

Weston Village Gardening Club

Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

Held on 7 September 2023

in the All Saints Church Weston

In attendance

31 Club members. A copy of the attendance list is attached to the minutes

Apologies for Absence

Sue Montgomery and Jan Byrne

Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that this was the first AGM since due to the COVID Pandemic

Chair's Report

Our last Annual General Meeting was held on 11 April 2019. At that time, we were planning for a full programme of talks, two coach trips, a holiday in North Wales, and the Flower Show. No one had an inkling that the COVID pandemic was less than a year away.

2019 was the Club's 10th Anniversary year. Nick Wray, who was our first ever speaker, came back in March and talked about the Gardens of Sicily and we celebrated with a party in the All Saints' Centre in June. In addition, we visited Kew Gardens and the Malvern Autumn Show and Edward Weston's beautiful garden in Kelston. A standout speaker was Andrew Cannell who came in October and talked about the gardens at the American Museum

The last talk before the pandemic brought a halt to club activities was in March 2020. Our speaker had an eventful evening. She got lost in the Village and had to be rescued, she hit a builders' skip and damaged her car. After the meeting she took the wrong turn onto the M4 and ended up heading towards Bristol rather than London. She eventually arrived home at 2:30am. A few days later she emailed to say that she had lost the cheque for her fee. Despite that the talk was very good!

Our normal activities stopped for a while but we soon came to terms with Zoom and held a series of virtual meetings. Over the ensuing months we were able to engage speakers from across the country and even had two speakers joining us from America. Members will recall Ian Bedford addressing us from his home in Norwich about Companion Planting for a Balanced Garden. Adam Pasco coming online from Peterborough to talk about Spring into Action and Get Set for Summer, and Geoff Hodge Zooming from Monmouthshire to talk about Growing Your Own Vegetables. Our own hardy perennial, John Tucker, did a Zoom talk for us. We even had a speaker online from the Naples Florida Botanic Garden, and another from the Houston Texas Botanic Garden. Life started to normalise with a return to All saints in November 2021 when Darren Everest talked about growing Dahlias.

2022 saw a near normal programme. In February, Derek Dexter talked about fuchsias, and John Tucker was back again in March giving a talk about Monet's Garden. After two abortive attempts, we were able to have a delightful club holiday in North Wales. Our coach trip was to the Hampton Court Flower Show where we had a lovely day out and loads of plants and other goodies were purchased. The Club's Flower Show returned in September. Sadly, entries were lower than previous years. This could be put down to the difficult growing conditions during the very hot summer. The Autumn season saw talks about wildlife gardening, Snowdrops and Avon Bulbs. The year ended with our traditional Christmas Social but on this occasion the quiz was replaced with many club members participating in Christmas wreath making.

Organising our meetings is not without its challenges. Two prospective speakers have died, another got lost and never arrived, two more were unable to attend due to ill health. However, despite of the challenges of the last 4 years we have only cancelled the club meeting on one occasion. This is fortunate as trying to find a replacement speaker at the last minute is no easy task.

Community Activities

We continued to maintain the roundabout at the bottom of Lansdown Lane and the planters in the High Street. These make a huge difference to the Village and are much appreciated by the community

who give us good feedback. Many thanks go to Steve and Christine Brook and the other members of the team for their hard work and dedication.

Membership

The club membership year runs from 1 March to the last day of February. As can be seen below there has been a steady decline in the number of members. During the pandemic we had resignations but due to the lack of physical meetings the number of joiners faulted. Recognising our inability to hold physical meetings in the Church the membership fee for 2020-21 was waived.

Member Numbers: 2019-20: 183, 2020-21: 155, 2021-22: 162, 2022-23: 146.

I wish to express my thanks to Helen Morgan for all the work she does maintaining the club's membership records and issuing membership renewal notices each year. Helen has also been a great support in producing the programme and maintaining the Club's website.

Finances

Ensuring the financial health of the club whilst at the same time providing a balanced and entertaining programme of talks and outings has always been one of the committee's main objectives. The club's main source of income is members' subscriptions. Further sums come from profits from outings and club holidays. In the past outings have been well supported and profitable. Since the pandemic there has been a drop off in support of outings. This has come at the same time as the cost of coach hire has increased due to inflation and the need to have up to date vehicles that meet clean air standards. Balances remain good. This has ensured that the club stayed afloat during the pandemic. There was a dip in 2021 due to there being no membership charge and no income from the outings that year. The Committee has managed to reduce administration costs through greater use of online communications. Speakers' costs are down due to the Committee engaging more speakers from within the region rather than further afield. The committee is proud to have been able to hold the subscription at £15 per annum for more than 10 years. This represents exceptionally good value. If a member attends every meeting and the Christmas Social this works out at less than £2 per evening or about half the price of a cup of coffee.

Surplus profits from the flower show are transferred to the Community Fund to provide funds for the maintenance of the roundabout and Village planters. The ability to achieve a surplus on the show is due in no small part to the All Saints Church waiving it's normal fee. The Club does make a donation to the Church in lieu of the normal fee but are still most appreciative of the financial and practical support the All Saints Church gives to the Flower Show.

Committee Membership

I would like to extend my thanks to the club committee for their unstinting support. Steve and Christine Brook and John Beaven have decided to retire. Steve and John are founder members of the club and were members of the former Flower Show committee. Christine joined the club shortly after its inception. Christine and Steve have given sterling service to the club, especially their work maintaining the roundabout at the bottom of Lansdown Lane and the Village planters. The club and the village are very much in their debt. John Beaven has done some excellent work for the club. He will be particularly remembered for his work promoting the show, drafting copy for the media, and raising many hundreds of pounds selling advertising space in the show schedule. We send our best wishes to Steve, Christine and John and thank them for all they have done for the club.

The following will be seeking re-election Bernard Rymer, Jane Rymer, Helen Morgan, Peter Redfern, Gay Ridley, and Carol Rust.

Help.....

Losing three very experienced and knowledgeable people from the Committee leaves a big gap and brings concerns about the Club's sustainability in the longer term. The Club will only survive if members step forward and help run club meetings and events. Therefore, we need 2 or 3 people to join the Committee. Other than helping at club meetings and events the time commitment isn't great. The Committee meets four times a year and meetings last about an hour and are by Zoom.

Future Meetings

The All Saints Church is just about to undergo a major refurbishment. This will mean that the Church will be closed for approximately 12 months. As a result, Club meetings will be held in the Weston Hub until further notice.

Finally

The Chair ended his presentation by thanking the club and committee members, for their continued support of the Weston Village Gardening Club.

Financial Report

The Financial Reports for the years ending 31st December 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 were circulated at the start of the meeting. The Treasurer outlined details of income and spending in 2022 saying Trips and Events were £22,994.57 this includes the North Wales holiday costs and the Hampton Court trip. Administration costs amounted to £633.12. This included the Zoom licence, Sum up machine, website costs and photocopying etc. Speaker costs were £653.50 and the hire of the Church £445.38

On the income side, Trips and Events brought in £21,049.00, this was for the North Wales. We also had deposits of £1,700 for the 2023 holiday in Ireland. Subscription income amounted to £2,190.

The Flower Show administration amounted to £1,809.17 and income for the year was £1,406.21

Community Fund income of £510.33 included a grant of £250 from BANES, £230 from the Plant Sales and a donation of £30. A further £400 was transferred from the Flower Show's account. Outgoings for maintenance of the planters and roundabout and the Village Christmas Tree amounted to £550.10

The closing balance for the Club was £7,800.56, the Flower Show £1,610.46 and the Community Fund £1,877.91

The Treasurer was thanked for her work. Helen Morgan proposed and Peter Redfern seconded the accounts which were approved by those present.

Retirement of Committee Members

The Chair reported that Steve Brook, Christine Brook and John Beaven have decided to retire from the Committee. The Chair reminded those present that Steve and John were founder members of the Gardening Club and had been members of the former Flower Show Committee. Christine had joined the club shortly after its inception and had been instrumental in the preparation of the Flower Show schedule and along with Syeve maintaining the planters and Roundabout. John had done much work selling advertising space in the Show Schedule and promoting club and show activities in the local paper. In recognition of their service to the club, Steve, Christine, and John were presented with Gardening Vouchers

Election of Committee Members

The Chair reported that Miranda Rossiter-Doel and Caroline Dyer had agreed to join the Committee. The other members of the committee were Bernard Rymer, Jane Rymer, Helen Morgan, Carol Rust, Peter Redfern, Gay Ridley, and Peter Merchant. All were duly elected.

Any Other Business

Sue Hiskins thanked Jane and Bernard for all the work they do for the club.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9:10pm