

Wantage Gardeners' Association AGM – 9th November 2023 – MINUTES

Brian Jones declared the meeting open at 19.36

1. Attended :

- Barbara Palmer, Jan Abrahall, Mike Welham, Keith West, Alan McPherson, Theresa Wright, Pete Newcombe, Juliet Postbestchild, Nigel Jeffrey, John and Val Broadbent (via Zoom), Denise Davies (via Zoom), Vernon Edwards (via Zoom) + the committee - Brian Jones, Mark Davies, Colin Fox, Liz Sanders, Terry Knight.

2. Apologies:

- Faith Culshaw, Ann-Marie Summers

3. Minutes from the AGM 2022 was circulated to members with the Agenda prior to the AGM. No matters arising.

4. **Chairman's Report – Brian Jones**

- On behalf of the Wantage Gardeners, Brian thanked all the members who gave their time to help over the past year to help the Association. He also thanked the Committee for their time in keeping the Association operating, the rota of helpers at the shop and Alan McPherson for organising and running a very successful visit to RHS Gardens, Wisley.
- Brian reported on the performance of the shop over the past year. It has performed well. Sales exceeded those of previous years. The huge stock of compost that was purchased at the start of the season has all been sold except for 4 bags left in the shop.
- Sales of some of the items we stock can vary greatly from year to year. This year we sold very few plastic pots.
- Most sales were paid for by card. A few minor problems were ironed out early in the season and the system worked smoothly.
- We attended the Grove plant sale this year, the proceeds going to our Association. Brian thanked Theresa Wright and Mark Davies for manning the stall.
- two plant sales were held at the shop in aid of the charities WGA supports - Thames Valley Air Ambulance and Vale Impact (formerly Wantage Independent Advice Centre). Brian thanked members who made the events a success and Theresa Wright for being cashier on both occasions.
- The Grove Summer Show was held this year which WGA attended more for publicity than for sales. Brian thanked Mark Davies for his help in organising and manning the stall. There appeared to be fewer entries than in previous years.
- Brian offered sincere thanks to Alan McPherson for organising the successful trip to RHS Wisley. Having attended it himself this year, he commented on how smoothly and efficiently the whole trip proved to be. He commented that the number of thanks and appreciative comments communicated by e-mail were a testament to how enjoyable the day was.

- Deliveries from our main suppliers BHGS ran into difficulties this year as their largest lorry had trouble working its way around a hedge at the top of Icknield Lane that had narrowed the access. In an agreement with the owner of the hedge, it was cut back significantly earlier in the year. Mark Davies, Keith West, Bernie Read and Brian spent a couple of hours performing the task. The owner is now happy to keep the hedge trimmed back. The lorry from BHGS appears to have no problems in accessing the shop now.

5. Treasurer's report – Colin Fox

- The Statement of Accounts was circulated to members with the Agenda before the AGM. Colin clarified certain aspects of the expenses:
 - we are £2177 better off than last year.
 - there is £10 000 in savings. These have been moved to a 2-year bond at 4.6%.
 - we sold £13 900 of stock.
 - the charitable donations have been split equally (£400 to each) between TVAA and Vale Community Impact.
 - membership subscriptions amounted to £283 although this is not accurate as not all members renewed or did so but failed to collect their cards.
 - Commission from Kings seeds amounted to £843 following Mark Davies' tenacious pursuit of what they owed us.
 - there was a small anomaly in the accounts that Colin rectified after the meeting.

6. Publicity/Website – Mark Davies

- shop sales are healthy – there are fewer online orders but footfall has increased;
- the Zettle payment system is finally working well.
- Gift vouchers are now available to purchase. Details are on the web page;
- the Scouts had talked about redeveloping the whole site, but this has now been shelved owing to costs. There will be some kind of refurbishment.

7. Rota Secretary – Terry Knight

- from the records of subscription there are 276 members (slightly fewer than mentioned above) of which 56 are new members.
- Terry used nextdoor.co.uk to spread the word.
- Terry thanked the volunteers who regularly help on Saturday mornings at the shop (around 20 regulars).
- more than 6 volunteers were to join the Committee in unloading pallets of compost on Friday 10th November.

8. Secretary's report – Liz Sanders

- Liz did not have much to add to what has already been said. But she wanted to thank the members for using the Association and contributing to its success. She also commented on the cheerful, friendly atmosphere that seems to be appreciated.

9. Trips – Alan McPherson

- The Wisley trip on 22nd May went very well. Barnes coaches are very accommodating. 61 seats were booked by 29 members at £15 per member. The WGA is a member of the RHS which accounts for the cheaper tickets. 5 new members joined the Association as a result of attending the trip. As in September last year, we had a good response from Richmond Village (10 passengers), and there was a variety of pick-up points in Wantage. Mobility scooters were provided for those who had requested them. Feedback was very positive. There was a small profit that Colin Fox indicated in the accounts.
- There was a suggestion of visiting Highgrove in 2024. It is much more expensive and books up really quickly. There is also a restriction on the size of the party. A visit to Malvern is probably too expensive and complicated to organise.
- Wisley will be repeated in 2024, probably in the summer.

10. Election of officers

- all members of the Committee were prepared to remain in their current posts.
- their re-election was proposed by Alan McPherson and seconded by Mike Welham

11. AOB

- Compost – there is a new compost that was trialled in the last season – Rocketgro. The committee would welcome any feedback. We can buy it one pallet at a time. The Rocketgro gro-bags were very popular.
- 7 pallets of Melcourt compost were being delivered on 10th November. A local driver collects and delivers the stock, so costs were reduced, and prices can be held.
- Strulch – a new mulch product that is going to be trialled next season.
- Grove Show. Mark asked for suggestions for categories eg. the best entry from a WGA member, or a children's award. There was suggestion of an allotment prize but that already exists.
- No-dig gardening. Alan McPherson has offered to give a talk on this as it is becoming increasingly popular. There was a discussion about stocking products that enrich the soil (eg. green manures).
- Bulk seeds (eg. carrots etc) are very popular.
- Attending members gave a vote of thanks to the Committee for the work they do.

The meeting closed at 20.25

