

Chairman's Report for 2022

Ray Keppler

It has been a difficult year for THACS. The committee worked hard to provide a full programme of events, despite starting with the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic and then facing daunting threats to the survival of the society.

The programme of events for 2022 started with the AGM in March, which was a virtual meeting using Zoom. Six committee members were re-elected, but our Vice Chairman, Jim Hall, resigned from the committee and did not stand for re-election. This left a vacancy, so we started a recruitment campaign to attract new people to join the committee. Our appeals led to the welcome arrival of Martin Taylor and Kristina Lawson to the committee, bringing new perspective and fresh ideas.

The Spring Show was held in April and it was good to have it back again, after a three-year gap. The display of show exhibits was delightful and clearly demonstrated the skill and enthusiasm of the exhibitors and their wide range of interests.

A plant exchange event was held in early May, to stimulate local interest and participation in horticulture. Based on the number of plants that changed hands, I think that the event was very successful.

The Dylan Taylor Art Fair was a two-day event on the weekend of 21-22 May. It was organised by Martin Taylor and featured twelve Tewin-based artists and British artists from further afield. It also offered signed artworks by David Hockney, Bob Dylan, Pablo Picasso, Joan Miro, Henry Moore and others.

In July, there was a day visit by coach to Painshill, which is a beautiful award-winning 18th century landscape garden in Cobham, Surrey. It had been three years since our last summer coach outing (to Cliveden in July 2019) so this visit marked another milestone along the path to normality after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Autumn Show was held in September, with exhibits of flower arranging, flowers, vegetables & fruit, painting, pottery, handicraft, photography, baking and more. The displays of exhibits were attractive and were enjoyed by the numerous visitors in the afternoon. One of those visitors was Mrs Janet Girling, who was seeking new homes for ten potted Camellias grown by her late husband. She wondered if THACS might be able to help her and we certainly could! THACS funded the hire of a suitable large truck, which Martin Taylor and I used on 1st November to collect and deliver the plants to their new owners.

The last event of the year was the Arts & Crafts Sale in December, offering the usual high-quality hand-crafted gifts for sale. Visitors seemed to have less money to spend this year but stall holders and the public always remark on what a friendly and welcoming event we have. The ever-popular charity cake stall made £400 which was donated to the Welwyn Garden City & Hertford Food Banks.

Throughout the whole of 2022, the work of the committee has been overshadowed by the existential threat to the survival of the Society.

After the AGM in March, the three elected officers - Ray Keppler (Chair), Malcolm Allen (Treasurer), Tina Lord (Secretary) – declared their intention to stand down from their current roles at the next AGM. There were no nominated successors for any of these posts, so the future of the society was at risk. Committee member Alice Greenwood and our auditor Graham Spring also declared that they would be standing down.

These resignations will leave two experienced committee members – Terry Brand and Lynne Burgess - who are happy to continue in their current roles. They will be joined by new recruits Martin Taylor and Kristina Lawson, so we are assured of at least four committee members who will stand for election at the AGM. However, none of these four committee members wanted to take on any of the officer roles, so we still needed to recruit a replacement Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.

The committee held a workshop at the end of May, to evaluate options and decide on actions. It was decided to hold an open Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) in early November, as a forum for discussion about this serious problem and an exploration of any possible ways of resolving it. At the EGM, there was a lively discussion about the crisis facing THACS and how it should be managed. Several interesting comments and suggestions were made, leading to further actions.

It was suggested that we should send out a questionnaire to the wider membership, to find out how important THACS events are to them and to seek their views about the future of the society. This was successfully done and you'll hear about the results at the AGM.

Another suggestion was to widen the recruitment campaign to go beyond the THACS membership and the readers of the Tewin Magazine. This too was done, in the form of an eye-catching flyer that was delivered to every household in the village in early December.

However, as 2022 ends, there are no candidates standing for election as Chairman, Treasurer or Secretary so the future of THACS in 2023 is looking bleak.

For twenty years, *THACS* has contributed to Tewin life, encouraging and facilitating interest and participation in all aspects of village horticulture, arts and crafts. Sadly, this may now come to an end.