**NORTH EAST AREA OF NAFAS**

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 29 JULY 2023**

**AT THE FOLK HALL, NEW EARSWICK, YORK**

**Present:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chairman: Mrs. Sheila Drybrough1st Vice Chairman: Mrs. Rita Braithwaite2nd Vice Chairman: Mrs. Mary HolmesSecretary: Mrs. Ann SimpsonTreasurer: Mrs. Sue GuilliattProjects Officer: Mrs. Joan O’Brien*Flower Arranger* Officer: Mrs. Hazel BellDemonstrators’ Representative: Mrs. Sue SpencerJudges’ Representative: Mrs. Janet HaytonSpeakers’ Representative: Mrs. Rita BraithwaiteMedia Officer: Mrs. Lynn NaylorWebmaster: Mr. Peter MathersDeputy Demonstrators’ Representative: Mrs. Catherine GledhillDeputy Education Representative: Mrs. Christine HinchcliffeDeputy Judges’ Representative: Mrs. Joyce HearnshawHistorian: Mr. Tony Cleaver | **Special Associates of Honour at National Level**Mrs. Janet HaytonMrs. Pat Daley**Associates of Honour at National Level**Mrs. Sheila RodgersMrs. Norma DobneyMr. Tony Cleaver**Associates of Honour at Area Level**Mrs. Shirley CleggMrs. Elizabeth TinkerMrs. Sue SpencerMrs. Jenny FreemanMrs. Joan O’BrienMrs. Ann Harding |

 38 members representing 24 clubs plus 4 additional club members attended the meeting.

**23/27 The Chairman, Mrs. Sheila Drybrough**, welcomed members to the meeting.

I would like to wish everyone a warm welcome to our Summer Council Meeting and hope that you all had a good journey this morning. We have had a very mixed summer, with some very hot weather in June and a much wetter and cooler July. I hope you have all managed to enjoy visiting shows, places of interest and gardens and will enjoy a few more before the summer ends. I, for one, love the lighter nights.

Thank you to Halifax Flower Club for their splendid flower arrangement and the help with the sale of the raffle tickets.

Spen Valley Flower Club volunteered to design a flower arrangement for the October Council Meeting and help with the sale of raffle tickets.

**23/28** **Apologies for absence** were received from Pauline Morley, Pat Martin, Louise Nettleton, Gill Hughes, Fil Caldwell, Sandy Evans, Janet Ratcliffe plus the following clubs, Guisborough, Bradford, Easingwold & Spen Valley.

**23/29 Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting:**

One amendment to the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2023, add Louise Nettleton to the list of apologies.

**23/30 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**23/31 AREA REPORTS**

***Chairman*** Mrs Sheila Drybrough reported

Before you leave today, may I remind everyone to check their folders. Can I also ask that you leave the folders on the table so that any information regarding the October Meeting can be included.

Following the discussion at the Council Meeting about holding the meeting in the morning - after further debate at the last Exec Meeting, it was decided that we will continue with a 1pm start time. Unfortunately, we will never be able to please everyone.

I would have liked to invite Alison Cockburn to say a few words regarding the exhibit at the Harrogate Spring Show. Alison was not able to attend the last meeting when we congratulated her team and sadly, she is unable to come today therefore I will ask Rita Braithwaite to read her report.

See Appendix 1.

Thank you, Alison, for your report and many thanks to all the team for the time and effort involved in putting on such a wonderful display.

At the last Council Meeting we announced the death of Eileen Page. We have received a letter from Eileen’s daughter, Angela, which I will just read out:

“*It was lovely to receive all the cards and wishes from members and friends at NAFAS and of course it was delightful to see so many travelling to Mum’s funeral”.*

I would like to thank Great Ayton Flower Club for inviting myself and Mary to celebrate the King’s Coronation with an afternoon tea. The Chairman and Committee had taken a lot of time and effort to make the day such a special one to remember with bunting, flags for table covers and a table with memorabilia. It was the first time I had eaten a coronation chicken sandwich and would certainly have another one. We all went home with a few extras and I enjoyed them the following day.

I would also like to thank the Past Chairmans’ Luncheon Club for inviting me to their 45th Anniversary. I was really sorry that I was unable to attend but Rita Braithwaite attended on my behalf. I think I missed a wonderful afternoon and hope you all enjoyed the event.

I would like to congratulate Eileen Barraclough, Elaine Bedford, Carys Harrison, Susan Fairhurst, Rita Braithwaite and Ying Slade who entered exhibits at the National Show in Gloucester, we were very proud of them all. Many also won prizes as well, from First prize to Very Highly Commended.

I would like to give a special thank you to Joan and the Exec. Team, for their time and commitment to making sure that the coach trip to Gloucester ran smoothly. Once again I would like to thank Rita for taking lots of photographs at the Show in addition to everything else she was doing. For members who were not able see the show, Rita has kindly put a slide show together so that you can see the wonderful exhibits in the amazing setting where they were displayed.

The Executive Committee continue to meet monthly either in Wetherby, or via Zoom. We are working on events for the rest of this year and 2024. More information about these will be given by Joan in her Project Officer’s report and the Representatives’ reports. I also attended the National Advisory Council Meeting via Zoom on the 18th July.

We still have some vacancies coming up for the end of this year and I hope that you will consider offering your services to the Area. There is the Demonstrators’ Deputy, Judges’ Deputy, Photographic Representative and Deputy, Speakers’ Deputy. If you want to know more about what is involved, please come and talk to one of us after the meeting.

**23/32 TREASURER’S REPORT**

Mrs. Sue Guilliatt reported:

Bank balances

Community account £11,919.33

Special Fund £1,842.01

Building Society £6,366.16

Building Society Bond £13,289.33

Cash £380.65

Affiliation fees

We have received affiliation fees from 55 clubs on behalf of 2,176 members. The total fees collected was £18,496 of which £13,273.60 was collected on behalf of NAFAS and £5,222.40 retained by the Area.

The membership of 2,176 this year compares to 2,295 last year a reduction of 119 members which is a 5.2% reduction. This includes a 35 reduction in membership as a result of the closure of Wakefield. It should also be noted that there will be a further reduction next year of 64 members with the closure of Rotherham and Steeton unless members join other clubs.

Of our 55 clubs 30 have shown a decrease in membership, 22 an increase and 3 have stayed the same. The overall reduction of 119 members is actually a decrease of 204 members offset by an increase of 85.

It is worth noting that 35 of our clubs have a membership of 40 or less, that is 64% of the total and 45 clubs have a membership of 50 or less which is 82% of the total clubs in our Area.

If we look at the membership across the Area since 2014 this has decreased from 4,010 to 2,176, a reduction of 1,834 members or 46%.

The largest reduction was not surprisingly in 2021 when membership reduced from 3,082 to 2,427 a reduction of 655 members or 21.3%, something which both clubs and the Area have never recovered from.

A table showing the year-by-year movement.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Members | Decrease | % |
| 2013 | 4203 |  |  |
| 2014 | 4010 | 193 | 4.6% |
| 2015 | 3928 | 82 | 2.0% |
| 2016 | 3679 | 249 | 6.3% |
| 2017 | 3456 | 223 | 6.1% |
| 2018 | 3344 | 112 | 3.2% |
| 2019 | 3208 | 136 | 4.1% |
| 2020 | 3082 | 126 | 3.9% |
| 2021 | 2427 | 655 | 21.3% |
| 2022 | 2295 | 132 | 5.4% |
| 2023 | 2176 | 119 | 5.2% |

Affiliation fees for next year

As already announced in July 2022 NAFAS are increasing their affiliation fees to £7.50 per member from £6.10 per member, an increase of 23%, which the North East Area will be collecting by 31 March 2024 on behalf of NAFAS.

As a reminder I reported to Council in October 2022 that the Area Executive considered what we could do to help clubs whilst looking at the financial position of the Area itself and the Area Executive’s financial responsivities.

We considered several options and concluded the best option was a combination of an increase in income and a reduction in costs.

For 2023 we implement the following:

* Room hire stayed at £0 per club as any increase disproportionally impacts smaller clubs more than the larger ones.
* The North East Area share of the affiliation fees would increase from £1.90 per member to £2.40 per member which was still 30p per member less than in 2020 and less than the £2.50 in 2014 when we had 4,010 members.
* We concluded that it would not be right to simply increase the affiliation fees without demonstrating the steps being taken to reduce our expenditure.
* To reduce costs we moved to having 3 face to face Council Meetings a year rather than 4 and the fourth replaced by a zoom meeting. April, July and October will remain face to face meetings and January will be via Zoom.
* The Executive normally met face to face every month and we planned to reduce this to 10 face to face meetings with zoom meetings the other 2 months.
* Reduced the fuel allowance to 35p per mile for Area activities.

The full summary was included in the minutes of the October 2022 Council meeting and Peter also posted this on the Area Website.

A report on how we did against these plans will be included in my report to the AGM.

Whilst we have not reached the end of 2023 the Area Executive agreed not to increase the Area affiliation fees which will remain at £2.40 per member which will be collected by 31 March 2024 along with the NAFAS fee.

Affiliation fee forms for 2024 will be sent out electronically after the October Council meeting and also posted to the Area website.

**Finance Review**

As a reminder and for any new club committee members especially chairmen and treasurers it is recommended that clubs undertake a financial review every year.

Financial reviews and budgeting help demonstrate the true costs of running the club and help committees consider what is a realistic level for the club’s subscriptions. I am aware that most, if not all, our clubs take this seriously and carry out a review.

To help there are excel workbooks on the Area Website under Links & Downloads; Club Finance Checker 2022.

If anyone has any questions, please contact me and I will try and help.

**GDPR**

Again, as a reminder clubs should carry out a review of their GDPR position and document any changes or confirm in the club minutes that a review was undertaken and nothing had changed.

Guidance for Flower Clubs can be located on the Area Website under Links & Downloads; GDPR Guidance for Clubs.

**23/33 PROJECT OFFICER’S REPORT**

Mrs. Joan O’Brien reported:

The Area sojourn to the National Show in May was a great success. The happy band of members joined the luxury coach at various locations between Northallerton and Woolley Edge services on Thursday 11 May. The first stop was Hidcote Manor, a world-famous Arts and Crafts inspired garden, with its linked ‘garden rooms’ of hedges, rare trees, shrubs and herbaceous borders. It was the type of garden that you could visit many times during the seasons and enjoy the diversity of plants. With a glass of fizz, nibbles and a quiz we journeyed on to the St, Pierre Hotel in Chepstow. A beautiful hotel surrounded by gardens and a golf course.

On Friday morning we set off for the National Show at the beautiful Gloucester Cathedral. Such a lovely backdrop for all the various classes of designs exhibited. It was a joy to walk around the Cathedral listening to the wide range of memorable and emotional music whilst looking at the creative designs produced by the talented members of NAFAS, some of which were from our Area.

On returning to the hotel we all enjoyed pre-dinner drinks with Sheila Drybrough, our Area Chairman. Plenty of chatter and good humour! Come Saturday morning we set off on our return journey. After approximately one hour we visited the Painswick Rococo Gardens. The gardens were designed in the 1740s as a fanciful pleasure garden, built in a hidden valley, for the owners of Painswick House. Although the terrain was challenging for some of us it was interesting to see how the gardeners are returning the hidden garden to its original glory.

It was a quieter return journey with everyone replete from their lunch and walk or should I say mountaineering. The quizzes stayed in their folders so as not to disturb the ‘snoozing’ cherubs!! It was a time for reflection and preparation to return to family and friends.

I must say I have changed my opinion of travelling by coach. Deidre Brown’s Luxury Coach wasn’t the bumpy ride I was expecting. It truly was a luxury coach with all mod cons. I would recommend that we consider using Deidre Brown’s Luxury Coach provision again for our future travels.

**65th Anniversary Lunch on 6 September 2023**

The Area Lunch will soon be here. It is being held on Wednesday 6 September at the Pavilions, Harrogate. The after luncheon speaker is Don Witton, a well known speaker on plants and flowers. The title of his talk is to be ‘Flower Power Plus Plus Plus’ Don will be bringing some plants for sale.

A two course menu will be provided: Roast Beef or Asparagus Pithivier for vegetarians. Lemon Possett for dessert. I have the full menu with me today for your perusal. I do hope you will be able to join us to celebrate the 65th Anniversary of the Area. Tickets costing £40 are available today. Information regarding the Area Lunch is on the Area Website.

**AGM November 2023**

The Area AGM will be held on Saturday 11 November at Stockton on the Forest Village Hall. The Demonstration following the AGM will be by Jo Purdy from Scarborough. The title of her demonstration is ‘The Lost Gardens of Heligan’ Jo is currently undertaking training to be a National Demonstrator. Lunch prior to the demonstration will be a finger buffet.

Tickets for the lunch and demonstration, costing £25, are on sale today. Information regarding the AGM is on the Area Website.

**Dates for your Diary 2024**

Planning and negotiations are well in hand for an International Demonstrator to conduct a floral demonstration and two workshops. The Demonstration to be held on Saturday 8 June 2024 and the workshops on Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th June 2024.

I will let you have further details when they become available.

The Executive is exploring the possibility of holding a Members Day during August/September 2024. I will keep you updated on this venture when details are available.

**23/34 TRADING**

Mrs. Sue Guilliatt reported:

There is little to report as we have had no activity since the April Council Meeting. We do have trading today and thanks go to Sue Spencer who has sourced various items for us.

We have on the table today the following:

The new NAFAS calendar - £6

Planners 2024 – 2026 - £2

New Competition manual - £5

NAFAS notelets, pack of 6 with 2 designs - £4

Ribbons – all 25p a metre

As mentioned at the last meeting we now have a card reader so you can pay for purchases from trading by card and you can also pay by card when buying tickets for the Area Lunch or the AGM.

We will be taking trading to the Harrogate Autumn Show at Newby Hall. If you are attending the Show please drop by and say hello.

***THE FLOWER ARRANGER*** Mrs. Hazel Bell reported:

NATIONAL

The cost of the magazine subscription will be £16 for next year, which is still an excellent saving over the price in the shops for such a quality magazine. Club members will have a 20% discount.

AREA

A copy of the magazine order form for 2024 is in the Club wallets. Orders need to be with me by November 1st. Please ensure this gets to your Club Flower Arranger Officer.

 I sent an email to all Club Flower Arranger Officers in early July to remind them of the delivery date for the Autumn issue. As yet all magazine orders seem to be correct.

The Autumn issue contains some wonderful photographs from the National Show at the magnificent Gloucester Cathedral. Lovely memories for those who managed to get to the event, and a taster of what you missed if you couldn’t attend. There are designs from the Harrogate Show and inspiring ideas for autumn arrangements.

If you wish to order the winter magazine please let your club Flower Arranger officer know.

**Extra orders for the Winter issue need to be with me by August 20th.**

I have copies of the Autumn issue and some back copies of the magazine available, if you would like them as gifts for friends, to give to inspire new members, or as a raffle prize at your club.

**The Winter edition will be delivered on October 12th.**

**23/35 NATIONAL REPORT**

**Chairman** Mrs. Sheila Drybrough reported:

I attended the National Advisory Council Meeting via Zoom on 18th July. I will read the information via the notes I made during the meeting.

It is wonderful to announce that the National Show was a great success in many ways. It was able to showcase the talents of exhibitors, demonstrators, speakers, judges and education elements that go towards being able to see the splendour of what was on offer. It was also a financial success: the Show made a surplus of £53,563p and attracted 3,653 visitors. This profit will go towards reducing the current NAFAS deficit. This is very good news and was not achieved without a lot of really hard work by all those who were involved in putting on the Show.

On behalf of our Area, we have sent a card of Congratulations to Kathleen Kear and all the team who have been involved in staging the event.

Steven Lane, the Chief Executive Officer, reported that now the Show has finished, they are concentrating on the business plan, looking at the governance and finance for the key elements for Offqual, together with how to promote the Flower Arranger and handbooks. One of the ways they will be doing this is at the World Cup of Floristry Show in Manchester this September. It is a show that has never been to Britain before with over 20 competitors from countries such as Peru, Canada, Finland, United Kingdom and South Korea creating the most cutting edge floral designs.

It will take place at Manchester Central Convention Centre on 7th- 9th September and the tickets are on sale online priced at £28 per adult, £10 for young adults (13-17) and children under 12 are free.

The National Speakers’ test will be held this year in our Area at Stockton on Forest on 3rd August. Tickets are £12 from NAFAS Headquarters and I think Rita has a few she will be able to sell today. I hope you will be able to support this event as there will be six candidates taking their test with some interesting talks that your Clubs may want to book as an alternative to a demonstration.

We wish Peter Mathers well as he will be taking his test on this day.

Niki Wylie, National Vice Chairman, is looking to recruit new trustees to replace those trustees who have reached their final year. The post is for three years with the option of extending for a further three years and the application form is on the National Website. They are looking for members who have skills or a background in Human Resources (HR), Legal and Marketing. If anyone is interested or you know of anyone in your club who might be interested and have these skills, please let us know.

**23/36 AREA REPRESENTATIVES’ REPORTS**

**DEMONSTRATORS** Mrs. Sue Spencer reported:

Good afternoon everyone, it seems as if Summer is almost over in my garden, but hopefully we will get some late blooms.

NATIONAL

I am sure we all enjoyed the National Show and the Committee would like to thank everyone who attended and a special thank you to all who took part.

Congratulations to all in our Area who staged some wonderful designs

Another date for your diaries is 7 – 9th September not really far away

The Interflora World Cup Floral Design Competition to be held in Manchester

NAFAS will have a high presence with the Flower Arranger and Demonstrations.

The Digital Blue Form will be going out shortly on a trial run.

AREA

How the year is passing by the Autumn Show at Newby Hall will soon be upon us. As I am sure you will have heard there will be Floral Art competitions again this year. On a smaller scale but I do hope you will be able to go along and support them by entering or just looking to see if you agree with the Judges. (who I have to say do a wonderful job).

We are still looking for members who may be interested in becoming a Demonstrator, as yet we do not have sufficient candidates to start training although we have been contacting other Areas to join us.

We do have one new trainee demonstrator Kay Ford from our Area who is actually traveling to Shropshire as they have training running now, and also Sarah Spencer who completed her training and then for family reasons was unable to take her test both would love to be invited to demonstrate at clubs. Please contact Ann Simpson or myself for details

A message from Demonstrators we do understand that Clubs are trying to cut down the hours of room bookings due to cost, but some Demonstrators are finding it very difficult to set up and clear in the time allowed. Can I please ask particularly if you are having an Open Meeting that extra time is allowed for the Demonstrator.

Often Demonstrators travel a long distance and could do with a little break after set up before the demonstration, and many are also lucky if they get home before midnight.

It would be helpful if Clubs can consider using online banking, as it is often difficult to bank cheques and give careful consideration to the flower allowance.

We are not complaining as we love what we do, but just need time to breath please.

If you have any enquiries please feel free to contact me or speak to me after the meeting

**EDUCATION** Mrs. Christine Hinchcliffe read a report prepared by Mrs. Vanessa Wellock:

NATIONAL

I was unable to attend the National Education Meeting and I am awaiting the minutes from the meeting.

AREA

We had a very successful day in June for the Workshop with Mark Entwistle, who led a very informative workshop, members made 2 designs each. Mark was very helpful and made everyone feel at ease. The day ran smoothly and everyone who attended had a very enjoyable day. The Workshop was held here at the Folk Hall which proved to be very successful as they provided tea and coffee, members brought their own lunches. Members all left very happy with their designs.

The next Workshop will be on Saturday 23rd September back at Wigginton Recreational Hall and the Tutor for the day is Eleanor Griffiths from Cheshire. Eleanor is a very innovative designer with several Chelsea Gold medals as well as gold medals from many RHS shows as well as being a multiple medal winner at The Harrogate Flower Show, I’m sure we will have a fabulous day as she has a wicked sense of humour as well as being very talented.

Moving on to 2024- The dates for the Education meetings for 2024 are Saturday 16th March and Saturday 21st September, they will be held here at the Folk Hall. Tutors are yet to confirm. I have the new membership forms with me for the new Education Year, I shall be sending them out by email this week.

**JUDGES** Mrs. Janet Hayton reported:

NATIONAL

Since our last meeting we have had the National Show in Gloucester and the Judges must have had a very difficult time as there was some wonderful work. It was certainly a show to remember.

The new edition of the Competitions Manual went on sale at the National Show and it is now available for anyone who is interested in competing so do get your copy if you have not already done so.

The Judges’ Conference to be held at Dromantine in Northern Ireland from 18th/20th August is now completely full which is good news.

AREA

Our Refresher Day for Judges took place on Saturday 17 June at Wigginton Recreation Hall with Margaret Rumens as our tutor. The day was open to keen competitors and those interested in becoming Judges as well as those already on our lists. From the feedback I have received the day was very popular with everyone saying how good it was to get together after such a long break. The updated Competitions Manual was high on the agenda and we were able to discuss the changes as Margaret pointed them out to us.

We then had practice in both oral and written comments which everyone felt was very beneficial.

A big ‘thank you’ to everyone who helped in any way with the running of the day and especially to those who agreed to create the splendid designs used in the judging exercises. The offers of help were much appreciated.

If anyone was unable to attend the Refresher Day, there is one taking place in the North Midlands Area on Saturday 30 September from 10.00 until 3.00. The tutor will also be Margaret Rumens. Please do contact me for further details.

We do also have the Autumn Show at Newby HallallH to look forward to and it will be good to see Flower Arranging Classes again

**SPEAKERS** Mrs. Rita Braithwaite reported:

NATIONAL

Plans are now being firmed up for the National Test at Stockton on the Forest, taking place on 3rd August. The National Speakers’ Symposium being held on line in July has been postponed.

AREA

As we heard in the National report plans are now well underway for the National Speakers Tests at Stockton on the Forest on 3rd August. The doors open at 9.15am and everyone must be seated by 9.45am. Tea and coffee are available but you must bring your own lunch. Tickets are £12.

Tickets should ideally be purchased from HQ but we are able to sell tickets on the door and I just happen to have the printed tickets with me.

North East Area is second to none in supporting NAFAS at every level and I hope you will keep up our reputation by coming along. There are six speakers with a variety of topics and I am sure it will be an enjoyable day.

**23/37 MEDIA REPORTS**

**AREA MEDIA OFFICER** Mrs. Lynn Naylor reported:

I would like to remind members that the Autumn Flower Show takes place on the 15th, 16th and 17th September 2023 at Newby Hall. The promotional material I have already received from members is displayed on the table at the back of the room. I would be grateful if you would check your clubs’ leaflets for accuracy and, if necessary, update it as soon as possible before forwarding it to me, along with any other promotional material you would like to display at the show.

A few statistics from our Facebook Page. At present we have 1,612 followers, our “reach” is up 28% and our “engagement” is up 50%. I consider that a very successful Facebook Page. Many of our followers will forward our information to other groups and so on infinitum, therefore promoting NAFAS and flower arranging far and wide.

**WEBMASTER** Mr. Peter Mathers reported:

If members are experiencing difficulties in locating items on the Area website, I am happy to help.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| National sites: | Area sites: |
|  | www.flowersnortheast.org |
| [www.facebook.com/NafasFlowers](http://www.facebook.com/NafasFlowers) | www.facebook.com/nafas\_northeast |

**23/38 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Stuart Trewartha (Castleford) asked what is a Members Day?

Joan O’Brien (Projects Officer) replied that we have a speaker in the morning,followed by lunch and a demonstration in the afternoon. It is a number of years since we held a Members Day.

Rita Braithwaite (1st Vice Chairman) I was in Gloucester a few days before the National Show. The Board members were always busy, working hard to make the show a success and should be congratulated and thanked.

Tony Cleaver (National Associate of Honour & Historian) We are a large Area and clubs work hard to promote NAFAS in a variety of locations. At Driffield Show, four flower clubs (Driffield, Scarborough, East Riding & Beverley) staged exhibits which were viewed by the Duchess of Edinburgh, who spoke to a member of Driffield Flower Club.

Shirley Clegg (Area Associate of Honour) asked if the Blue Form has gone live on line

Sheila Drybrough replied that it will be trailled soon in selelcted areas.

Dorathy Hood (Great Ayton) 5 clubs from their Area are creating designs for Stokesley Show in September

Lesley Dalton (Knaresborough) thanked Joan O’Brien and the Executive for the very enjoyable trip to Gloucester.

Geraldine Carter (Halifax) Halifax Flower Club will be exhibiting at a local Agricultural Show on 12 August.

**23/39 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Saturday 14 October 2023 commencing at 1pm at The Folk Hall, New Earswick, York YO32 4AQ**

The meeting closed at 2.20pm

**APPENDIX 1**

**Report on the Area Exhibit at the Harrogate Spring Show 2023 written by Alison Cockburn.**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity of representing the North East Area at the Harrogate Spring Show.

It is always daunting when first given a title for a design.  You either have so many ideas that you don`t know where to start or your mind is a complete blank.  Fortunately, the title `England` immediately brought to mind `this Sceptered Isle` and it is useful to have a son who is able to point out that this is part of John O`Gaunts’ speech in Shakespeare`s Richard II.  Several parts of the speech appeared to have relevance:-

“This fortress built by Nature”

“This precious stone set in the silver sea

The next step was creating a mood board, which focuses the mind, and making rough sketches for a design.  I decided that the design should be of a castle on a mound and incorporate the colours red and gold of the Plantagenets surrounded by a silver sea.  Judy created 3 wonderful Plantagenet lions and I was tasked with creating a castle from an old flower box.  This proved to be a very messy but enjoyable task.  I spent many hours covered in wallpaper paste and newspaper.  I used woodchip paper to produce a stone effect and then sponge painted it.  And myself in the process.

We were then faced with the problem of mechanics.  I had decided in my wisdom that we would use lawn turf to cover the mound as this was plant material, which of course should predominate.  This meant that cardboard boxes were not going to be strong enough to support the weight.  Fortunately, Liz appeared with her dog crates as Judy and I were scratching our heads.  These were light weight and strong and had the advantage of having mesh sides to which we could attach things with cable ties.  The mound could then be created by covering the crate in chicken wire and stuffing it with cardboard – lots of it.

Unfortunately, we were not able to have a full scale rehearsal because of going down with COVID and Judy`s work commitments.  This meant that our first full session of construction was at the Show.  Visualising something in your head is not quite the same as physically doing it.  Nothing quite goes the way you had envisaged.  All the accessories such as pebbles and sand were much heavier than I thought.  The lawn turf kept slipping and it was only Liz`s suturing skills that saved the day.

While we were laying the lawn Judy was busy putting together her willow cascade.  Naively I thought that this wouldn`t be a problem as I could put together the top placement in a container on the bench and drop it into the urn which was inside the castle.  This proved to be a disaster, especially with the sceptre secured in the middle.  However, our antics did keep photographers and reporters amused as we struggled to lift a very heavy bowl, with the help of a kind young man, while balanced precariously on 2 sets of steps.  The sceptre fell over and in so doing the floral foam disintegrated.  After a valiant struggle I made the decision to take everything apart before the whole thing collapsed.  After considerably lightening the arrangement and shortening the sceptre`s pole we managed to get it in place.  Although, I must admit it looked a bit battle scarred and we never did manage to get the sceptre straight.  It made me realise that I should have put my lipstick on and worn something smarter but, I hadn`t envisaged attracting quite such a crowd.

Things seemed to be quite straightforward after that.  Until I realised, after Judy had left, that the willow cascade which should have linked the silver sea to the rest of the design stopped short at the bottom of the mound.  This left a considerable stretch of bare space.  Fortunately, we managed to lengthen the grassy slope and fill in with sand and pebbles.  I found some spiked test tubes in my toolbox and inserted them into the grass and sand and filled them with the same flowers as were in the willow.  Plants and flower arrangements helped bring things together.

I was left on my own to finish off and as it got dark I realised that there was no lighting above our installation. This made it difficult to see what I was doing.  I carefully went over the sea with a paint brush to flick off all the sand and I thought that I had obliterated our footprints from the beach.  However, I had missed quite a few as was glaringly obvious when I saw things in daylight.  I had also forgotten to finish off one of the placements and there was a bare semi-sphere of floral foam in a prominent position.  Unfortunately, I think that the judge had been to Specsavers.

The comments from the public were very positive which I think makes all the hard work worthwhile.  I have learned a lot from the experience and I know that there are a lot of things which I could do better.  If the chance to do something like this comes again I would love to do it.  Only next time I would definitely be going for gold.