

**EPSOM GARDEN SOCIETY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
21 November 2022**

Present

18 members (Names removed for privacy)

Apologies

9 members (Names removed for privacy)

Welcome by Alan Moody, President

Thank you to everyone for attending and to those who sent apologies.

The 2021 AGM was a Zoom meeting, and the minutes were in the newsletter and on the website. This meeting approved the minutes.

1. Chairman's Report - Isabella Glanville-Taylor

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Society through the year. Special thanks go to Cathy Flitter and Steve Roebuck for all they do, particularly with the Show; to Pam Davis for all her work as Treasurer; to John Lucking for Open Gardens; to Margaret Haslam for the newsletter; to Mariam Oliver for Outings

2. Treasurer Report – Pam Davis

2022 has once again been a difficult year due to COVID. We are fortunate that most of our members have remained with us, and subscriptions were paid. Steve will discuss in detail.

This year, monthly meetings costs, which consist of Zoom, hall hire and speakers, has cost the society almost £700. For part of the year, we were on Zoom, with no income from this but come March we were able to come back to the hall where we collect entrance fees. This year the Society has found that many of our speakers have put their fees up which is the biggest expense, but we would like to continue with the talks as we believe many members find them interesting and helpful. On that note, it would be great to see more members at our meetings, we are proposing to change some of the format and Cathy will be telling you our ideas.

The Committee looked to see where we could try to increase our income. We are proposing to increase our annual membership fees to £5 per family. The fees of £3 have not changed for almost 20 years, so I hope you will understand this increase and support us.

We held one show this year again in July which was a great success. The show managed to break even. Tea and cakes were popular with members allowing them to have a catch up with members and friends. Plants, raffle and an entrance fee also gave us a reasonable income. We are also lucky to have excellent sponsors so do please use them wherever possible. We do list them on our newsletter regularly. I am going to work on them for support for the next two years over the winter. They are important to the Society, and we do hope to enlist a few new ones.

General expenses of all admin remain the same, as have our membership fees for the Societies we belong to. A badly damaged cup that was returned to us last year, cost the Society £160 to have fixed. Engraving of the cups this year is the responsibility of the winners.

The accounts have been independently audited by Julian Flitter, a partner of Goodman Jones firm of accountants and we thank Julian for doing this. There is a breakdown of the accounts and the costing of the Summer Show at the back of these minutes.

Proposal to accept the accounts was made by Steve Roebuck and seconded by Viviane Sinnock. This was accepted by all members at meeting.

3. Membership Report – Steve Roebuck

We have a total of 313 members, a net loss of 22 over the year. We gained 7 new members, 4 at the summer show. We have lost about a third of our members over the last 10 years, which actually isn't bad compared to other clubs, but it would be great to see the trend going the other way.

Shows have always been a good recruiting ground for us, so having fewer will make a big difference to our numbers. Having said that, friends of existing members has also been a good way of finding people, so maybe we could have a push through our current members to ask friends and neighbours to join?

Any other suggestions of how to recruit would be gratefully received. Hopefully our beefed-up publicity team will also gain us some more members. We offer great value for money with our newsletters, show(s), meetings and open gardens group, & especially with the discounts kindly offered by local companies.

Our wonderful road reps again did a sterling job knocking on doors collecting subs and delivering membership cards. Having a hybrid system where members have the option of paying on-line works well with over 200 members paying their sub this way. I then notify the rep who drops their card off. It does create more work for me than when the reps did most of the work and paid a lump sum, but it is well worth the effort. Many people just don't keep any change with them when asked for their sub and prefer to pay by bank transfer.

All £956 in subs and £52 donations has been paid into the EGS account and at the end of our year our treasurer is sent a copy of our membership list and our subs received spreadsheets to ensure all subs are accounted for.

Regarding our newsletter distribution, we only deliver 70 paper copies now, of which 7 are postal, the rest are via road reps. Indeed, about a third of our 26 reps have no paper copies to deliver so are only called upon at subs time. Several are likely to retire soon so we will be looking for volunteers to step forward to take up the reins. As I said, there are usually only a small handful, if any, of paper deliveries each month. The main part of the job is collecting subs in the Spring. We still find that knocking on doors is much more effective than just emailing a request.

Finally, a reminder to let me know if you change your email address. It's very easy for emails to disappear into the ether and they don't always bounce back to let me know they haven't been delivered.

4. Meetings report – Cathy Flitter

Our return to face-to-face meetings has been a little hit and miss this year. A hit because it has been lovely to meet up again in person and enjoy the full meeting experience with refreshments provided by Margaret (thanks to Linda for her kind assistance too), a raffle which never fails to surprise and some good speakers to enjoy. March kicked off with an enjoyable tour of Hever Gardens with Neil Miller, a speaker from the Gardeners charity 'Perennial'. April was a little different with Tim Winter showing us Woodland Crafts. Paul Patton was 'Growing for the Kitchen Garden' in May, then some of the 'misses' started. Our speaker for June injured herself so badly she was unable to visit. Luckily, John Baker and June Colley of Hanging Hostas Garden fame stepped in with a fascinating talk on the Perfume of Plants. June was originally a perfume scientist for one of the big perfume houses in France and brought lots of 'samples' for us to try, including some that one might not expect – think civet cat, fungi, stinking lily – all apparently used in the perfume creation - a definite 'hit'! July was another miss, quite literally as we had to cancel when temperatures hit over 40C! August saw a return of popular speaker Cherrill Sands, who told us about the Gardens of Surrey, which inspired a visit, organised by Marian, to Munstead Wood, the home of Gertrude Jekyll – interesting as a garden of historical interest, although no longer quite what it was. September should have had Russell Bowes to talk about The Devils Garden, but it was not felt an appropriate theme on the occasion of the Queens funeral! October had a really interesting talk on Pruning Fruit with Jim Arbury, the head of fruit at Wisley, lots of helpful tips and very generous with his time answering individual questions too.

The biggest miss has been the drop in numbers attending. With the exception of August, numbers haven't even reached the 20s. Before lockdown, we had nearer 40. With the price of speakers rising (now an average of £100 with travel) as well as the hire of the hall, coupled with poor attendance, we are obviously sustaining some big losses each month. The number of speakers available is also more limited post pandemic, many only offer daytime talks. I would, therefore, like to suggest some changes to the format of meetings in 2023. Firstly, I am proposing the earlier start time of 7.30pm for the evening meetings. It has been noticed that once refreshments are over, our speaker can end up with only a handful of members remaining as it is too late! Also, a couple of evening meetings are to be replaced with coffee mornings: one in January, when no one really likes to go out in the cold of the evening and another 'flower arranging' in June. The latter would be more low key than a NAFAS society meeting with a simpler presentation, making use of summer flowers for instance. Finally, I would like to try a meeting on a Saturday morning. It would be good to attract members who are still working and don't really want to go out at the start of the working week and also cannot manage a weekday coffee morning. I envisage this as being something quite general, to appeal to the weekend gardener maybe. We would also not have a meeting if there were another event such as a Show. With no speakers in November (AGM) and December (Quiz night/Social), hopefully these changes will increase attendance and therefore cover the majority of our costs. These plans are dependent upon the Church agreeing and having available alternative slots and we are currently waiting for communication from them. An alternative venue may occasionally be required, and publicity will definitely be key to its success. Any comments and suggestions from members would be gratefully received, given that this is still very much experimental and could change again in 2024.

5. Show Report – Cathy Flitter

As I have already given a full report on this year's Show (August/September newsletter), I would just like to again thank everyone who helped to make it such a successful and enjoyable occasion. A bigger Show, even just once a year, really does give a lot more work and the number of people who worked their socks off, both on the Friday night and all day Saturday was really amazing.

A few things to take away and learn from. We literally had no junior entries at all this time and only a couple last year. This is obviously because families with school age children are likely to be on holiday. Although we still had plenty of exhibitors otherwise, the extreme heat meant the number of exhibits were down, although still very respectable given the conditions. Because of this, we were able to keep the smaller hall as a refreshments and sales venue. With the heat, this was nice for our visitors to be able to keep in the shade and we were also able to have access to the kitchen beside it. This would also be a benefit if we held the Show at more unpredictable times of the year weatherwise.

Plant sales, members table and the raffle were moved out to the front and under shelter which offered an excellent 'welcome' to our visitors and also meant that they tended to buy plants and raffle tickets straight away, rather than heading straight to refreshments. It also meant that we had sufficient space for exhibits in the main hall and still have room to move or just stop and admire.

The Show simply was not publicised enough. In the past, the local papers, radio stations, social media were all contacted. Posters and flyers were seen just about everywhere but this didn't happen as there was simply no-one to take this on. My thanks to Kim and Isabella who are planning something of a media campaign! Next year we will be hoping to be 'everywhere in Epsom'!

Finally, onto number of Shows. It is disappointing not to be able to resume our three shows annually, but much has changed in the past three years and trying to go back to 'how it used to be' just does not seem feasible in the current climate. Firstly, it is a huge amount of work to run these Shows and it seems too much to ask the same group of people, who are all volunteers, to muster the enthusiasm and energy on three separate occasions. Secondly costs of hiring halls, booking judges (at least for their travel) and all the extra expenses of printing etc means it is unlikely break even, which I'm pleased to say we managed this year. This is with as much trimming of the budget as can easily be achieved. Should we move to a cheaper hall, we would not get the footfall that we currently have at St Martins with its excellent central location and availability of parking, so plant sales, raffle, refreshments and those all-important visitor numbers, which are vital to keeping our membership numbers up, would all suffer.

It has been suggested that we, for now at least, aim to offer an Annual Show, but vary the times of year with an Autumn Show proposed for early September next year and a Spring Show the year after. I think this will give us the best of all worlds with a changing schedule each year and, yes, it may mean that at some shows we might be down in certain categories, but it still gives more people the opportunity to get involved. It may well be that the days of the high standard, RHS standard shows are over for those of us at a more local level, but we can encourage more families and less 'regular' gardeners to get involved and, as we have seen through lockdown, there are lot of them around!

6. Open Gardens – John Lucking (read to meeting by Steve Roebuck)

We are very grateful for people willing to open their gardens to our Society members. It certainly isn't necessary for it to be a "show" garden, it is always interesting to see what grows well around Epsom and to steal ideas for our own gardens. Whilst we all love the tea & cakes, it isn't a problem if you can't offer this, we just enjoy being nosy!

Despite the hot dry summer meaning that fewer gardens were opened we still had 12 gardens open, two of which opened twice. There are about 70 members on the list of potential visitors or gardens, but we typically get around 20 visitors to a garden, sometimes a few more, sometimes fewer.

John Lucking has kindly organised this for several years and would be pleased if someone else was willing to take the task on. It is all done by email. Let us know if you feel able to do this task.

7. Committee Election

All the existing Committee will stand, and we have one new member. This is the current Committee:

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| President | Alan Moody | Secretary | Kim Shrosbree |
| Chairman and Publicity | Isabella Glanville-Taylor | Newsletter Editor | Margaret Haslam |
| Membership & Webmaster | Steve Roebuck | Assistant Show Secretary | Heather Martindale |
| Shows & Meetings Secretary | Cathy Flitter | Outings | Marian Oliver |
| Treasurer | Pam Davis | | |

Proposal to re-elect the existing Committee by Viviane Sinnock and seconded by Tom Pope. This was accepted by all members at meeting.

Proposal to appoint Julian Flitter to audit the accounts was proposed by Isabella Glanville-Taylor and seconded by Kim Shrosbree. This was accepted by all members at meeting.

There have been no new volunteers for the Committee.

8. AOB

There were one or two items of Any Other Business which were raised by attendees of the AGM:

- Will try a coffee morning on a Saturday and perhaps afternoon meetings, although it should be borne in mind that parents may be working and children at school if these were a weekday. It was noted that coffee mornings will cost the same as the monthly meeting cost, but this will be reviewed next year.
- It was suggested that we try Horton Arts for recruiting junior members as they have activities there
- It was also suggested that we promote ourselves as a friendly Garden Society in Epsom and that we use our own judges for shows.
- There was suggestion by Steve that we have an informal Spring Display at the March meeting for members. This was thought an excellent idea.

ACCOUNTS FOR END OF YEAR 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022

| | 30/09/2021 | 30/09/2022 | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| Balance at Lloyds Bank | £9,384.07 | £8,217.43 | Opening balance | 9387.07 |
| Outstanding Receipt | £3.00 | £95.00 | Income | 1514.84 |
| Less O/S Cheques | £0.00 | £0.00 | Expenditure | -2304.48 |
| Monies held on Bal Sheet for 2020 | -£380.00 | £0.00 | Monies held on bal sheet | -380.00 |
| TOTAL | £9,007.07 | £8,312.43 | O/S receipts | 95.00 |
| | | | Closing balance | 8312.43 |

| Income Breakdown | 2021 | 2022 | Cost/Income | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Membership subscriptions | £992.00 | £956.00 | | |
| Donation | £35.00 | £55.00 | | |
| Monthly Meetings Income | £191.42 | £199.91 | | |
| Advertising | £380.00 | £380.00 | | |
| Spring Show (net) profit/refund | £187.50 | £0.00 | | |
| Summer Show (net) profit | £0.00 | £0.00 | | |
| Dobies Credit | £0.00 | £18.93 | | |
| | £1,785.92 | £1,609.84 | | |
| | | | Cost/Income | -£694.64 |
| | | | Bank Reconciliation at | 30/09/2022 |
| | | | Balance per Cash Book | 8217.43 |
| | | | O/S receipts | 95.00 |
| | | | Less Bal Sheet retention | £0.00 |
| | | | | <u>8312.43</u> |

| Expenditure Breakdown | 2021 | 2022 |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Printing/Stationery | £225.08 | £294.33 |
| Postage | £102.84 | £21.67 |
| Hall hire for Lectures | £0.00 | £252.00 |
| Summer Show (net) Cost | £651.42 | £371.77 |
| Monthly meetings Costs | £661.34 | £967.76 |
| Last Year Cost Engraving | £57.50 | £117.00 |
| RHS & SHF membership | £132.00 | £45.00 |
| Sundry equipment new cup | £90.00 | £159.95 |
| Insurance | £0.00 | £75.00 |
| Mayor Fund/Gratuity to committee | £174.00 | £0.00 |
| | £2,094.18 | £2,304.48 |

Surplus/Cost of income over expenditure: (-£308.26) -£694.64

SUMMER SHOW 2022 COSTINGS

| JULY 21 SHOW | | JULY 2022 SHOW | |
|---|----------------|---|---------------|
| DEBITS | £ | DEBITS | £ |
| Total prize money awarded | 230.50 | Total Prize money awarded | 195.00 |
| Judges' fees | 144.00 | Judges Fees | 113.80 |
| Sandwiches for Judges/committee etc | 33.05 | Sandwiches for Judges/committee etc | 48.10 |
| Voucher & planet for Raffle | 0.00 | Voucher & planet for Raffle | 13.68 |
| Cakes/jam/cream/plates (see note 1) | 56.38 | Cakes/Jam/Cream/ plates | 68.84 |
| Voucher for caretaker | 0.00 | Voucher for caretaker | 0.00 |
| Cup engraving | 0.00 | Cup engraving (Not applicable this year) | 0.00 |
| Hall hire (see note 2) | 375.00 | Hall Hire | 375.00 |
| Stationery/printing | 11.36 | Stationery/printing | 38.40 |
| Display boards for photography | 0.00 | Display Boards for Photography | 0.00 |
| Consumables | 83.48 | Consumables | 0.00 |
| Tablecloths | 0.00 | Tablecloths | 0.00 |
| Hire of gazebos | 115.00 | Hire of gazebos | 130.00 |
| | <u>1048.77</u> | | <u>982.82</u> |
| JULY 2021 SHOW | | JULY 2022 SHOW | |
| CREDITS | £ | CREDITS | £ |
| Tea/Cake Stall | 171.70 | Tea/Cake Stall (see note 3) | 271.65 |
| Plant Sales | 102.50 | Plant Sales | 95.10 |
| Raffle money | 43.00 | Raffle money | 75.00 |
| Entry Fee for Exhibits | 43.40 | Entry Fee for Exhibits | 34.40 |
| Advertisement in schedule 50% of receipts | 380.00 | Advertisement in schedule 50% of receipts | 380.00 |
| Bread Stall contribution | 25.00 | Bread Stall contribution | 20.00 |
| Book Stall | 11.75 | Book Stall | 0.00 |
| | <u>777.35</u> | Entrance Fees | 108.00 |
| | | Card Stall | 6.90 |
| | | | <u>991.05</u> |
| COST OF SHOW | 271.42 | PROFIT OF SHOW | 8.23 |

NOTES:

1. Includes £19.50 from cakes frozen
2. Includes Friday night costs
3. Includes £40 cakes