



Friends of Valley Gardens “Harrogate”

Harrogate’s Award Winning Park

President: Martin Fish
Charity Number: 1148369



AGM Minutes, March 3rd 11.00am Jubilee Room, Bramall Centre, RHS Harlow Carr

Present: Martin Fish President, Jane Blayney Chairman, Anne Grange Treasurer; Liz Chidlow Volunteers. **Members:** Ann Beeby, Anne Broadbent, Peter Blayney, Simon Collier, Paula Collier, Brian Dunsby, Beryl Dunsby, Robert Grange, Andrew Jordon, John Moor, Carole Moor, Arthur Philipson, Jean Benedict

1. **Apologies;** David Mason, Jim Clark, Richard Dobson, Christine Booth, Chrissie Holmes
2. **Welcome:** The Chairman welcomed everyone and apologized for the late start of the meeting due to weather conditions and RHS Harlow Carr delayed opening.
3. **Minutes** of the last AGM were agreed and accepted by Liz Chidlow, seconded by Andrew Jordan.
4. **Matters Arising** No matters arising
5. **Officers’ Reports**

a) **Chairman** This has been circulated with the agenda. Peter Blayney (retired Secretary) and Stephen and Jon Iddon (retired Publicity Officers) were thanked for their services to FOVG.

Comments; Liz Chidlow raised the issue of dog mess in the gardens again. This was prompted by a comment from a family who visited the ‘Visions of Paradise’ exhibition. *“We love Valley Gardens but have stopped going due to the amount of dog mess. We go to Harlow instead now. Every time we went to the Valley Gardens we got dog mess on my kids shoes.”*

- The issue was supported strongly by Simon Collier who is having continual problems with dogs off leads causing damage and fouling.
- The members feel strongly that this is a health and safety issue.

- Signage was felt to be inadequate and confusing with no strong emphasis to keep dogs on leads at all times.

ACTION It was agreed that Friends of Valley Gardens would get a petition signed by visitors to be presented at Council meetings asking visitors to the gardens for their support to lobby the Council concerning the problem. The petition could be presented to HBC Council meeting. In addition a further letter would be sent to Harrogate Borough Council Parks department asking for their support with better signage.

b) **Membership** Current membership is 130 members.

c) **Treasurer** Report circulated: Peter Blayney asked for figures for the Japanese Garden Account. AB gave the current balance as £11,028.81. The main expenditure left is for spring planting, the information board, printing leaflets and the opening ceremony. This is all covered by the HLF grant. Items will be procured by HBC as before. The Treasurers' report was accepted: Proposed LC, seconded AJ.

d) **Volunteer Gardeners** report circulated.

e) **Publicity** With no publicity officer currently in post JB thanked Jon Iddon and Stephen Watkinson for their hard work, and then asked for support with online media going forward.

6. **Parks and Environment Services** The following report has been sent by Kate Dawson, Strategic Development Manager; "Firstly thank you to all the Friends of Valley Gardens for the difference made by the volunteers, whether on a specific project or helping out on a wide variety of tasks around the gardens, this helps immensely. Last year saw again over 3 million people recorded as visiting these beautiful gardens and it is with the joint efforts of volunteers and employed staff that they can be maintained to the high standards they are to retain this high level of visitors every year.

I have had the privilege of working closely on the Japanese Garden Project this year and the improvements there are to be commended. Well done Ann and Liz. It has been a pleasure working alongside you albeit you've been much more visible than I. If anyone hasn't visited yet please do, it is very tranquil

and every step takes you into an area of interest with amazing views and greater chance to explore now more paths have been provided. The planting is ongoing which will only enhance the area further. I have also had an insight into the latest project – the King Edward Gates project. Again it is great to see the ideas start to come to fruition in the gardens.

We are grateful that you have embraced our new ‘events’ procedures as positively as you have and we know that open communications and working together can make a difference. This coming year we are starting to see events from organisers which are more considered and are more in keeping with the gardens. It is hoped that the gardens can be utilized more in the school holiday periods throughout this and future years to provide events that are longer in duration but are safer and better managed than before.

Over the last year the damaged bandstand has been greatly improved with a new roof, electricity added and increased security. By removing some of the more overgrown conifers behind the bandstand we feel that opening it up has improved the area immensely and will reduce the antisocial behavior in that part of the gardens.

7. Projects

- a. Japanese Garden; This report has been circulated. AB added a comment about the success of the Visions of Paradise Exhibition at RHS Harlow Carr and reported a conservative estimate of 4000 visitors during the six week period. The garden opening ceremony is now at the planning stage for October and the Japanese Garden Society is liaising with the Japanese Embassy concerning a dignitary to attend.
- b. King Edward VII Gate; Peter Blayney gave the report in lieu of DM. The start date has had to be put back to April 3rd when contractors will commence work. The electricity terminal has been re-sited. Some discussion followed re the necessary soil replacement for the rose beds which HBC is still insisting on despite some more modern methods being currently employed by other organisations. MF reported that there is likely to be compaction caused by heavy vehicles which could also be a problem for the rose bed area.

c. OMWPR Andrew Jordon reported

- Due to the weather this month opening on Sunday has been cancelled.
- The joint venture with the Pump Room Museum for school science week has also been cancelled due to lack of funding for the museum.
- The heater has broken down, and some more permanent form of heating the space needs to be considered.
- Donation box; AJ suggested having a more suitable donations box to replace the buckets and goblets currently used inside the OMWPR. In addition the possible siting of a permanent donations box in the outside area. AG said this had been considered and rejected originally due to concern for inappropriate items being placed in the box.

8. Election of Officers; The existing Officers and Trustees have agreed to stay in post for a further year. There were no nominations for Secretary, Publicity Officer or Young Persons Representative.

9. Any Other Business;

i) Arthur asked if FOVG could take out some form of group membership to RHS, if this is available, to enable members to have cheaper access to courses etc as he would like to improve his knowledge. MF Responded that he was aware of an Affiliated Membership for Societies but he did not think this would provide the benefits which Arthur was looking for.

ii) Martin Fish (President) took the opportunity to thank the Friends of Valley Gardens for the fantastic job they are doing. He felt that as President of the Friends he was proud to be associated with this amazing garden which was continuing to provide so many visitors with a very positive experience due to its quality and how much it is appreciated by the town.

10. Date of next General Meeting; Saturday October 27th at Jubilee Room, Bramall Centre.

11. Date of next AGM TBA