

HAZLEMERE GARDENING ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting

4th December 2023 14:30 hrs

There were 16 Members and Committee present; a signed attendance list is available.

1. APOLOGIES

Carole Last, Carole Robinson, Sarah Lock, Phil Clapham, Barbara Marks, Bob Atkinson, Stuart Astin and Judith Weaver.

2. APPROVAL OF 2022 MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting were approved by Ray Podbury and seconded by Peter Hayes.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None

4. CHAIRMANS ADDRESS – Jack Schwarz

Jack said: On behalf of the committee, I am pleased to welcome you all to our 2023 Annual General Meeting.

The Gardening Association has had another very successful year with an increase in membership and I am very pleased to say we have had more members exhibiting, for the first time, at our Spring and Autumn Shows and we would be delighted if this trend continued in the future.

In May we held a plant sale in The Barn Compound and the funds raised were donated to Rennie Grove Hospice Care.

We also held trips to The Malvern Spring Show and to RHS Wisley and we had a stand at the Hazlemere Fete.

We had nearly one hundred guests at our Social Evening and for the first time we had a fish and chip supper rather than a buffet.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the committee, who give so much of their time to run The Store and to arrange all of the events I have mentioned above and to keep our website and Facebook page up to date.

In particular I would like to thank Bob Atkinson for all his help over the years he has been on our committee. Bob will not be standing for election to the committee this year.

We look forward to seeing all our members when we reopen The Store on the first Sunday in February 2024.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT – Joy Payne

Joy reported that:

Trading Account

Sales at £37,541:00 were £1,200 more than last year but purchases were down up by approximately £2,800.

The figure for buildings insurance is lower because the Parish Council found a new insurer.

Building consumables (which are the expenses incurred running the Barn and conforming to Health & Safety requirements) have reduced as last year, they included the purchase of two more card readers and repairs to the pallet truck.

Closing stock has increased as we have again bought some extra stock to beat the expected price rises next year.

Profit & Loss Account

On the income side, the price of tickets for the Social Evening increased to cover the cost of the fish & chips. The plant sale was extremely successful this year.

On the expenditure side, the fete cost more as it was cancelled last year. The expenditure for the Social Evening includes the increased cost of the food. The figure for web design and maintenance is a lot lower this year because last year, we had to pay for some essential maintenance to get the HGA laptop up to date. The only paid advertising this year was in the Terriers & Totteridge News.

Balance Sheet

Stock at the end of the year is £38,435, an increase on last year and all paid for.

There are no 'Debtors' this year as we have not yet received any credit for the return of the out-of-date seeds. The figure shown as 'Creditors' is in respect of the proportion of the buildings' insurance paid in the following financial year in respect of this year.

The Prepayments figure includes the amount of commercial and stock insurance premiums paid this year but which cover part of next year.

The bank balance plus cash in hand totals £19,580.59.

I would like to thank the cashiers and my fellow committee members for dealing with the money each Sunday and to Barry Westbrook for his work on the Audit.

Proposed by Peter Pearman and seconded by Andrea Dean and unanimously accepted

6. STORE MANAGER'S REPORT – Phil Clapham (Reported by Peter Pearman in Phil's absence)

Phil reported that ordering and restocking the Barn Store is not like trying to sell to people on a one-off basis some things go quickly and he has to re-order. At the moment we have too many items that are slow sellers. We have too much stock and now have to get it down to a manageable level.

This year's orders were affected because Horticultural Supplies closed down. We now have lots of stuff that may not sell quickly but some of it won't be available from anyone else. The good thing is that buying in new stock next year would involve a price increase – which in many cases we won't have to make. This applies to the netting for example and the bags of fertilisers.

He will be making the Westlands order in January once he's evaluated what we need.

At the moment he hasn't had to put up many prices for next year but will have an overview prior to opening the shop just to see what leeway he has. He plans to have some bargains to start off the year. He has also ordered new products such as long handle weeders designed to pull dandelions out of lawns, and lawn spike shoes. This followed several requests last year. Also Seed tray inserts for small plants. I have now stocked some made in the UK which are robust inserts, these are solid and will last a long time.

At the moment Phil reports that we are all ready for next year's trading – but nothing from Durston's on prices for next year, or whether peat free only is in force. If we do have to move to peat free it will be better to get our compost from Country Supplies.

Phil has asked for volunteers to mop the floors after Christmas and to wash the yellow jackets for the start of next year's trading. At some point in the new year, he will have a lot of bagging up. He has asked if anyone remembers who the cashiers were who were happy to help?

A member reported that Durstons Peat Free Compost had given very poor results, but Melcourt Peat Free in their opinion was excellent.

Special thanks were given to Phil for ensuring we continue to stock the range of excellent products and that the store meets the requests of members.

7. SEEDS – Carole Robinson (Read by Jack Schwarz in Caroles absence).

Carole reported that 2023 has been an exceptional year for seed sales. Many varieties of both Unwins and Dobies sold out completely with only a few remaining packets left on the stands especially vegetables when we closed in October. Tomatoes of 12 different types sold out completely with only 2 types remaining by the time the Barn closed. Flower varieties were a little slower but we still had extremely high sales with Cosmos selling out and being reordered twice.

Dobies seeds continued to sell much better by having pictures of the varieties displayed on the stands. In comparison they are generally less expensive or have a higher number of seeds per packet in comparison to the same varieties sold by Unwins. All Dobies seeds are Sutton's just organised into plain packets and named as Dobies. Please also be aware that those packets with a date on the back are the year packaged and not the expiry date. A few HGA members had mentioned that Peas plus French and Runner beans of Unwins varieties had increased in cost quite a bit again this year as they have for the past two years. We won't get the new catalogue until end of December so at this stage we have no idea what next year's prices will be.

If there are any specific seed varieties of preference then please let Carole know as soon as possible and she will do her best to include them in our orders. Through Westlands a minimum of 6 packets of Unwins seeds in any variety has to be ordered whereas through Dobies we can order as little as 1 packet of any variety if requested.

As Westlands have again allowed HGA to keep the out-of-date packets to donate to local charities, schools etc she will be packaging these up and delivering them early next year. There will not be as many packets as we have had in the past few years mainly due to selling out of so many varieties as well as quite a few having a longer expiry date. However, we will attempt to make sure all places on the list receive something.

We have a considerable list of schools, nurseries, hospices, LD and MH centres and care homes plus a number of additional community projects who benefit from these seeds. There is no firm agreement on Westlands accepting our out-of-date seeds as being returned for credit or in allowing us to donate them to those on our list. This is revisited every year so is never a definite. Hopefully this will continue in the future though.

8. POTATOES/ONIONS/SHALLOTS/FLOWERING BULBS – Sarah Lock, Spring (Read by Anita Reed in Sarah’s absence)

Sarah reported on the Spring delivery. The January 2023 delivery from Taylors Bulbs arrived in good time and was of a consistently high quality. Many thanks to Joy and Anita for all their help with weighing/bagging over 200 packs of potatoes! The stock of all the items ordered: 9 varieties of potatoes, Sturon onion sets and Golden Gourmet shallots, sold very well.

After 9 years in this role Sarah decided, the time had come to resign. Andrea Dean kindly volunteered to take it on:

The committee expressed their thanks for all that Sarah has done over the last nine years.

Spring Bulbs, Onions Shallots: Andrea Dean.

Andrea reported that she took over from Sarah Lock in March, and wanted to thank her for all her work over the past 9 years - particularly given the difficulties encountered during the Covid pandemic. She thanked Sarah for her very thorough handover to her and help with various questions during the year.

The order of spring-flowering bulbs was delivered on time in early September and were almost sold out after one morning of trading, so a top-up order was placed. These extra bulbs, along with onion sets, also sold out very quickly. If our membership numbers remain healthy, we should be able to place a larger order in 2024. Hazlemere Council also purchased, via HGA, a bulk bag of mixed daffodils for a trial to plant in local verges.

As the spring bulbs were so successful, the Committee decided to reinstate summer-flowering bulbs for 2024, which were discontinued for 2023 due to poor sales in 2022. The orders for these have been placed, along with seed potatoes, shallots and onion sets, and they should be delivered in time for the start of trading in February 2024. Following some requests from members, the February order will include red onion sets.

Andrea also thanked all the Committee for welcoming her and for their support and help over the past year.

9. MEMBERSHIP REPORT – Peter Pearman

Peter reported that at the year-end there were 413 members. This figure includes 109 new members and 10 life members. This figure is the largest membership since the late 1980’s and the vast majority of the credit for this increase must go to Andrea Dean from our committee for her regular Facebook postings.

In addition to this we continue to regularly update our membership via email and hard copy on events and changes to our product range at the barn store.

We also contribute articles for both the Widmer End News and the Penn & Tylers Green Village Voice magazine.

Peter thanked the members who had assisted us through the past year with cashier, handling and gate duties, in particular those stalwarts who volunteered multiple times during the year. without those people we would be unable to run our Barn store.

Last year we raised the annual membership fee to £7 and £5 for those aged 60 and over. This has provided additional funds to meet our increasing costs.

The recommendation of the committee is that the membership fee remains unchanged. *Proposed by Barbara Hughes and seconded by Ray Podbury, carried unanimously.*

10. SHOW REPORT – Barbara Marks (Read by Andrea Dean in Barbaras absence).

This year we held our second post-lockdown Spring Show. After a very large dip in numbers of entrants in 2022 (the lowest on record at 12), there was a dramatic increase to 27 this year, which included 3 children, and the highest number of entries since 2017! We are always concerned that erratic weather patterns at this time of year will affect the number of floral entries, added to the sad demise of one of our keenest growers earlier in 2023, but in the event, some new winners emerged victorious in several floral divisions, – a ‘changing of the guard’ perhaps! The show sub-committee also made the decision to include a few domestic classes this year. Although they didn’t attract many entries (perhaps because of short notice?), they might become a more regular feature. The photography division had a reasonable number of entries, but, on the advice of our judge, it has been revised, so do have a look at the updates on the HGA website and then get creative with your phones and/or cameras.

As you can see from the figures, there was a big increase in the number of entries in the Autumn Show. Competitors were busy right up to the deadline and the hall awaiting the judges looked amazing. Huge thanks to all our members who ‘had a go’, especially those new to doing so, and congratulations to the many who then carried off trophies for the first time. Hopefully you will inspire others to do likewise.

Spring	Entrants	Entries	Entries/ entrant	Autumn	Entrants	Entries	Entries/ entrant
2023	27	169	6	2023	27	299	11
2022	12	93	8	2022	27	202	7
2021	---	---	---	2021	18	146	8
2020	---	---	---	2020	---	---	---
2019	19	143	8	2019	25	252	10
2018	17	124	7	2018	25	253	10
2017	19	179	9	2017	20	204	10
2016	30	193	6	2016	23	195	8
2015	17	143	8	2015	24	213	9
2014	22	147	7	2014	22	203	9
Average	20	149	7	Average	23	219	9

We are also extremely grateful to our members and others who give up their time to organise and help out at our shows. Whether you volunteer to fill in entry cards, set up the hall or clear it after the event, help out the judges, do the judging yourself, or provide them with lunch, or run the raffle, you are all important and the shows wouldn’t happen without

you. Our afternoon visitors also appreciate the Good Neighbors and Penn & Tylers Green Evening WI members who provide their refreshment.

11. TECHNOLOGY REPORT – Peter Hayes

Peter said that the HGA website continues to be managed “In House” which means that it can be updated quickly to keep members informed about events, spring & autumn shows and Barn Store products. HGA has linked its website to Google Analytics and uses this software to get information about how the website is viewed. Throughout 2023 (January – November), the website was viewed 17000 times with 1900 viewings being first time visits.

Just over 50% of the website viewings have been made using a mobile phone. A second website has been developed this year to make it easier to view HGA’s activities with these devices. The website will be further revised in 2024 to make it easier for these users to view the website.

Following a suggestion from a member, a Barn Store product search page has been added to the website. Members who have used this new search function have commented that it helps them find the products quickly and easily.

HGA now has three card readers operating in the Barn Store. These were purchased to give an alternative method of payment to Barn Store customers and to reduce handling cash and cheques. The card reader has proved to be very popular and most payments are taken using these devices.

Facebook: Andrea Dean.

Andrea reported that, HGA had a Facebook page set up by Peter Hayes, but it was not used actively for publicity or communications. When she joined the Committee this year, she offered to try to increase our use of Facebook. She said that the Committee was happy for me to “have a go” to see if a presence on Facebook was beneficial for the Association, alongside our website and regular emails to members.

The first posts she did were to publicise the Spring Show, both beforehand and on the day. We had a very good turnout of visitors to the Show. In May she posted the Annual Plant Sale, which was extremely busy with many stalls selling out and quite a lot of new members joining on the day. After that she publicised Gordon Hickmott’s monthly plant stall, the coach trips, the Hazlemere Fete and the Autumn Show, so typically we had at least one post per month. All the posts are also published on Instagram.

Andrea posts into the local community Facebook groups, i.e., Hazlemere, Penn and Widmer End, to maintain a local presence. Always including a link to the HGA website to encourage use of the website and increase awareness of all the information on it. Our number of Facebook “followers” is now 117, from only a few at the start of 2023.

The Committee thinks that the regular use of Facebook has helped our membership remain very healthy in 2023. As our foray into Facebook seems to have been successful, and has no cost to HGA, the Committee has decided to continue with this in 2024.

12. SOCIAL REPORT – Carole Last (Read by peter Pearman in Carole’s absence)

Visit to Malvern Spring Show – 14th May This was our first visit to the Show since 2016. Interest in and uptake of tickets was a little disappointing with finally only 45 people going on the day. The weather was good and the members who attended were happy with the day out.

Visit to Hidcote/Kiftsgate – Monday 19th June. It had been agreed to try a weekday trip. Unfortunately, the trip only attracted 35 people and a financial loss was incurred. The transition between the 2 gardens worked well. Also, unfortunately the ‘Kiftsgate rose’ was in full bud but not in full flower as was hoped, however we had a lovely day of summer sunshine, spoilt a little by a traffic accident on the M40 which made the coach arrival back in Hazlemere at almost 7pm.

Annual Trip to RHS Wisley – 3rd September. About a month before this trip, we found out that our coach company, Heyfordian, had gone into administration. Angel Executive coaches came to our rescue. However, prices across all companies were higher, it is expected that future coach trips will be more expensive. The major roadworks on the M25 ‘Wisley’ exit did not cause too much of a delay and we were still at Wisley’s entrance at 10am.

Social Evening – 27th October Horatio’s Garden. We returned to a full house of 94 for this illustrated talk given by Victoria Oliver which was very well received by those present. She and 2 volunteer colleagues brought along some charity merchandise which was well supported by members. As a departure we decided to replace the cold buffet with brought in fish & chips which again was well received. There were again issues surrounding the Community Centre’s projector screen and the committee may look into the possibility of obtaining our own screen. I thank the committee for adopting Horatio’s Garden as the chosen charity for Plant Sale proceeds at next year’s event and finally I feel everyone enjoyed the evening and of course thanks go to everyone who arranged the supper, served the drinks and sold raffle tickets.

Looking ahead to 2024 we are hoping to run a Spring trip to RHS Wisley, Summer trip to possibly Leonardslee or Nymans and a trip to see Christmas Lights.

13. ELECTION OF OFFICIALS FOR 2024 NOMINATIONS

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	Peter Pearman
CHAIRMAN	Jack Schwarz
VICE-CHAIRMAN	John Chandler
TREASURER	Joy Payne
SECRETARY	Anita Reed

COMMITTEE MEMBERS STANDING FOR RE -ELECTION

Phil Clapham, Sarah Lock, Barbara Marks, Andrea Dean, Peter Hayes, Carole Last, Muriel Cross, Barbara Hughes, Carole Robinson and Ray Podbury.

All nominations for the Officers and Committee members were proposed by Jill Grimble and seconded by Diane Podbury and approved unanimously.

Stuart Astin had expressed an interest in joining the committee.

He was proposed by John Chandler and seconded by Joy Payne and elected unanimously.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR: Mr D B Westbrook FCCA

Proposed by Joy Payne and seconded by Anita Reed

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

14.1 Plant Sale:

A member requested that we do not allow the sale of plants at the 'Plant Sale' until the advertised time of 10:00 a.m. He has found that by this time many are already sold out. – it was agreed that we will keep the gates closed until 10:00.

In discussion it was agreed to consider how we present and sell spring bulbs for the same reasons.

There were no further questions and Jack thanked everyone for attending and invited them to stay for refreshments.

The meeting ended at 15:05 pm

Next Committee meeting Monday 8^h January 2023 at 20:05 p.m. on Zoom.