



MALMESBURY and DISTRICT GARDEN CLUB

March/April NEWSLETTER 2025

www.malmesburygardenclub.org.uk

Chair and Secretary – Ellie Church



ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE CHAIR

It is with a very heavy heart that I write this announcement on the future of the Garden Club.

Members have from now until the September meeting to volunteer to become committee members.

The present committee will be resigning *en masse* as most of them are in their eighties and nineties and some are struggling with health issues.

We would hate to see the demise of the Garden Club but unless we have a committee we see no alternative.

At present the committee meets monthly but a new committee could arrange meetings to suit.

A couple of the old committee would explain the separate roles and hand them over to you.

I really hope you come forward.

Ellie Church – Chairperson

SUBSCRIPTION TIME

Subscriptions are now due for 2025. They remain fixed at £7 for individual members and £10 for joint members in the same household. We have a full programme of talks and events for the coming year, and I think you will agree that this represents extremely good value for your subscription.

Details of how to pay and an application form are at the end of this Newsletter.

Thank you,

Sean O'Shea (Treasurer)



Tasks for March/April



- Plant out early sown sweet peas
- Cut back winter flowering heathers
- Cut back autumn flowering shrubs, fuchsias, buddleias, etc.
- Sow half-hardy annuals
- Prune bedding roses, hybrid teas and floribundas
- Spray roses against black spot
- Complete planting of lilies
- Apply general fertilizer to the borders
- Sow under cloches early carrots and lettuce
- Sow herbs under glass: basil, coriander, etc.
- Plant onion sets, potatoes
- Sow wrinkled peas
- Sow late summer cabbage and leeks
- For April: sow Brussels sprouts, kale, etc.

MEETINGS - EVENTS - ACTIVITIES

<p>Monday 10 March 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall</p> <p><i>Garden Heaven</i> Vanessa Berridge</p> <p>Vanessa is founding editor of The English Garden magazine and author of multiple gardening books. Her talk is entitled "Garden Heaven", also the subject of her latest book</p>	<p>Monday 14 April 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall</p> <p><i>The Secrets of Successful Water Gardening</i> James Allison</p> <p>James is Principal of Water Garden Solutions based in Cheltenham. He lectures in this country and abroad and is an award-winning writer</p>
<p>Saturday 24 May 2025 The Market Cross, Malmesbury</p> <p><i>Annual Plant Sale</i></p> <p style="border: 1px solid red; display: inline-block; padding: 2px;">Please note the change of date</p>	<p>Saturday 26 July 2025 Charlton Village Hall</p> <p><i>Annual Show</i></p>
<p>Monday 8 September 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall</p> <p><i>Bees in Gardening</i> Richard Ricketts</p>	<p>Monday 13 October 2025 7.30pm in the Charlton Village Hall</p> <p><i>Clematis</i> Andy Jeanes</p>

THE FUTURE OF MALMESBURY GARDEN CLUB

Over the years our membership has been in decline. Expenditure has exceeded income, but we survive on our healthy bank balance. More pressing is the absence of volunteers to help run the Club and serve on the Committee. Our current committee members have all served for many years and now feel that it is time to hand over the reins.

Volunteers are required to fill the roles of chairperson, secretary, treasurer, membership secretary (to include GDPR compliance), speakers organiser, refreshments organiser, someone to set up loud speakers and store same, publicity officer, website manager, newsletter editor, newsletter printer and distributor (some of these roles do not require being a member of the committee) and accounts auditor (not a committee member).

An **Emergency General Meeting** will be held on **Monday 8 September 2025**, and if no new committee members come forward, a motion will be put to *close the Club* and the existing committee will resign *en masse*.

Currently, no decision has been made to cancel the Plant Sale and Annual Show, but these can only go ahead if there are volunteers to run them.

This decision has been taken with a heavy heart. None of us want to oversee the demise of this Club that has been in existence for more than 50 years. Our wish is that we hand over to a new, dynamic committee, who will bring new ideas and vigour, to take the Club forward.

If you can help, please contact Sean at seanoshea5124@gmail.com or speak to us at a meeting.

Reports from recent meetings

Mike Hinwood: A Year in the Life off a Nurseryman

Jim Thomas welcomed Mike Hinwood from Foxley Nursery, known to everyone in the room, who gave us all some background information to the Nursery, and of his month by month work schedule.



So, how did it all start? Mike's grandfather was a keen amateur gardener, growing peaches and nectarines on a south-facing garden in Malmesbury while running the family business of Hinwood & Son, Gentleman's Outfitters & Drapers in the High Street. But it was his parents who started the nursery in 1948 as a market garden growing leeks, celery, carrots and parsnips as a wholesale venture, then adding in cucumbers, lettuce and tomatoes supplying local greengrocery shops, of which there were many in Malmesbury, plus a mobile round to supply the outlying villages.

One of Mike's first paid jobs on the nursery was scrubbing wooden seed trays for which he was paid the princely sum of 6d per hour! Greenhouses were initially heated using a coal-fired boiler, later replaced by oil. Mike took over the running of Foxley Nursery with his wife Carol in 1987, more or less as we know it today. He had trained in horticulture at Merrist Wood College, Guildford, and worked in London and Hertfordshire before finally returning to Wiltshire. Carol has gained a wealth of knowledge since joining the family and nursery and is now responsible for all the ordering of plants and seeds etc, plus all the necessary paperwork.

When not on the nursery, Mike enjoys working at the top of a ladder pruning roses, though has been known to lose his footing on more than one occasion – hence his requesting his fee to be paid to Wiltshire Air Ambulance!! The Christmas trees which appear every year throughout the town on numerous buildings are placed and removed by Mike, which also involves putting lights on each tree, then removed and stored away for the next Christmas.

To summarise, Mike broke the year into monthly sections:

January: Nursery closed to allow for maintenance, catch-up jobs and a rest.

February: Better weather and longer days allow for general maintenance, full sterilising of all pots, benches and greenhouses, and the start of planting the new season's plug plants.

March: Seed sowing begins in earnest with the help of seasonal staff.

April: Sales of herbaceous and perennial plants.

May: The busiest month of the year, as sales of bedding plants soar.

June: Stock-take month, while continuing with pricking out and watering.

July: A quieter time, so an opportunity to go on holiday and take a well-earned rest.

August: Another quiet month, school holidays, but building up for the sale of surplus summer bedding plants.

September: Arrival of bulbs and Autumn bedding plants.

October: Carol submits the seed order for the following year, while continuing with the endless round of paperwork.

November: Weather dependent so can be very quiet on the Nursery, minimal staff required.

December: Lights to Christmas trees for distribution around Malmesbury, sales of Christmas trees, wreaths and table decorations.

At the end of the talk, there was one pressing question from the floor: how good is peat-free compost? Members were not convinced of its efficacy, but Mike reiterated that it does work well using other medium (garden compost and leaf mould) and noting the different water requirements.

Mike's sales' table of plants from the Nursery was welcomed by all.

Victoria Wright: Non-peat Growing Materials

Victoria Wright, Technical Manager at Melcourt Industries, gave us a very insightful talk on Peat-Free compost which is produced in Tetbury, and has been in operation since 1983. The company started with just 2 main trustees, one being from a sawmill in Shropshire and the other being Jenkinsons from Penrith, who are responsible for the transportation of all Melcourt products from their site in Tetbury.



Melcourt is the UK's leading supplier of mulches, growing media, play surfaces, soil improvers, equestrian surfaces, biofiltration media and more, based on bark, wood and other natural materials.

A leader in innovation and high quality for nearly four decades, Melcourt has developed a range of products that is second to none, with unparalleled technical back-up, prompt and efficient delivery, outstanding levels of customer care and all-importantly, excellent environmental sustainability.

Victoria leads a team of experts who are constantly analysing samples of raw products which are UK sourced, also the methods of drying and turning the finished products before being ready to be packaged. SylvaGrow multi-purpose compost is a unique blend of fine bark, woodfibre (by-products of sustainably managed forests) and coir. It contains balanced nutrients sufficient for the first 4 - 6 weeks of growth. It contains no peat or green waste compost. It is also renewable, consistent, readily available, UK sourced, low pH, and low in nutrients as befits the requirements of multi-purpose compost. Green compost is not used as it is not consistent, may contain herbicides, and invariably traces of micro-plastics.

There are Melcourt products for all garden uses and Victoria was quick to point out the benefits of the multi-purpose compost as follows: 1) Watering, to be done little and often, 2) Dry surface compost does not always mean dry below, 3) Provides an excellent weed-suppressant, 4) Feeding may be required earlier, so be vigilant, 5) Some Peat-Free composts have long-term feed incorporated into the compost, hence the necessity to understand the ingredients, 6) Should there be any problems, they should be reported immediately – reassuring to have this back-up.



Victoria and her team were able to advise members on local sources of SylvaGrow as there is no shop currently on site, primarily because they are keen to support local distributors. One cause of concern to the team was the use of plastic to package the products, but they are working on producing larger bags for larger gardens, while maintaining a need for the bags to be recyclable. The Bag for Life is another option with some garden centres providing Melcourt compost loose as long as you buy the necessary bag.

Two very lucky winners of the raffle prize walked away with a bag of Melcourt compost each.

Margaret Medland



FROM THE GARDEN by KEITH

Comments from the garden

As I write this there is more water standing in many parts of the garden than I have ever had before – the lawn, the gravel drive, all the

borders, even the vegetable plot! It will need many weeks to dry out.

Lilies

I must start with a type I have never tried before, Goliath O T, what a sight! Best for the back of the border or shrubbery, growing up to 8ft (240cm), these produce up to 40 flowers per bulb in July/August, each measuring 20cm across. Be warned, it will be up to 3 years before they get to this size. Here are a few varieties: PURPLE LADY, purple/pink with a light yellow centre; HONEYMOON, golden yellow; RED MORNING, crimson red and apricot yellow; ORANGE SPACE, bright orange flowers; BEVERLEY DREAM, maroon with creamy white edges.



The trumpet lilies are all very fragrant, all growing between 4ft and 5ft (120-150cm). I have always grown this variety in pots, a stake might be needed if positioned in a windy spot. Here are just a few I have tried and can recommend: REGALE, flushed yellow white, with between 10 and 15 flowers per stem; PINK PERFECTION, large deep pink flowers; AFRICAN QUEEN, funnel shaped apricot flowers. All trumpet lilies flower July/August.

The dwarf lilies are well worth a try; they are ideal for pots. Dwarf oriental and dwarf asiatic lilies are quite a sight from June to August, depending on variety. Flowers have six outer petals with a cluster of stamens in the centre. I have always grown these with summer bedding beneath, both grow to 3ft (90cm) in height. Here are some I can recommend: asiatic lily FOXTROT, pale pink; ABBEVILLES PRIDE, orange; HAPPY LOVE, purple red. Oriental lilies are also worth a try: MUSCADEL, white with pink spots; SALMON PARTY, salmon pink with bright orange speckles; GOLD BLEND, large white flowers with gold/orange markings.

There are many other varieties of lilies including *longiflorum* which are again fragrant, ht 3-4ft (90-120cm), tiger lillies, 3-4ft (90-120cm), *Lilium* species and old favourites and hybrid lilies which can grow up to 5ft (150cm). One thing I have always done when planting lilies is to place a small amount of horticultural grit or sand

beneath the bulb, also planting at a 45% angle so as to stop too much water entering the growing point therefore rotting it.

Herbaceous revival

Coral bells, also known as *Heuchera*, is a must for every garden. Flowering from June to September, it is a plant for the front of the border and many other places including the rockery, ht 2ft (60cm) depending on variety. Some good varieties include: PURPLE PALACE, purple maple-like leaves, flowers appear pale pink evolving into deep purple; ELECTRA has lime green leaves with orange veins. There are many other varieties worth adding to your border.

Tickseed or *Coreopsis* has an average height of 18ins (45cm), colours range from golden yellow, mauve-pink, yellow-orange to red, flowering June to October depending on variety. A number of different plants are also called tickweed. Bee Blossom, or *Gaura* variety WHIRLING BUTTERFLIES is one of the best, a mass of upright stems topped with delicate white blooms fluttering in the summer breeze, ht 2ft (60cm).



One to think about for next time King's Spear.

Keith's choice shrub

Cytisus battandieri (Moroccan broom or yellow tail tree): I have had this in my garden for over 20 years. Pruned after flowering it is still only 6ft (180cm) high. A lovely semi-evergreen shrub or climbing shrub with silvery green leaves. In June a profusion of spiky yellow flowers appear smelling of pineapples. Grow it as a shrub or train its long growths on a wall or trellis.



No disease please

Lily disease: A fungus causes leaves to turn brown or bleached and die off; leaves wither from the base of stem upwards. Flower buds are also affected and fall off or remain but do not flower. If infection spreads to the stem the plant will topple over. Removal of entire lily is the only remedy, including the bulb if signs of rot are seen. Change soil if grown in a pot, or plant in a

different place next year. I have never had this disease.

Plants to enjoy in March/April

Forsythia, Magnolia, Prunus, Spiraea, Camellia, Berberis, Dornicum, Saxifraga, Primulas, Arabis, lily of the valley, Dicentra.

Bulbs: *Iris danfordiae, Crocus, Chionodoxa, Eranthus, Hyacinthus, Narcissus in variety, Scilla, tulips in variety, Muscari (grape hyacinth), Fritillaria.*



FROM THE VEGETABLE PLOT by KEITH

Comments from the veg plot

CARROTS: *"Please don't plant me next to the onions again, the smell was awful."*

BEETROOT: *"Not next to the leeks again, please; we have been under water for months."*

LETTUCE: *"You did this last year, planting us next to the broad beans. We were squashed beyond belief."*

PEAS: *"This was a joke: the runner beans never left us alone."*

If they could talk . . . you never know! Having said the above, onions by carrots help deter carrot fly.

Tomatoes

With it being over five years since I wrote about tomatoes and that a lot of people grow them, it's time for an update. Also I have noticed many new varieties are available. Many growers have trials with the new varieties so giving a good idea how the new varieties perform. Tomatoes are now grown in many different ways, indoor and outdoor, also as cherry, beefsteak, plum, grape and medium size. There are a number of cherry varieties that are ideal for hanging baskets. Plum tomatoes, with an elongated shape, I have grown many times. There are also heritage tomatoes which still have a fantastic flavour.

These tomatoes are suitable for hanging baskets: TUMBLING TOM, bright red sweet and very compact yielding masses of small round fruits; LOSETTO, a blight resistant variety producing an abundance of sweet toms with a cascading effect; TUMBLING TIGER, can produce well over 150 small oval fruits per plant with a sweet taste; CHERRY FALLS, sweet cascading cherry toms with good resistance to disease.



Some cherry toms that can be grown outside in the ground with support, also with good resistance to blight, verticillium wilt and mosaic virus: SAKURA, long trusses of sweet fruits; CROKINI F1, an award winning tom with an abundance of sweet tasting small round red toms; KORALIK F1, this is a bush variety that will be quite happy in a pot on the patio, producing medium size cherry toms with good taste and disease resistance.

Bush varieties can be planted in the ground with straw or something similar around them to keep the fruits from touching the ground: CHOCOLATE CHERRY, its purplish fruits have a first rate flavour, trusses can contain up to 12 round cherry size fruits, well worth a try.

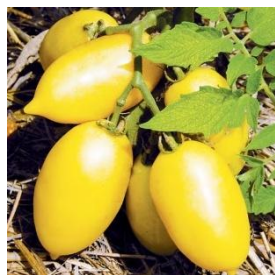


Other slightly larger varieties I have tried outside with good disease resistance especially to blight include: COCKTAIL CRUSH, a medium size fruit with a really traditional flavour; CRIMSON CRUSH, again a good size with great flavour, classed as a beefsteak but not quite; FANDANGO is a very large tom, not quite a beefsteak, a good size and with good blight resistance and a good taste; PAOLINE, another one worth growing, top marks for taste, a medium size tom with good disease resistance.

If you would like to grow a beefsteak then try GIGANTOMO F1. The fruits can weigh up to 1kg with good taste and disease resistance. Slightly smaller but still a beefsteak come BIG DADDY, COUNTRY TASTE and MARMANDE A.G.M. All have good disease resistance. GAZZY is a yellow beefsteak, slightly ribbed with fruits weighing 12.3oz (3.5gm).

Plum tomatoes are a favourite of many people. I have not grown any of these but a lot of friends of mine grow them every year. SAN MARZANO seems to be a favourite of most people, its firm meaty flesh is perfect in salads or sandwiches, can be grown outside; ORANGILLO in trials had the best tasting mini plum, the orange fruits are very sweet growing on compact plants. There are quite a few plum varieties, but here are just a few: SUPER MAMA F1, large plum up to 1lb (500gm) each very sweet; FLAMINGO F1, a mini plum producing 1/2oz (20gm) superbly sweet fruits; CELANO F1, a good one for pots, bushy really delicious small bright red fruits; LIMONCITO F1, producing sunshine yellow small oval fruits with good flavour; NAGINA F1, amazing crop of tangy sweet plum fruits.

Heritage tomatoes are also good to try: PINK BRANDYWINE dates back to 1885, large pink fruits with a sweet and tangy flavour, meaty with few seeds, a beefsteak variety; CREAM SAUSAGE also known as banana cream, very prolific with good flavour, a plum variety; BLOODY BUTCHER, a medium size tomato, an early variety, full of flavour.



If you wish to impress your friends and neighbours, then have a go at one of these: tomatillo DE MILPA, an heirloom variety, the fruits are reputed to have a fabulous taste, wine stained blushing with purple as they mature; tomatillo VERDELINO needs no staking and tolerates colder summers, fruits are golf ball size enclosed by a papery husk like a Chinese lantern. These fruits are green when ripe, a Mexican heritage variety with a tangy flavour between a lime and a beefsteak tomato, some fruits will blush with purple after harvesting.

Seasonal activities

Here we go again: my favourite time of the year, seed sowing, making vegetable areas ready for planting by spreading compost and fertilizer, so long as the weather is in our favour. We should be able to start sowing vegetable seeds depending on the weather. Most varieties can be sown now: carrots, spring onions, beetroot, salad of various varieties, radish, broad beans and potatoes. All are best planted in late March to early April. You will probably get away without frost protection, but earth up soil over the growth (haulms) should there be a frost forecast. There are of course many other varieties you can start including leek seeds. I prefer to sow these in a 6inch pot in the cold greenhouse, it gives an earlier crop if the ground is cold. Continue to clean up vegetable areas that have had winter crops in them, remember where you planted each variety; it is far better to plant these winter varieties in a different place each year, it helps prevent a build-up of various diseases. If you covered your rhubarb in January a quick look will show that it will not be long before you can pull some pale red champagne sticks.

Spring has sprung my fig has at least twenty figs spread through the plant. It is four years old and is beginning to show leaf, I am hopeful of a good crop this year. Getting ready for your vegetable varieties is a good plan at this time of year, sticks up for runner beans or climbing french beans, putting compost in certain areas, especially for carrots – they don't like farmyard manure, it causes them to split. Trench out and partially fill the trench with compost, as you will be growing early potatoes push them into the

compost at about 18ins (45cm) apart and fill back in. I mark each end with a stick so I can see where they are.

As I write this it is possible there will not be an annual vegetable and flower show, but things can change. The show should be on Saturday July 26th and it will be on us before you know it. Every entry makes the show more interesting, even if your vegetable has not grown as it should. A section on weird looking vegetables is a possibility! You never know, I may have a few. Fancy a first prize for your deformed vegetable.

Starting your seeds in a seed sized propagator gives you an early start and could save you money. Cucumbers, peppers, courgettes, tomatoes, cabbage, kale, broccoli (calabrese) are just a few you could start.

Keith's choice vegetable

Pea variety Hurst Green Shaft: one of the best sellers I believe, this one I grew for many years and was a favourite with a lot of clients. It gives a great crop of sweet peas with 8-10 peas per pod, a second to early main crop variety with very little disease.

No vegetable nightmares

Tomato Ghost Spot: Pale green or yellow rings appear on unripe fruits, as growth progresses the rings turn yellow or pale orange. Caused by a fungus; the spores are easily spread by splashed water, rain and air currents.



Affected fruits carry on growing and are perfectly edible so there is no need to remove them from the plant. Remove any surrounding plants that show signs of this disease.

Produce to enjoy in March/April

Perpetual spinach, Swiss chard, swede, turnips, Jerusalem artichokes, curly kale, savoy cabbage, parsnips, Brussels sprouts, leeks, purple sprouting.

From store: potatoes (beginning to sprout), onions, carrots and beetroot (both stored in peat or dry soil, both beginning to show signs of growth such as small shoots), shallots, cooking apples.



HELP! Your questions answered by resident expert, Keith

Please send your queries and problems to: info@malmesburygardenclub.org.uk

- Q** *My wife wants some herbs in the garden. I have a large lawn and a very small vegetable area. Where is the best place to plant them?*
- A** Your best bet is to buy the herbs that you require at a garden centre, they will be in small pots. Pot them on into larger pots and place them by your back door or as close as possible for ease of picking when needed in the kitchen. Should you require coriander or dill, which are annual herbs, sow some seed in a fairly large pot. They will go to seed fairly quickly so what I have done is sow more seeds of both in small pots and put them in the larger pots when the first sowing goes to seed. Some of your herbs, when in larger pots, can be placed around your vegetable area, this will encourage pollinator insects into the vegetable garden.
- Q** *I would like to plant some camellias. I have seen them in other gardens and they look fantastic. Do they need much attention and what is the best position to plant them?*
- A** I quite agree, but there are a few things you need to know first. Were the camellias that you have seen in your area? If not, and your soil has lime in it, they will not grow. If they are in your area, they might have been planted in large pots using lime free compost (ericaceous), which is the best way to grow them if you have lime in the soil. Also, do not place your camellias where they get the morning sun (east facing) as the buds of the camellia will drop off if there has been a frost.

Q I have been able to grow a passion fruit from seed, but after four years it has still not flowered. Will it flower eventually?

A There could be a couple of reasons it has not flowered. The position you have it in sounds OK but it may be still getting a cold wind. Each year gives us a different climate when plants like the passion fruit are going to flower. Late frosts are another problem. I had a friend who grew his from seed and that never flowered. Purchasing a plant from a garden centre that has flowered, which will have been a cutting from a stock plant, will give you flowers. You might have been too kind and given it a lot of feed which produces lots of foliage but no flowers. Like a fig tree, it's best to restrict the root growth by surrounding the plant, not too close though, with bricks, stone or plastic, therefore making the plant think it's under threat, which will make it flower. This is best done when first planted as passion fruits (*Passiflora*) do not like being moved.



RECIPE

Cheese and bacon pinwheels

Ingredients

- 1 packet defrosted frozen puff pastry
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 8 slices cooked ham
- 8 slices cheddar cheese



Method

1. Preheat oven to 190° C [375°F]. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Dust work surface lightly with flour and roll pastry into an oblong to fit baking sheet.
3. Spread with Dijon mustard, then ham and cheese. Roll pastry tightly like a Swiss roll. With a sharp knife cut into ½ inch slices.
4. Place onto prepared baking sheet and bake for 15 – 20 mins until light brown and puffy.
5. Cool on wire rack then enjoy.

Ellie

And finally . . .

Some colourful planting ideas for March/April from Keith



SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2025

Subscriptions for 2025 are now due. They remain the same as previous years, that is: £7.00 for single membership and £10.00 for couples.

I would be grateful to receive your subscriptions as soon as possible. They may be paid:

- at the monthly meetings
- by post to me, Sean O'Shea, at Redlands, West End, Brinkworth, Chippenham, SN15 5DA
- by using the Club Post Box at E & S Hardware Store, High Street, Malmesbury
- by Bank transfer to Lloyds Bank PLC; sort code 30 91 99; account 02440789; put your name as the reference so I can track your payment.

PLEASE SECURE CASH/CHEQUE IN AN ENVELOPE WITH THIS FORM

Enclosed £7.00 single membership £10.00 double membership

1. (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): Membership No.

2. (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): Membership No.

Tel. No.

Address:

.....

Email address.....

GDPR Declaration:

- I authorise Malmesbury & District Garden Club to hold records of my personal details as necessary for the efficient running of the club. These details include:
 - name and address
 - landline and mobile telephone numbers
 - email address (if disclosed)
 - application/renewal form
 - record of subscription payments
- I am happy for Malmesbury & District Garden Club to communicate with me by email, by post and by telephone.
- I am aware that I can request a copy of the details of my record and that I can ask for any inaccuracies to be amended or for records to be deleted. I am also aware that I can refer complaints to the Information Commissioner if I am not satisfied with the way my complaint has been dealt with.

For further details contact Mr. Sean O'Shea at the address above.

Signed: (1) **(2)**

Thank you
Sean O'Shea (Treasurer)