



Registered Charity Number 1161254

Patron: His Majesty King Charles III

Minutes of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
Held in The Courtyard Room of Leonardslee Lakes and Gardens  
On Saturday 31st May 2025 at 1:45pm

Present: Chairman Stephen Peters ( Chairman South East Branch) Secretary Robbie Sampson, John Marston, Barbara Sampson, Sian Thomas, Laura Williamson, Emma Page, Philip Eastell, Brian Long, Chloe Ragg, Selina Mansell, Alex Beany, Chloe Knight, Jack Davies, David Millais, Elizabeth Ray, Jane Watkin, Misako Kasahara, Lavinia Sealy, Miranda Gunn, Ros Rawling, Barry Haseltine, Peter Goldsmith, Jim Gardiner, Sarah Bray, Liz Howell, Chris Loder, Roy Lancaster, Nick Hagon, John Wotton, Mathias Kurstjens.

Present on zoom. Graham Mills, Polly Cooke, Barry Cooke, Alistair Stevenson.

**QUORATE** We need 13 members. Yes.

The attendees were notified in the cover page of the Annual 23/24 report that the meeting was being recorded to aid minute taking.

Stephen Peters was standing in for Graham Mills RCMG Chairman who was unable to attend this meeting. Stephen welcomed everyone and opened the meeting.

There was to be no voting by a show of hands at this meeting as the voting was via a poll. Voting forms had been sent to all members. The results had been received by mail or email and added on a spreadsheet.

Those standing for the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Plant Committee were notified in advance of the results of the election.

1) **APOLOGIES** were received from Pam Hayward, Judy Hallett, Andy Hallett, Faith Raven, John Woodyatt, Brian Moss, Joseph Nichol, Sally Hayward, John Sanders, Benedict Lyte, Patricia Short, Charles Williams, Russell Beeson, Mary Ashworth, Sylvia McQuire, Ted Brabin, Alistair Stevenson, Carolyn Townsend, John Talbot, Laura Jones, Jean Gellatly, Peter Gellatly, Fred Woodhams, Jackie Woodhams, Margaret Hall, Nick Butler, Jackie Buttler, Andrea Whittaker, Connor Ryan, Peter Furneaux, Tom Clarke, Louisa Clarke.

2) **MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM** held at Trewithen Gardens on Saturday 1st June 2024.

The Minutes, published on the website, were unanimously agreed to be a true record of those present. There were no objections. The minutes were signed as a true record by the Secretary of the meeting.

3) **MATTERS ARISING** There were no matters arising of the last AGM.

4) **ANNUAL REVIEW.** The RCMG Chairman, Graham Mills had prepared a powerpoint presentation for 2023/2024 which was projected and narrated by the secretary.

**Treasurer's and independent examiner's reports.**

The Treasurer explained the differences in expenditure from one year to the next. As the yearbook came out much later, last year, the invoicing for the printing and distribution costs were received and paid in the following year so it was left out of these accounts.

**Membership.** A slight reduction in numbers. Of those that explained why, they left because there was no branch activities. Alan Robertson, our Events czar, aims to engage with all the membership, advertising all events to all members, so no one gets missed out. We have increased our Garden membership and are seeking to increase the membership both within the UK and Internationally. It has been satisfying to see complimentary members wishing to become paying members in their own right.

**Bursary:** As a Charity we support to encourage research and education. We contribute towards trips into the field for leaders of horticulture and students too. When they return we only ask that they write a report and perhaps a lecture to our members

**Events:** Every month, this year, Barbara and I have been able to join a group visit or lecture. The Branches really do have a lot going on.

**Communication:** It has been suggested that to raise funds for all our good works for the Charity; we should charge non members to gain access into "Member's only" areas of our Website and Facebook pages.

**Plant Committee:** Through networking and discussion between gardeners with collections of our genera we aim to slow the rate of loss of Rhododendrons, Camellias and Magnolia in the wild and in our gardens by propagating and reintroduction within gardens in the UK. Any plant identification questions are answered by the plant committee.

**Recommended Garden Scheme:** A group of around 145 gardens in the UK and worldwide that have representative collections of our genera. To add any garden it just takes two members to propose the addition, with certain stipulations.

**Yearbook and Bulletin:** These continue to be the best and brightest of all the Garden Societies publications. They are very expensive to produce and have drained our resources. There are no quick answers and your committee will continue to seek a way of funding the publications.

**Archive:** Pam Hayward has been our Archivist for many years and has been of great help as the memory of the Group. Certainly, her advice has kept me out of many jams. But all good things must come to an end and we are sorry to have received her resignation.

**Website:** I pulled the March 2025 meeting report. There were over three and a half thousand unique visitors making over seven thousand unique visits and a total of almost twenty thousand pages accessed during January alone. The largest number of visits were to the Directories of the three genera, event finding, show information and membership.

**Branches:** This year Barry Haseltine retired and we welcome Steve Peters as our Chairman of the South East Branch, who is standing in for Graham Mills here today. The rejuvenation of the West Midlands Branch is one of our aims for this year.

**Volunteers:** Helping the group is fun. For too long, the managerial tasks involved have been advertised as ‘too difficult for you to do!’ I may not be as good as other Secretaries but at least I have a smile on my face. The Yearbook and Bulletin editorship has been at a very high level. The final product has been fantastic, but if you look back, each past editor has done their best to different standards. Modern technology has made desktop editing possible for all. It is just a case of having a “CAN DO’ mentality and asking for help.

**Chairman’s award:** This is self explanatory. What a guy. You read here that the 2023 AGM and Centenary Cup Competition at Ness Botanical Gardens was impressive. This was my first to organise with Ted as mentor and a calming hand on my back. The lessons learnt will stand me in good stead. I wholeheartedly endorse our outgoing Chairman’s choice. I wish all the best to Angela and Ted Brabin.

**Note:** As shown on the Agenda, the Trustees report is available online.

5) Re-election of John Marston as a Trustee. Carried

6) Re election of management committee members who are standing for re-election 2025/26.

Secretary: Robbie Sampson.

Treasurer: Philip Eastell.

Bulletin Editor: Vacancy.

Lead Yearbook Editor. Vacancy.

Webmaster: Graham Mills.

Communications Officer: Mark Bobin.

Advertising Officer: Philip Eastell.

Recommended Garden scheme: Nick Butler.

7) Re-election of Independent Examiner: Vacancy.

8) Election of new committee members 2025-2026

Chairman: Philip Eastell.

Vice Chairmen: Mark Bobin and Sian Thomas.

Plant Committee Chairman: Jack Aldridge.

Event co-ordinator: Alan Robertson.

Archivist: Vacancy.

Video Editor: Laura Williamson.

9) Any other business of which notice has been received. None received. Barry Haseltine asked if there was to be any vote of thanks to Pam Hayward and to Graham Mills for their service to the RCMG. The secretary explained that it was in hand for the next committee meeting and confirmed that Rosemary LeGrand, our New Forest Branch Chair, was already discussing an appropriate award with the assistance of Jim Gardiner. Philip Eastell stood and supported Barry Haseltine’s proposal and the meeting clapped as a sign of their appreciation.

10) Venue and date of the next AGM and Centenary Cup Competition 2026 will be confirmed at a later date.

Stephen Peters then stood and gave thanks to our hosts Penny and Adam Streeter and to Jamie Harris, for allowing us to hold our Centenary Cup Competition and AGM at Leonardslee. From Wendy and the young ladies in the entrance kiosk, to the garden staff that kept all the displays around the entrance to the Courtyard fresh and tended, the event went off without a hitch.

The Courtyard room, with its air conditioning and stable atmosphere, proved itself to be more than suitable for the flower show. Everyone entering, even on Sunday afternoon, smelt the strong aroma from some of the Azaleas. The blooms looked just as fresh after 48 hours on most of the Rhododendron, Azaleas and the ornamental trees and shrub classes. The Clocktower kitchen kept us all fed and watered and helped out when we needed doors unlocked or the garden staff called.

Finally Amber conducted the whole event admirably, making sure our needs and those of our hosts were met without any friction.

All members of the RCMG and the Management Committee attending the AGM and outreach Centenary Cup Competition would like to extend our thanks to the owners of Leonardslee and all the staff who made us feel so welcome and made the weekend such a success.

FROM THE GROUP SECRETARY

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