

FRIENDS OF EASTCOTE HOUSE GARDENS

MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 17th August 2021 at 11am in The Stables at Eastcote House Gardens

Apologies:- David and Anne Payne, Cllr Becky Haggard, Michael Paddy, Adrian Tortellini, Janet Green, Trevor Dixon, Margaret Ray, Nupur Khanna, Sue Francis, Jo Oliver, Christine Wallace, Steve and Sue Place, Andy Weller, Gusta Glover

Present:- Catherine Dann (President), Lesley Crowcroft (Acting Chairman), Gill Peters, Audrey Newell, Denise Read, Doris Dowell, Tony Swan, Sonal Sohal, Paul Lake, Christine Lake, Linda Wells, Sue Smales, Liz Gambier, Teresa Walters, Richard Doughty, Chris Groom, Irene Groom, Keith Barnard (Treasurer), Malcolm Penny, Joan Butfield, Gerry Edwards, Susan Toms.

There were no questions concerning the e-mail minutes of the AGM/QGM of June 2020

Cllr. Becky Haggard sent thanks to everyone for all their handwork during the lockdowns.

The current committee remained in situ during the pandemic as it was not possible to hold an AGM in June of that year (2020). In March 2020 the Chairman and Deputy resigned, Lesley Crowcroft and Chris Groom took over as Acting Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively.

The following changes have been made to the committee. David Payne has sadly stood down as President because of ill health, both his and his wife Anne. When David was one of the Ward Councillors he fully supported the efforts to restore the buildings. He was instrumental in pestering the then Leader of the Council, Sir Ray Puddifoot MBE to support us. Without the backing of Sir Ray, EHG would never have been restored. We all owe David a very big debt of gratitude, he will be missed.

Catherine Dann currently Vice President has accepted the role of President. Catherine when Ward Councillor also fully supported the restoration of the gardens. We are pleased that she is willing to continue to support us.

Trevor Dixon who has supported the FEHG and has been a devotee of EHG for decades regrettably has had to stand down due to the ill health of his wife Angela. Trevor set up our very excellent web site and trained Paul Lake, who will now take over the website with help from Trevor if needed. Our thoughts and best wishes go to both Trevor and Angela.

Steve & Sue Place have both resigned from the Committee, but will continue to carry out the annual recording of the wildlife in Long Meadow. A vote of thanks was given to all retiring members of the FEHG committee.

Steve Dunn has agreed to continue as Hon. Auditor, we thank Steve for continuing to watch over our finances.

Those members of FEHG who are willing to continue as Committee members are set out below.

PROPOSED COMMITTEE FOR 2021-2022

- President - Catherine Dann
- Chairman - Lesley Crowcroft
- Deputy Chairman - Chris Groom
- Treasurer - Keith Barnard
- Deputy Treasurer - Malcolm Penny
- Secretary - Jo Oliver
- Minute Secretary - Joan Butfield
- Quartermaster - Tony Swan
- Craft Group - Sue Smales
- Web Master - Paul Lake
- First Aid - Christine Lake
- Ruislip Northwood Eastcote Local History Society - Susan Toms
- Eastcote Park Estate Conservation Area + Eastcote Horticultural Society - Gerry Edwards
- Hon Auditor - Steve Dunn

Hillingdon Council usually appoint the three Ward Councillors to the committee without voting rights. Currently the Ward Councillors are Ian Edwards, Leader of the Council, Nick Denys and Becky Haggar.

Also appointed is a Green Spaces Officer, without voting rights, currently Joshua Wallington.

The Committee for the coming year was unanimously agreed.

ACTING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

We have recently been able to re-start serving refreshments at break during the volunteer sessions. For the time being these are being served outside to avoid a crush of people in the cabin.

As well as losing some members of the committee, as noted in the notice for the AGM Committee. Dinah Clements, Head Gardener's assistant, left the group for family reasons. Dinah's contribution to the gardens is appreciated and she will be missed.

Instagram

Sonal Sohal, a fairly recent recruit, started an Instagram account for EHG, she updates the site on a regular basis.

Working with the Borough Curator.

Susan Dalloe is the new Borough Curator, a complete change from the previous curator, Susan is full of ideas and is keen to work with FEHG to hold Council sponsored events at EHG. Below the various activities on which we have collaborated.

- Susan plagued AOC Archaeology for the return of the finds from the various digs. It took 18 months but at last they were returned. We had been trying for the two previous years.
- Summer 2020 working conjunction with Susan Toms, Ruislip, Northwood & Eastcote Local History Society and Lesley Crowcroft FEHG, a video was produced of a tour of the gardens to compensate for the loss of Open House Weekend. This can be seen on the Hillingdon web site.
- Recently a short video has been made of the four herb beds with Varsha Soneji, medical herbalist, this will be online soon. Vasha gave a Herb Walk in 2019 in conjunction with FEHG, we had to cancel the 2020 walk.
- During dementia awareness week a visit from a Hillingdon group. Lesley gave a brief talk on the herb beds.
- A mindfulness walk was held in July. This was successful and a 6 week programme will start in August.
- Also in July Varsha led an afternoon dedicated to herbal teas. Which again was successful and will be repeated.
- August, working with the Library Service, a Story Telling trail for the under 7s. This event was over-subscribed, and will be repeated if possible. Audrey & Lesley made up small herbal 'Tussie Mussies' for the children to smell and touch, these were very popular and all were taken home.
- A printed map for a Tree Walk is in preparation.

Calendars

A 2021 calendar was not produced, work usually starts in March of each year, in 2020 we went into the first lockdown, the future for selling was not known, therefore, it was decided to cancel for that year.

Only a limited number of calendars for 2022 were produced as we were not certain that we would be able to hold events at which they could be sold. All have now been sold. A big thank you goes to Paul Lake for collecting & collating the photos and then putting the calendar together.

Hopefully next year the 2023 calendar will have a normal production run.

Book Sales.

The second hand book sales ceased with the start of the first lockdown. We hope to re-start the sales in September at the Heritage Day. Many visitors have missed the sales, as have those wishing to pass on books for the sales.

Extra visitors

During the lockdown visitors number grew, many were Eastcote residents who had not visited the gardens before. Most were well behaved, but others were litter louts, also some very destructive families. FEHG and Hillingdon Council have spent a lot of time clearing up, time that could have been better spent elsewhere.

Litter Picking.

Malcolm Penny organized a litter pick in Eastcote Town and Cavendish Park, for the Eastcote Conservation Panel working in conjunction with FEHG and 4th Eastcote Scouts. 24 helpers came and managed to gather 24 bags of rubbish. Another litter pick is planned for September.

New volunteers.

There have been many enquiries regarding volunteering during the past 18 months. It was not possible to take people on at times because of the restrictions. Contact was made again once restrictions were eased. Some started, most of whom have stayed. There are approximately 40 active gardeners registered. However, some only come once a month, some twice a week. There are other members who help at events and do other work outside of gardening.

Reports from group leaders below. The Chairman's comments are shown in blue.

Treasurer's Report August 2021. Keith Barnard

[Our thanks to Keith and to Steve for keeping the accounts in good order, over this period.](#)

An audit of the accounts for the year ending 30th April 2020 has been carried out by our Honorary Auditor Steve Dunn which has been circulated to all committee members, additional copies are available should anyone want one. For information the balances of the individual elements of the account are as follows:-

| | |
|--|------------|
| General Fund (Day to Day Expenditure). | £3,463-00. |
| Archive/Publications. | £4,640-00 |
| Craft Group. | £570-00 |
| Savings/Reserve Fund. | £5,014-00 |

The accounts for year ending 30th April 2021 are being audited now and for information the individual elements of the account are as follows:-

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| General Fund. | £1,658-00 |
| Archive/Publications. | £4,627-00 |
| Craft Group. | £620-00 |
| Savings/Reserve Fund. | £5,016-00 |

Due to Covid 19 no Book and Plant sales or any other Fund raising could be held, but we have continued to plant and maintain the Gardens to a high standard without for the time being using any of our Reserves.

Small donations from the general public to our funds during lockdown have been very welcome.

During this difficult time Andy Weller has continued to market and sell many of the FEHG Publications. Any expenditure during the year i.e. printing of 2022 calendars, donation to Help for Heroes, printing materials etc have been well matched by the sale of our publications.

For your information the Archive/Publications Fund now stands at £4,786-00, all other elements of the account are in line with the year ending 30th April 2021.

FEHG AGM 2021 Gardens Report. Lesley Crowcroft

Starting from March 2020 when the first lockdown began. Chris Groom's suggestion that volunteers could come and work at EHG at any given time, bringing their own tools and socially distancing from anyone else around, worked extremely well. Regrettably, Lesley Crowcroft went 'absent without leave' twice, due to health problems. Chris kept hold of the reins and sent out jobs to be done by anyone who could manage to come.

When the first lockdown eased we were able in June 2020, to carry out the planned replanting of the beds around the courtyard and car park, which had been scheduled for late March early April. All the plants were in pots in volunteer's gardens, we were all glad to see them go to their new home.

This year 2021, these have matured and have looked magnificent all year. Later in the year, 2020, the areas next to the steps leading to the office, were cleared and replanted.

Some of the older Azaleas were removed and new shrubs planted in the Autumn.

The Long Border in the Old Orchard was cleared and replanted, work finishing just before the December lockdown came into force.

As well as the new planting and paving over an area next to the car park, where passengers could not get out of their cars without landing in a flower bed, all the other areas of the gardens were kept in good order. That is the Walled

Garden, Old Orchard, Rockery, Prairie bed, Hazel bed, boundaries were kept weeded and trimmed, tree circles kept clear, the list is endless.

During the winter months' lockdown, a few hardy souls came twice each week to keep on top of the workload.

2022 is the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen [70 years]. A new bed is planned. It is near the Field End Road entrance, to commemorate this record-breaking achievement. The preparation of the bed has started with help from a team from Coca Cola Uxbridge. LBH have promised to help with the digging over, starting in September, so that we are ready for Autumn/Winter planting. This bed will be mainly trees and shrubs. The slogan for the Jubilee is 'Plant a Tree for the Jubilee', The Queen is an avid tree planter.

During the past 18 months the number of visitors to the gardens has increased greatly. Some new visitors who have lived locally for many years visited the gardens for the first time! Members working in the gardens are frequently told how much their work is appreciated, that the gardens have been a lifeline throughout the pandemic.

Plans are now going forward to hold a plant sale at the Heritage Day in September. Lots of digging up, splitting and potting will be required. Hopefully we will raise lots of money to replenish our rather depleted coffers.

London in Bloom.

On site judging was cancelled for 2020, instead a desk top report could be submitted. LC submitted reports for the Walled Garden category and the two volunteer categories, It's Your Neighbourhood and Our Community. We kept the same marks as in 2019, that is three gold awards. FEHG also received from the RHS a certificate of Recognition for 2020.

Judging resumed in 2021. Hillingdon Council did not enter parks or conservation areas this year. This is due to cutbacks in the Green Spaces budget. FEHG entered EHG and Long Meadow into the following 5 usual categories. For EHG - Park, Walled Garden, for Voluntary groups- It's Your Neighbourhood, Our Community, For Long Meadow – Conservation Area. Also entered was a desk top entry – Environmental Challenge. Results will not be available until October 5th & 6th this year. If anyone would like an electronic version of the Environmental Challenge please let Lesley know.

A 'aide memoir' booklet was given to all judges for all categories both for FEHG and LBH entries, these were compiled by Lesley.

Hillingdon Council did enter the Borough wide judging and Eastcote Village, EHG was on the route for both. The Judge for the Borough entry was very impressed, he said that coming to EHG was like visiting a stately home!

For both the LBH tours, Alex – Gardens café, supplied a very excellent lunch. Most appreciated by the judges. As the stables were not available FEHG set up gazebos, tables and chairs.

Long Meadow.

Steve & Sue place have continued the butterfly count this year. The section of the grassland most used by butterflies has been cordoned off, so that it is left for the butterflies and not included in the hay cut which will take place soon. A winter works program will be arranged soon.

[Eastcote Horticultural Society managed to keep their trading hut open during the pandemic, observing all rules. Also, introducing the virtual flower shows. A big thank you, goes to Sue and her team for entering photos on behalf of FEHG. We had some very good results.](#)

FEHG Summer Fair and Picnic

The Summer Fair and Picnic is planned for Saturday 4th June 2022 from 11.00am to 16.00pm. This is the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend [70 years] The Stables are booked for Friday afternoon and the site is booked for Saturday 4th June. The Mayor is also booked. Our very popular dog show will take place.

Special stalls being investigated :- Ferret racing, children's zoo, etc

Chris Groom

[A mammoth undertaking, please make a date in your diaries, we will need many volunteers to cover the stalls, putting up and taking down and running the event.](#)

Real Ale Club (RAC)

I'm pleased to report The Real Ale Club is continuing to thrive and now boasts 32 members, comprising of Friends of EHG and their partners, and we generally attract an attendance of 10+ per meeting.

Obviously our activities were initially hampered by the lockdown restrictions with our monthly meetings ceasing from April 2020.

However, after some encouragement from our members we started to meet for monthly 'Virtual drinks' via Zoom from February 2021, and these evenings were very well supported and provided some very enjoyable and (by then) much needed interaction between households.

With the gradual lifting of restrictions, and the careful selection of a suitable venue, I am delighted to report we have been able to restart meeting from June 2021. Our first two meetings being held courtesy of Eastcote Cricket Club, where we were able to meet outside and enjoy everyone's company in a socially distanced and safe environment.

For our next meeting on 5th August we have made arrangements to use the outside seating at the recently refurbished The Woodman, which is a new venue for the Club.

The RAC is a very friendly bunch, and the evenings provide the FEHG an opportunity to meet socially and enjoy each others company. Despite the name you don't have to drink Real Ale, with several members enjoying their own favourite tippie (even lager!!). We don't have 'whips' and you don't have to buy any rounds, just your own. No commitment to attend every meeting and you can stay as long, or as briefly, as you want to.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the RAC Members for their continued support and active involvement by attending and assisting in the running and management of the Club. Their willingness to visit and test out venues, and arrange permissions etc is really appreciated. And special thanks to Chris Horsburgh who enabled the RAC to make use of his Zoom account to restart the 'Virtual meetings'.

New members always welcome – so if anyone would like to join us then please get in touch with me so I can include you in the email distribution list so you know where and when we are meeting. It's usually the first Thursday of every month (or thirst Thursday as we call it!!) at an agreed local venue.

Antony Bucksey aabucksey@aol.com 020 8866 9704

This was a brilliant idea of Tonys and it has proved so successful, All must be looking forward to 'normal' meetings once again. [Cheers!]

FEHG Book Group

The FEHG Book Group comprises 8 members and usually meets on the first Tuesday of every month. Membership numbers are limited because under normal circumstances we meet in each other's houses, and a larger Group size would not be practicable.

Each month we receive a book, via Eastcote Library, which we then read and discuss the following month. We are not restricted to any particular genre and subsequently there can be very wide-ranging opinions expressed as we debate the merits of the plot, writing style and any other aspect of the publication.

Our meetings ceased from April 2020 with the introduction of COVID lockdowns, which prevented the distribution of books from the library and banned us from meeting in each other's homes.

As the restrictions lifted and our access to the library returned, we were able to restart, with the careful distribution of books and using Zoom meetings to facilitate our discussions, which actually worked quite well.

With the further lifting of restrictions, we initially agreed to recommence actual meetings from our July meeting (which was actually planned for 29th June), albeit subject to weather as the meeting was to be undertaken outside. Of course, that week was like winter (wouldn't believe it now!!) so we reverted last minute back to Zoom.

We are hopeful that the conditions (including the weather) will allow us to reconvene meeting in person from our August meeting

Rosemary and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the members of the Book Group for their continued support with special thanks to Jenny Gurden, who led the Group from its inception and continues to be actively involved.

Antony & Rosemary Bucksey

Jenny led the book group for many years and her leadership was very much appreciated, thank you to Rosemary and Tony for taking over the organization.

Corona Quizzes

I was requested to provide a few words for the FEHG AGM in regard to the series of 9 Corona Quizzes that I prepared and distributed during the dark days of lockdown.

This activity was initiated and encouraged by Lesley Crowcroft, as a means to provide the FEHG with something to keep them occupied and help them feel involved and socially connected, especially if living alone.

I was happy to oblige and circulated the first 'Corona Quiz' at the end of March 2020 via the email distribution lists previously utilised for the seasonal quizzes raising funds for FEHG.

Feedback was instantly very positive, and it appears that many recipients enjoyed receiving the challenge and the opportunity to keep occupied. Over the ensuing months, as more quizzes were prepared and sent out, I received several requests to add individuals to my distribution list and more encouraging feedback as the quizzes were re-directed to families and friends around the world.

Many thanks to all of you who provided encouragement and feedback, whether by email or in person in the street.

I hope they kept you amused and entertained during those dark days and that any ensuring family disputes over clues and answers (which I know there were a few!!) have by now been resolved.

Antony Bucksey

[9 quizzes in such a short time must be a record! They were a great success helping us all at a very difficult time.](#)

Tree-Dressing:

2020 –

Unfortunately, owing to Covid restrictions, we were unable to have our normal Tree-Dressing afternoon. Instead, we put up posters inviting the local community to add a bauble to our decorations every time they passed the tree. The result was the best dressed tree we have ever had! Several baubles had lovely messages attached, and numerous visitors to the Gardens told us of their delight at seeing the tree – it was a wonderful, cheering sight in very anxious times.

Special thanks to Audrey for making sure all the baubles looked clean and smart! We also heard that our tree became *the place* for people's Christmas photo of their children to post on Instagram!

2021 –

This year's Tree-Dressing is scheduled for Saturday 27th November. The Mayor has been invited and we have booked the Stables. We will contact local schools in September. Hopefully, as usual there will be the tea stall, crafts for sale and a teddy hunt for the children.

Following last year's success, we propose that after the official ceremony is over, we once again ask the local community to add their own decorations over the Christmas period.

Paul & Christine Lake

[The 2020 tree was a joy to see, so many families adding their decorations then taking photographs, the children were delighted. We are so grateful to Paul & Christine for making 'Christmas happen' at EHG in 2020.](#)

Publications activity- Andy Weller.

As of June 2021

In the absence of any events since the first lockdown there has been some positive news to report.

In March 2020, just before lockdown one, received from the printer 'An Eastcote WWII Commentary'. This is a non-profit making publication selling at £5 with £3 from each sale being donated to Help for Heroes.

Sales of this publication went very well. We started to send money to Help for Heroes. Later, in consultation with Lesley and Keith, it was agreed that in advance of selling out this print run that the Friends should donate all that we would have sent if we had have sold out. The obvious reason being that many charities have suffered from a lack of donations.

We had 149 copies available for sale and by the end of Lockdown 3 in April we sold 115 copies. I also received £47 in cash donations. This means that, with Help for Heroes being able to benefit from Gift Aid, this activity resulted in well in excess of £500 to the benefit of Help for Heroes.

The first publication about the history of Eastcote House and the people who lived there was issued in 2015. Then followed our best-selling publication Secret Eastcote (now into the 3rd print run). Many copies of Secret Eastcote have been sent to the United States, as there was both a U.S. Base and a U.S school on what is now a developed housing estate.

Five further publications about the history of Eastcote then followed.

The Black Horse Story including a summary of Eastcote's pubs and long gone old ale houses, sold out following two print runs. During the last lockdown, as a measure of goodwill, I sent out over 60 versions in an electronic format.

The total sales of all our publications is approaching 1,400.

Andy worked very hard to sell the WWII Commentary, without any events and everywhere else closed. He regularly advertised on Nextdoor and has achieved wonders.

Heritage Open Day – 19th September 2021The following stalls have accepted our invitation to take part in our Open Day event. As well as the Grade II listed buildings being open, Dovecote, Stables and the Walled Garden the main attraction will be the Classic Car Rally.

- Jazzology
- Pinner Flower Lovers' Society (Audrey Newell)
- RNELHS (Susan Toms)
- Ice Cream Van (Maria Tedeschi)
- Archaeological finds (Susan Dalloe)
- Eastcote Horticultural Society (Alan Thomas)

As well as the above stalls we will have the Friends' stalls

- Craft Group
- Dave's cards
- Raffle
- Refreshments - Jane
- Publications

In the Gardeners' yard there will be a book and plant sale. Unfortunately, the British Legion are unable to attend Classic cars – Keith Barnard, Joan Butfield & Susan Toms- the rest of the event.

Volunteers are needed for this event, please make a date in your diaries. Fingers crossed that the weather will be dry and there will not be a lockdown in sight. It was not possible to hold this event in 2020 because of the Covid 19 restrictions. A lot of work goes into organizing these events so let's hope all goes well in 2021.

FEHG COMMUNITY SHIELD

Joan has collected the shield from Eastcote Horticultural Society and will arrange engraving for this year's winner.

Joan & Terry Butfield sponsor the FEHG Community Shield. The award is given annually to a group or person who has made a big contribution to the life of the community. [Eastcote Conservation Panel award the Hinman Shield each year to a young persons' group for the same contribution.]

Craft Group report

The Craft Group started up again in May, initially we were limited to 12 people indoors, but with the finer weather we have been able to sit outside and to open up the sessions to the whole group.

Two from the waiting list have been given places with a third due to start at the end of August, bringing the total membership back to 24. Prospective members will have to join a new waiting list due to limitations on space.

For Heritage Day on 19th September we plan to have a craft stall; several members of the group have been busy during the past eighteen months - knitting, crocheting, weaving, quilting, sewing, cross-stitching, embroidering and making cards - producing items for exhibition and sale with many aimed at enticing those shopping early for Christmas.

Some time has also been devoted to sorting material, wool, knitting needles, patterns, cross-stitch kits, ribbons, buttons etc. as we hope to have a separate haberdashery stall to engage customers who prefer, or would like to try, to craft their own items.

Some crafters are happy to take commissions for custom-made items and their details will be available on the day.

Money raised from the sale of donated items goes towards the upkeep of the gardens, as does a percentage of orders taken or other sales made.

Sue Smales

It is so good that the Craft group has continued as much as possible throughout the pandemic, also, that there is no shortage of people wanting to join. Many thanks to Sue for her leadership and organisation.

AOB

Alec (from The Garden Cafe) said that a visitor to the gardens has informed her that there was a hollow yew tree in the grounds and he was going to notify the Council. LC said best to leave it alone and will contact the Council and inform them that we don't think it is an issue.

CG asked if anyone knew of a petting zoo for the summer picnic. We ought to be booking attractions as it is the Jubilee celebration weekend. SS asked about the format of the picnic which LC described. It was agreed that the picnic should be renamed The Jubilee Fete for next year.

Thanks were expressed on behalf of everyone to AN's son for the potting up bench he has made and donated to FEHG.

TS queried whether it might be advisable to have a big marquee for the FEHG stalls for the event in case of bad weather. Costings will be looked into.

CD, as President, expressed her thanks for the volunteers' work. She was full of wonder and proud of everything that was done.

The meeting closed at 11.55am.