

HAZLEMERE GARDENING ASSOCIATION

Annual General Meeting

2nd December 2024 14:15 hrs

There were 21 Members and Committee present; a signed attendance list is available.

1. APOLOGIES

John Chandler, Gill Anderson, Sarah Lock, Barbara Marks, Stuart Astin and Phil Clapham.

2. APPROVAL OF 2023 MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting were approved by Joy Payne and seconded by Andrea Dean.

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 2024 Annual General Meeting. The Gardening Association has had very successful year with an increase in membership and he said he was pleased to say we have had new members exhibiting, for the first time, at our Shows and we hope this trend will continue.

Jack said we had one hundred guests at our Social Evening and our fish and chip supper was excellent. Apart from our usual trip to Wisley we also ran a trip to Nymans and a trip to see the lights at Christmas at Kew. All our trips sold out.

It was reported that the store has had a very successful year due to the great range of products we sell, and Jack thanked Phil our Stores manager for all the hard work he does every week.

Jack also thanked the whole committee, who give so much of their time to run The Store and to arrange all of the events we hold and to keep our website and Facebook page up to date.

Sarah Lock has decided not to stand for re-election to our committee and he thanked Sarah for all the help she has given to us over the last 10 years.

Jack said we look forward to seeing all our members when we reopen The Store on the first Sunday in February 2025.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT – Joy Payne

Joys report.

Trading Account

Sales at £42,722 were approximately £5,000 more than last year and purchases were also up but by approximately £1,800.

Building consumables (which are the expenses incurred running the Barn and conforming to Health & Safety requirements) have increased slightly as the service/repair to the pallet truck cost more this year and the card charges were more (£640) due to the increased sales paid for by card.

Closing stock is much the same as last year.

Profit & Loss Account

On the income side, subscriptions increased as we attracted more members this year. We received more money from the May plant sale this year. The donations figure is in respect of commission from Gordon's monthly plant sales. Hazlemere Parish Council ordered a lot more bulbs from us this year. We opened an instant access account in August so have received a small amount of interest.

On the expenditure side, depreciation has increased as we made two purchases this year (a screen and a Hoover). We were able to send more money to Horatio's Garden this year, £400. There was no advertising this year apart from on Facebook which is free. The Sundry figure has increased because it includes a £50 donation to Cancer Research in memory of one committee member.

Balance Sheet

Stock at the end of the year is £38,467, almost the same as 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 sale of the Kew tickets for the trip in the next financial year.

The Prepayments figure includes the amount of commercial and stock insurance premiums paid this year but which cover part of next year, the cost of the coach for Kew paid this year for the trip next year, the amount of the website renewal paid this year in respect of next year and the unused wine purchased for the social evening.

The bank balance plus cash in hand totals £26,799.41

Finally, Joy thanked the cashiers and her fellow committee members for dealing with the money each Sunday and to Barry Westbrook for his work on the Audit.

Question: 'Why was the profit reduced by £600?' – response - likely due to reduced pricing and some stock being reduced to increase sales. Also, the card charges.

Proposed by Carole Robinson and seconded by Ray Podbury and unanimously accepted.

6. STORE MANAGER'S REPORT – Phil Clapham Report read by Peter Pearman

Phil had reported that this has been quite a successful year for the shop. Once again, trade dropped off in the second half of the year and we were left to rely on a loyal local customer base to keep it all rolling along. It was certainly hectic at the beginning of the year – but tailed off as the weather got wetter and wetter. In spite of all that he said, we increased sales once again. A lot of this was as a result of rising prices of composts.

Phil reported that, looking more closely at the sales figures and comparing 2024 with 2023 there were some figures that leapt out of the data. For instance, in 2023 fibre pots in packs of 12, selling at £2.50, were a leading seller. However, in 2024 we hardly shifted any fibre pots and instead, it was small plastic pots that went viral. We sold hundreds of them. What sells is all down to price – the cheaper option, whether it be weed killer or propagator, is what tops the selling list.

Stock. A few people commented during stock take that we have too much stock. In order to get cheaper prices, it is necessary to buy in quantity. Solid stock items are not a problem.

Phil reported that looking at compost our sales may have gone down as Durston's was an unpopular product. He reported that most of it has gone, apart from Durston's John Innes and half a pallet of Durston's growbags. We also have half a pallet of Durston's tub and basket but he is expecting this to sell quickly as it is a reasonable product. The Growmoor

alternative is much superior it seems to him – but customers will give us their feedback. Sales of John Innes are well down on earlier years and hopefully we can address that with Growmoor.

Phil reported, this brings us around to compost in general. We now have a good choice of peat free products as well as composts containing some peat. It seems the ban on selling peat products has been delayed as the government is keen to seek parity with the EU and their ban does not come in until 2030. Therefore, we have the best of both worlds. It is worth pointing out the non-peat products for sale in garden centres have had problems – the result of unintended consequences. This includes, for example, pest infestations, especially by those irritating small black flies. The reason is that peat free is fibrous – as it contains coir [coconut hair] and little insects can wiggle in and breed. In contrast, peat tends to compact. Neither are perfect plant mediums. The latter will dry out in the summer but peat free will take water down to the bottom of containers leaving plant roots to swim in smelly watery confections. If you can work with peat free, all well and good, but there is a learning curve. Water also washes out nutrients which is why you need to feed the soil in the spring after winter rainfall. Peat free, when over watered will not only fill up the bottom of containers with water but also any plant nutrients that the peat free possessed would also drop to the bottom.

7. SEEDS – Carole Robinson

Carole reported that 2024 was an extremely good year for seed sales generally. When we closed in October the racks were almost empty, which made the seed stocktake much easier! Again, tomato varieties sold incredibly fast with just 3 packets of one variety left. Most surprisingly was the fact that 2024 appears to have been the year of the carrot. She purchased a huge number of packets in multiple varieties from Dobies as the prices were very good and the shelf life is 3 years. She had intended for that stock to cover 2025 with possibly some also carried over to 2026. However, apart from one solitary packet they all sold out.

Having reduced the Unwins seed order through Westlands but increasing the Dobies ones the prices generally have lowered considerably. There were initial issues as the packets are very plain. Over the past two years she introduced picture and information sheets at the front of each packet variety which has helped our members when making their choices. This year hanging cards were introduced, giving more information about Dobies generally. On explaining that they supply Sutton's, Thompson and Morgan and other seed suppliers with their seeds, who then repackage under their own names but at a much higher price, our members have realised that the quality is excellent and the cost we can sell them at is much lower which is hugely beneficial.

Unwins seed sales were slower again this year mainly due to being a lot more expensive. There will be some seeds for our charities but not very many. Unfortunately, those due for return had all been received as our January order this year but with sell by date as 2024. She has passed on that this is not satisfactory and has become one of the reasons our order has reduced. Her intention is to only use our credit amount when placing the order for 2025 through Westlands.

Carole always priced to the nearest penny when writing our reduced sale price on each packet. This has reportedly been an issue for some of the cashiers, so as agreed with the other committee members, 2025 onwards the prices will be rounded up or down to the

nearest five or zero. Hopefully this will make adding up easier at the tills. If there are any specific varieties of seeds you would like her to get, please let her know asap. Orders are placed at the beginning of January. Through Westlands, the Unwins seed suppliers, there is a minimum of six packets of any variety but through Dobies there is no minimum, even if just one or two packets are wanted.

**8. POTATOES/ONIONS/SHALLOTS/FLOWERING BULBS – Andrea Dean
Early Spring Delivery 2024**

Andrea reported that, this order consists of 9 varieties of Seed Potatoes, Golden Gourmet Shallots, Red Baron and Sturon Onion sets and 20 varieties of summer-flowering bulbs. Taylor's Bulbs delivered on time, and the quality was generally very good. Only a few items were rejected.

These all went on sale from February, and sold very well. This was very positive, as summer-flowering bulbs had not been ordered in 2023 due to poor sales in the previous years. Red Onions had not been ordered for a few years due to quality issues. The potatoes in particular sold out very fast, so the Committee has decided to increase the potatoes order by 25% for 2025. The red onions all sold, so have been ordered again for 2025.

Summer Delivery 2024

It was reported that this order consisted of Radar Onion sets and 36 varieties of spring-flowering bulbs. Taylor's Bulbs delivered in good time, and the quality was generally very good. Only a few items were rejected. However, the quality of the hyacinth bulbs was rather poor for the second year in a row, so hyacinths will not be ordered in 2025.

The bulbs order was increased following healthy sales in 2023. Both bulbs and onions sold well, so the quantities will be maintained for 2025 if membership levels remain similar. After a successful trial last year, 4 bulk bags of bulbs were purchased for Hazlemere Council which will be planted on local verges.

Andrea had help from many Committee members during the year, which has been much appreciated - thanks go to Sarah for labelling potato bags, Joy and Anita for weighing potatoes, Muriel and Barbara M for pricing bulbs, Peter H for updating the web pages, Jack for the bulb's information sheet for the spring show and Phil for displaying everything.

Question: *'What varieties of potatoes are being increased for next year?'* Andrea replied more of the same. There was then a suggestion for Picasso (lates) and more blight resistant varieties such as Sarpo (5 different varieties are available). Andrea agreed to look at this for next years order.

9. MEMBERSHIP REPORT – Peter Pearman

Peter reported that at the year-end there were 448 members. This figure includes 115 new members and 8 life members. Last year's membership was 413 so we continue to increase our membership base, year on year.

We continue to regularly update our membership via email and hard copy on upcoming events and changes to our product range at the barn store. We also contribute articles for 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.

The recommendation of the committee is that the annual membership fee remains unchanged at £7 and £5 for those 60 and over.

Question: *There was a comment about members who have entered the courtyard and some near miss accidents.* Peter replied that from next year only members volunteering (there for the whole session), will be able to park in the courtyard.

Proposed by Carole Robinson and seconded by Gordon Hickmott, carried unanimously.

10. SHOW REPORT – Barbara Marks Read by Andrea Dean.

Barbara had reported that, the number of entrants in the Spring Show continued to rise this year, with the largest number of entries for 8 years. She said well done all you daffodil growers who managed to navigate the RHS guidelines as to which class you should enter the different varieties you grew! The show organisers were pleased with the number of entries in the domestic classes, and will continue to include these in both the spring and autumn shows. There were many more photography entries than usual in the updated schedule, which was gratifying to the judge who had suggested them. Members were asked to watch out for further new photography classes in the 2025 schedule, which will be posted on our website in the New Year.

As can be seen from the figures, there was a big drop in the number of entries in the Autumn Show, though a less dramatic decrease in the number of entrants. She said if you were able to grow fruit, vegetables or flowers that were in peak condition at the time of the show, huge congratulations. It must have been the wettest and coolest summer for several years, so please don't be disheartened if your entry wasn't placed as high as you hoped. Our judges are very strict about quality control! The two vegetable collections displayed in trugs were the envy of many of us, and the floral arrangements were equally stunning and took a long time to judge. Our autumnal domestic goddesses were a bit thin on the ground this year, but we hope to attract more entrants next year with a revised schedule.

Spring	Entrants	Entries	Entries/ entrant
2024	28	185	7
2023	27	169	6
2022	12	93	8
2021
2020
2019	19	143	8
2018	17	124	7
2017	19	179	9
2016	30	193	6
2015	17	143	8
Average	21	130	7

Autumn	Entrants	Entries	Entries/ entrant
2024	22	171	8
2023	27	299	11
2022	27	202	7
2021	18	146	8
2020
2019	25	252	10
2018	20	204	10
2017	23	195	8
2016	24	215	9
2015	22	193	8
Average	23	209	9

Barbara said we are of course 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, provide them with lunch or do the judging yourself, or run the raffle, you are all important and the shows wouldn't happen without you. Our afternoon visitors also appreciate the Good Neighbours and Penn & Tylers Green Evening WI members who provide their refreshments.

11. TECHNOLOGY REPORT – Peter Hayes

Website

Peter reported that: HGA's website is managed in-house which means that members can find current information about products on sale in the Barn Store, spring and autumn shows, visits and social events. He monitors the website's traffic using Google Analytics to evaluate the effectiveness of content and ensure that users can easily find the information they need. Between 1st January and 27th October, the website has been viewed 15,100 times with 1,790 first time viewings. Viewings increased by 14.3% compared with a similar period last year, with peaks in spring and late summer. This coincides with the Barn Store busy periods. This year the most popular pages are;

Home page (viewed 3,373 times), Barn Store (3,022 times), Membership (1,165 times), Events (1,003 times)

He said that just under 50% of the website viewings have been made using a mobile phone and HGA has a second lighter website for these devices. Further improvements have been made to this website to make it easier to view HGA's activities with these devices.

The winter months provide a perfect opportunity for HGA to update its website, ensuring it's ready to meet the needs of members and visitors as the new gardening season approaches. This will include updates to the Barn Store products, events, shows and membership pages as well as new pictures to refresh the website pages.

Card Readers

HGA has three SumUp credit/debit card readers operating in the Barn Store. The card readers continue to be very popular as most payments in the Barn Store are taken using these devices. This year, there has been a few problems with their use due to the internet connection, however these problems have been quickly resolved and has not affected Barn Store trading.

12. Facebook: Andrea Dean.

2024 was the second year of HGA using Facebook for publicity. Posts are made to the Hazlemere, Widmer and Penn local community Facebook groups, and also appear on Instagram. A link to our website is always included on the post to encourage readers to visit the website.

HGA events that are open to the public are promoted via a Facebook "event" as well as reminder posts, i.e. Spring Show, Plant Sale, Autumn Show and Gordon Hickmott's plant stalls (supporting BBOWT). In between these, occasional posts are made to maintain our presence, and content includes special offers, local open gardens or just encouraging people to visit the Barn Store and join HGA.

We now have 193 “followers” in the local area, which is great progress from less than 10 at the start of 2023 and 117 at the end of 2023.

A similar approach is planned for 2025, and she would welcome any input and improvement suggestions from members.

13. SOCIAL REPORT – Carole Last

Annual Visit to RHS Wisley – 12th May Carole said: we had a full coach of 50 this year. The down side was that for the 2nd time the M25 junction for Wisley was closed the w/e of 11/12th May. However, the coach driver chose an alternative route that kept us moving and arrival at Wisley was only 10 minutes after opening time. The weather was again kind and she felt everyone enjoyed their time in the gardens.

Visit to Nymans – Monday 29th June Again we had a full coach of 50 and although an earlier start time of 08.30 we reached Nymans at 09.45 (15 minutes ahead of opening time). It did throw up the issue of one passenger wanting to use an onboard toilet, which has led to the decision for 2024 coach outings to pay £50 more and be able to advise passengers that there is an onboard toilet they can use. Once again, the weather was kind and the trip enjoyed by everyone.

Social Evening – 25th October “The Flowers that drove men to Murder: Orchids, Oddities and Obsession”. We again returned to a full house of 100 for this illustrated talk given by Professor Sandy Primrose who had given us a previous talk in 2018. For a second year running we decided to have brought in fish & chips which again worked well and was well received. The issues around the Community Centre’s projector screen had been resolved, and worked quite well with the use of their radio microphone. (A back-up screen has been purchased). As previously, the speaker donated his fee to the Rennie Goves Hospice. The evening was well enjoyed and of course thanks go to everyone who arranged the supper, served the drinks and sold raffle tickets.

Looking ahead to 2025 Carole said we are hoping to run an Autumn trip to RHS Wisley; Summer trip to possibly Leonardslee and possibly another a trip to see Christmas Lights.

14. 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, Barbara Marks, Andrea Dean, Peter Hayes, Carole Last, Muriel Cross, Barbara Hughes, Carole Robinson, Stuart Astin and Ray Podbury.

There were no further offers to stand for the committee, but Jack invited members to contact him afterwards if they were willing to join the Committee.

All nominations for the Officers and Committee members were proposed by I didn't get a proposer down anyone any idea? and seconded by Gordon Hickmott and approved unanimously.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR:

Our accounts have been done for several years by Mr D B Westbrook. We are very grateful to him.

However he will no longer be doing these, so we are looking for a new Auditor for 2025 should anyone know of one or be themselves available.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 15.1 Carole Last reported that the trip to Kew on the 1st December went very well with 52 people attending.
- 15.2 Peter Pearman asked members to note that, following complaints, that people had arrived early for the Plant Sale, this year the doors were shut till 10:00 a.m. and this seemed to improve matters. This will be ongoing.

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

The meeting ended at 15:05 p.m.

Next Committee meeting Monday 6th January 2024 at 20:00 p.m. on Zoom.