HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

MINUTES OF THE 29th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT BENINGTON LORDSHIP, BENINGTON

AT 6pm ON 3rd SEPTEMBER 2020

Present President The Viscountess of Verulam

 Acting Chairman

 and Education The Hon Lady Stuart-Smith

 Secretary Mrs Penny Figgis

 Treasurer Mrs Sally Pool

 Outings Mrs Sonja Fillingham

 Research Mrs Anne Rowe

 Website and

 Membership Mr John Craggs

 Trustee Mrs Anne Mitcheson

 Newsletter Mrs Deborah Spring

 Events Mrs Liz Carlin

The Acting Chairman Bella Stuart-Smith welcomed twenty-two members of the Gardens Trust to the AGM on a damp evening. She said that there had been five new members this year which brings the total to 331 members.

1. APOLOGIES were received from Kate Harwood, Rosa and Ian Tubbs, Ellie and Roy Johnson and Mary Arikoglu.

2. MINUTES of the 2019 AGM were approved and signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING. There were no matters arising.

4. The CHAIRMAN’S REPORT. The Acting Chairman referred to the sad loss of Roger Gedye who during his three years as chairman had been a strong force in revitalising the HGT. She thanked all those people who had contributed to the fund in his memory. Because of COVID-19 this year, it was not possible to hold an inaugural lecture, but the fund will create an opportunity to do something of real value in future for those interested in the history and conservation of the landscape.

She thanked Susannah and Richard Bott for allowing the meeting to be held at Benington Lordship and recommended to members that they take the opportunity of visiting the gardens.

The co-option of Sue Flood to the Executive Committee should have been mentioned in the annual report. She was County Archivist and worked at HALS from 1978 until her recent retirement.

5. RESEARCH underlines everything the HGT does. She thanked Anne Rowe for her expert leadership and her team of researchers for their hard work. Eleven reports were lodged in the County Archive in 2019 and three researchers have given talks about their research. The training sessions are very valuable and are highly recommended.

6. CONSERVATION. Kate Harwood has been involved at every level with planning issues and responded to about 100 applications this year. The mission of GTs is to try and protect what is historic and special so that despite the insatiable need for housing, in the country and in the greenbelt, developments can be carried out in a sympathetic way.

The Gardens Trust has developed some online training courses, the details of which will be in the next newsletter. It is hoped that members might take advantage of these for interest and in order provide some assistance to Kate in her work.

7. NEWSLETTER. Deborah Spring and Alison Moller were thanked for editing the newsletter which included many interesting articles. The newsletter reported on the various Walks and Talks and courses which have taken place over the last year. The Chairman thanked Liz Carlin and her team of Alison Moller, Tina Rowland and Kate Harwood who helped organise them.

8. OUTINGS. Sonja Fillingham, Ellie and Roy Johnson and Trevor Beale were thanked for arranging the varied and enjoyable garden visits.

9. MEMBERSHIP and WEBSITE. John Craggs was thanked for his work as membership secretary and for managing the website. Using email is a more efficient way of communicating and members are asked to give the HGT their email addresses and to notify John of any changes.

He has also created a new page for the website this year inviting members to send in photographs of their gardens. He would be glad to receive more photographs.

A volunteer is needed to take his place as membership secretary soon as he would like to handover before the next AGM.

It is hoped to reinstate the Walks, Garden Visits and the Gardeners’ Question Time next year. There is just one definite date for 2021; a study day on Charles Bridgeman on the 19th of June at Tring Park.

10. THE HON TREASURER’S REPORT. The Chairman thanked Sally and Jonathan Pool for producing the Accounts for the year and invited Sally to give her report. The accounts for the past year were approved by the Trustees on the 24th of June. There has been a deficit of income over expenditure of £2,119 compared to the previous year’s surplus of £787. Net Assets fell to £39,445 from £41,565 over the period. There has been no fundraising this year due to COVID-19.

The Roger Gedye Memorial Fund now stands at £2,760.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Stephanie Leach and seconded by Liz Carlin.

11. ELECTION OF OFFICERS. The Acting Chairman stood down (but remains a member of the Executive Committee) and Sue Flood was elected Chairman; proposed by Deborah Spring and seconded by Anne Rowe.

The other members of the Executive Committee were re-elected; proposed by Annie Saner and seconded by Dione Verulam.

AOB. Bella Stuart-Smith was thanked for acting as Chairman for the past year and for taking the meeting. The Bott family were thanked for hosting the meeting.

The meeting closed at 6.25pm.