

WYKE REGIS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
MINUTES OF AN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on Wednesday 5th September 2018 at 7.30pm in the Trading Post

Cheese and Wine was served by the Committee prior to the Meeting

Present: Brian Shaw (President), Jim Burt (Trustee), Rachel Waldock (Chair), John Southway (Deputy Chair), Paul Clarke (Treasurer), Michelle Lindley (Examiner), Carrie Dalby (General Secretary), Dave Best (IT Manager), Chris Mowlam (Buildings Manager), Andrea Inns, Jackie Hambling, and Alexis van El (General Committee).

Lorraine Bash, Christina Moody, Donald Crocker, Leslie Scott, Christina Scott, Jill Head, Roger Russell, Pam Russell, Dorothy Woods, Brian Woods, David Spinks, Jennifer Spinks, Pat Halstead, Thomas Davison, Kim Curtis, Madeleine Coombes, Rocky Allen, Jan Marquis, Michael Waldock.

1. **Apologies:** Jo Morland, Michael Rogers, Anneli Fisher, Jo Hudson-Cook, David Wood, Sue Stow, Lynda Parker, Caroline Print, Rita Balderstone, Derrick Howe, John Bird, Chris Males, Maria Collis, Colin Giles, Terry Shakespeare, Gary Clothier, Eleanor Fitzgeorge-Parker, Maggie Buchan, Lesley Saunders, Sarah Owens, Linda Basham.

2. President's Address

Good evening everybody. Thank you for coming and supporting the Society. I hope that you have enjoyed the wine and cheese.

The Trading Post is the Society's major asset and Members, as you see, have been putting in many hours of work to bring it into its present greatly improved state of repair and to meet legal requirements. A significant amount of work still needs to be done to ensure the long term viability of the Trading Post and anybody who can help the present Team with this work would be very welcome to join them. The management of the Society is overseen by two Trustees: Jim Burt and Malcolm Ketchley. [Jim Burt interrupted to remind the Society that Dale Culbreth, although he has resigned, will remain a Trustee until his name is removed from the Land Registry]. If anyone can fill this vacancy, we would like to hear from them. They liaise with the Society's General Committee to ensure that the ongoing day to day and long term management of the Society is appropriate. I'd like to thank the present members of the General Committee for their very hard work in the creation of new management systems. These new systems ensure the effective day to day running of the Society. I would like to welcome any Member who would like to join the Committee or volunteer to help with the functioning of the Societies activities. Please liaise with Carrie Dalby, General Secretary regarding either the Trustee or committee positions that are vacant. Any voluntary assistance that you could give would be much appreciated. Thank you.

Brian Shaw

3. Chair's Address

Welcome everyone and thank you for supporting the Committee.

My thanks go to the Committee and Trustees for all their input over the past year – especially to Carrie, Andrea and Dave on whose shoulders the majority of the work falls – I will return to this later!

A general thank you goes to all the volunteers who help with the various jobs needed to keep the Trading Post functioning – operating the till, running the café and yard, sowing seeds and potting up plants, bagging up bulk goods, helping with the Summer Show and generally keeping the place clean and tidy.

I have to disagree with Brian: Our Members are the Society's main asset, closely followed by this building. The Trading Post has suffered from a lack of maintenance which, due to its structure (concrete slabs and cast iron fittings), has resulted in an extensive amount of renovation work

being required, for example, replacement of the cast iron shoes on which the walls stand, renewing the adhesive between the concrete slabs, treating the damp walls and painting the exterior woodwork. Along with this work this year has seen a continuation of the interior building works embarked on last year. The main shop area has new cupboards and shelves – fitted by Les and Chris Scott and John Kaye, and a bespoke till counter designed and fitted by Dave Best – all this was a huge ask in the time available over the Christmas break and we are indebted to them for this.

A programme of rewiring, fitting security lights and fire alarms has been undertaken by Chris Mowlam, an enormous task that is ongoing and our thanks go to him for his commitment to this. The interior painting was undertaken by Jackie Hambling, Chris Scott, Jane Attfield and Dorothy Woods and has made the whole room far brighter, completed by the procurement and filling of the blinds by Les Scott. There are inevitably volunteers who I have forgotten to mention but thanks goes out to all who have helped.

This programme of maintenance has to be kept up if we are to ensure the survival of the building – or the outcome could be that of its sister building – St Nicholas's Church in Buxton Road - which has been declared too expensive to renovate and the site sold for development.

Outside we have a new raised bed recently dedicated to Roger Russell – a long standing member of the society – built by Les Scott. Rocky Allen and Fred Colebrook have been busy repairing and repainting. Thanks go to Carrie for organising successful work parties to get all this achieved. All this maintenance work has been undertaken with no draw down from our savings – the recent increase in Membership and trading due to the improvements has made this possible.

The new poly tunnel has been put to good use with Andrea, Jackie, Jill Head and their helpers producing a steady stream of plants for sale – from seed, cuttings, grown on plug plants and donations. Plant sales form a large part of our day to day business, which now includes the sale of peat free compost following a request at the last AGM and which is selling well.

The day to day running of the Trading Post requires a huge amount of input from the back office where Dave, Carrie and Andrea seem to live – the vast amount of work they do is very often unappreciated as it is not generally visible – EPOS generally, stock management and purchasing, writing and producing the newsletter, membership issues, the requirements of the General Data Protection Act and much, much else takes up a huge amount of their time, which is becoming unsustainable and they need HELP – you will see from the list of vacant positions where you can do this – so please do if you can. We also need more help with managing the yard (thanks to Herbie Pover for years of service in the yard) – one afternoon a month would make such a difference, as would contributions of articles for the newsletter – this is your Society and needs your help to make it flourish.

My final thank you is to our outgoing Treasurer Paul Clarke who has had to cope with an antiquated system of hand written ledgers with multiple columns - the transition to a computerised system is underway and will result in a different form of presentation of accounts in the future.

So to end – we have had a hugely successful year with much improved facilities, increased Membership and the gradual conquering of the EPOS system. However we are not just a shop – we are a society with the aim of providing education and interest via talks, demonstrations and workshops and social events such as trips out and quizzes . Some of this has happened but not as much as we would wish, as we do not have enough help, so please if you could help us achieve our aims you would be welcomed with open arms.

Thank you.

Rachel Waldock

4. Minutes of the AGM held on 12th September 2017

These had been distributed and were taken as read and were agreed a true record. Adoption proposed by Chris Scott, Seconded by Jill Head. **Agreed.**

5. Matters Arising

The peat-free compost requested at the last meeting is now in stock and proving popular with the Members.

6. The Treasurer's Report - Year ended 30 June 2018

The Profit & Loss Accounts and Balance Sheet are attached.

- 1 I'm pleased to report once again that we have had a successful trading year along with major enhancements to the Trading Post.
- 2 To begin with the Trading Post figures we have, for the first time, data directly from the EPOS system showing the sales of Members and WRHS Plants which has increased the income over last years figures. The dismal figure of interest is from our Instant Access Account with the Bank!
- 3 Our stock holding has increased by approximately £2,000 which is mainly due to the cost of the items rather than the quantities. The annual stock take demonstrated the value of EPOS as the quantities match very closely.
- 4 The Membership has increased this year which is not apparent from the income figure. The discrepancy has arisen from some social items being added in previous years to the EPOS membership code, but this year's figure of £2,712 is correct.
- 5 EPOS is at last proving to be an asset, mainly due to the mammoth efforts of Dave Best with his IT hat on. Various routines coupled with an increasing understanding on his part of the system is making a major contribution to the running of the Society.
- 6 There has been a significant spend on the continuing refurbishment of the main room and the support facility used by the Committee. This has required a major change to the presentation of P & L Account and to the overall Balance Sheet. Some of you will remember the dire strait the Society was in September 2015 when Roger Cheetham and his wife became dangerously ill and a group of us within the Society taking on various roles with myself becoming the Treasurer. There were many spreadsheets in Roger's personnel computer that would have been an advantage to the understanding and presentation of the subsequent accounts to the Society over the following 4 years. Combined with my lack of understanding of accountancy, I have failed to account for the depreciation of assets in the correct manner. The net result is that the profit for the year when inserted in the balance sheet is out by approximately £6,000. The P & L Account is correct.
- 7 I understand that the intention is to examine as many past purchases as is feasible to establish a better baseline for the Society's Assets so that the ensuing accounts are in balance.
- 8 Although I am retiring as the Treasurer, I intend to stay on in the new post of Assistant Treasurer to help the new Treasurer as a deputy during holidays etc.
- 9 We are pleased to report that the Society is in a healthy position and look forward to steady growth in the future.

Paul Clarke

There were no questions.

Adoption was proposed by Alexis van El and Seconded by Jackie Hambling. **Agreed.**

7. IT Manager's Report

May I begin by apologising that some of you may have received your Agendas slightly late. Unfortunately, the bulk emailing system, which I send in the quiet hours, cut out before sending them all - I had omitted to set a switch and I had to start it again two or three times. In terms of IT, the year since the last AGM has been busy, interesting, and on the whole, successful and satisfying.

Considering that this is a Horticultural Society dedicated to the interests of gardeners and allotment holders, it might seem surprising that computers and information technology play such a prominent role here. Surely the WRHS should be all about backaches, and compost under the finger-nails, not headaches and fingers on keyboards. And to have an IT Manager who knows absolutely nothing about gardening or horticulture hardly seems right, does it ?

Fortunately, our Constitution requires Members merely to "have an interest in gardening", not to actually do it ! But the fact is that computers and IT wind themselves into every aspect of the life and work of the Society. Could we perhaps get back to the good old days of paper and pencil, and have one of those picturesque old tills from Arkwright's Store ? It's a fragrant thought, but sadly, no we can't. To run the sort of operation that we have today would require a roomful of ledger clerks, working five days a week, and we have neither the space nor the staff. So we're stuck with computers, and my job is to unload as much of the work as possible onto those computers, and make them run with a minimum of human effort.

So, what has happened in the IT department since our last AGM ?

In the last months of 2017, we were preparing to refit the main shop, which could only happen during the Christmas Closure. IT was heavily involved in producing scale layout drawings, schedules of materials, costings, and buying lists, and of course, designing the mobile pay-desk to replace the rickety old trestle table that had served us since time immemorial. I'm still amazed that that old table never tipped over.

It was an ambitious refit, with several of us working here every day except Christmas Day and Boxing Day. It seems half a life-time ago, but two or three memories still remain to haunt me. One is of lying in great discomfort on top of the high racks in the back shop, struggling to terminate Ethernet cables in junction boxes en-route to the Office, and trying not to roll off and land on my head. That memory will linger yet awhile.

Late January or early February marks the delivery of the seed potatoes - the timing determined by the weather in Scotland. Since we all hoped that it would be a late season, the wretched things naturally arrived early, and we all had to down tools, clear space, and manhandle more than a ton of potatoes from the yard into the shop, and then dance round them for the rest of the period.

The third thing that sticks in my mind is that late in the afternoon on the day immediately before the shop was due to reopen, I was perched on top of a pair of steps, completely blocking the loo doorway, frantically trying to commission the comms equipment, whilst someone else was patiently trying to mop the floor beneath me. Somehow, by the skin of our teeth, everything was up and running, and the shop beautifully cleaned, polished and restocked in time for opening day. We've promised ourselves to have Christmas off this year!

Then our main computer, which was feeling it's age, gave up the ghost and died. We rapidly purchased a more modern replacement, and I managed to recover all the data stored on the old machine.

All the IT facilities inside the building were now behaving themselves in a fairly civilised way, but the world outside was a very different matter. The electronic till relies on a broadband connection over the telephone lines. At best, the broadband was running like a salted slug, and at worst it would drop out for five or ten minutes at a time, leaving the till inoperable, while the queue stretched down the shop. Paul Clarke, who has some experience in such matters, spent much time berating Open Reach, and persuading them to do something to improve the pathetic service they were providing. As Paul explained to them, the problems were particularly severe in wet and windy weather, and so, naturally enough, they waited for a sunny day at the end of a dry week before sending a wireman to poke around indoors and claim that he could find nothing wrong.

He gave us the usual nonsense about "it must be a problem on the premises", and all our fault, but Paul and I soon shot down that argument. Eventually, Paul managed to talk Open Reach into sending a linesman to check the external cabling, and surprise ! the linesman found a damaged cable, and a junction box with no lid, exposed to all weathers. He replaced the damaged parts, and now our broadband connection is reliable, and really quite brisk.

The remainder of the year has been dominated by the blighted General Data Protection Regulation. This legislative gem is intended to protect us all from the wicked machinations of vast multinational corporations who want to bombard us with junk mail. Instead, we have all been bombarded with urgent entreaties to register our agreement to the use of our personal data.

The fact that small organisations like WRHS are not powerful multinational manipulators seems to have escaped the legislators' notice, and the GDPR imposes a ridiculously heavy burden upon us. I wasted a good deal of time reading various publications, including the official Government website which purports to clarify our responsibilities. Never in the field of human endeavour have so many words been used to impart so little information !

Happily for me, John Southway then volunteered to attend a GDPR training day run by the local Council. And I hope he enjoyed it ! My personal belief is that the courts and the lawyers will spend the next twenty years trying to thrash out exactly what the GDPR actually means in practice. Meanwhile, I have removed the membership data from our remote database in the cloud, and built a new membership database on our in-house computer, with heavily restricted access. Postal addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers are no longer held on the EPOS system that drives the till. The old Membership Form has been replaced with a new GDPR Permissions Form, which allows each Member to say exactly how the Society can use his or her data.

And the forms have to be locked up in a document safe with access restricted to two named persons. You couldn't make it up ! Of course, all the software that makes use of Membership data has had to be completely rewritten, including the bulk email program that sends out the monthly newsletter, and the software that calculates how much money is owed to each Member who sells plants through the Society. Apart from writing a lot of new software, just transferring the data from 500+ membership forms onto the database required a lot of time and effort. But, looking on the bright side, we now have a robust Membership database, with good, functional interfaces that are easy to use. The new bulk emailing system runs reliably, and needs only minimal membership data for operation.

The downside is that some other IT tasks have had to give way to the urgent demands of GDPR. We are still running on cardboard membership cards, and it will be some time before we can upgrade to plastic cards. The Society's website is suffering from neglect, and needs a major rebuild. However, there are more urgent IT tasks that must be addressed first, in particular the ordering, pricing and stock control systems provided by EPOS are cumbersome and difficult to use. A good deal of work is needed to implement an alternative system that is efficient and easy to operate, and (if I am still in post after this meeting) this is the area I intend to attack next. Once we have systems that are quick and easy to operate, then volunteers to operate them will probably come forward.

Putting together the monthly Newsletter is another IT task, and I am pleasantly surprised to find that quite a number of people actually read it ! We now have several regular contributors, and some occasional contributors also. Carrie collates these various contributions, and since I am not a gardener, someone, usually Andrea, has to tell me what items in the shop are of seasonal interest. I simply assemble the pieces, make them all fit on the pages, and email out the end result.

Amongst 500 Members, there must be plenty of knowledge, ideas, and experience of gardening & horticulture. Growing conditions vary wildly across the country, but most gardening publications have to generalise. Being right on the south coast, with mild weather and salt winds, must bring its own benefits and problems. Why not write a few paragraphs about your successes and setbacks ? Or you could contribute an occasional piece about your own particular interests. It doesn't have to be about growing flowers, fruit & veg. It might be about your wildlife-friendly pond. Or wine-making. Or your recipes for using or preserving seasonal gluts of vegetables. Your contributions will be well received. This is, after all a local gardening club, not an ivory tower for the dissemination of academic papers.

Finally, let me say a word or two about volunteering.

Volunteering at WRHS doesn't have to be your life's work. I know that whenever you come into the shop, you find Carrie and Andrea scuttling around, each trying to do two jobs at once, and Chris working as a yard manager and looking after building maintenance at the same time, to say nothing of the IT Mangler dancing a dance like a semi-despondent fury, because the till is playing up again. But our jobs are not typical. There are plenty of essential tasks that need only a few hours a month, but which are well worth doing. The basic requirements are common sense, the ability to work in a team, and the ability to laugh a good deal. And providing you can avoid the IT Mangler, you get to work with some really nice people.

Give it a try !

Jim Burt asked about access to the Society's website (www.wrhs.or.uk), as he was unable to open it. Dave explained that this is a problem that he is working on, but in the meantime, Members should load the free programme Firefox (or Pale Moon), which will give access.

8. Amendment to the Constitution

It is proposed that Clause 8.4 of the Constitution be amended

from

The Trustees may attend, participate in, and vote at Meetings of the Committee;

to

The Trustees may attend Meetings of the Committee, but not participate, nor vote. Trustees cannot be elected to serve on the Committee.

Dave Best explained that this proposal was to strengthen the management of the Society. By making the Trustees independent of the General Committee, they would be able to oversee the day-to-day running of the Society. The Trustees hold the Society in Trust for its Members and the property is registered at the Land Registry in their names. In the same way as the Financial Affairs are checked annually by an Examiner, who is independent of the Committee, the Trustees could become Examiners of the General Committee. They are ultimately legally responsible, so should be able to check that all statutory Regulations are observed and up-to-date.

Jim Burt (a Trustee) took issue with the proposal that the Trustees could not participate or vote at Committee Meetings. He asked how he could make a proposal at a Meeting, then not vote on it. Lorraine Bash and Paul Clarke gave examples of other Societies that keep the Trustees separate from the Management Committees, in order to keep a disciplinary control.

The Amendment was Proposed by Dave Best, seconded by Lorraine Bash.

The Proposal was put to the vote:

24 in Favour; 2 against; 1 abstention. The Constitution will be changed.

9. Election of Accounts Examiner

9.8 of the Constitution: The Committee shall nominate an Examiner, who is not a Member of the Committee, to be elected at an AGM, to examine the Accounts annually and tender a Report thereon to the Treasurer for presentation to the AGM.

The following statement will be proposed for inclusion in the Constitution at next Year's AGM:

"It is further understood that the Examiner cannot be held responsible for any errors in the Accounts."

Leslie Scott was proposed as Examiner by Carrie Dalby, seconded by Andrea Inns, and elected.

10. Election of General Committee

Nine of the existing Committee had offered to stand for re-election, with Michelle Lindley taking over as Treasurer, and Paul Clarke becoming the Assistant Treasurer.

One nomination had been received for each of the 14 seats on the Committee, so an election was not required. They were voted in en bloc.

Chair:	Rachel Waldock
Deputy Chair:	John Southway
General Secretary:	Carrie Dalby
Treasurer:	Michelle Lindley
Asst Treasurer:	Paul Clarke
IT Manager:	Dave Best
Trading Post 1:	Andrea Inns
Trading Post 2:	Rocky Allen
Purchasing Team:	Jackie Hambling
Purchasing Team:	Alexis van El
Building Maintenance:	Chris Mowlam
General Member:	Jill Head
General Member:	Lorraine Bash
General Member:	Christina Moody

11. Any Other Competent Business

1. Omitted in error from item 6.

It is proposed that a sum of £10,000 be ring-fenced for future re-building requirements. **Agreed.**

2. Thomas Davison asked if consideration had been given to changing the opening hours at any time? Jim Burt said that in the past there had been Friday afternoon trading, but that was when the AUWE had closed early. Saturday afternoons had also been tried, but support was insufficient. Recently, late night opening on Wednesdays did not attract enough trade to justify it. The shortage of volunteers to run the Trading Post makes it impossible to staff more hours.
3. Rocky Allen asked if the Tool Hire facility could be expanded to include mechanical items, such as battery trimmers. Carrie Dalby explained that maintenance was the main issue, as we did not have repair facilities.
4. Les Scott proposed a big vote of thanks to the General Committee for all their fantastic work in running and maintaining the Trading Post. Rachel Waldock thanked him from the Chair.

The Meeting closed at 8.38pm.

The next General Committee Meeting will be Monday 10th September 2018 at 7.30pm in the Trading Post.

WYKE REGIS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2018

	2018	2017
<u>SHOP TRADING</u>		
General Sales	19,867	20,867
WRHS Plant Sales (Gross)	2,789	514
Members Plants Sales (Gross)	1,278	
Interest Received	12	11
	23,946	21,392
<u>Less</u>		
Opening Stock	21,715	16,130
Purchases	14,686	16,627
WRHS Plant Purchases	899	
Members Plant Sales Refund	1,022	777
Closing Stock	(23,783)	(21,715)
	14,539	11,819
	9,407	9,574
 <u>OTHER INCOME</u>		
Membership and Donations	2,712	2,748
Summer Show and Social Events	731	1,642
	3,443	4,390
 Gross Profit	 12,850	 13,964
 <u>OTHER RUNNING EXPENSES</u>		
Expenses relevant to Events	313	1,690
Refurbishment		4,461
Vouchers	608	147
Repairs	1,394	1,200
Insurance	1,123	1,094
Waste Disposal & Water	142	146
Light & Heat	397	276
Office Supplies	222	255
BT Telephone and Broadband	731	774
Bank & Card Charges	861	689
EPOS Charges	360	360
Affiliation Fees	65	65
Depreciation	2,094	900
	8,311	12,057
Total Other Running Expenses	(8,311)	(12,057)
 TOTAL TRADING PROFIT(LOSS) FOR YEAR	 4,539	 1,907

WYKE REGIS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2018

	As at 30 June 2018		As at 30 June 2017	
<u>FIXED ASSETS</u>				
Freehold Property		28,500		28,500
Refurbishment of H/Q	15,885		7,531	
Equipment - Trading				
Equipment - Main Room Units	1,912			
Equipment - Poly Tunnel	698			
Equipment - Computers	734			
	19,229		7,531	
Less Depreciation	2,094	17,135	900	6,631
<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>				
Stock (Cost)		23,783		21,715
<u>CASH and BANK</u>				
Current a/c	9,014		9,640	
Instant Access a/c	22,423		21,609	
Membership a/c	50		1,946	
Cash in Hand	253	31,739	355	33,550
TOTAL ASSETS		101,156		90,396
<u>Less CURRENT LIABILITIES</u>				
Creditors		0		0
TOTAL NET ASSETS		101,156		90,396
<u>FINAL ASSESMENT</u>				
Assets Balance b/f		90,396		
Calculated Surplus(Deficit) for Period		4,539		
Assets Balance c/f		94,935		

Due to a greater understanding of EPOS during the year, accuracy in recording has greatly improved and should continue to be a critical tool for future accounting.

There has been significant refurbishment of the building and this expenditure has been capitalised in line with HMRC guidelines. This will now be depreciated over the years.

To tackle the issue of depreciation of assets, these have been identified in the last financial year and will now be dealt with

Threshold for depreciation	£200									
	Date	Value	Life (years)	Depreciation	Value		Reduction			
Poly Tunnel	Aug-17	£ 698.40	10	10%	£ 628.56	OK		£ 69.84		
Units in Main Trading Post	Dec-17	£ 1,912.09	10	10%	£ 1,720.88	OK		£ 191.21		
Computer Comms Interfaces	Dec-17	£ 134.26	3	33%	£ 107.41	Below threshold				
Computer 1	Feb-18	£ 225.00	3	33%	£ 149.85	OK		£ 75.00		
Computer 2	Mar-18	£ 509.10	3	33%	£ 339.06	OK		£ 169.70		
									£ 505.75	
Freehold Property		£ 28,500.00								
Referbishment of H/Q		£ 15,885.00		10%				£ 1,588.50		
Total Depreciation = £ 2,094.25										