

MINUTES OF THE 32nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT HANFORD SCHOOL, CHILD OKEFORD

ON FRIDAY 14 APRIL 2023

APOLOGIES - Mr and Mrs Carsley, Mr and Mrs Coriello, Miranda Pender, Gillian Taylor, Anthea Payne, Hugh Lindsay, Becca Charron, The Countess of Sandwich, Kevin Morris, Dodie Garnier, Anne Butler, Anne Andrews, Lucille Williams

INTRODUCTION - The minutes of the 31st AGM, held at Minterne House, were approved and there were no matters arising. Lord Henry Digby welcomed members and offered his thanks to Mr and Mrs Rory Johnston for hosting us at Hanford, which he noted had not changed since his sister attended the school 58 years ago. Since the last AGM, we have lost three members who contributed significantly to the DGT, Juliet Bloxham, Alfred Hedin and Paul Dallyn. Lord Digby offered his thanks to Hugh Lindsay who is retiring from Council, but will stay on as a Vice President. Hugh served as Treasurer for many years, became Chairman and then continued as Vice Chairman. We have a small gift to present to him at home.

REPORT BY CHAIR - Firstly I would like reiterate Henry's thanks to Rory Johnston, the Head of Hanford School, for hosting this meeting.

We are heartened to report that while still recovering from the effects of the Covid crisis, we managed in 2022 to mount a programme of events which produced a slight increase in income and in spite of adopting a conservative approach to giving out grants, we were able to increase these.

While the financial situation of the trust improved only marginally from a difficult 2021, the year showed encouraging progress in a number of areas. Thanks to the recruitment of more volunteers to the Events Committee, a larger and busier committee under its temporary Chair, Henry Digby, has posted a full and exciting programme of visits and lectures this year.

Sarah FitzGerald and her Research and Recording Committee have progressed the updating of the Gazetteer which is becoming an increasingly well recognised research tool for garden historians, heritage organisations and local authorities.

The Conservation Committee continues to keep a watchful eye on planning applications and Chris Clarke and Richard Burden maintain a strong line of communication with Dorset's two Councils. Although the year has been relatively quiet on this front, it is crucial that we continue as a statutory consultee and watchdog for the very special landscapes and gardens of Dorset.

Carol Carsley and Lynne Cove are making headway with the Schools Committee and proactively expanding their network of contacts with local gardens and businesses. The committee is certainly becoming more relevant in today's world, and making a valuable contribution to raising awareness of the DGT.

This issue of a lack of awareness continues to concern us and all of the County Gardens Trusts. To that effect Annie Atherton has been updating and generally improving the look and the usability of our website, and we are hopeful that the newly launched Gueterbock Gardener of the Year Award will also help to promote organisation. We are grateful to Madelaine Morris who, having just retired as our Secretary last year, kindly agreed to take up the Chair of this new committee.

We are also very fortunate to have eminent author Chris Stocks as Editor of our Journal, and I hope that you have all enjoyed the last issue, with its erudite and entertaining articles. He and Madelaine are also keeping our Instagram account active and attractive.

More good news is that Gabrielle Selson reports that the number of new members joining us last year is up.

Since our last AGM Valerie Lee has taken up the position of our new Secretary and is doing a wonderful job in managing the Council and arranging and minuting our meetings.

Finally I would like to thank Lucille Williams for her tireless and faultless work as our Treasurer, while holding down a busy job and a young family.

With a general improvement in the DGT's performance we now hope that, with an upbeat events programme scheduled for this year, we can feel cautiously optimistic about the future. I would especially like to thank all of our volunteers, who dedicate so much time and energy to the DGT, for ensuring the trust continues to be a worthwhile enterprise, and an enjoyable one to be involved with.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Valerie Lee (on behalf of Lucille Williams) reported that the improved performance from a full programme of events had allowed increased expenditure on charitable activities. Costs have been kept under control and in 2023 there will be a benefit from taking the website development in-house. Overall reserves remain stable.

ADOPTION OF THE ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2022 - all agreed

REPORTS OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS

CONSERVATION - In Dorset, our important gardens remain relatively unscathed from development, compared to other areas of the country. We continue to monitor developments at Wolfeton. Following a recent meeting, we are working well with Dorset Council which has agreed to incorporate the Gazetteer into planning policy. The next target will be BCP council.

RESEARCH & RECORDING/SMALL GRANTS - There has been much interest in water gardens and two possible ones have been discovered in the county. The R&R committee will undertake more surveying work in 2023. Work on the floral clock in Weymouth, to which we contributed with a small grant, is almost complete.

EVENTS - We undertook 13 events in 2023, generating a net surplus of £6,577. The highlights were a visit to Highgrove and the excellent Christmas lecture by Peter Hughes KC. We have 16 events planned for 2023 and many more in the pipeline. However, we need more members to ensure that we can fill events. There are 3 new committee members, but we would welcome new members.

SCHOOLS - We are back to usual activity levels. The pandemic has made schools realise the importance of their school gardens. We are sending out a termly newsletter and offering free items such as seeds and bulbs has helped to make contact with new schools. We have held two very successful Twilight sessions, where schools can learn about our work and form networking groups. We would welcome new members.

WILLIAM GUETERBOCK AWARD - We have not yet had a significant response, but expect things to pick up as the weather improves.

JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER - The newsletter has returned to quarterly publication. The journal is currently at the editing stage and should be out in the next month. Articles or contributions are always welcomed.

MEMBERSHIP - We welcomed 50 new members in 2022.

ELECTIONS - President Lord Henry Digby, proposed by Sarah FitzGerald, seconded by Joan Dallyn. Vice Presidents, The Countess of Sandwich, Anthea Payne and Hugh Lindsay, proposed by Richard Burden, seconded by Annie Atherton. Chair Sir William Hanham, proposed by Tony Malin, seconded by Richard Burden. Members of the Council retiring by rotation, proposed by Lynne Cove, seconded by Rosamond Sweet-Escott. Independent Examiner Mr Ian Winsor, proposed by Madelaine Morris, seconded by Richard Burden.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS - Tony Malin suggested that publicity material could be put into garden centres to try to increase membership and he would be happy to cover East Dorset. He also suggested that events could be opened to non-members, but only at a premium charge. Roger White highlighted that Devon Gardens Trust charge very low entrance fees for talks. Joan Dallyn pointed out that Devon events were heavily subsidised by a large bequest. William Hanham suggested that bequests could be an important source of income for us and asked members to remember the DGT when writing wills.

The meeting ended at 4.05 pm.