. Adoption of Audited Accounts

The accounts were prepared by Bridget Carr. The TRHA accounts were previously audited by Sayam Namalewa but, as she is no longer able to do the work, BC employed Gisela Sharpe who is also the auditor for the Community Association's accounts.
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 Gisela Sharpe had done a very satisfactory job auditing the 2025 accounts and proposed her as auditor for this coming year. It was seconded by Vivien Readman and carried by the floor.

7 Election of Officers

Diane Thirtle said that Myrddin Jones had taken over as Chairman in 2023, after the two years when the Association had not been able to function properly, and had made it the thriving organisation it is today. He has agreed to stand for a further year.

I. **Chairman**: **Myrddin Jones;** proposed by Diane Thirtle, seconded by Bridget Carr Elected.
II. **Hon Treasurer**: **Bridget Carr;** proposed by Malcolm Bray, seconded by John March Elected.
III. **Hon Secretary:** - post unfilled
IV. **Vice Chairman: -** post unfilled
V. **Minutes Secretary**: **Paul Humphreys;** proposed by Myrddin Jones; seconded by Maria Bright. Elected
VI. **Membership Secretary: Jenny Wager;** proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Bridget Carr. Elected
VII. **Trading Secretary: Jenny Benger;** proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Carol Rose. Elected.
VIII. **Show Secretary: Henry Marchant and Polly Catchpole;** proposed by Myrddin Jones seconded by John March. Elected
IX. **Newsletter Editor:** Graham Starkie; proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Paul Bromley. Elected.
X. **Social Secretar**y: post unfilled
XI. **Store Maintenance Secretary: Paul Humphreys;** proposed Myrddin Jones, seconded by Graham Starkie. Elected

Committee
Richard Trorey, was not present at the meeting, but had agreed he would stand as a Committee Member. Proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Bridget Carr. Elected

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

Vice Presidents – see Amendments to the Constitution
The current Vice Presidents are:
Mr. W Barnes; A. & C. Beck; Mrs. Broughton; Mr. M Bray; Mr. W G Crane; Mr. J Evason; Mrs. J Jones; Mr. B Maule; Mr. J McMahon; Mr. N Patchin; Mrs. C L Potterton; Mrs. G Roberts; Mr. G Shillabeer; Mrs. R J Spivey; Mrs. Sumner; Mr. R Trayling; Mr. & Mrs. Wise; Mr. M Yeates.

8 Amendments to the Constitution

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 of existing and proposed Vice Presidents will officially be changed to Honorary Life Member.

Revised Clauses:

8.2 Any member may be nominated as a Honorary Life Member for outstanding and or long term service to the Association and put forward to the AGM for approval. It will be a life time award.

10.3 Any member entitled to attend and vote at the AGM may appoint the Chair as a proxy with full discretion to vote as they see fit on their behalf. The appointment of a proxy must be made in writing, including by email or text, and delivered to the Secretary not less than 48 hours before the meeting. A proxy appointment may be revoked by the member at any time before the meeting by written notice to the Secretary or by attending the meeting.

13.10 Membership privileges shall be as follows. They shall be decided by the Committee and shall be reviewed in advance of each AGM.

- Members who volunteer as Newsletter Representatives shall be entitled to free membership from the renewal date of the following year until such time as he or she resigns from the post.
- Honorary Life Members shall be entitled to free membership.

This year it is proposed to elect one new Honorary Member, Diane Thirtle, in recognition of long term commitment and service to the Association. Proposed by Myrddin Jones Seconded by Mick Yeates Elected.

9 Membership Subscriptions

Jenny Wager said that the standard household subscriptions are currently £8 for Standard Members and £7 for Seniors. She proposed they stay the same for 2026. This motion was carried by the floor.

10 AOB

i. Peter Halman proposed a vote of thanks to all the Members which was supported by the floor.

ii. Mick Yeates suggested that the Association should plant a tree on Stanlake Meadow to replace the one previously donated, which had died. He offered a walnut tree. Malcolm Bray said it should be a native tree. The matter will be discussed in Committee.

iii. The Store opens next Sunday, 1st February 2026 and is fully stocked.

The meeting closed at 20.15.

Signed as being a true representative of the Annual General Meeting 2026:

Name: _____ Date: _____