

FRIENDS OF EASTCOTE HOUSE GARDENS

Minutes of the Quarterly General Meeting held at 11am on Monday 1st October 2018 in the Stables.

Present: Keith Barnard, Sue Place, Joan Butfield, Jane Neave, Doris Dowell, Heather Chamberlain, Catherine Dann, Sue Smales, Andy Weller, Chris Groom, Frank Theos, Jack Solomon, Mike Paddy, Lesley Crowcroft, Linda Wells, Steve Place, Gerry Edwards.

Apologies for absence: Liz Gambier, Margaret Ray, Paul and Christine Lake, Susan Toms, Christine Wallace, David Payne, Cllr. Becky Haggard, Gill Hughes, Trevor Dixon.

The Minutes of the last QGM held on the 9th July 2018 were approved. No matters arising.

SP advised the meeting that AW had resigned from his position as Secretary and from the committee, but will continue as Archivist and Researcher

TREASURER'S REPORT

As at 1st October 2018 General Account balance stands at £4,462.83p.

This takes into consideration £50 withdrawn from the account in cash to pay for the Jazz Band at the Open House weekend.

Due to the adverse weather conditions the Jazz Band was cancelled and the £50 cash paid into the petty cash fund which now stands at £79.93p.

Archive and Publication Fund balance £5,639.81p

Craft Group Fund balance £420.90p

Community Savings Account balance £2,502.97p

AW advised the meeting that there were outstanding costs for the reprint of The Black Horse Story and the third print of Secret Eastcote out of Publications.

REPORTS OF PAST ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

LONDON IN BLOOM

FEHG entered the following categories and achieved the following awards

Our Community	Gold
Walled Garden	Gold
It's Your Neighbourhood	Level 5 Outstanding

LBH entered the following categories and achieved the following awards

Large City Park (the gardens)	Gold
Large Conservation Area (Long Meadow)	Gold

GREEN FLAG

Both the gardens and Long Meadow retained their Green Flags.

LC reminded the meeting that FEHG had helped in the attainment of a Green Flag Award for the Eastcote War Memorial

COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION

We cleared the river of rubbish, balsam and fallen branches and thinned the vegetation in the backwater to maintain sufficient open water.

During the GSK volunteer visit day we cut the grass and other vegetation that had been cordoned off from the annual hay cut (to allow the butterflies in the most butterfly rich part of the meadow to feed and breed without disturbance).

Funded via the Council's Chrysalis program two sections of chipped stone path were installed by the Council's contractor in the wettest and muddiest areas of the meadow to provide safer and more pleasant walking conditions for those visiting the meadow during the winter

CG asked what the hay was used for when taken off site. KB thought there was a possibility it was used for biofuels. SP advised that it was unsuitable for animal feed due to its composition.

LW asked about the butterflies on Long Meadow. SP replied that there were a few marbled white which might be beginning to establish a small colony within the meadow. For common blues the 2018 peak count was 23 compared to the 2013-17 average peak count of 8 and the 2018 total count was 67 compared to the 2013-17 average total count of 20. For brown argus the 2018 peak count was 18 compared to the 2013-17 average peak count of 2 and the 2018 total count was 65 compared to the 2013-17 average total count of 4.

Their favoured areas were excluded from the annual hay cut this summer to allow them to breed and feed well without disturbance. In 2018 we counted 119 meadow browns, the bread and butter butterfly of grassland, during a single survey – more than twice the highest number counted during a single survey during the past five years.

There were dragonflies and damselflies using the backwater for breeding. The backwater did not dry out this year despite the long dry summer due to our management work to keep the channel connecting it to the river open so water could flow in from the river to top it up.

KB asked about the state of the River Pinn – SP said Paul Busby's group monitors the pollution and river fly larvae in the river.

DOVECOTE OPENING

The Dovecote has been open to the public 5 times during the summer months over and above the picnic and open house. Each time volunteers have acted as stewards. It has been very successful with a steady stream of visitors throughout the opening times. The stewards are indebted to the craft group for supplying refreshments. Thanks to the stewards, Trevor Dixon, Susan Toms, David Payne, Keith Barnard, Lesley Crowcroft, and Joan and Terry Butfield. Providing there are enough stewards this should continue next year.

PLANT AND SECOND HAND BOOK SALES

To date there have been 5 book sales and 3 plant sales with one more to be held on October 6th 11am-2pm. Holding the plant/book sale at Open House is a new venture.

The amount raised so far this year is £1,197.41. Books - £443.31 and Plants £745.10 with one more sale to go. The totals for each book sale and visitors have increased every time this year.

All have been well attended except February which was very cold. It has been decided for 2019 there will be monthly book sales starting in April with plant sales on the April, June, September and October dates.

The sales have a regular clientele, a lot of new people hear about us from other satisfied customers.

A big thank you to all who have sorted books, potted up plants and helped at the sales.

OPEN HOUSE - 23RD SEPTEMBER

FEHG had to curtail the planned activities because of the extremely bad weather. However, we re-grouped and even with restricted space managed to hold a successful event. More visitors arrived after the rain stopped, but numbers were down on last year.

The Dovecote was manned 11-am-5pm with David Payne giving talks at 12 noon and 3pm. both were well attended and there was a steady stream of visitors throughout the day.

The Classic Car Rally was well supported with 35 cars being present. Watford Car Club helped with stewarding. Keith Barnard deserves a very big thank you for organising such an excellent rally in the most trying circumstances.

Jane Neave and helpers changed a tea garden into a cake stall in the stables. The raffle and new publications also moved into the stables. Regrettably we were not able to accommodate the Craft Group, hopefully we can arrange for a craft sale on another date.

Terry Butfield was the photographer of the day - thank you Terry.

The FEHG Community Shield sponsored by Joan and Terry Butfield, was presented to the St.Lawrence Players by the Mayor of Hillingdon, Cllr.John Morgan.

A plant and second hand book sale was held in the Gardeners' yard . This was a trial and it proved very successful.

Regrettably we could not have the Jazz Band, the Corn Dolly Workshop, the Bill Hook's exhibition and other outside stalls.

All leaders and helpers - your efforts under very difficult circumstances are appreciated and applauded. The event raised £628.70. (last year, 2017, with good weather we raised £882.65)

KB said that Council thanked us for such a wide range of photographs,

LEAVESDEN COUNTRY PARK

Leavesden Country Park has received Lottery funding. Two of their officers asked to visit EHG to investigate how the volunteer group operates. As part of the Lottery funding they have to set up a voluntary group. Both went away with many ideas and lots of inspiration.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SS said that on Saturday 6th October there would be a craft sale from 1pm-4pm in the Stables. AW and LC were thanked for their help with the advertising.

Tuesday 2nd October - Archive Film Screening - fully booked.

November 4th - November 17th "Eastcote Remembers"

LC said that tickets for all talks and concerts are now on sale. Times for the exhibition to be open to be confirmed.

The Seasons Art Class have many paintings to add to the exhibition. The lead at Coteford school has left. There has not been a response from anyone else, so regrettably they will not be taking part. 6th Eastcote Cubs are taking part. Southbourne WI have made a banner which will be displayed. The main body of work coming from FEHG members and the craft group.

Saturday 1st December Tree Dressing.

Paul and Christine Lake are organising the Tree Dressing this year. The format will be the same as previous years. Some of the school teachers who arranged last year's visit have left the schools. Paul and Christine are trying to make contact with whoever is now in charge of the school choirs.

FEHG will give each school taking part a small native tree for their school gardens. This will not cost more than £20.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

SP summarised by saying

We have heard reports of some of the major activities and other events over the past 3 months - the ones that tend to grab the headlines but there are other things going on quietly in the background, often unrecognised and unnoticed such as:

The unglamorous job of shovelling compost - a vital raw ingredient for a successful garden.

Margaret who switches the kettles on at the right time - a very important job

Sallie who makes sure there are biscuits to go with our tea and coffee – an equally important job

Our webmaster, Trevor, who despite sometimes having to wrestle with the inner gremlins of the digital world keeps our website up to date.

All very important little jobs that contribute to the well oiled and award winning organisation that is FEHG.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 3rd December in the Stables.

The meeting closed at 11.33am