

MINUTES OF THE 33RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT TREBAH GARDEN

ON

SATURDAY 12 OCTOBER 2024

1. PRESENT

Council of Management

Robert Dudley-Cooke (Chairman), Ray Townsend, Zoe Curnow, Tim Hubbard,
Mike Harvey

Apologies

Harry Bradshaw, Charles Richardson, Nina Khaira, Peter Hodgson, Peter & Ann
Davies, Caroline Carver, Clarissa Orwell, Christina O'Keeffe, Nick Robinson, Sue
Child, Keith and Aldyth Hambly Staite, Jayne Cadbury, Pamela Beattie, Henry and
Davina Haydon, Jackie Whibley

In attendance

Jon Cummins CEO & Gina Wilkes Head of Finance.
Tracy Campbell (Membership Secretary and minute -taker), Polly Caines,
Programming and Engagement Coordinator and Verity Stevenson, Business
Support Coordinator.

Members Present

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2. MINUTES OF THE 32nd AGM HELD ON SATURDAY 14 OCTOBER 2023

All members had access to a copy of AGM Minutes 2023, it was moved that the
Minutes be taken as read and approved.

Proposed by Ray Townsend, seconded by Susan Morris-Pester, approved.

3. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

BK Plus Accountants produced the audited accounts for the financial year ended
31st January 2024 was presented by David Hastings

Approved by Chris Hibbert & seconded by Ray Townsend

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

When approaching the Chairman's Report each year One naturally searches for a
sentence or phrase which encompasses all and gives the flavour of the year that
has recently passed.

Remember my report relates as do the accounts before us to the year from
February 2023 to January 2024 and is therefore related to what is now an
historic period

I remember in 1992 the Queen summed up her year as an annus horribilis,
accordingly taking the lead from a poem written in the 1667 by Dryden who
described that year as an annus mirabilis (a wonderful year). Where therefore
to pitch and describe our year here at Trebah which did not fall under either

definition or description. With your indulgence therefore I have described our year as an Annus Solidationis - a year of consolidation with the humblest apologies to such illustrious predecessors.

So a year of consolidation after the difficulties and aftermath of Covid during which we returned to our normal pattern of working, basically a return to 7 days a week opening.

You have heard the Auditor's Report and in broad outline visitor numbers are making significant strides towards our high point before the troubles of 120,000 visitors. At the Covid low point they had reduced to half that number. The actual number was just over 100,000 and in this current year the forecast is 105,000+. What is noticeable is that the income received notwithstanding has in fact increased. The spend per head has increased, the entrance charge has increased and our commercial outlets restaurant- shop sales - plant sales, have increased. Against this there are included in the account the final costs of the Court Garden and the initial costs of the conversion and repair work to the lodge to prepare this for holiday letting.

This year's budget (since February 2024) and the figures to date show that we are exceeding our target in visitor numbers and contribution, and we are very clearly moving forward which enables us to consider implementing many of the projects and improvements we have identified, and which are on the drawing board.

On the management front, Nigel Burnett, who had been our general manager for 18 years, retired in May 2023. His deputy had previously resigned from Trebah earlier in the financial year. We are very grateful to Nigel for heading up the management team through some very difficult economic and changing times and I am sure you will all join with me in wishing him a long and productive retirement - a retirement well earned.

When it came to looking for Nigel's replacement, we did not have to look far. We received very many applications but after an extensive interviewing process, we were delighted to appoint Jon Cummins from our own ranks. Jon had joined us in September 2022 from the National Trust in Cornwall, to strengthen our management team and during his short time with us had shown his considerable capabilities and potential.

Making a new appointment gave us a further opportunity to review our management process and Trebah's activities in general, root and branch so to speak and Jon has worked tirelessly since his appointment to that end together with the Management Committee and we have made changes as deemed necessary and appropriate. One such change was the appointment to Head of Finance (a new post) of Gina Wilkes who would work alongside Jon Cummins and have direct access to the Management Committee. Gina was well known to us having returned to manage our accounts department after some years away. During the financial year we continued to work on The Strategic Business Plan for Trebah which has been in the making for a number of years, a weighty tome indeed, which has now been completed.

The plan of course needs constant updating but clearly and precisely sets out our objectives, and aspirations for the future. It is of course compulsory reading for the Council of Management whose members have assured me that it is the last thing they read every night before sleep some members go so far as to say that it is indeed highly soporific and the only way to attain a good night's rest.

In addition, we are preparing a separate Garden Plan and Garden Management Plan which provides for detailed examination of all parts of the garden. The Garden Committee are responsible for these plans and for defining the need for a balance between commercial development to provide funding for the garden, and development of the garden itself. Gardens are living beings which is our duty to look after and nurture as well as providing new avenues of interest for our visitors we must never lose sight of the fact we are custodians of plants from all over the world which have thrived in our benign climate in Southwest Cornwall. The places of origin of many plants are often under threat in our ever increasingly destructive world and this, places on many Gardens in our county, an extra responsibility to preserve and ensure their survival.

In May 2023, the long promised Walled Garden finally opened which I am very pleased to say has been an instant success with our visitors and has received many accolades. Whilst we the trustees can take a bow for the design of the garden itself great credit and praise must go to Darren Dickey our long-time head gardener for the planting and illusion of maturity, which he has already managed to generate in the walled garden. Of course I should add with the help of his garden team.

The principal reason we were able to pick up and give the green light for the Walled Garden to proceed, was the very generous bequest of the sum of £145,000 from the estate of the late John Gould. Monies which we had put aside over preceding years we absorbed by the consequences of the Covid Epidemic. Accordingly, the bequest could not have come therefore at a more propitious time. We are and will remain deeply grateful for such a splendid gift used for a splendid addition to Trebah.

In addition, also monetary gifts were given by two Council members for specific items forming part of the walled garden

We had also put in hand the renewal of the children's play area 'Tarzan's camp' and a start made on the renovation of the lodge and garden entrance. The lodge indeed turned out to be a major undertaking and the work of conversion has only recently been completed in readiness for holiday letting.

The initial national publicity in relation to the Lodge ensured that next year 2025 it is already fully booked. This together with the residential letting of the upstairs of Trebah House is providing a second income stream as part of Trebah's property portfolio.

Trebah has benefitted throughout the financial year from strong national publicity coverage which is so essential for a garden of renown. We must once again, thank Darren Dickey for his excellent video coverage in this direction.

Lately, we have received a great accolade, and I will leave Jon to give you more details.

I do hope from the résumé of our financial year and update on the current year, I have passed on to you, the energy and attention that is given by the Trebah team. It is our duty under the terms of our charitable objects and articles of association, to ensure the garden continues in perpetuity. It is therefore very necessary in these highly commercial times, to plan well ahead and have ideas as to how Trebah may be sympathetically improved whilst maintaining our objective of nurturing and caring for the garden.

We are of course as good as our team of Staff Members and Trustees. A reoccurring comment and one of which we should be very proud, is the appreciation our public

have, for the kind and caring way they are treated here, so essential to maintaining our Trebah image and values.

A very grateful, thank you goes on behalf of the Council of Management to all our members of staff for the way they perform their various duties and the way, the staff make Trebah a very special place. A particular thank you goes to Jon Cummins for the way he has handled the challenges entrusted to him and for bringing together and forging a closer Trebah team. I have said before and it is deserving of repetition that being a charitable trust Trebah is very fortunate in having a strongly committed Council of Management, committed trustees who have given many years of service to the cause of securing Trebah's future.

So, a financial year of consolidation with an improving current year in progress which will enable us to bring forward our list of projects. I have one last thank you to make and that is to you, our members. We have no fewer than 6500 members something of which we can be very proud. A Membership number which grows year on year and long may it do so.

This concludes my report.

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Robert, thank you for the introduction and your kind words.
Good afternoon everyone and thank you for taking the time to attend.
Conscious that I did not speak at last years AGM, so initially today I wanted to introduce myself, give a little more detail on last year and briefly discuss our work going forward.

My career:

- Gardens have been part of my career from the start and are close to my heart.
- I joined Trebah because of the reputation it has and the opportunity it offers
- I feel privileged to have been given the trust and confidence of the Council and Robert as Chair for the opportunity this role offers and to have picked up the baton from Nigel Burnett who achieved a huge amount in his 18-year tenure.

My values:

- Being considerate of the past when making choices for the future. Respecting the history and fabric of the garden and understanding of the families and communities involved and Trebah Garden Trust.
- Thinking beyond today. Bring and embrace big ideas. Ask and challenge why.
- Ensure that we consider sustainability and climate change.
- Looking after our people – understand the knowledge, skills and experience within. Recruit and develop the right people and enable them to make the most of their potential. E.g. in 2023 we recruited two excellent new members of the team; Catherine Croft and Polly Caines, Programming and Engagement Coordinator.
- Recognising our supporters. Look after you, our members and our visitors as supporters of the charity and listen to your feedback.
- Strive for excellence. I aim to produce the best end result I can, and I expect the same high standards of our team. I always aim to be - and we should always be - proud of what we do.

Looking back:

2023 was a challenging year, both with the level of change we worked through in the team and some of the changes we implemented in the business - there's more detail on that in the annual report - but an enormous amount has been achieved:

- We opened Trebah fully again – giving access to Trebah 7 days a week, 362 days a year.
- We've opened the new Court Garden
- We have continued to open Trebah earlier each day at 9.30am.
- We re-introduced cash payments in August last year.
- Our commercial offer across the gift shop, garden shop & nursery and café has remained strong.
- Our cash position remained strong as we'd managed overheads and capital expenditure managed. Helped by the decrease in light and heat costs as a result of lower unit prices, but also the success of the second solar energy installation.
- Created a successful programme of events, talks and exhibitions with a slightly different direction, that both use the amphitheatre and are relevant to the garden and as part of that have been trialling and testing uses of this space (the Gallery space).
- Grown support by building our membership base - Introduced new membership categories and introduced some new member benefits. Two new attractions have joined our reciprocal scheme: Lappa Valley and Geevor Tin mine.
- We've almost doubled our team of volunteers to 69, introducing roles into different areas of our work.
- Invested time and money into essential maintenance and training necessary for compliance and safety.
- The Lodge has been the fastest selling cottage that our managing agent, Cornish Holiday Cottages has had. We have nearly sold out 2026, as well as 2025.
- A highlight was hosting Military Day for 80th anniversary of D-Day embarkations, continuing the tradition set by Tony Hibbert.
- We received a Trip Advisor Travellers choice award; we have been nominated for a Visit England Gold accolade and we were named as 8th best garden in the world. I believe Trebah punches above its weight in many areas. We may be modest in size compared with the bigger names such as Heligan, Chatsworth, Wisley or The Newt, but our reputation is up there with the best.
- We've done a good job of promoting all this through successful marketing, social media and PR.
- We have been developing a stronger and more cohesive team.

At this point I wanted to thank everyone involved here at Trebah – staff and volunteers – for initially how they welcomed me into the team, the hard work and dedication they've shown and the trust they have put in me through what has been a tough journey at times over the last eighteen months or so. Some are here today... Heartfelt thanks to you all.

Looking forward:

- Further re-revision and updating of the Strategic Plan and agreeing a Vision for Trebah.
- Developing an agreed list of proposed investments for cyclical repairs, maintenance and new projects.
- Recruitment of at least two new trustees over the next 6 months, thank you to those present who've expressed an interest.

- Robert mentioned the Garden development and management plans, but we will be investing in the garden this winter through, tree planting, a new compost facility, additional irrigation and improved, safer, access to the amphitheatre and starting on work to accurately record and identify some of the plant collection in the garden.
- Begin a programme of both refreshed and improved visitor signage and new botanical labels.
- Continue investing in the staff team through training and development.
- Further developing our volunteer involvement.
- Further increasing our visitor numbers by promoting Trebah as a high quality and inspirational destination.
- Undertaking feasibility for new capital projects where needed.
- Improvements to our catering and retail activities.
- Continuing to develop a relevant programme of events and exhibitions for Trebah as a garden and starting to explore new partnership opportunities.

A lot to do, especially when operating in a tricky landscape. There is a lot of competition for people's leisure time and money, with harder choices being made by many during the cost-of-living crisis. Continued uncertainty about domestic tourism is also predicted, especially here in Cornwall.

So far this year Trebah is bucking the trend of tourism in Cornwall. From 1 February to the end of September we have welcomed 11% more visitors than in the same period in 2023. Many other attractions are reporting similar % reductions. We should be pleased with this success and celebrate it, but we must not rest on our laurels.

I can simply give you my word that I will work hard alongside the board and with the team to maintain and grow Trebah's garden, its business and reputation.

I hope both the Council of Management and you as our members feel assured that the day-to-day leadership of Trebah is in competent hands in the years to come. Thanks again to you all for your time and for your support of Trebah.

6. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

It was recommended that BK Plus Accountants be re-appointed.
Proposed Gill Pipkin seconded Carol Hurst, approved.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

In accordance with the Articles of Association, the Re-election of officers by rotation Mike Harvey, Tim Hubbard and Harry Bradshaw.
Proposed by Gill Pipkin and seconded by Lucie Nottingham.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Comments/questions from members present.

Susan Morris-Pester asked about whether the Council of Management were able to update the member on the possibility of toilets in the garden. RDC and JC confirmed that feasibility will be undertaken and temporary toilets will be trialled next year on the beach.

Eileen Mould asked if it was possible to improve access for visitors using mobility scooters by adjusting the speed humps. JC confirmed this is something we can look into with a ground works contractor.

Susan Morris-Pester thanked Jon and the team for the excellent job they are doing.

MEETING CLOSED

