

FRIENDS OF EASTCOTE HOUSE GARDENS

Summer General Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2019 at 11.15 in the Stables.

PRESENT

Steve Place, Sue Place, Mary Sewell, Catherine Dann, Audrey Newell, Linda Wells, Liz Gambier, Susan Toms, Margaret Ray, Sue Smales, Tony Swan, Malcolm Penny, Chris Groom, Keith Barnard, Gerry Edwards, Joan Butfield, Lesley Crowcroft

APOLOGIES

Andy Weller, Christine Wallace, Cllr.Becky Haggard, Cllr.Ian Edwards, Michael Paddy, David Payne, Anne Payne, Alison Holtorp

MINUTES OF QGM HELD ON 4TH MARCH 2019 AND ANY MATTERS ARISING

No matters arising.

TREASURER'S REPORT - KB

Operating Costs

Firstly I would like to speak about the General Fund element of the FEHG General Account. The other elements being Archive and Publications and the Craft Group. We also have a Savings Account for our Reserves.

Expenditure comes under a number of headings namely General expenditure which covers such things as purchase of tools, plants, stationery, picnic, storage boxes, etc. repairs to equipment and petty cash. This expenditure can vary but in the past I have budgeted £2,500; this year we spent £2,735.49p

Project expenditure is another variable which includes for any materials used in the construction of paths, prairie bed and Alpine Mound, etc. This financial year we spent £675.94p.

Further expenditure which I consider to be fixed costs are volunteer refreshments and Insurance; volunteer refreshments being £208.71p during the year and insurance in the region of £200. Volunteer refreshment costs may rise if we are successful in attracting a lot more volunteers.

Based on the above figures the total operating costs for the financial year 2018/2019 as at 30th April 2019 was £3,820.14. giving an end of year balance for the General Fund of £5,157.80. It must be remembered that Fund raising activities continue throughout the year.

I would therefore like to ask that another £2,500. is transferred to our Reserves making a total of a little over £5,000. This gives us a good buffer should we suffer a downturn in fund raising activities.

The current balance of the General Fund stands at £6,322.98.

Archive and Publications

The balance of the Archive and Publications element of the FEHG General Account was £5,606.36 on the 30th April 2019 the end of the Financial year.

The current balance stands at £5,458.36

Craft Group

The end of year balance on the 30th April 2019 was £420.90 and the current balance is £420.90.

PICNIC - CG

We'll start off this report with a very big thank you to all the Friends of Eastcote House Gardens whether they are members, relatives, friends of Friends, etc. who made this year's picnic a great success as always.

A large group of stalwarts turned up early for setting up but as it was drizzling and a bit cold there was generally a reluctance to get going but the rain gradually went away and the team got going. Because of the slow start we were initially a bit behind time and we thought we might not be ready to greet the stallholders and finish our preparations before opening time. However, the team worked very hard and all were ready before time.

At times traffic control pushed our resources and as a tip for next year we need to designate a marshal to co-ordinate the stall holders' parking as some space was lost due to random parking by stall holders.

On cue the sun sort of came out at 11am and the problem for the rest of the day was strong gusty winds which by the end of the day had resulted in the 'death' of two of the gazebos, but the canvas roof and walls were saved and we will buy replacement metal structures only, perhaps this time with a heavy duty frame.

The two bands" Jazzology and Stumbling Block" were well received and good value. If we book Beaux and Bells again we will need to add a stage microphone as although they were well liked it was difficult to hear them from more than a few yards away.

On the subject of microphones the borrowed PA system was a great success and our thanks to Mark Phillips. He has said he can supply a stage microphone for next year to improve the experience with the bands and bell ringers and it may be of assistance to the St.Lawrence Players.

All the Friends' stalls were popular and did well but the very blustery wind caused difficulties to all stalls and particularly the Children's Games stall. Also, the less than ideal weather meant that visitor numbers were down and very few picnicked meaning that people stayed for less time and spent a little less.

Overall, the financial result was a little down on last year, but bearing in mind the weather we feel that the sum of £1,420 added to our funds was a great result and much better than we expected at 8am on Saturday morning.

We should also bear in mind that all the profits made by charity stalls and church groups are retained by them. Also, the money we paid to Ruislip Beaux and Bells goes directly to Michael Sobell House and all proceeds from the Dog Show go to charity. The overall sum raised for FEHG and many local charities is large but the local goodwill towards Eastcote House Gardens for holding a Community Picnic is immeasurable and provides a great day out for local people.

Again, a very big thank you to all those who helped to make the picnic a success

CD informed the meeting that the Mayor and Mayoress of Hillingdon, Cllr. David Yarrow and Mrs. Mary O'Connor, former Hillingdon Councillor visited the picnic and were full of admiration for the many different features they saw. They started off in the Walled Garden, then visited the Alpine Mound, Jubilee Orchard, Prairie Bed, HA-HA, Shade Garden, Summer Border, Woodland Garden and Hazel Shrubbery. A brief visit was also made to the book stall and some of the stalls in the main area.

The Mayor and Mayoress asked how many volunteers were there to keep the whole park up to such a high standard. I was unable to answer this question, but when I met them again at the Eastcote Horticultural Show, LC answered the question. There are approximately 50 volunteers, about 40 of whom are gardeners. The Mayor and Mayoress were very impressed.

LC then further informed the meeting that on Saturday 15th June at the Eastcote Horticultural Society Summer Show she was able to talk to the Mayor and Mayoress of Hillingdon, Cllr. David Yarrow and Mrs. Mary O'Connor, former Hillingdon Councillor, both have been Mayors in previous years. They visited EHG during their former Mayoralties, therefore, both knew the gardens in their less than wonderful state.

Having visited on the picnic day and been shown around by our President David Payne and Vice President Catherine Dann (both of whom have served as Mayor of Hillingdon, the Mayor was full of praise for FEHG. He said the whole park was unbelievable and appreciated all the hard work FEHG put in to keep such a high standard. He was rather shocked when I said we had approximately 50 volunteers of that 50 around 40 are gardeners. He would not have been surprised if I had said we had 150 gardeners, as the gardens were excellent.

Following a discussion a provisional date of 6 June was agreed for the 2020 picnic.

CRAFT GROUP - SS.

The Craft Group website has been updated to say that we are at capacity with 24 members and operating a waiting list.

At the book and plant sale held this week before Easter we managed to sell most of the ceramic plant pots which had been donated to us. The few remaining should find homes by the end of the year.

Projects.

Two maternity wings have been the lucky recipients of our beautiful baby blankets and Northwick Park Hospital has also been given some tiny knitted hats suitable for premature babies.

You may (but probably won't) remember that this year's project is to create medieval style wall hangings for the Stables and at the last QGM you were invited to watch this space....

If you look at the gallery our first three banners were completed and hung in time for the picnic. Also displayed on the day were two sketches by depicting a sower of seeds and a woodsman - there were hung, appropriately, above the bill hooks' exhibition. Three wall hangings created by Jenny Amoury, a descendant of the Hawtrey family, were placed above the local History Society's display. We were congratulated on our work by the Site Manager, who expressed his opinion that they were in keeping with the age of the building and enhanced the Stables, and who asked us to create more in time for London in Bloom. We hope to be able to offer a wider selection for Open House and the concerts planned for the autumn.

Picnic

On the day of the picnic, despite a wet and windy start, Book Club and Craft Group members staffed the Craft Stall and the Second Hand Book sale. The weather contributed to a slow start and although matters improved with the late appearance of sun and blue skies, it was decided not to hold a quilt lottery as it was thought that too few tickets would be sold. This made a considerable impact on the amount made.

Finances

After buying supplies of wool earlier in the year the Craft Group were holding £88. Craft Group members made and donated some items for sale, and with further contributions the Craft Stall raised £46.50. Craft Group Funds now stand at £134.50.

REAL ALE CLUB - (read by KB on behalf of the RAC)

Throughout 2018/2019 the FEHG Real Ale Club (RAC) has continued to blossom and attract new attendees and now boasts a membership of 28, comprising volunteer gardeners, their partners and friends.

The Club continues to meet on the 1st Thursday of every month, visiting an agreed local venue that serves the necessary Real Ale, although there is no requirement to drink Real Ale and several members partake of other liquid refreshments.

The evenings provide an opportunity for EHG volunteers and Friends to meet and socialise outside of the gardening sessions, and are very relaxed with no pressure or commitment for members to attend every meeting, stay all evening, buy large rounds or contribute to 'whips'.

Due to the increasing numbers attending our meetings, and some establishments being unable to accommodate a large group easily, this month we tried a new venture with Paul and Christine offering their home as a 'pop-up' Pub Garden' with members bringing their

own beer, glasses and nibbles. This was a great success, mainly thanks to Paul and Christine's hospitality, their amusing quiz and subsequent musical entertainment.

As we approach our second anniversary I am confident the RAC will continue to flourish and will continue to attract and welcome new members.

Our next meeting is planned for 4th July at the Ascot in Eastcote, and we start to gather from 7pm. If any volunteers and their partners would like to join us then please just ask to be included in the email distribution list.

NEW ALPINE MOUND - SP

Most of you will have noticed a volcanic shape rising just outside the east gate to the walled garden.

This is the new alpine mound, skilfully assembled by the men of muscle, who shifted big heavy pieces of masonry from the old house, heavy building blocks and railway sleepers, large heavy paving slabs and 1.5 tonnes of chipped stone into position to create the structure.

Our thanks to all of them.

Sue and I had the much easier task of selecting the plants and introducing them into their new home.

Once it has matured and the plants have spread and tumbled down the sides to cover up the stark edges it will look as good as the one on the gabions.

A.O.B.

PUBLICATIONS (READ BY SP FOR AW)

The draft of the final AOC report has been received via LBH. At the last QGM Becky took it upon herself to request from AOC when the final report could be expected. Becky received a similar reply from AOC that they are still considering the nature of the finds but Becky's intervention may have helped so please pass on my personal thanks to Becky.

I also wish to report that we have ordered a third print of Secret Eastcote having sold just over 340 copies and requests are still coming through.

EASTCOTE WAR MEMORIAL

LC, Chairman Eastcote Conservation Panel said that for some years volunteers from FEHG, ERA, RLB and at times others from the local Scouts have worked with LBH to improve the War Memorial Gardens.

Three years ago new shrub planting was sponsored by ERA, the Eastcote Conservative Branch and the Ward Budget. (This is controlled by our local Councillors.)

Residents and staff of the Forresters assist with watering when necessary. LBH continue to supply the winter and summer annual planting. Last year the gardens were awarded a Green Flag.

The work put in by the volunteers is vital to keep this garden in tip top condition. This year the garden will feature in the London in Bloom category "London Village".

This small oasis of peace is a focal point of Eastcote, for the whole community and all year round, not just for Remembrance Sunday.

Thank you to all who have worked to achieve this wonderful standard. Eastcote's volunteers are the 'tops'. Please keep up the good work.

PROJECTS – KB (on behalf of others)

KB on behalf of others expressed their concern about the amount of work to maintain the gardens to the high standard with the number of available volunteers. The more projects undertaken meant more maintenance work. It was pointed out that the Pamela Gardens boundary planting when completed would be the last project. No other projects were envisaged.

It was also pointed out that no garden is weed free and that some weeds particularly on boundary areas can be an asset to wildlife. It was also pointed out that RHS Wisley has a fair share of weeds.

In the discussion that followed KB stated that some volunteers liked ownership of parts of the gardens to work on whilst others liked to be told what to do. The general opinion of the meeting was that this arrangement was working.

GE assured the meeting that they don't need to worry about every single weed in the garden as some are natural homes for moths and butterflies. For instance, butterflies need nettles. Wisley, National Trust and RHS gardens all have weeds in places - they are simply unavoidable.

On social media all comments about EHG are very positive.

The new orchard is looking fantastic thanks to a number of work parties early in the year. Currently it looks as though there should be a good crop of apples and pears.

The newish LBH Show being held at the Great Barn on Saturday 21st September is a good one for FEHG to enter but unfortunately it clashes with Open House this year.

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

As usual at these meetings report authors have given summaries of a variety of interesting and newsworthy events and activities.

However, also as usual, there are Friends who quietly and unseen expertly organise activities in the background.

Joan, who organises the visiting stall bookings for events such as the picnic

Terry who compiles our lovely calendar each year.

Just as important but more pleasant than extracting bindweed.

The meeting closed at 12.03pm