

MINUTES OF THE 29TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT TREBAH HOUSE, TREBAH GARDEN

ON

SATURDAY 17 OCTOBER 2020

1. PRESENT

Council of Management

Robert Dudley-Cooke (Chairman), Carolyn Brodie, Lucie Nottingham, Sue Nathan, Harry Bradshaw, Charles Richardson, Mike Harvey, Tim Hubbard, Gillian Pipkin,

Apologies

Dr Susan Child, Randal Hibbert, Helen Fletcher, Janette Mellor, Mr and Mrs Shattock, Tony Vyvyan (Trustee), Ray Townsend (Trustee) Peter Hodgson (consultant and member of trust management committee)

In attendance

Nigel Burnett, Director

Members Present

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2. MINUTES OF THE 28th AGM HELD ON SATURDAY 12 OCTOBER 2019

All members had access to a copy of AGM Minutes 2019, it was moved that the Minutes be taken as read and approved.

Proposed and Seconded. Approved by Caroline Brodie and Tim Hubbard

3. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Each year at the AGM I go to great lengths to explain (if explanation were needed) that the accounts under consideration are historic, for a period which ended some 9 months before the AGM itself. My report in addition gives an update on the current trading and financial position.

This year Covid-19 has made that distinction without further assistance on my part. The period before Covid (BC) and the period after Covid (AC).

Those halcyon BC days are represented by the accounts we are considering up to the 31 January 2020. The Trust had made a profit of £306,000 for the year which was helped by a generous legacy which the accounts estimate at £135,000. This amount has now been received but as you will learn from the Auditor's report has to be included in the earlier accounts under consideration. That figure £306,000 was achieved after completion of the alterations to the access to the beach which, I have to say, are a tremendous improvement. In addition, we have completed the installation of ground source heating to power our visitor centre. Planning had been granted for our long in gestation project, the Walled Garden the contractors were

about to be given the go-ahead to commence work, the money had been earmarked for this project and all was ready to go.

I remember well, a meeting of the Management Committee convened to discuss the question of the level of reserves necessary for Trebah. The current limit was at the time £250,000 which it was unanimously felt, by the Trustees, should be increased to £500,000. During the meeting we considered what events could befall Trebah which could possibly put such a strain on our cash reserves. We considered the burning down of the Visitors Centre the most likely event to cause major disruption and loss of income. We reassured ourselves that even in this most unlikely event we would still have the garden to open and generate income to enable us to continue. The Trust was, therefore, at this time in a healthy position not only as to the level of annual profit sustained over a good few years but also we had built up cash funding for a number of projects we were able to have completed over recent years – solar panels, ground source heating, beach access improvement, The Amphitheatre. The provision for a Walled Garden for our less mobile visitors in particular but of course not exclusively had been funded in readiness for the completion of the Walled Garden over an 18 month period and work by our internal workforce had just started.

Then came Covid-19 at seemingly indecent speed followed by the lockdown when all operations ceased. A skeleton staff only remained to secure our premises and garden; the remainder of our staff were furloughed. Trebah was an eerily quiet place the like of which I have never seen before in near 40 years.

Similar to many organisations in what is deemed the leisure sector. Trebah's income is seasonal in simple terms, we are on the debit side for the winter 6 months and very much on the credit side during spring and summer. Therefore, (if ever there could be a good time) Trebah went into lockdown in March at the very worst time, having just come through our quiet winter period, the receipts, and cash flow at its annual lowest.

Furlough, I have to say, assisted very considerably as we sought to reduce our overheads to an absolute minimum, holding the line until we could open again. That day came after 3 months and we were able to open our doors once again and admit visitors in mid-July. The very necessary restrictions limited the number of visitors we could admit, and a slot system was introduced to regulate the flow of visitors. Very much in line with keeping the overheads at a reduced level we decided to limit our open days to 5 days a week rather than 7 days. This modus operandi has so far proved successful in that whilst being unable to offer all the facilities previously offered, our visitor numbers have exceeded expectations and the revised budget figures are very much in line with previous years notwithstanding, an achievement indeed.

However, we shall be entering shortly into our next quiet winter period, once again, regardless of any further emergency restrictions which may probably be placed upon us and there is a strain, therefore, on Trebah's finances with 2 winter periods and less than ½ summer period to compensate. A period of austerity will in all probability have to follow, and our projects will of necessity have to be delayed for the foreseeable future to ensure Trebah's survival. The policies of the last years have meant that Trebah went into the Covid storm in the best of conditions our borrowings and therefore our commitments were and are very small relative to the size of our operation and we are seeking to come through the present situation without recourse to borrowings using monies already reserved in the Trust for our rainy day and other purposes. The position is very much dependent of course on the restrictions that may be yet to come and for how long.

The message has been and is therefore very much one of resolve steering our way through these troubled times with the help and deep commitment of our very able staff who receive so many commendations for their friendly and efficient service in these difficult times. It was therefore a matter of sadness to receive a letter from a resident of the local village not expressing the usual appreciation but complaining that Trebah “seems to have lost its way being driven by commercialism”. The existing Management Team of staff and trustees have been in place for very many years, having seen Trebah through troubled times and the austerity years whilst enabling the many improvements to be made for the benefit of our visitors. I and my fellow Trustees do not accept therefore the appellation. It is true to say that both in the past and of course currently that without the professionalism and commercial knowledge brought by the Trebah Team, Trebah in all probability would not now exist as a garden open to the public.

My great thanks and those of my fellow trustees, go to our director Nigel Burnett and all members of staff for their resilience and may I say levelheadedness and hard work during these last trying months. Their understanding of the need to preserve the Trust and thus the Garden in perpetuity has enabled us to have the flexibility to modify our business model to fit the changing world around us.

There are very challenging times ahead particularly as we are will entering our winter season with a renewed onslaught from Covid -19. The situation is being constantly monitored so that we can take appropriate action as required. In the meantime, our projects and planned improvements must remain on hold.

One of our Trustees, Tony Vyvyan, is retiring from the Committee after this meeting. Tony has served many years and the Trust has benefitted greatly from his sage advice and level-headed approach. Tony has a considerable ability, after lengthy discussion to summarise in a few words the way forward and I and my fellow Trustees owe him a great debt of gratitude. Tony has for a number of years, since he has passed his first flush of youth, requested permission to retire, which I have on every occasion, refused. I have now run out of excuses, reasons which he cannot, and in a weak moment acquiesced. I, we, will miss him greatly, but leaves with our very, very grateful thanks.

Our grateful thanks too, go to our members. We have witnessed very strong growth in our membership in recent years and this has continued in the financial year under discussion and I am very pleased to say up to the current time. Their strong support and indeed gratitude for our efforts are so much appreciated as we face the further challenges ahead of us.

In conclusion may I give a reminder that Trebah is a charitable trust subject to “Very strict rules of accountability”. What we do, we do for Trebah and its future. My fellow Trustees bring with them a wealth of different skills and knowledge all given freely (as to time and cost) for the benefit of the Trust and the garden, which is of course our motivating force.

4. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

James Hodgson of Hodgsons Accountants produced the audited accounts and the auditor’s report for the financial year ended 31st January 2020 was read out.
Approved by Charles Richardson and Gillian Pipkin

5. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

It was recommended that Hodgsons be re- appointed. Proposed and seconded.
Approved by Tim Hubbard and Mike Harvey

6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

In accordance with the Articles of Association, Robert Dudley-Cooke, Ray Townsend, Sue Nathan and Lucie Nottingham, offered themselves for re-election to the Council of Management. Proposed and Seconded. Approved by Lizzie Hoskins and Mike Harvey