

Minutes of ERHS 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting of the East Reading Horticultural Society held at St Peter's Church Hall on Tuesday 20th February 2024 at 8.00 pm

Present: Jeff Gardner (President) John Peacock (Chairman), Brenda Hayes (Treasurer), Margaret Thomas (Secretary), Malcolm Iosson, Neal Stockwell, Trevor Wilson, Mike Fewtrell. Gwen Barton and Torkill Fozzard.

Apologies: Carole Peacock. Mary Brooke, Jill Newman and Jean Gardner.

Opening by the President Mr Jeff Gardner

Jeff Gardner our President opened the meeting with a welcome to everyone. He thanked the committee for all their hard work and John for his leadership. We are in a healthy state of affairs financially and Jeff thanked Brenda for her diligence.

Minutes of the 82<sup>nd</sup> AGM held on Tuesday 21st February 2023

These were signed and approved, proposed by Gwen Barton and seconded by Neal Stockwell and signed by Jeff Gardner.

Matters arising

None

Chairmans's report

John welcomed everyone to the 83<sup>rd</sup> AGM and thanked Jeff for presiding over the meeting and on a personal note was pleased that Jeff was in better health.

The purpose of the AGM is to review the ERHS, for the members to ask questions of the committee and to enjoy cheese and wine. The evening is about looking forward, celebrating the card reader and electing new vice presidents.

The trading shed is the heartbeat of the society. Trevor Wilson has risen to the challenge of organising the stock levels which are now good and the shed looks an inviting place to support our gardening needs. We are indebted to Trevor for all his time and energy spent at the shed.

Equally Brenda has organised our finances with meticulous precision and has liaised with Trevor to keep our affairs in order. We are aware of the extra time Brenda invests to review and assess our finances and John wishes to place on record his thanks for her energy and enthusiasm. The use of the card reader has been very successful but we recognise that some members might still wish to pay with cash which we will accept.

Our newsletter and the precise and excellent editorship of Neal Stockwell ensures that members receive their monthly information and Malcolm Iosson is meticulous in organising the collection of annual subs. and delivery of the newsletter, which includes excellent work from Torkill Fozzard.

The shed management works well because Mike Fewtrell is so organised in planning the shed stewards rota but he is concerned about the staffing levels and will always welcome new volunteers. To this end the committee are close to proposing that the shed only opens on Saturdays during July and August.

Gwen Barton has worked so well to plan our talks programme and the recent presentation by the First Responders to a 999 call was riveting, so much so that the ERHS would like to find a way to support their charity. In future newsletters it will outline any decisions the committee make to support their work.

Gwen has also indicated that she will complete one more year of talk planning so we will be looking for her replacement during this year. If any member could help plan a programme for 2025/2026 please let John know.

Margaret records the minutes at our meetings effectively and in addition to thanking her for her secretarial skills we recognise the significant money raised from her varied raffles.

John thanked Trevor and his volunteers who unload lorries at the shed after receiving early morning phone calls.

The Christmas Show was great fun and a similar format will take place this December.

Additionally Anne Wilson's delicious cake has been eaten and enjoyed at our talk evenings.

On a very personal note John wished to thank his wife Carole for all her excellent organisation and planning for the Autumn Show as he sees how hard she works behind the scenes.

At last year's Show thanks must go to Cathy Begg, Neal's daughter and Webster his grandson for being in charge of the IT part of the Show and Elsie, John's granddaughter for sorting out the prize money, and to Jill Newman who has helped in the kitchen particularly at the Christmas Show.

The Exbury visit went very well. It was thought that a possible trip to the Malvern Show this year was too expensive at £28.50 plus travel costs making a total of £40 approx. Therefore a trip to Wisley is being planned in due course.

John wrote a piece for the MERA magazine and it did provoke some interest as we were asked for some financial support for the planting of the Kenton Road roundabout. John Saunders has sent us plans but Wokingham District Council are very slow in approving this community improvement initiative.

John told us he was celebrating 10 years as Chairman of ERHS hence the table flowers were sitting on top of a baked bean tin! Tin or aluminium representing the 10 years anniversary for resilience, durability and an inability to rust!

John said we must keep as fit and healthy as possible and that is why our gardens and allotments are so important for mental and physical well-being. He was looking forward to leading the ERHS for further service and hopefully not getting too rusty! He finally thanked everyone for their continued support of ERHS.

### Treasurer's Report

Brenda told us sales had increased by 10% over 2022 to a figure of £17,017 for 2023. Subscriptions for 2023 produced £1589. Raffles produced £389 and Bank Interest slightly higher now was £148.

Total expenses for 2023 were £3,430, up by £1,000 from last year but not as alarming as it might seem.

The cost of the annual show and talks increased by £846 the total for 2023 being £1,334 due to more talks, 6 very good talks in 2023 compared with only 3 in 2022.

The card reader has been in operation since January 2023 with a fee of 1.69% of the sales. It was much appreciated that shed stewards had worked hard to adapt to the new way of recording sales.

Sundry costs of £415 are for general admin. and running costs i.e. security for card m/c, banking costs and general admin. costs.

By comparison the newsletter costs have reduced considerably from £631 in 2022 to £257 in 2023 due to Maiden Erleigh School handling all the printing for newsletter etc

ERHS recognises and appreciates the School's contribution to ERHS and states this on each monthly newsletter.

Finally we must thank Mr Hayward for stepping in at short notice to review the accounting records and the accounts presented today. Cathy Begg who did our accounts has left the area. A full balance sheet was given to each person at the AGM.

### Election of Officers

President: Jeff Gardner will stand for another year, proposed by John Peacock and seconded by Neal Stockwell.

Chairman: John Peacock proposed by Jeff Gardner and seconded by Mary Vidgen

Treasurer: Brenda Hayes proposed by Gwen Barton and seconded by Ruth Palmer

Secretary: Margaret Thomas proposed by John Peacock and seconded by Neal Stockwell

Committee Members: The following agreed to continue serving: Gwen Barton, Mike Fewtrell, Torkill Fozzard, Malcolm Iosson, Neal Stockwell and Trevor Wilson.

All the committee to stand again proposed by Anne Wilson and seconded by Yvonne Hailstone and accepted by the all members present.

March Talk: members were reminded it had been moved to Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

### AOB

John asked for any questions from the members present.

Compared with going to Malvern as previously mentioned Wisley would have no entry fee as we are affiliated to RHS and would only have the travel cost. A member asked if the society could subsidise the Malvern trip as we had a substantial amount of money in the bank. This would be discussed at our next committee meeting in April, as a possibility.

Mary Vidgen asked if we might consider the Newbury Show, but this idea was declined.

Another member suggested we might visit a garden in the National Garden Scheme shown in the yellow book, this will be discussed at the April committee meeting. They also asked why did we hold such a large sum of money (£33,771) in the bank but it was pointed out that a large % of that was stock we hold in the shed. As previously mentioned we hope to support the First Responders Charity.

We had tried to set up a bursary for a local student at the Berkshire College of Agriculture, but it had come to nothing due to the College not really taking it up with us.

John put forward Gwen Barton and Neal Stockwell as Vice Presidents, as Fred Palmer and Geoff Ruffles had died. This was proposed by Trevor Wilson and seconded by Mike Fewtrell.

The shed closure on Sundays in July and August was mentioned again by a member who told us H & P's shed had been closed for 5 years on Sundays due to lack of trade.

The meeting closed at 8:50 pm and everyone was invited to enjoy some cheese and wine.

There were 32 people present.