

Tettenhall and District Horticultural Society

EGM 17th May 2023 7.30pm Tettenhall Institute

Present: 28 (plus 4 proxy-votes)

Apologies: Renee Young, Steven Bailey, Elayne Jackson, Mike Finnegan-Iam, Philip Davis, Sarah Silvester, Liz Pearce, Wenonah Davies.

Chairman's Introduction

Eimert welcomed members and explained that the EGM had been called due to the resignations of three key committee members: Treasurer, Social Secretary, Show Secretary.

The aim of the meeting was not to analyse how the Society had come to the point of calling an EGM. Rather, it was to discuss how to ensure the continuation of the Society.

The aim of the Society to become an efficient gardening club/horticultural society with great gardening talks, garden-based trips, gardening demonstrations, workshops and an annual show is being challenged in favour of being a friendly social club. Eimert observed that there was no conflict of interests, as it was possible to have a friendly social aspect in conjunction with the horticultural/gardening aspect.

Eimert invited the society's President, Wendy Thompson, to address the meeting. Wendy's address was to be followed by one from Pru Coleman, a long standing member/committee member who has much knowledge about the Society as she wrote the history of the society for its centenary year.

President's Address

Wendy Thompson referenced the Society's long association within Tettenhall and her feeling of honour in being asked to become its President. The role of the Society within the local community was highlighted. Also referenced was the welcoming nature of the society. Wendy described how the sharing of tasks within the Society in the past has meant that the workload involved in running the organisation had been spread evenly. Wendy expressed her hopes that a way forward could be found which would enable the Society to continue its work.

Pru Coleman (Secretary)

Pru spoke of the importance of the Society to the local community. Pru also highlighted the way in which a common interest in gardening brings like-minded people together from which friendships flourish. The Society's place within Tettenhall village was demonstrated by the work of Eimert, Sarah Silvester and Pru at the recent Tettenhall Institute Coronation event where members, ex-members and members of the public were able to hear about the Society's work; hands-on propagation demonstrations were given. Plant sales from this event raised £60, which was split between the Society and Compton Care.

Pru then resigned as Secretary and Newsletter Editor.

Chairman's Update

Eimert thanked Robert Billing, Wenonah Davies and Sue Joyce for their committee work. Robert Billing will remain in place as Treasurer until the end of June in order to enable a transition to a new committee.

Eimert explained the founding principles of the Society were to 'promote, educate and enjoy gardening'. These principles are embedded in the Society's governing document.

Membership: 5 months into the year the Society's membership has exceeded the total for the end of year 2022. As of May 13th 2023, membership stands at 77 with 3 members on hold (this compares with 61 members the Society achieved at the same point last year). New joiners increase every month. Membership is projected to reach 130 by year end, which is double last year's membership. 30 new members have joined via the website (all live within the Tettenhall area). Digital reach shows that the development of the website and its use to promote the Society is having a positive effect. Post reach is now 7K with 505 followers – this is a dramatic improvement from the point at which Sarah took on the role of digital and marketing manager.

Trips and talks are going ahead, so long as help comes forward to facilitate these events. Herbs through the Seasons with Malcolm Dickson from Hooksgreen Herbs 26th May. Ashwood Nurseries 50 Years with Howard Drury 30th June. A planned 'tree walk' in West Park 11th June. The Bridgewater Trip 2nd July.

The Society's September **Annual Show** to go ahead, if volunteers come forward to run it.

Website: Sarah Silvester will no longer run the website. This is a specialist area which will be a difficult role to find a replacement for. For the time being the website will be mothballed and the monthly newsletters will stop. Information will be provided via the Trading Hut when possible.

Trading Hut: sales exceed those achieved at the same point last year. A survey had been carried out at the 2023 AGM which resulted in an increased range of organic products being stocked.

Volunteers were called for in order that the Society continues to be viable. A follow up meeting has been arranged for Wednesday 24th at 7:30pm, if sufficient interest is expressed.

A general discussion ensued on a range of topics which are detailed in no particular order below:

Tettenhall and District Horticultural Society v Tettenhall Gardening Club

Tash questioned the change of name from Horticultural Society to Gardening Club. She stressed the educational potential of the Society and its long history.

Richard explained that the official title of the Society is Tettenhall and District Horticultural Society. This name dates back to the Society's founding in 1915 during WWI. Pru explained that the change of name to Gardening Club was agreed at a past AGM solely for marketing purposes. Pru explained that the change of name had not resulted in an increased membership which continued to decline despite the re-brand. There was no consensus on which name members preferred: some felt

'Gardening Club' was more friendly and appealing; others preferred Horticultural Society as it reflected the purpose and history of the organisation.

Horticultural v Social

There was a discussion regarding the horticultural element conflicting with the social element of the society. It was generally agreed that there is no fundamental conflict between these two elements as a shared love of gardening brings people together and engenders social contact between like-minded people. There was a call not to dumb down the Society; this was balanced by comments from those who were concerned that future talks would be 'over the head' of members. The Chairman stated the Committee's intention which has always been to provide content for all levels of gardening enthusiasts.

Website

There was resounding praise and admiration for Sarah's development of the website and the low cost for which this work has been carried out. The work that Sarah has done for the Society amounts to several thousands of pounds of website development, marketing and social media. The cost of a £180 upgrade to enable online payments was questioned. 30 new members have used the online membership option. Pru explained that the website was always intended to be self-funding and that due diligence had been carried out on every level. Sarah had created a detailed document which presented the business case for the website. Sarah had hoped to present this document to the Committee. To date, the Committee has not viewed this document. Sarah has stated that she does not wish to have further association with the Society.

The following offered to **volunteer** for the Society:

Tash, Lewis and Theresa, Adam, Ingrid, Stan, Martin, Dave, Kelly, Anita, Shirley, Louise, Graham, Wendy F, Robert.