

GRACE & FLAVOUR A.G.M. 2022

Date & Location:	10th November 2022, West Horsley Village Hall
Directors Present:	Ray Beard, Ashley Brown, Amanda de Haast, John Fluker, Gerry Robbins, Vicky Rutherford, Helena Stuart-Matthews, Rob Treble, Michael Trower, Carolyn Whitfield & John Whitlock
Apologies:	Tom Suffolk and Judy Young
Chairman	Amanda de Haast
Minute Taker:	Vicky Rutherford

Agenda Items

1. Welcome by Chairman: Amanda de Haast

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting.

The first thing to be done is to ask for your approval for me to chair this meeting.

Proposer: Heather Spackman. Seconder: Bob Spackman. Group vote by show of hands.

Minutes: I also ask you to approve the minutes of the 2021 AGM.

Proposer: Mark Blowers. Seconder: Ray Beard. Group vote by show of hands.

Resignations: John Whitlock is standing down by rotation and has agreed to be re-elected. I can confirm that Beverley Nash has agreed to stand for the committee this evening.

Proposer: Gerry Robbins. Seconder: Stephen Stuart-Matthews. Group vote by show of hands.

Nicki Douet resigned from the committee at the beginning of the year. We are delighted that she has returned to good health.

Amanda's resignation is to take effect at the end of this meeting

2. Chairman's Report: Amanda de Haast

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Last year the Chairman's report was dominated by Covid and its continuing impact. This year we have learnt to live with it, take the job when offered, and occasionally remember to keep our distance and wear a mask! We are almost back to normal!

This gardening year we took the early decision to keep a low profile with no major expenditure and I believe we have managed to do that, and hopefully Ashley will confirm that later.

We experienced some storm damage to the newer poly-tunnel in the winds in February and we are very grateful to West Horsley Parish Council for their continuing interest and financial support which covered the cost of a new cover and associated repairs. It is very reassuring to know we have strong, positive relationships with both East and West Horsley Parish Councils.

Five members undertook some basic First Aid training and their names can be found listed on the First Aid poster in the Potting shed. As a result, the contents of our first aid box has been brought up to standard, and the defibrillator gets an annual check.

The committee undertook a review of our Health & Safety policy and risk assessment to make sure they were fit for purpose and I am grateful for everyone's comments. We should all show greater awareness of our working environment and everyone's safety while in the garden. Please make sure all tools are put away correctly, and any trip hazards removed. We have a good supply of old tennis balls to cover stakes and there are safety goggles hanging up by John's desk. Please ensure your skills sheet (found in a folder above John's desk) is up-to-date (this is a requirement of our insurance policy) and that we also have a note of your next of kin details – (sheet found in the soon-to-be-introduced Induction and Membership File). These are important requirements.

The Spring Clean we had earlier in the year was successful and we have largely managed to keep on top of the clutter in the Potting Shed. Let's keep it that way and dare I suggest - a start on the small green shed over the winter. A reminder - there is no Potting Shed Fairy – it is up to us all to keep the building in order – though it has been noted that one or two members are trying out for the role! And for that we thank you!!

We attended the WI Link Tea Party in March and the Ripley Farmers Market in June with our 'Show and Tell' photo boards, banner, produce displays and flyers. There was a very positive reaction to our stands and we attracted several new volunteers. In May we had a stand at the Bioblitz event at West Horsley Place where we continued with our 'Show and Tell' and encouraged children to plant sunflowers and pumpkins. Ashley took a table at the Horsley Garden Society Summer show in June to sell our produce and promote the community garden. In August we were charity guests at the Horsley Farmers Market where we sold over £250 of produce and flowers as well as promoted the garden. They kindly made us one of their supported charities and we received a very generous donation for which we were very grateful. Sadly the Village Picnic was cancelled due to the Queen's death but should a similar event be planned we have everything in place for an entertaining afternoon. A big thank you to all those involved in organising, setting up and manning the stand at these events especially Carolyn.

Carolyn has also been very instrumental in setting up and overseeing our Instagram account, where you will find some great photos and storytelling. Though she will be travelling as from next week for several months she will be delighted to keep updating it for us – as long as we feed her with photos and news. We also have our Facebook page which Michael oversees. If you follow that, you can also add your own photos once signed up.

Helena has once again cared for and grown a fabulous display of cottage garden flowers. I am sure everyone here has taken home her beautifully arranged bouquets which give so much pleasure. She has

3. Garden Manager's report: John Whitlock

I would like to start by thanking Amanda de Haast for staying on as Chairman for a fifth year but more of that later.

We have had a challenging year with extreme weather conditions but we have been very successful on the vegetable front. I have been reading a book by Tim Spector called "Food for Life" where he says we should be eating 30 different plants a week to maintain good gut health. I'm pleased to say that this morning we had 37 different vegetables and herbs available which is pretty impressive.

In this time of concern about the environment and climate change I just wanted to highlight that we are doing our bit and to emphasise that we

- are a no Dig Garden
- are Peat Free
- use no pesticides / herbicides or inorganic fertilizers
- have planted many trees and hedges
- have developed the wildlife areas

Our only weakness is the manure which would not pass Soil Association standards of organic.

Our main successes this year have been the brassicas and tomatoes and peppers.

The Wednesday Weeders have been brilliant at keeping on top of the weeds.

Flowers have again been great despite a very dry summer thanks to Helena Stuart-Matthews.

In the fruit department, apples and pears have been great; it's just a pity that we can't store pears. The plums were again hit by frost so we only harvested a handful. The soft fruit has also been very good although the black currants were not as good as last year.

Problems: we decided, based on last year's performance, not to bother with autumn onions as it wasn't worth the effort. Despite attack from badgers/rats/birds we still managed to get quite a lot of sweet corn. Some crops suffered from poor germination last year but I'm pleased to say the only failure this year was celeriac. We have had no blight but have had lots of cabbage whitefly.

Future plans include a new asparagus bed and possibly a new raspberry bed and re-introducing main crop potatoes (Cara and King Edward) as, thankfully, we have gained a few more volunteers to the garden. We will buy in celeriac plants and sew more supper onions. The big job for the winter will be to clear the old soft fruit area and the old asparagus and rhubarb beds.

I was asked last year whether we would consider using Strulch as an alternative to plastic sheeting in the fruit cage. We did look into this but the cost would be too prohibitive.

I would like to thank

- The gardening team who have as always been so supportive.
- All of you for working so hard in the garden including some new members – it's lovely to see new members at the garden
- Amanda for being so supportive

Questions

Sandy Hamilton-Power asked whether we could grow blueberries. John Whitlock replied that they need acid soil and our garden is not ideal to grow them in sufficient quantities.

4. Finance: Ashley Brown

September 2020 – September 2021

Current bank balance is £11,941 including £4k contingency.

We spent £5,133 on a wide variety of improvements and maintenance including allotment drainage, greenhouse staging, polytunnel staging, rhubarb and asparagus.

The Accounts for the year Oct 2021 to End of Sept 2022 were presented and agreed. Proposed by John Fluker and seconded by Gerry Robbins.

Ashley thanked Brian Manners who audits the Grace + Flavour accounts. They can be viewed on our website – graceandflavour.org/Events/AGM. Ashley proposed that Brian be re-appointed and this was agreed by a show of hands.

Tonny Millership has agreed to support Ashley.

Plans for 2021/2022

Expenditure will include new side netting for the fruit cage, laying a patio in the coffee area, allotment drainage, pollarding trees and buying new mesh, netting and weed suppressant.

5. Allotments: Michael Trower

Everybody in the allotments seems to have had a good year, despite some of the extremes of heat and rain at different times.

The water stopcocks for the dip tanks have been encased in protective tubes in order to protect them from inadvertently being damaged. The building gang have also constructed some steps to make it easier to go between the garden and allotments – Thanks to them for this and the stopcock protection. It is envisaged that the drainage will be extended further south in the forthcoming year to help water drain away more easily.

Thanks are due to those on the mowing rota for keeping the grass tidy and those who strim around the margins – it all helps to keep the allotments looking well presented.

Three allotments changed hands at renewal time and there is currently no waiting list and all plots are occupied.

6. Building Report: Tony Millership

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Essential maintenance completed:

- Sanding down and revarnishing the potting shed
- Repainting side timbers and roof of the green shed.

Work completed for the garden:

- Work tables refurbished outside the polytunnel
- Workbenches raised inside the polytunnel
- Two new tables built for the small greenhouse
- Pea cage relocated and new netting installed.

Vital improvements included:

- Steps constructed providing a short cut from the community garden to the allotments.

Other work:

- Ground clearance and brambles removed around lime trees along the field fence
- Lots of bonfires
- Additional gravel spread in the car park

Plans for 2023:

- Further 25m of allotment drainage
- Paving slabs to be installed on the patio area
- Refurbish boundary deer fence following tree damage
- Paving along the east wall props.

7. Wildlife Report: Gerry Robbins

This is my third AGM report.

A mild winter was followed by a good spring but then a prolonged dry period with record breaking temperatures in Surrey reaching a scorching 39.1°C on the 19th July.

The milder, wetter late summer and early autumn weather has been very welcome relief for us and the wildlife.

Hedges

The north boundary hedge planted in early 2021 was attacked over the winter 21/22 by horses in the adjacent meadow. The culprits were captured on a wildlife camera. We immediately netted over the top of the hedge to prevent further damage. This has been very successful but we may need to replace the netting this winter when the horses return.

A new shorter row of hedging (mainly native species) was planted in the East wall during a mild January spell to add to the existing mixed border. This survived Storm Eunice in February and with mulching and judicious watering has come through the summer drought with only around 15% losses.

That may seem high but some large reforestation projects have suffered 50-80% losses, so we are not doing badly.

Again, thanks to West Horsley Parish Council for financing both hedges.

It was pleasing to note that the old nest box in this hedge was used by a great tit family again in spite of the change. The aim is to keep this hedge in bounds to prevent excess shadowing of the adjacent allotments.

Nest Boxes

As usual, these were repaired and cleaned out over winter.

1-2 were re-sited as the future of their host trees (the big allotment birch and north wall ash) was in doubt. Spring brought its usual delightful flurry of nesting activity.

Of a total of 22 boxes, 11 were occupied. 30 blue tits and 16 great tits fledged.

The number of great tits appeared down on previous years (e.g. 26 in 2021).

Stock doves made regular steady use of the big boxes in the lime tress as usual.

One box had a beautiful wasps' nest.

Sadly, there were no exotics such as robins, owls or finches.

Both male and female kestrels were frequently seen flying in the garden in spring and summer but stubbornly refused to use our bespoke nest box. Judging by the successful box in the old oak tree at the junction of the A25 and Sherbourne (which is worth checking out next spring if you are passing), we may need to re-site our box about 10-15ft higher! Any offers!

The Pond and Surrounding Flower Beds

Not much to report here.

Regular removal of plant material to keep up to one third as a clear surface and occasional topping up water during dry spells have been the main tasks.

We are planning a larger clear-out of the outside portion of the pond over the winter.

The surrounding flower beds have been staked and strung to support the beautiful tall yellow sunflowers which dominate in late summer and early autumn. A new "butterfly" corner bed was created next to the noticeboard with a single Buddleia "Lochinch" and edging lavender planted by Tom Suffolk.

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8. Thanks and Close: Gerry Robbins

Amanda was thanked by John Whitlock and Gerry Robbins for her 5 years of service and presented with an Adam Aaronson bowl, an exclusive G&F coffee mug and a bouquet of flowers. She handed the gavel to Gerry Robbins in recognition of his becoming our new Chairman and he duly closed the meeting at 8.40pm.