

**MILFORD GARDENERS' CLUB**  
**MINUTES OF 27th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21st FEBRUARY 2024 AT 7.30 pm**

The Chairman, Sue Crabb, welcomed members to the 27th AGM of the Milford Gardeners' Club.

**PRESENT:** Members of the 2023 committee: Sue Crabb (Chairman), Clare Johnston (Treasurer), Iris Slee, Juanita Woods, Jacqui Evans, Sharie Perl plus 46 members of the Gardeners' Club.

**APOLOGIES:** Marigold de Jongh, Jenny Spenser, Penny Senior, Carolyn Harbridge, Wendy Thomas, Katie Kemp, Sue Shaw, Shelagh Richardson, Trisha Proctor, Paul and Jacqui Garton, Judith Holliday, Sheila O'Connor, Pat Higgins and Liz Hines.

**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM HELD 15th FEBRUARY 2023 AND MATTERS ARISING:**

The Chairman noted that the minutes of the last meeting had previously been circulated to members. There were no matters arising from the floor. It was agreed that the Minutes were an accurate record of the meeting and be adopted.

Proposed by: Lynne Ball

Seconded by: Anne Jenks

**Passed by the Members.**

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

Sue Crabb gave her report for the year 2023.

*I think I can say that 2023 was another successful year for the club, despite numbers not having greatly picked up since Covid. Average attendance was 57 with the summer months of April, May and June being the best attended. Our current paid up membership stands at less than 100 which is rather worrying but I am hoping we will attract some more people through the year.*

*We had a very interesting programme with a wide range of subjects. Pip Bensley gave us a brilliant start to the year and we were very happy to have her back last month. An excellent speaker with knowledge, enthusiasm for her subject and lovely pictures.*

*Martin Stewart from Stewarts Garden Centre gave a fascinating insight into the evolution and growth of Stewarts to what it has become today. It was very enjoyable as I am sure we have all been there at one time or another.*

*In March we had Mark Hinsley on "The Churchyard Yew". Oh dear! He writes a very good column in the free "Country Gardener" paper and I thought this would be a really interesting and different talk. The problem was that he had so much information that he wanted to impart that his talk became rambling and whilst he gave us many fascinating facts about the*

*yew, at the end I couldn't remember much of what he said! It was also tricky because he kept going until quarter to nine despite my best efforts to signal it was time to wind it up.*

*Brian Perry brought plants with his talk on unusual perennials which as usual were quickly snapped up. We had advice on less work, low maintenance gardening, plants for problem areas, and some new and inspiring ideas for bulb planting, not just for spring bulbs but for bulbs throughout the year.*

*The talk on "How to grow roses successfully" was a bit of a disappointment. I for one, was hoping for some fabulous pictures but sadly, the images weren't great and a large part of the talk was about the history of roses with only the last 15 minutes about the nitty gritty of growing them. All the gems of information were in the last part of the talk but this was another that I had to cut short at 20 to 9 so we didn't really get all the good advice.*

*However, Pete Durnell in September did not let us down. Ok, it wasn't specifically gardens but he is such a knowledgeable and fluent speaker and gave a super talk on two very contrasting areas of flora and fauna in the New Forest His pictures of butterflies and wild orchids were stunning.*

*So what else went on last year?*

*Iris organised a trip to the Down House at Itchen Abbas in February to see snowdrops. Despite it being a cold day it was thoroughly enjoyed by those who went. Tea and delicious cakes were served and everyone was very impressed by the robot lawn mower. The owner, Mark Porter, is the County Organiser for NGS gardens in Hampshire.*

*Almost the whole of May and the start of June saw dry sunny weather, in fact we had 31 consecutive days up to June 10 th with no rain. (I keep a journal so I know!)*

*The plant fair was very successful, the weather was perfect and our stall took £1047. The overall total raised was £1596, which was split between our two charities, Honey-pot and The Brain Tumour charity. I have to make special mention here of Sharie Perl whose plants filled half of the table space, not to mention the plants she sold to friends and neighbours prior to the fair. Great job, Sharie.*

*We had another fabulous club holiday at the beginning of July, this time to the SW of the Peak District. The weather took us by surprise being about 10 degrees colder than we had been having and I for one, didn't pack enough warm clothing. On our brief stop to look round Bakewell and get lunch it was curtain rods of rain and most of us only saw the town from a cafe window! At least we got to see the scenery on the way there.*

*We visited a super private garden on the way up which had some unusual plants in the nursery. We spent a day at the new RHS Bridgewater garden and went to Gaworth Hall, a 15th century house where we were welcomed by the family and given a tour by two brothers and their mother with some great anecdotes along the way.*

*We also visited Biddulph Grange, a very Victorian, National Trust garden with many stone steps, not easy for some of us to negotiate but we were very careful and everyone stayed in one piece as my mum would have said.*

*On the way home we stopped off at the National Memorial arboretum for a land train ride with commentary telling us about the memorials we passed and their significance. It was very emotional and moving and would be well worth a second visit. Despite all the horrors of*

*war it was there to commemorate, it had a very special feel, tranquil, and soothing, balm to a troubled soul I would have said.*

*I have to say that Jenny is brilliant at putting these holidays together and finding interesting places and gardens to visit.*

*Our out evening in July to Folium and Flos was a huge success. They have fabulous trees and shrubs including olives, citrus, pittosporum , photinias, fatsias and greenhouses full of exotic palms and giant ferns. We had perfect weather for the evening and were able to purchase plants at a special rate.*

*A first for this year was trialling “in house” open gardens. 7 members opened their gardens through June and July. Those who visited said it was lovely to have a chance to chat to people in the club that they don’t usually talk to. I was a bit disappointed with the numbers and the amount of money raised, but the weather was problematical on some of the days and I know many people go away in June . I intend to talk to those people who opened and see if they think it is worth doing again this year and indeed if they want to, but I do like sharing my garden when it’s looking good!*

*Finally, knowing that a lot of our members find winter driving difficult in the evenings, I made the decision to have the Xmas social in the afternoon, instead of the evening. It was absolutely the right decision. 51 people came, it was relaxed, sociable and they were unanimous that it should remain in the afternoon so that’s been sorted with the Community Centre.*

## **TREASURER’S REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2023**

*As you can see from the annual accounts, which were sent out before the meeting, we made a small surplus during 2023 and still have a healthy reserve.*

*However, income was down on the previous year; luckily so were expenses (mostly due to speakers bringing their own projectors saving £30 a time), but we can’t rely on this always being the case, because, as we all know, everything is getting more expensive e.g. hall hire, refreshments, speaker’s costs etc.*

*Since a peak in 2019, membership numbers have been falling year on year.*

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of paid members at end of Feb</b>	<b>No. at end of year</b>	<b>% fall</b>
2019	130	152	
2020	137	137	10%
2021	Rolled over membership from previous year plus 22 new members = 159		
2022	115	129	6%
2023	103	112	13%
2024	94		9% on Feb ‘23 figures

*For 2023, I budgeted based on 120 members; I thought this was quite conservative, but as you can see, we fell short by 8 (£160).*

*For 2024, I have budgeted on 100 members (again I thought I was being cautious!), but to date we only have 94 paid members, considerably fewer than we had this time last year, so the trajectory is continuing downwards. As a club, we need to do something to maintain and increase our membership if the club is to survive and be able to afford good speakers.*

*On a brighter note, we had another successful Plant Fair, supplemented by members' open gardens, enabling us to donate £880 each to Honeypot Children's Charity and the Brain Tumour Charity. A match-funding offer also allowed us to nearly double our donation to the Brain Tumour Charity.*

*As I mentioned last year, HSBC closed their New Milton branch in the summer. Luckily this was after I deposited the Plant Fair proceeds. This means there are now no local branches (nearest is Bournemouth!) so future cash deposits will have to be made at the Post Office. My understanding is that the Post Office will only accept complete bags of coins, so I'll have to come up with a plan to deal with this for the next plant fair.*

*Thank you to everyone who now pays their subscriptions, outing and holiday payments by online transfer. This really is the most efficient and cost-effective way for the club and me as Treasurer. Paying by cheque and cash incurs costs for the club.*

*Finally, I would like to thank Paul Garton for his help, advice and guidance in preparing the accounts and for examining them.*

#### **Adoption of 2023 accounts**

Proposed by: Sue Tennant

Seconded by: Sharie Perl

**It was agreed that the Accounts be adopted.**

#### **VOTE OF THANKS FOR OFFICERS, COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS**

**The Chairman gave thanks to:**

**Clare**, without whose help I could not run the club.

**Carol Gretton** who organises the tea rota and is 100% reliable.

**Jacqui Evans** who has taken on the role of Programme Secretary. Works extremely hard, is already sorting 2025. Worries too much about the calibre of speakers!

**Sharie and Juanita** for continuing to organise the plant fair.

**John Hall** who helps with the tech stuff. Great to have him as a safety net at most meetings.

**Richard and Ann Bickle** for continuing to provide refreshment services at club events.

**Paul Garton** for his help in the preparation of the accounts.

Lastly, although she is unable to be here tonight, thank you to **Judith Holliday** for serving on the committee for 9 years. She is stepping down as from tonight but we do have a garden voucher to give her.

