

Chairman's Report for 2023

Ray Keppler

It has been a strange year for THACS as we made the transition from an active society to one that is busily putting its affairs in order as it faced the end of its life. There were only four THACS events in 2023 as most of our efforts were devoted to the mothballing project and the preparation for our closure.

The first event was an art day on 2nd February. The topic was lino printing and our regular tutor Jude O'Sullivan guided the 16 participants as they cut lino and made prints with different coloured backgrounds during the creative and fun-filled day.

The second event was the AGM on 27th February and that meeting confirmed the change in the state of the society.

Longstanding committee members Terry Brand and Lynne Burgess were re-elected. Martin Taylor and Kristina Lawson, who were co-opted to the committee during 2022, were also elected to the committee.

The Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary had previously said that they wished to stand down from their roles and, in spite of an extensive recruitment campaign, no candidates for these positions had come forward. Consequently, the society was no longer viable. In accordance with the outcome of a survey of members, I committed to run a project to "mothball" the society so that it could be revived at some future time. I was re-elected as Chairman and Malcolm Allen was re-elected as Treasurer on the understanding that we would limit our activity to managing the mothballing project and supporting the remaining committee members with anything they wished to organise in the meantime.

After the business of the AGM, there was an interesting talk entitled "*Beekeeping - and the challenges with second guessing Mother Nature!*" from our final guest speaker, local beekeeper Phil Raine.

Our third event was a Plant Exchange on 20th May, with a stall on Lower Green. It was a great success and enjoyed by a good number of villagers. People seemed to enjoy milling around in the sunshine and chatting. Some swapped, others made donations and some were happy to take plants away for free.

The fourth and final event of the year was a creative writing day on 11th October. Frances Wilson, our popular tutor of several years, led the six participants through a combination of exercises and writing of poetry or prose.

Since the AGM in February, the work of the committee has been dominated by the mothballing project. This kept the option of revival alive, whilst also preparing for the closure of the society.

The first tangible deliverables were announced in November with the unveiling of two groups of digital files posted on the THACS page on the Tewin Village website: -

- Archive. The first group is an archive of material that might be of historical interest in the future.
- Legacy Resources. The second group consists of documents that could be useful resources for anyone seeking to revive THACS or start a new society.

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The project then shifted its focus onto asset management, whereby we built a complete inventory of THACS assets and then set about deciding the future of each of them. Our most significant asset is the money in the bank and, as 2023 ended, the committee was finalising proposals for the use of those funds, for members to consider and vote on at our final AGM in February 2024.

That AGM will also mark the formal closure of the society. For more than twenty years, *THACS* has contributed to Tewin life, encouraging and facilitating interest and participation in all aspects of village horticulture, arts and crafts. Although that is unfortunately coming to an end, it is satisfying to see that some THACS-initiated activities and events will continue after the society has gone: -

- 1) The future of the Tewin Cowper School allotment has been secured for the next ten years so Year 4 pupils will continue learning and enjoying how to tend the earth and grow flowers, plants and vegetables with help and guidance from John Sheridan and other allotment holders.
- 2) The participants of the last THACS Creative Writing Day in October liked it so much that they decided to organise a follow-up event of their own. It will take place in January 2024 and still be led by Frances Wilson and organised by Joanne Allen. If this goes well, then there may be more such events running in future.
- 3) The annual Arts & Crafts Sale took place this year on 2nd December but without THACS involvement or backing. This well-established event has gained its independence and hopefully will continue to be run, thanks to the dedication of event organiser Hilary Tipping.

These are very pleasing examples of the way that THACS has encouraged and enabled people to participate in horticulture, arts and crafts activities. Such achievements have only been possible because of the efforts of our numerous helpers and supporters and I am very grateful to all of them. My hope for the future is that their activities will continue, enabling village horticulture, arts and crafts to thrive long after THACS has gone.