 **Epsom Garden Society: December 2022 and**

 **January 2023**

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 Newsletter: Margaret Haslam 01372 724138, 3 Elm Grove Epsom KT18 7LZ

 Membership Secretary and Newsletter Distribution: Steve Roebuck 0208 394 2168

 Show Secretary: Cathy Flitter 07821 277708

*Dear Member, if you have any news or garden related small ads that you would like to be included in the Newsletter, please phone me, 01372 724138, or email me,* *margarethaslam6@gmail.com*

On the 21st November 2022 we held our AGM. Our President **Alan Moody** welcomed us all, and reminded us that last year our AGM was a Zoom meeting because of Covid. The Minutes were on the web-site and in the newsletter at the time, and there were no matters arising.

Our Chairman **Isabella Glanville-Taylor** thanked everyone who has helped to run our Society.

**Pam Davis** gave her Treasurer's report. Covid has made this a difficult year, and we are fortunate that most of our members have stayed with us. We have kept a programme going using Zoom meetings, but there has been no income from this. Since March we have been back in the Hall where we can collect entrance fees. This year we have found that most speakers have put their fees up, but we would like to continue organising them as members find them interesting and helpful. The Committee have been looking to see where we could increase our income and propose increasing our annual membership fees to £5 per household. The previous fee of £3 had remained the same for twenty years. [Cries of 'About time too!' from the audience.]

We held one Show this year in July that was a great success. Thanks to refreshment sales, the plant stall and the raffle and charging a small entrance fee, the costs broke even. We are also lucky to have excellent sponsors, so please use them when you can, you will see them listed in the newsletter regularly.

General membership fees of Societies that we belong to have stayed the same. One unexpected expense was mending a badly damaged cup that was returned to us last year. A man who works at *The Repair Shop* did a wonderful job on it but it cost us £160. Engraving names on the cups from now on will be the responsibility of the winners, if they want it done.

The accounts have been independently audited by **Julian Flitter,** many thanks to him.

**Steve Roebuck** gave his Membership report: we have 313 members, a loss of 22 over the year. Four joined at the Show. We have lost about a third of our members over the last ten years, which actually isn't bad compared to other clubs, but it would be great to see the trend going the other way. Shows were always a good recruiting ground, so having fewer will make a big difference to our numbers. However, friends of existing members has always 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. Hopefully our beefed up Publicity team will also gain us some new members. We offer great value for money with our newsletters, show[s], meetings and open garden group, and 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 have been paid into the EGS account and at the end of the year our Treasurer is sent a copy of our membership list and spreadsheet of subs received to ensure all subs are accounted for.

Regarding our newsletter distribution, we only deliver 70 paper copies now, of which seven are postal, the rest delivered by road rep. Indeed about a third of our 26 road reps have no paper copies to deliver and 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. 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. [We were amused to hear that **Steve** was a road rep for the ***Epsom Protection Society*** and so enjoyed knocking on doors asking for protection money! Not so much fun now they are ***the Civic Society***!]

Finally a reminder to let **Steve** 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 him know that they haven't been delivered.

**Cathy Flitter** Meetings report. Our return to face-to-face meetings has been a little bit hit and miss this year. A hit because it has been lovely to meet again in person and enjoy refreshments provided by **Margaret** and **Linda** and the raffle, which never fails to surprise, and some good speakers to enjoy. 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 now averaging £100 with travel, plus the hire of the Hall, and poor attendance, we are sustaining some big losses each month. The number of speakers available is also more limited post-pandemic, many only offering day-time talks. Firstly, I am proposing an 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, and another one 'flower arranging' in June. This would be more 'lowkey' than a NAFAS society meeting with a simpler presentation making use of summer flowers. Finally, I would like to try a meeting on a Saturday morning to try to attract members who are still working and couldn't manage a weekday coffee morning. I envisage this to be something quite general, to appeal to the weekend gardener perhaps. With no speakers in November [AGM] and December [Quiz/Social night], 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 the 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.

**Cathy Flitter** Show report: the full report was in the September newsletter, it was a lot of work, but much enjoyed. We had no junior entries at all this time, they have all grown up and gone away to university. We will have to start again with some new little ones. We still had plenty of exhibitors, although the extreme heat meant the number of exhibits were down. This meant the small hall could be used as a refreshments and sales venue. It was nice for our visitors to sit in the shade and access to the kitchen was at hand. This would be a benefit if we held the Show at a more unpredictable time of the year, weatherwise.

Plant sales, members' table and the raffle were all moved out to the front and under shelter which offered an excellent welcome to visitors, and meant they tended to buy plants and raffle tickets at once rather than head straight to the refreshments. This made more room in the main hall for exhibits with space to move round and admire. We should have publicised the Show more. There was just no one to take this on. But thanks to **Kim** and **Isabella** who are planning a media campaign next year!

Finally, onto the number of Shows. It is disappointing not to be able to run the three shows annually, but much has changed in the last three years. It is a huge amount of work to run a Show and just too much to ask the same small group of people to muster the enthusiasm and energy on three separate occasions. Also costs of hiring halls, booking judges, even just paying for their travel, and all the extra expenses of printing etc. have all risen and it is unlikely to break even. Which I am pleased to say we managed this year. Should we move to a cheaper hall we would miss the footfall that we have at St Martin's, with its central location and excellent parking. We want to encourage more families and less-regular gardeners to get involved, and there are plenty of them around!

**Steve** read **John Lucking'**s report on the Open Garden Group: we are very grateful for people willing to open their gardens to our Society members. It doesn't have to be a Show garden, it is just nice to see what grows well in Epsom and steal ideas for our own gardens. Twelve gardens opened, and about twenty people visited each one. Tea and cake enjoyable but not essential. **John** has organised this for several years now and it is all done by email. Let him know if you would be willing to take the task on.

***The new code for ordering seeds from Dobies catalogue for our members at a 40% discount is SUGD104K.***

Small Ad. : two ***free yew trees,*** one 3', one 4', could be cut to make Christmas trees, 01372 720152.

 *Best wishes Margaret*

P.S Don’t forget to save money by using the Methodist Scout’s Christmas post for Epsom, Ewell & Ashtead; KT17, 18, 19 & 21. Only 40p per card! [www.7thepsom.org.uk/activities/christmas-post/](http://www.7thepsom.org.uk/activities/christmas-post/)

P.P.S. Our first Coffee morning meeting in January will be notified by email & our website.

<https://e-voice.org.uk/epsomgardensociety/>