

59th Annual General Meeting of members of the Hardy Plant Society

Saturday 19th March 2016

Reigate College, Castlefield Road, Reigate, Surrey RH2 0SD

Minutes

Officers present: Cathy Rollinson (Chairman) Elaine Lofthouse (Hon Sec), John McGhee (Hon Treasurer)

Apologies for Absence: Trustees: Helen Boothman, Diana Bellerby, Sharin Ingleby

Postholders: Ruth Baumberg (Vice Chairman), Pam Ratcliffe (Journal Editor)

Members: Tricia Fraser, Charmian Odle, Vivienne McGhee, Sally Broome.

Cathy Rollinson opened the meeting by welcoming everyone especially the Society President Roy Lancaster and thanking the Southern Counties Group for organising the day.

The minutes of the 58th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 28th March 2015, which had been circulated to members were presented for approval as a correct record of the meeting.

Approval proposed by Roy Lancaster, seconded by Anthea Sokell and approved unanimously.

Matters arising – none were recorded.

Chairman's report: the Chairman's report had been circulated to members in the February Newsletter.

Cathy Rollinson made some comments - her first year in this role had been busy and she had learned a lot. Perhaps the best part had been getting to know some of our members – although not nearly enough, and she hoped to do better this year.

Everything that the HPS does depends on teamwork. She was immensely grateful to the small team of Officers and the slightly larger team of Trustees. Local and Specialist Groups depend on their Committee Members to ensure their survival and there's also the wider group of members who can always be relied on to lend a hand when help is needed. Today was a great example of a team working together to put on an excellent day - thanks were given to her Southern Counties Group friends.

The same teamwork was evident in the efficient organisation of the very successful Autumn Weekend organised by the North East Group, which was much enjoyed by participants. Although a number of activities are organised for next year, including lecture days, no Group had come forward to organise another Autumn Weekend. It would be a pity if this enjoyable part of our calendar were to disappear, so we were looking to someone to volunteer to put something on in 2018.

As always, there was need of a reminder that there are a number of vacancies for postholders, although she recognised that she was preaching to the converted as many of those present are already heavily involved - but if anyone should know of anybody who might be suitable, they were urged to speak to them or let her know.

Acceptance of the report was proposed by Tony Rogers, seconded by Ruth Plant and adopted unanimously.

Financial Report: John McGhee introduced the document which was circulated at the meeting. He pointed out that the surplus might sound a lot but this was only because of cost savings over the last few years. Membership income had dropped by £2000 and we needed to stem the flow. This year £4000 would be spent on Publicity, the new website and four booklets and there would be further extra costs in 2017 for the Society's Diamond Jubilee, including a Chelsea exhibit.

Finding new investments with a decent return was a problem. Bonds are safe and at the moment give a relatively good return. The St James investment had made a loss of £3000 due to changes in the stock market.

Special thanks were given to John for his continuing hard work in making the Hardy Plant Society one of the few Horticultural Societies in a sound financial position.

Acceptance of the report was proposed by Derek Cooper, seconded by Helen Mount and adopted unanimously.

Election of Chairman of the Society. CATHY ROLLINSON was proposed by Colin Moat, seconded by Elaine Lofthouse and elected unanimously to serve for a second year.

Election of Vice-chairman of the Society. RUTH PLANT was proposed by Cathy Rollinson, seconded by John McGee and elected unanimously. This role is in addition to Ruth continuing as Groups Coordinator.

Election of Honorary Treasurer of the Society. JOHN MCGHEE was proposed by Elaine Lofthouse, seconded by Sandra Hartley and elected unanimously.

Election of Honorary Secretary of the Society.

OLIVIA SPENCER is unable to take up the position of Honorary Secretary. The Chairman said that very sadly Olivia is now facing serious family problems which have arisen since she was nominated to take on the Hon Sec role. We are looking for someone to take on this role and are hopeful that we have identified a suitable candidate.

The appointment will be dealt with by direct appointment at a meeting of Trustees and formal election at next year's AGM.

Meanwhile Ruth Plant will cover the role and Elaine Lofthouse will continue to be available as necessary in the short term.

Election Trustees of the Society

The following nominations for the period March 2016 to March 2020 have been received.

STUART SENIOR (Somerset Group). Proposed by Roy Stickland, seconded by Lady Ro Fitzgerald.

JAN VAUGHAN (Worcestershire Group). Proposed by Lyn Maile, seconded by David Pollitt. Jan is also taking on the role of Conservation Coordinator, the post to be approved by Trustees at their next meeting.

Stuart and Jan were elected unanimously.

Vote of thanks to Officers and Trustees standing down at this AGM

Ruth Baumberg is standing down as Trustee and Vice Chairman. Unfortunately Ruth was not present at the meeting having fallen and dislocated her shoulder.

Elaine Lofthouse is standing down as Trustee and Hon. Secretary after four years.

The chairman said that this postholder is a crucial member of the senior management team of "Officers" who effectively run the Society and are held to account by the Trustees. Elaine has supported three Chairmen in her 4 years – perhaps the most challenging part of the role – and was sure that John Dilks and Vivienne McGhee were as grateful to her as she has been for Elaine's knowledge and wisdom.

Diana Bellerby, Helen Boothman and Sue Catchpole are standing down as Trustees after four years. Sue Catchpole will continue her role as Secretary of the Publications Subcommittee.

The Chairman thanked two postholders who have stood down:

Helen Mount has acted as Coordinator of the Conservation Scheme for four and a half years and has done a lot of work to update the scheme and focus it on plants of undoubted merit.

After working for 7 years on developing and maintaining a bespoke website for the Society, **Cliff Powlesland** stood down last summer. The Chairman thanked Cliff for his dedication to this often thankless task. The website is an important resource and over the years, the number of people accessing the HPS site has increased markedly.

Tokens of the Society's appreciation were given to Elaine, Helen and Cliff.

Election of Independent Examiners of the Society's accounts.

HAINES WATTS, Worcester Ltd

Proposed by Ruth Plant, Seconded by Roy Stickland and elected unanimously.

Student membership:

Cathy Rollinson said that the Trustees had been working on a proposal to offer HPS membership at a reduced rate to students and the Trustees recommended the acceptance of a Student Membership scheme in principle subject to final approval and inclusion in the Constitution at the 2017 AGM. Members indicated that they were happy for work to continue on this initiative and a formal proposal would be brought to next year's AGM.

The formal business of the meeting was closed.

Open Forum. No issues for discussion had been received by the Hon Sec

A general discussion followed including the following points:

- Online payments through PayPal are now available, this should encourage students
- Groups needed to come forward to run events such as the Autumn Weekend, Summer Gardens Day and other events
- Postholders will have access, where relevant, to update the new Website.
- Society leaflets are available from the office or often through Groups.
- Junior, ie: School children membership is not being progressed at present but 'school and college corporate membership' are possibilities to be considered.
- Social media: the Society now has Facebook and Twitter accounts, as do many Groups; seen as valuable communication tools.
- Seed Distribution: germination information would be helpful; Pauline Cooper is 'working on it', and mentioned the descriptive data base on the website.
- Any publicity is appreciated, the BBC was especially mentioned, although it was recognised that editorial policy did not always permit naming of the Society.

Elaine Lofthouse
Hon. Secretary
March 2016