**ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 16th November, 2019**

**Present:** Approximately 120 members with Mr Christopher Bailes in the chair.

**Apologies Recorded:** Mrs Christine McGregor (Society Director) and various award recipients.

In the Director’s absence, the minutes were recorded by Dr Rob Amos (trustee).

The President, Christopher Bailes, opened the meeting by welcoming members and briefly reflecting on the Society’s year. It was noted that this AGM marked the beginning of the Society’s 90th anniversary year.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting, held on 17th November 2018.**

Members present were asked to approve the minutes of the last meeting, held on Saturday 17th November 2018, as a correct record. The motion was proposed by Hilary Little and seconded by Ian Wright. The vote to approve passed unanimously.

1. **Report of the Board of Trustees**

In the Director’s absence, the President presented the Annual Report on behalf of the Board of Trustees. Over the past ninety years, the AGS has grown from a small organisation of just 145 members to an internationally renowned charity that plays an increasingly important role in the conservation of alpines.

2018/19 has seen the Society continue to build on the success of recent years. The new state-of-the-art alpine house is nearing completion and will be formally opened in the spring as part of our 90th anniversary celebrations. The conservation project that is being jointly-pursued with the RSPB is beginning to see the replanting and recovery of native flora in the Lake District.

It has been another busy year for tours, with the trip to New Caledonia being a particular highlight. Several tours will be running in the coming year, including another visit to Patagonia, one of the Society’s most popular destinations, and a first visit to Bolivia.

The journal continues to develop under the direction of the Society’s editor, Greg Loades, who has now been in post for a full year. It is one of the most popular benefits that members receive and is also a highly-respected publication that is produced to a professional standard.

Work continues on the website, which is proving very successful at enabling visitors to locate and engage with those aspects of the Society’s activities that particularly interest them. Due to the work of the Society’s Online Editor, Laura Armstrong, the AGS now has a dominant position among comparable horticultural societies on social media.

It has been another excellent year for shows, a key avenue through which the Society presents itself to the public and seeks to educate them about alpines. Work continues to identify improved venues that provide the facilities needed to run a successful show (sufficient space, light and car-parking) and are easily accessible by the public. The Society’s thanks go to Director of Shows, Martin Rogerson, and everyone involved in making the shows a success.

There has been a major change in the staffing of the Society. The Society’s Director, Christine McGregor, took long-term sick leave earlier in the year and, after eighteen years dedicated service, has decided to retire. Christine has been instrumental in all of the Society’s major achievements and initiatives. In recent years, her work has seen the successful launch of the conservation project in RSPB Haweswater and facilitated two AGS-funded student placements at Edinburgh Botanic Gardens. The Society owes a debt of gratitude for everything that Christine, supported by her husband Jim, has done for the Society.

The Board of Trustees appointed an Executive Group, comprising Christopher Bailes (President), John Galloway (Treasurer), David Haselgrove (trustee) and David Morris (trustee), to help manage the Society during Christine’s absence and to appoint a new Director. A specialist charity recruitment firm company was contracted and, after interviews with three candidates, an offer was made to Tony Bryan. Tony has an extensive background in commercial horticulture but also shares the Society’s passion for plants. The Board of Trustees looks forward to working with Tony when he takes up his position in the New Year.

The President closed his summary of the Trustees Report by thanking everyone who has supported the Society over the past year, particularly the staff at the AGS Centre.

Don Peace proposed the acceptance of the Trustee’s Report and this was seconded by Paddy Parmee. The vote in favour was unanimous.

1. **Treasurer’s Report, Auditor’s Report and Summarised Consolidated Accounts**

The Treasurer, Professor John Galloway, presented the Report and Accounts for 2018/19.

In total, the Society’s combined income for the year was £612,196, comprising subscriptions, gifts, investment income, income from the two subsidiary companies and the Society’s own trading activities.

Income from subscriptions was £141,809, a small fall from last year but in line with the overall trend from recent years. Income from investments had also remained steady at £64,200. The Society’s two trading companies produced a combined net surplus of £28,803, which was lower than the previous year.

Total expenditure amounted to £790,690. The main items of expenditure include ongoing support to major projects, such as the new alpine house and the website, staff and governance costs and direct charitable activities.

A deficit of £178,494 was therefore recorded for the year, compared with a deficit of £110,478 for 2017/18. As in previous years, this was addressed by selling some of the Society’s investments.

The Treasurer concluded his report by making two observations. First, membership subscriptions amount to 45% of the Society’s income and only offsets around 30% of its outgoings. Second, and as a consequence of this, the Society remains reliant on its considerable investment portfolio, and therefore the stock market, to be able to pursue its charitable objectives. Due to ongoing changes in the stock market, the Board of Trustees is looking into possibly changing the nature of the Society’s investments so that they continue to best serve the needs of the charity.

The Treasurer was thanked for his clear and detailed report. Two questions were raised from the floor afterwards. First, it was asked how many members the AGS currently has. This was estimated to be 6,500. Second, it was asked whether the Society’s values, particularly with regard to conservation, are reflected in its investments. The conversations currently ongoing with the Society’s investment companies about its investments include ethical considerations and issues of sustainability.

There being no other questions, the meeting unanimously voted to approve the Report and adopt the accounts. This was proposed by Christopher Grey-Wilson and seconded by Ben Parmee.

1. **Election of President and Officers**

David Haselgrove took the chair and invited members to confirm the appointment of Christopher Bailes as President for a further year. This motion was proposed by Ian Wright and seconded by David Livermore. The vote was passed unanimously and the President resumed the chair.

The following officers were voted en bloc to serve for the ensuing year, there being no other nominations:

Treasurer Professor John Galloway

Director of Shows Mr Martin Rogerson

Their election was proposed by Paddy Parmee and seconded by Bob Wallis. The vote was passed unanimously. It was noted that the position of Director of Tours remains vacant and that Mrs Diane Clement would be stepping down as Director of Seed during the coming year.

1. **Election of Trustees**

Two nominations had been received to fill vacancies on the Board of Trustees for the period of 2019-2021. These were Mr David Mountfort and Mrs Gail Devries.

Two nominations had been received for the appointment of new trustees to serve for a full-term running 2019-2023. These were Mr David Haselgrove and Mrs Celia Sawyer.

The four nominated trustees were elected en bloc. This was proposed by Celia Wright and seconded by Martin Rogerson. The vote to approve was unanimous.

The retiring trustees, Mr Peter Liverman and Mr Roy Barker, were thanked for their work on behalf of the Society.

1. **Appointment of Auditors**

Messrs Kendall-Wadley were reappointed to serve as the Society’s auditors for the forthcoming year, there being no other nominations. They were proposed by Christopher Grey-Wilson and seconded by Elsie Willett. The vote was passed unanimously.

1. **Announcement of any other items of urgent business, not otherwise on the agenda**

No other items had been notified.

1. **Presentation of Society Awards**

The President presented the annual Society and Literary Awards. It was announced that the Lyttel Trophy had been awarded jointly to Mr and Mrs Martin and Anna Sheader. Martin and Anna’s studies have greatly enhanced our knowledge of alpines, particularly the South American flora. They also generously share their expertise through publications, lectures and by regularly leading AGS tours to South America.