

Hardy Plant Society 58th Annual General Meeting

Saturday 28 March, 2015.

Portland College, Mansfield, Notts. NG18 4TJ

Officers Present: John Dilks, Chairman; Elaine Lofthouse, Hon. Sec. and John McGhee, Hon. Treasurer. Apologies: Trustees; Roy Stickland, Ray Lakeland. Postholders; Sharin Ingleby, Pam Ratcliffe. Members; Sally-Ann Turner

John Dilks opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking the Nottingham Group for organising the day, and Dr John Grimshaw for his talk 'Plants, Gardens and People' which had taken place that morning.

1. **The minutes of the 57th Annual General Meeting**, held on Saturday 22 March 2014 which had been circulated to members were presented for approval as a correct record of the meeting. Approval proposed by Fran Pattinson, seconded by Helen Mount and approved unanimously.
2. **Matters Arising.** - None were recorded.
3. **Chairman's Report.** The Chairman's Report had been circulated to members in the February 2015 newsletter. John Dilks made some comments - he praised the new format for the HPS Journal, which contained 25% more coverage than before, both photographs and text. There had been good feedback. He thanked Pam Ratcliffe for her hard work as editor. Dee Folkard and Sandra Hartley were thanked for their years of editing the Newsletter; this had now been taken on by Lynn Hackett. The Society was in good financial health for the short term, but there were worries about the longer term future, with the continuing decline in membership. As with many societies, it was essential to recruit younger members. John thanked all the Postholders. He also thanked Roy Lancaster for his continued support of the Society.
John Dilks explained that he was standing down as Chairman as he was unable to give enough time to the role. He thanked John McGhee and Elaine Lofthouse for their support and work with the Society.
Acceptance of the report was proposed by Barbara Riley, seconded by Tony Rogers, and adopted unanimously.
4. **Financial Report.** John McGhee introduced the 10 page document which was circulated at the meeting with a brief note of guidance. Since membership figures were declining, there might have to be an increase in subscriptions, which had been held stable for 8 years. The society had borne down on costs, and had managed to cut back £6-10,000 on administration. The current financial situation was quite strong.
Derek Cooper thanked John for his work, and there was discussion of the paper.
Increase in subscriptions: As it was not intended to increase subscriptions for another two or three years the possibility of several small increases rather than one large one was discussed. It was hoped to introduce payment by Direct Debit and phase out Standing Orders, which would make subscription increases easier to manage in future. Historically any increase in subscriptions had resulted in a substantial fall in membership numbers.
Publicity spending was well down in 2014, but there were plans to increase the budget in the near future. The lack of a Publicity Officer meant that press coverage had been minimal. Marketing expertise was needed, but Members and Groups should be encouraged to raise the profile of the Society. Ideas included publicity at open gardens, banners and posters. The Hardy Plant Society was well known as a friendly Society and it was suggested that becoming too commercial could put off new members. The personal approach was best.

Adoption of the Treasurer's Report was proposed by Ruth Plant, seconded by Henry Woolston, and carried unanimously.

5. **Election of the Chairman of the Society.** Cathy Rollinson was proposed by Sandra Hartley and seconded by Anthea Sokell, and elected unanimously.
6. **Election of Vice-Chairman of the Society.** Ruth Baumberg was proposed by Sue Gray and seconded by Gill Evans, and elected unanimously.
7. **Election of the Honorary Treasurer.** John McGhee was proposed by Sandra Hartley and seconded by Jan Vaughan and elected unanimously.
8. **Election of the Honorary Secretary.** Elaine Lofthouse was proposed by Eric Watson and seconded by Barbara Gooch and elected unanimously.
9. **Election of Trustees of the Society.** The following nominations as Trustees, for the period March 2105- March 2019 have been received.

John Dyson (Rutland Group). Proposed by Cliff Powlesland and seconded by Ruth Plant.

Sharin Ingleby (North East Group). Proposed by Heather Russell and seconded by Pam Ratcliffe.

Ruth Plant (Staffordshire Group). Proposed by Carol Galley and seconded by Pauline Cooper.

Keith Scott (Staffordshire Group). Proposed by Rob Cole and seconded by Lenore Greensides.

All were elected unanimously.

10. **Vote of thanks to John Dilks.** Vivienne McGhee thanked John Dilks for his work as Chairman and presented him with a Gift token to show the Society's appreciation.

11. Election of Independent Examiners of the Society's accounts.

Focus Accountancy had now merged with Haines Watts, Worcester Ltd.

Proposed by Henry Woolston, seconded by Helen Mount and elected unanimously.

The formal business of the Meeting closed at 14.25.

OPEN FORUM. No issues for discussion had been received by the Hon. Sec.

Newly elected Chairman, Cathy Rollinson said she was looking forward to meeting members around the country, and would continue to press the issues of publicity and increasing membership. Specialist and local groups were the best points of contact with the Society. It was important not to be exclusive, but to encourage people at all levels, and the Groups were very important in this respect. It was good that money was available for professional publicity but the role of members in encouraging friends to come to meetings and join the Society was vital.

Cathy pointed out that the Society's Diamond Jubilee would take place in 2017 and this could be very useful for publicity. One idea was to have a Members' Open Gardens day or weekend. Cathy asked members to communicate with her about any ideas they might have. There was a need to keep up to date, for example by using Facebook, Twitter and other social media.

Southern Counties Group would be hosting the 2016 AGM on Saturday 19th March in Surrey.