

Sheet and Tilmore Allotment Association

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 10th November 2021 - 7.30pm

Half Moon, Sheet

Attending:

Tim Dilks - Chair

Alison Carling - Treasurer

Georgie Thurlby - Secretary

Steve Elliott - Sheet Rep

Slaney Hopkins - Tilmore Rep

Margaret Davis - Committee Member

P Davis

David Malone

Anthony Williams

Gordon Churchill

June Gurney

Michal Rapley

Juliette Kite

Robert Parker

John Deavin

Robert Doran

Helene Young

Julie Yardley

Zoe and Adam Morge

Fiona and Keith Oakley

John Elliott

Viv Elliott

Alison and Mike Bruce

P and D Barton

Nick and Bubbles Silk

Steve Thompson

M Cowen

Cllr Peter Clist (of Petersfield Town Council)

Cllr Robin Forrest (of Sheet Parish Council)

Sheet Parish Clerk Jenny Hollington

Apologies:

Abi Grute - Trading Secretary

David Mogg - Membership Secretary and Webmaster
Jerry and June Germey - Tilmore Rep
Mike Owen
Ros and Andy Smith
Patricia Woodridge
Jamie Parkins

1. Welcome from the Chair

Tim welcomed the attendees to the meeting, including the councillors from Sheet Parish Council and Petersfield Town Council.

Apologies had been received from Abi Grute, David Mogg, Mike Owen, Ros and Andy Smith, Jerry and June Germey, Patricia Woodridge, and Jamie Parkins.

Tim explained that there had been a last minute change to the agenda and that the membership would **not** now be asked to vote on the Constitution at this meeting.

2. Minutes from last AGM

The last AGM had been held in November 2019, as it was not able to be held in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and a national lockdown.

The minutes of the last AGM were approved as an accurate record of the proceedings (proposed by Anthony Williams and seconded by John Deavin).

3. Chair's report

Tim welcomed the new members of the committee who had joined since the previous AGM: Georgie Thurlby (Secretary), Jerry and June Germey and Slaney Hopkins (joint Tilmore reps) and Margaret Davis, and remarked that it was good to have some new blood on the committee. He also thanked all the committee members for their hard work over the previous two years.

Tim felt that it had been particularly important having an allotment during the Covid-19 pandemic because it provided the opportunity for fresh air and exercise. However the growing season this year had been mixed - there was an outbreak at Tilmore of tomato and potato blight. Tim recommends the tomato variety Mountain Magic which is blight resistant.

Tim reminded everyone to check their stored crops for any sign of rot. There had also been an issue with onions which started twisting and withering. However, onions grown from seed seemed to be more resilient.

Tim gave a brief history of the creation of the Adhurst allotments and the status of associate members.

4. Treasurer's report

Alison gave a brief update: the accounts had been audited and signed off this week. They had been pronounced 'excellent' by the accountant.

The balance in the current account at financial year-end (30th September) was £1784.22 which is up on previous years, and this will be used to purchase stock for the Shed for the opening of the season.

Alison reminded members that were doing bank transfers to please include their names and plot numbers as a reference, as this would help with reconciling payments.

Confirmed that the accounts will be up on the website by the end of the week for review and that Alison is happy to take any questions.

5. Trading Shed report

Steve gave the report in Abi's absence. The profit for the Shed in 2019-20 was £206.02 and in 2020-21 it was £141.71. This was a slight decrease despite more stock being sold this year. Steve thanked everyone for supporting the Shed over the last two years.

The Shed had been painted by Abi and Steve so it was hoped that it would last for a few more years.

In response to a request from the floor asking for extended opening hours, Steve said that they would be considering this for the new season.

Steve gave an update on the new suppliers - there is an extended stock list and this would be put on the website shortly. The first opening of the 2022 season would be the first Sunday in March - all the opening times would be posted on the website.

Potato orders would be available again from the Shed - this is separate to the potato orders that can be placed with Kings. Unfortunately the paper forms were not able to be provided at the AGM due to a last minute change, but this would be circulated via email after the meeting. Orders need to be in by the 19th.

6. Membership report

Tim gave a brief update in David's absence. The process for getting the 50% discount on Kings seeds has changed: the instructions for getting the discount and ordering online will be available shortly. Members can also still order using the paper forms if preferred, but delivery may take longer. All the details are on the website <https://sheetandtilmore.weebly.com/documents> page under 'More'.

Tim explained the benefits of membership - the 50% discount on Kings seeds, public liability insurance, access to the Trading Shed etc.

In response to a question from the floor, Alison informed the meeting that there are currently around 50 members across both sites. A discussion ensued about the best way to increase membership. Alison explained that data protection meant that the councils could not tell the committee the names of new ploholders, only the plot numbers. Confirmed that information about the association is sent to new ploholders by the council allotment officers. There was a suggestion from the floor that the STAA flyer could be included in the annual rent invoices that are sent out by the councils and it was agreed that this would be useful. Confirmed that the site reps and other committee members make a point of speaking to new ploholders when they see them and encouraging them to join.

Cllr Clist explained that one of the benefits of being part of the association, from his perspective, was that it was easier for the council to liaise with the committee rather than with individual members, as opinions on a topic could be summarised and moderated by having gone through the filter of the committee. Therefore being part of the association allowed members to have their views heard in a way that was easier for everyone.

7. Committee positions for 2021-22

The committee members all resigned from their positions and a motion was proposed by Gordon Churchill (seconded by John Deavin) to re-elect them as follows for the 2021-22 year:

- Chairman - Tim Dilks
- Secretary - Georgie Thurlby
- Treasurer - Alison Carling
- Membership Secretary - David Mogg
- Trading Secretary - Abi Grute
- Webmaster - David Mogg
- Sheet rep - Steve Elliott
- Tilmore reps - Jerry and June Germey and Slaney Hopkins
- Committee member - Margaret Davis

8. Competition prizes

The prizes from the 2021 best kept plot competition, which had been judged at the end of July, were then awarded.

Cllr Peter Clist from Petersfield Town Council presented the prizes for Tilmore as follows:

Best Kept Plot

3rd place (£10 Shed voucher) - Paul and Dot Barton, Plot 18A

2nd place (£25 Shed voucher) - Andy and Jo Smith, Plot 4

1st place (£50 cheque donated by Petersfield Town Council) - Fiona and Keith Oakley, Plot 14

Best Newcomer (£20 Shed voucher) - Jamie Parkins, Plot 29

Cllr Robin Forrest from Sheet Parish Council presented the prizes for Sheet as follows:

Best Kept Plot

3rd place (£10 Shed voucher) - David Mogg, Plot 88

2nd place (£25 Shed voucher) - Robert Doran, Plot 47

1st place (£50 cheque donated by Sheet Parish Council) - Steve and John Elliott, Plots 93 and 94

Best Newcomer (£20 Shed voucher) - Tom Sprake, Plot 7

9. Results of member survey

Georgie provided a brief summary of the results of the recent member survey, which had been sent out via the town and parish council to all plot holders. The aim was to find out what members think about the association, what makes them want to be a member, and what they might like the committee to do more of.

A good number of responses had been received, 26 in total, and these were split approximately half and half across both the sites. About 80% of respondents were already members and the remaining 20% said they were not currently members but they planned to join.

The three most popular reasons for being part of the association were the 50% discount with Kings (about 75% selected this), the public liability insurance (about 70%) and the access to the Trading Shed (about 70%).

The most popular answer for what people wanted the association to do more of was arranging seed and plant swaps (58%), followed by social events like barbecues (50%), liaising with the councils on rules and upkeep of communal areas etc (46%) and arranging discounts for other retailers (46%).

Confirmed that seed and plant swaps can be arranged on the association's new Facebook group.

A question was asked about talks and what topics members would be interested in, and the most popular topic was soil biology, followed by biodiversity and wildlife, organic growing, composting, medicinal plants and herbs, and no dig gardening.

New suggestions for things the association could offer or arrange included:

- a 'best of' growers competition for flowers, fruit and vegetables
- an annual donation of excess produce to local charities/churches/hospices (it was agreed that this may not be practical due to the nature of vegetable growing and it not being all ready at the same time, but the meeting was informed that the Free Shop in Petersfield train station are always happy to accept excess produce
- there were a couple of suggestions for the bulk delivery of manure to be repeated - though there had been some logistical issues with this.

Confirmed that the committee will be discussing what we are going to do with this information - we want to continue to offer the benefits that are really valued by the membership, and we will be looking at what else we might be able to do as well.

Tim reiterated that Free Shop Friday are very happy to accept excess produce and he had been donating vegetables regularly this year.

A comment from the floor suggested that bagged manure could be used to avoid the logistical issues that had occurred with the bulk load (there had been some concern about fair distribution and making sure that only members had access to the free manure).

10. Membership fee increase

Alison explained that the £5 membership fee had not been reviewed for many years, and the committee had taken the decision to increase this to £7 from the 2022-23 year onwards (so £7 would be payable at next year's AGM) in order to continue to offer the benefits of membership and in line with general inflation. The committee felt that this still represented good value especially given the additional benefits that they would be looking at offering, after the member survey results.

There was a comment from the floor about the membership fee increasing from £5 to £7 which the member felt was a steep increase. There ensued a discussion about the fee increase and whether or not it would affect membership levels - generally, members felt that it was important to feel that they were getting good value from their membership, and there was some concern that if membership levels were already low that the slightly higher fee would be a deterrent to new members joining. However, some members also felt that a higher fee would be justified if the committee were arranging additional benefits of membership.

Confirmed that the cost of the public liability insurance has increased by £20 in the last four years.

11. Any other business

There was a comment from the floor about the limited range of organic seeds available from Kings and asking whether the committee had considered promoting or offering discounts for other seed companies. Confirmed that the committee would be looking at sourcing discounts from other retailers as part of the member survey suggestions.

The meeting was closed at 9.15pm.