Twyford & Ruscombe Horticultural Association

Minutes of the 67th Annual General Meeting

Held on 31st January 2024 at St Thomas More Catholic Church, Twyford

Present:
Myrddin Jones (MJ); Diane Thirtle (DT); Bridget Carr (BC); Jenny Wager (JW);
Graham Starkie (GS); Sarah Darby (SD); Paul Humphreys (PH)
Richard Eyles; Irene Starkie; Marion Jones; Malcolm Bray; Michael Yeates; Dave Barnett;
Gemma Alford; David Bright; Neil Patchin; James Fort; John March; Chris Wallace;
Laurie Wallace; Roger Lewis; Christine Gerzon; Stephen Billington

The current Chairman, Myrddin Jones opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from the following people: Jean Moody; Jenny Benger; Olivier Drap; Katya Drap; John Wager; Frank Moore; Richard Trorey; Georgina Roberts

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the AGM held on 26thJanuary 2023, 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 we had a very successful year thanks to the Committee's dedication and hard work. He thanked all the other volunteers who help us in the Trading Store, at Shows, delivering newsletters and doing important work behind the scenes. He said we were back to running a full programme of events which included events for children at the Store, a Quiz Night and TRHA was involved in community events including Donkey Derby, Twyford Fete and Scarecrow Trail

MJ said that membership and our show participation increased in 2023 and we are determined to build on this in 2024. We are keen to try new things, understand members' priorities and learn what other Associations are doing that may be effective. He looked forward to our implementing our plans for 2024 and asked for feedback and suggestions from the Membership.

Sarah Darby, our Show Secretary in 2023, was supported by Claire Clark who has been Show Secretary for a number of years. Claire's job will prevent her from being involved in future and MJ thanked her for her work and assisting a smooth take-over.

We are looking for new volunteers to support Sarah before, and during, the Shows. In 2023 the Shows were Open for to non-members to exhibit. That proved successful in increasing the number of exhibits.

Jenny Wager, in addition to her role as Membership Secretary, organised a very successful plant sale and a potato planting and a bulb planting events at the Store for children. She is working with local schools to attract children and their families to engage with the Association.

Our Newsletters and Members Handbooks are edited by Graham Starkie and are significant pieces of work. Newsletters are vital way of communicating with our members in both their electronic and paper formats.

In 2023 the wholesale supplier of products for our Trading Store announced that they were ceasing business. Jenny Benger, our Store Manager, and several others have worked hard to find alternative, competitive, suppliers and that has been achieved. MJ thanked our Store volunteers including Malcolm, Marion, Olivier, Katya, Dave and Mick who are there in all weathers.

Paul Humphreys returned from Greece in 2023 and, although we are sorry for the circumstances, we are pleased that he has rejoined us on the Committee. Paul is supporting Diane Thirtle in her role as Secretary, Jenny Benger with purchasing for the Store and taken back the website development work. The website contains the latest Store price lists, information about events, show guides, hints and tips for show entrants and sign-posts events from neighbouring associations. We had around 8,000 website visits last year. We have over 300 followers on social media, Facebook, X, and Instagram. This is up 20% on the previous year and it is proving a quick and easy way to advertise. The aim is to grow the numbers and attract more people to join the Association. and we are grateful to Paul for his work.

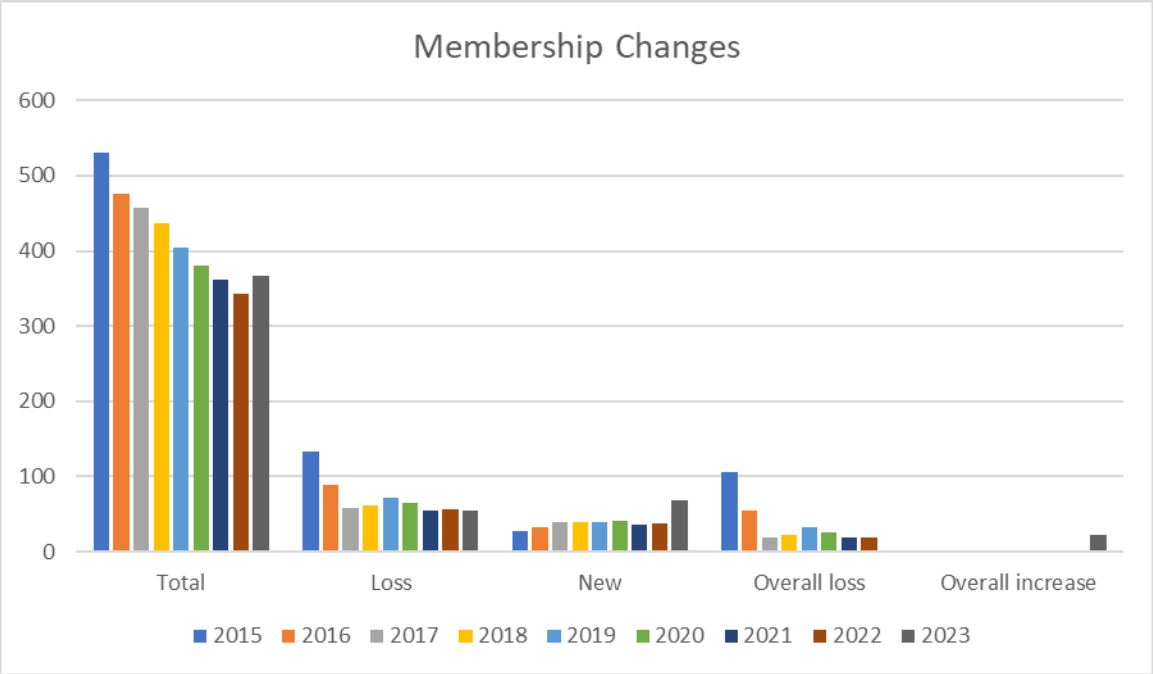
ii. Treasurer's Report

Bridget Carr presented the audited accounts to the meeting a copy of which is appended to these minutes.
BC said we had a good year financially and we hold a balance of £19,378 even though we have spent money on maintaining the Store building including repairing the guttering at a cost of £700. We have been able to achieve this healthy balance with profits from our Store and by increasing Membership numbers. We have to maintain a good level of funds for contingencies as the Store is in constant need of repair.
The Store has done very well this year due to good planning of products that sell by the Store Manager, Jenny Benger.
There was a slight loss on the Shows overall due to a low turnout on one occasion, but there is an overall improvement now that the format has changed.
Other costs are up because we had some additional expenses, including our new banners for use at the Shows and other events. Some of our funds will be spent on updating the Exhibit and Floral Art tables this year.
The quiz was a nonprofit making event but was very well attended and raised £400 for local charities. The two charities were very appreciative of the funds they received.
Our two trips were successful but a small loss was made on the one which was not so well supported in spite of booking a smaller coach.

- Jenny Wager asked why we have a large amount in our bank account. BC explained that we have to hold a certain amount reserve because, in the event that TRHA ceases to exist, the terms of our Lease state that the Store site must be returned to its original state before being handed back to the Parish Council. It was agreed that we could move a proportion of the bank balance into a savings account to accrue some interest.

iii. Membership Report

Jenny Wager reported that the final total membership for 2023 was 366 (2022- 343), an overall increase of 23 members (in 2022 there was an overall decrease of 18 members). This is a significant change for the better!



Despite the good news we still need to work at finding new members and keeping existing members to support the running and work of the TRHA. In 2019 our membership was 400 and we will have this ambitious target in mind for 2024.
The total income through membership in 2023 was £2,346.
The Committee recommend that there is no change in membership fees for 2024 but would like to increase the late joiners fee to half price: £4.00 for standard members and £3.50 for seniors.
We continue to offer the option of online Membership payments and this year members will also be able to pay by card at the Store as the conditions for card use have changed.
The membership comprised 191 Senior members, 110 Standard members, 55 exempt members plus 10 late joiners. Over the course of the year there were 69 new members.
The number of people who receive their newsletter by email is 259 (75 %).
Thanks went to Graham Starkie, who sends the email version of the newsletter promptly, David and Maria Bright who took over distribution of the newsletters and all the Reps who delivered the newsletters and collected subscriptions.
Local schools Colleton Primary School, Charvil Piggott Primary School, Polehampton Infant School and Happy Hours Pre-School became Group Members and last year took part in daffodil and potato growing and they are planning to re-join. We were pleased that Polehampton Infants School have also decided to re-join. A school's newsletter was started during the school Spring and Summer term time to encourage schools to enter the Shows.

- Mike Yates asked why numbers decreased and are now increasing. MJ believes our increasing use of social media, the Shows being Open to non-Members, plant sales and presence at the Fete helped. JW said personal contact seems the best way to recruit new members. DT said that we had a membership of 700 years ago, when the fee was minimal, but people were less involved in the Association.

- Allotment holders are being encouraged to join TRHA and TATA..

iv. Trading Secretary's Report

Jenny Benger was unable to attend the meeting but MJ reported that we are having to change suppliers as the existing one is no longer trading. JB and several others have worked hard to find an alternative, competitive, supplier. This has been achieved and the same brands of products will be available. As the catalogue is larger, we may be able to stock additional items. Any suggestions will be welcome.
In 2023 we sold over 40 tonnes of composts. We will continue to sell both peat-free and peat-based composts this year but this will change in 2025 as peated composts are phased out.
PH is assisting JB with stock control and advertising.

v. Show Secretary's Report

Sarah Darby said she was pleased to report that the shows last year were a great success. We made the decision to make exhibiting at the shows Open to non-members. Leaflets and posters were produced for each individual Show, and more advertising was done than previous years. In total we attracted 200 exhibitors across the three Shows, which was higher than the pre-pandemic 2018 and 2019 numbers, and we had a record number of 684 exhibits over the year, 316 of which were at the Autumn Show. We have been gradually increasing the number of classes in the Show Schedule after having to reduce them quite significantly whilst we were easing out of the pandemic.
Last year we also introduced a Chairperson's challenge. Basil seeds and a recipe for pesto were given out at the Spring Show, and exhibitors grew the basil and made the pesto which was exhibited and judged at the Autumn Show. This proved quite popular and another Chairpersons Challenge will be done this year.
We are investing in updating the look of the Shows, as well as further expanding the number of classes in the schedule. We are also trying to encourage younger people to exhibit more, by adding children's classes to the judged sections, introducing a Schools Challenge section to the Summer Show and giving out medals for the children's classes. We are also re-introducing three trophies that have not been awarded for a while: The Lisa Lucas Photography Trophy in the Spring show, the Les Moody Sweet Pea Challenge Trophy in the Summer Show, and the Kate Drye Memorial Cup for Handicrafts in the Autumn show. We are also planning to give certificates for Best In Show exhibits in the Floral Art and Horticultural, judged sections.

- Jenny Wager said for the School's Challenge points will be awarded to children who enter on behalf of their schools. A Challenge Cup will be awarded at the Autumn Show to the school that has accumulated the most points throughout the year.
- Mick Yeates asked if the Classes could be more seasonal, especially for the Spring Show. SD said it was always difficult especially in the Spring as the weather is unpredictable. Classes for "Any Named Vegetable" have been included to make it more flexible.
- Malcolm Bray said maybe our posters and banners should enforce the Open nature of our Shows.

vi. Newsletter Editors Report

Graham Starkie said it was his pleasure to write to all the members. He was very happy with the new relationship with Piggot School, our new printers. JW said members had a very good response to the Newsletter content and quality. Graham's deadline for copy is the 27th of each month.

vii. Social Secretary's Report

Jessica O'Connor who was organising social events, resigned in 2023 due to her workload. She arranged had for a trip to Wisley which was enjoyed by all. Jessica also organised a Quiz Night which was a huge success raising over £400 for local charities.
MJ thanked her for her work.
As her post was not filled MJ organised a trip to Waterperry Gardens in Oxfordshire in September. Although the trip was not well supported it was a very enjoyable day out.
Two garden visits are planned this year, one of which will be an RHS garden as we have the benefit free entry for up to 50 people. Dates will be announced later.
Quiz will be held on Friday 10th May at Charvil Village Hall.
We would also like to arrange two talks by gardening experts. Any suggestions would be welcome

- Malcom Bray asked why the Quiz Night to be held in Charvil this year? MJ said it was felt St Mary's Hall is too small as we had to turn away people last year. DT said Charvil Village Hall was the most suitable venue and was available on the evening chosen. The quizmaster is very happy to with the venue and has a key so TRHA does not have to pay an access fee.

vii. Store Maintenance Report

A person is needed to manage the Store maintenance. In 2023 this was done by MJ. He said that the guttering was repaired last year at a cost of £700. We still have a lot of maintenance work to do in 2024 including repairing the main doors that are now looking very weather beaten and replacement the side door. A contractor was appointed mid-2023 but the work has still not been started.

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 proposed Sayam Namalewa, who is our current Auditor. This was seconded by Diane Thirtle and adopted by the floor.

7 Election of Officers

i. **Chairman**: **Myrddin Jones** was proposed by Diane Thirtle, seconded by Malcom Bray. 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 Bridget Carr. Elected.
vi. **Membership Secretary: Jenny Wager** proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Diane Thirtle. Elected
vii. **Trading Secretary: Jenny Benger** proposed by Myrddin Jones, seconded by Bridget Carr. 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

Mick Yates.Elected

x. Social Secretary: post unfilled

xi. Store Maintenance Secretary: post unfilled

Committee

Richard Trorey was not present but said he would stand as a Committee Member. Proposed by Diane Thirtle, seconded by Paul Humphreys. Elected.

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 Myrrdin 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; Mr. H Ranscombe; Mrs. G Roberts; Mr. G Shillabeer; Mr. I Simpson; Mrs. R J Spivey; Mrs. Sumner; Mr. R Trayling;

There were no new vice presidents elected.

- Mick Yates asked how many Vice- Presidents take an active part in the Association.

It was explained that they are people granted life Membership because they have undertaken work for the Association in the past. Some have moved away, others become too old. Malcolm Bray asked if they can enter the Shows. They can but JW said most just receive the newsletters. If these are sent electronically it does not cost us anything. MJ said that maybe Vice Presidents is the wrong name. It was agreed it would be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

8 Amendments to the Constitution

None

9 Membership Subscriptions

JW said the standard household subscriptions were £8 and £7 for Seniors. She proposed it stay the same for 2024. This motion was carried by the floor.

10 AOB

MJ appealed for any volunteers, to work in any capacity, to contact him at the end of the meeting, or at the Store saying experienced Committee Members will be happy to pass on their knowledge.

The Committee meets nine times a year and dates and times can be adjusted to suit the members.

The Store opens next Sunday, 4th February and has had deliveries of composts, potatoes and onion sets for spring planting.

JW said that anybody could re-new membership after the meeting or at the Store.

The meeting closed at 20.55

Signed as being a true representative of the Annual General Meeting 2012:

Name: _____ Date: _____