MILFORD GARDENERS' CLUB

MINUTES OF 28th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19th FEBRUARY 2025 AT 7.30 pm

The Chairman, Sue Crabb, welcomed members to the 28th AGM of the Milford Gardeners' Club.

PRESENT: Members of the 2024 committee: Sue Crabb (Chairman), Clare Johnston (Treasurer), Iris Slee, Juanita Woods, Jacqui Evans, Sharie Perl plus 46 members of the Gardeners' Club.

APOLOGIES: Richard and Anne Bickle, Wendy Thomas

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM HELD 21st FEBRUARY 2024 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**:** Sheila Dence Seconded by**:** Carolyn Harbridge

Passed by the Members.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2024

I think I'd describe the past year as a steady one for the club. All the usual activities happened. The plant fair, a shorter than usual holiday, an outing, the Christmas social, so we are ticking over but the drop in membership numbers is a worry. We did manage to finish the year with 111 but currently have less than 100 paid up members. This has been the trend, year on year since 2022 and it's something the committee are looking at.

We had some top-class speakers last year.

Pip Bensley gave us brilliant suggestions on how to grow clematis and climbers.

Steve Edney talked about the development of his nursery. We have a long-standing relationship with him, as we first met him on a club holiday to Kent in 2011, where he was in charge of The Salutation garden. On a subsequent holiday we visited his own garden where he was majoring in growing exotic tender plants and it truly felt like a jungle. It's been very interesting to see how he has moved forward in the last 15 years.

Rosy Hardy was paying her fourth visit to us. She is such a knowledgeable plantswoman and always brings plants, rather than slides to illustrate her talks and she gives many hints and tips on growing plants successfully, so it was great to have her back.

We have had Andy McIndoe a number of times before. His talks are always amusing, enjoyable and well-illustrated. He talked about beautiful English Gardens, but I think he was somewhat amazed and rather impressed at how many of the gardens he featured, we had visited on club holidays. That's all down to Jenny who is brilliant at tracking down interesting but not mainstream gardens.

We also had a very well-illustrated talk from Tom Clarke, the Head Gardener at Exbury on camellias and their cultivation.

We had two wildlife oriented talks. One by Bob Lord, Chairman of Friends of Ballard Water Meadows at New Milton and the other by Mike Read, a wildlife and landscape photographer, who gave us superb illustrations of the plants and wildlife in our local area. I was a little concerned when his opening slide was a picture of the road coming in to Ringwood and the first few were looking very urban but it turned out to be a super talk with amazing pictures, particularly of birds.

I came away feeling I must do more to encourage wildlife in my garden.

Staying fairly local we had a talk about the making of the garden at the Russell-Cotes museum in Bournemouth and one about the rejuvenation of Athelhampton House and garden. Both of these were interesting but included rather too many faded slides of garden plans and by-gone days, whilst I was wanting to see pictures of plants.

The out evening to Woodpeckers care home at Brockenhurst was very successful and enjoyed by all who went. I missed out as I was ill at the time but I did manage to visit when they were open for the NGS in August and was very impressed by what they had done there.

The plant fair was very successful as ever. The weather was kind to us and although it was a struggle to get enough helpers, until up to the very last minute, we had just enough help in the end. £1647 was raised and a donation of £800 was made to both Honeypot and New Forest Basics bank. I'm delighted to report that we were able to make the donation to Honeypot so that it was matched-funded so they actually received £1600.

I put a date in the calendar for an informal get together at the Meadow in August. It was lovely weather but I went down with Covid and only 3 people, plus Iris turned up. Was this because no reminder went out or were people just busy doing other things? Who knows?

The Christmas social was in the afternoon again this year but clashed with an Oakhaven fundraiser up at the Church which I was a bit dismayed about, as our event had been on the calendar since January. In the end about 35 people turned up which was a bit disappointing but we all had a good time. Maybe we should move it to another month! There is always such a lot going on in the village in December.

I guess the highlights of the year were the outing in May and the 2-night holiday to Devon at the end of June.

On the outing, we went first to Houghton Lodge Gardens on the River Test near Stockbridge. It's a wonderfully peaceful location with a fabulous peony border, a newly developed Japanese garden and deep perennial borders along a wall. You can go through a gate and you are in water meadows with meandering paths, fabulous trees and walks down to the river.

From here we went to Longstock plant nursery which is owned by John Lewis and has a restaurant, foodie shop, garden and gift area and an extensive collection of plants, shrubs and trees to buy. Plant-lovers paradise I'd say!

Our final stop was to a private garden just on the edge of Stockbridge which opens for the NGS 4 times a year. The owner was a renowned embroiderer and textile artist and this really shows in the design and layout of the garden and how she uses colour in the planting. It was an absolute gem

and as we were served tea and cakes made by her local WI, it rounded off what was a very enjoyable day out. We were joined by some of Milford WI on this outing and by making it a joint trip, were able to fill a big coach.

Despite health problems earlier in the year, Jenny managed to get the arrangements for our trip to North Devon sorted and I would like to thank her for this, I'm sure she didn't find it easy but she was determined not to let us down.

We set off to Bideford where we were staying for 2 nights but the plan was to go via Axminster and Burrow Farm Gardens which should have been no more than a couple of hours drive from Milford.

As luck would have it there were major roadworks en route and we ended up having to take a very devious route, arriving much later than planned. We had plenty of time to enjoy the garden though, even though we were late arriving at the hotel.

The next morning we set off early to enjoy a full day at RHS Rosemoor where the roses were in full bloom and everything was lush and lovely.

On our last day we stopped at the Dartington glass factory at Torrington en route to Hestercombe, near Taunton. I was very excited when I realised the route we were taking was via South Molton and we actually drove past the house where my father was born and I saw my old primary school.

Hestercombe is a historical house with the garden, designed by Gertrude Jeckell and Sir Edward Lutyens. It is being restored by volunteers and could do with a big cash injection as much needs doing but it's spread over 50 acres and there was a lot to see and enjoy.

That just about wraps up the year. I think I was a bit pessimistic saying it was a steady year when I started my report because really it was a good one in many ways!

TREASURER'S REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2024

As you can see from the annual accounts, which were sent out before the meeting, we made a small surplus of £319 during 2024 and still have a healthy reserve.

Although income was slightly up on the previous year; so were expenses, as everything is going up in price e.g. hall hire, refreshments, speaker's costs, subscriptions etc.

Since a peak in 2019, when we finished the year with 154 members, membership numbers have been falling year on year. We ended 2024 with 109 paid members but to date we have only had 76 renewals, compared to 94 this time last year. If numbers continue to fall we may need to look at cutting costs.

On a brighter note, we had another successful Plant Fair, enabling us to donate £825 each to Honeypot Children's Charity and the New Forest Basics Bank. A match-funding offer also allowed us to double our donation to Honeypot.

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 examining the accounts.

VOTE OF THANKS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

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

Carol Gretton who organises the tea rota and is 100% reliable and has agreed to continue for the rest of this year but we do need someone to take over from next February. It's not an onerous task, you just need to be an organised person and thank you to all the members who have helped serve the refreshments during the past year.

Jacqui Evans who has taken on the role of Programme Secretary, works extremely hard and worries too much about the calibre of speakers!

Sharie and Juanita for continuing to organise the plant fair, with **Jen** supporting in the background.

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 and they have said they are happy to continue for this year.

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

Finally, I'm really sorry to say that Sharie is stepping down from the committee from tonight and also from the plant fair after this year. She joined the committee in 2021 and has worked tirelessly on keeping the plant fair going in partnership with Juanita. I know that she sold £90 worth of plants to friends and neighbours before they even got to the fair and on the day last year, she half-filled the entire stall with what she had potted up. Thank you so much for all you have done, Sharie, and we have a garden token for you, as a mark of our appreciation.

Finally thanks to the committee, they are a great bunch and although we are getting thinner on the ground year on year, we are still just about keeping the club running.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS & ORDINARY MEMBERS:

Nominations:

Officers:	**Chairman**	Sue Crabb
	Treasurer:	Clare Kelly (Johnston)
	Secretary:	vacancy
Ordinary members:		Jenny Spenser
		Iris Slee
		Juanita Woods
		Jacqui Evans
		Marigold de Jongh

It was proposed by the Chairman that a block vote be taken again this year for all posts.

Proposed by: Yvette Frost Seconded by: Anne Jenks

All proposals were unanimously passed by the members.

APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINER:

Paul Garton has offered to continue the role as the Examiner of Accounts for the coming year and this is greatly appreciated.

Proposed by: Yvette Frost Seconded by: Sue Tennant

Passed by the Members.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 7.52 pm.