



Berkshire Gardens Trust is regulated by the Charity Commission for England & Wales: Number 1201501

Trustees' Annual Report for 2022/23

CHAIR'S REPORT

This year, which runs from April 2022 to the end of March 2023, has been really enjoyable with activities back to normal, welcoming our members again to a number of events over the year.

I can only reiterate my message from last year that we could not do what we do without the support from the members and the dedication of the Trustees. I would like to thank the owners of the gardens for their generosity and hospitality in arranging for us to visit, some of whom came as our guests to the AGM, and Linden Groves' talk in 2022. Thank you to all our speakers who have been happy to share their research and knowledge with us either in a Zoom talk, at our meetings at Purley Barn, or as an introduction to the gardens we visit. I hope that our members and their guests have enjoyed the programme and thank you also for the kind messages from attendees saying how much you have appreciated the visits.

Charitable Status: You will recall that following a 90% majority vote in favour of the Special Resolution '*That the Articles of Association of the Trust as laid before the meeting be approved and adopted as the new Articles of Association of the Trust in substitution for and to the entire exclusion of the existing Memorandum and Articles of Association*' at the AGM in September 2022, we applied to register with the Charity Commission. Registration was confirmed by the Charity Commission on 5th January 2023. We are now in the process of updating our various policy statements.

Finance: We have continued to run on a well-managed financial basis under the able guidance and administration of our Treasurer, Hugh Simon. I would like to thank him for his support and commitment. He will present the good news in a moment. You will see that we continue with a healthy income. My thanks again to Brian Tubman for carrying out the examination of the 2022/2023 accounts.

Our **Trustees** are the backbone of BGT and they all continue to work tirelessly for the Trust.

In March Hugh Simon kindly offered to take over from Fiona Hope as Secretary. They have carefully worked through the handover over the last few months. Fiona therefore formally submitted her resignation as Secretary in July this year and Hugh was formally confirmed by the Trustees on 8 September 2023. The Trust's registered address was consequently changed to Hugh's address.

Fiona has been Secretary since BGT was first incorporated and on behalf of all the Trustees, the President and the members I would like to thank her for her dedication. Fiona has made an enormous contribution to BGT over the years. As well as being our Secretary, she has over time taken on the Membership Secretary, the newsletter, networking and promotion, our link with the Gardens Trust, research and planning. Fiona remains as a Trustee.

Kim Hacker was co-opted as a Trustee in May 2022, confirmed at the 2022 AGM, and she has been doing a sterling job in managing the membership, event booking and finding new speakers and venues.

We are very pleased to welcome Michelle Leek (who approached us as a result of our advertisement for Trustees using Involve) who was co-opted as a Trustee on 6 March 2023. Michelle has worked for Natural England for many years and complements the existing skills and interests of the Trustees.

Since the end of this financial year, we are also very pleased to welcome Sian Thomas who was co-opted as a Trustee on 11 May 2023. Sian has an extensive background in management consultancy and is a key member of the Friends of Savill Gardens and the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group.

Both Michelle and Sian have expressed their wish to be appointed as Trustees and more can be found out about them on our website 'Meet the Trustees'. As usual both positions are for the next three years and I will shortly ask you to vote on this.

I am sorry to report that Deborah James resigned from being a Trustee at the beginning of September due to family and other commitments. We will miss her contribution to the Trust and wish her all the best for the future. Deborah remains a Member.

Over the year 2022/2023, Alison Mihail has been a stalwart at coming up with new ideas and also taking the minutes of Committee meetings, a job not much loved. I thank her for taking on this task for such a long time.

The work of the Trustees is like an iceberg. You see 10% above the surface, but there is another 90% you do not see. Thank you to them and to you our members for your support of the Berkshire Gardens Trust.

Events: In April 2022 we were welcomed to the gardens and vineyard at the Queen Anne Kidmore House near Kidmore End by Niamh Kendall and her husband. I am very pleased that she has agreed to join our panel of three experts in discussing the creation of new gardens on historic sites following the AGM.

In June we had guided visits to Willie Hartley-Russell's wonderful gardens at Bucklebury Place and the Anderson family's lovely park at Purley Hall. These were followed by our guided tours of Bruce Ginsberg's extraordinary gardens at Earlstone Manor in July and the National Trust's Cliveden in August. We are very pleased that both Willie and Bruce will also be joining us at the panel discussion after the AGM. The panel will be chaired by Adam Vetere, owner and designer of Old Camps, which we visited this year.

Our 2023 programme started this April and again we are delighted to invite the owners and speakers as our guests to this AGM event.

Zoom Talks and Spring Lecture: We resumed our Zoom talks over the winter with three speakers. In November Richard Bisgrove enlightened us in his talk *Nancy Lancaster: From Interior Design to Garden Design*. The following early 2023 events focussed on art and the historic garden. In January Cathryn Spence joined us to tell us about *Nature's Favourite Child – Thomas Robins and the Art of the Georgian Garden*. In February Fiona Rose inspired us with her talk on *In the Garden with William Morris: Flora as Art*. Last but not at all least, in March we were able to hold our Spring Lecture with Sally Pinhey giving us a wonderful illustrated talk on *The History of Botanical Art*. Again, I have been very pleased with the number of members and non-members attending and we will continue to offer a range of talks over the winter months.

Research: This is a core activity for BGT but is time consuming and therefore I thank those who have contributed this year. Janet Fuller continues to lead the research group and our Public Parks Project (as part of the Gardens Trust's programme 'Unforgettable Gardens'). Janet has prepared a paper on 17 Craven Road, Reading for the Royal Berkshire Hospital, who have given their permission to publish. Janet has also written a short paper on Gertrude Jekyll's relationship to Wargrave Manor which will be added to the website.

Members Sian Thomas and Sarah Randolph have helped source further expertise for Andrew Radgick to help the Bracknell Forest Society's (Bracknell's Civic Society) project to identify the trees in Lily Hill Park, Bracknell.

In March we joined forces with researcher Phillada Ballard and Member Helen Tranter to further investigate the historic parkland at the University of Reading's Whiteknights campus with the aim of getting it listed locally by Reading and Wokingham Boroughs.

The Gardens Trust are leading on research into Robert Marnock, a late 19th century garden designer. We have found that he contributed to the design of the pleasure gardens around Park Place at Remenham and to the former Asylum at Fairmile at Cholsey, which of course used to be in Berkshire. More information is available on our website.

I would like to welcome member Ann Smith who has joined as a volunteer on the Research Team. Michelle Leek has also joined the team.

Planning matters: These continued with ongoing notable concerns over multiple developments at Park Place, Remenham (Grade II*); housing at Caversham Park, Reading (Grade II); and housing at Ditton Park, Slough (Grade II). We keep a register of all planning

cases from 2010 onwards and a summary on our website. In the year 2022/2023 we dealt with 33 planning cases (well up on 2021/2022) which also included development proposals at Wargrave Manor (listed building/unlisted park); Reddam House and Bearwood College, Bearwood Park (Grade II*); Wasing Park (Grade II); The Red Lodge, Swallowfield Park (Grade II); White Lodge, Donnington Grove (Grade II); Silwood Manor, Silwood Park (listed building/unlisted park); and Twyford and Winkfield Parish NDPs. My thanks to Helen Parvin for her invaluable help in dealing with some difficult cases.

Outreach: I am very pleased that we have had a small increase in volunteers interested in helping with research. My presentation in October to the Friends of Savill Garden was well received. We have produced a new BGT leaflet for distribution at other events by like-minded organisations. We are also hoping to produce a new newsletter in 2023.

Do join us if you are interested in helping us as volunteers to fit in with your own interests and availability. We are here with a warm welcome and any support you need.

Gardens Trust: We continue to play our part in the Gardens Trust and I have been involved in a number of meetings with the Conservation Committee. I have raised a number of issues, for example the difficulties in protecting the Grade II* Registered Park Place, Remenham, when there are so many different ownerships; and the need to work more closely with Historic England when they also comment on planning applications. I have been in touch with their staff at the national and regional level. The Gardens Trust continue to offer help recruiting volunteers. In November Helen Parvin and I attended GT's Historic Assembly where I was on the discussion panel on planning issues. We soon learnt that we are not alone in our difficulties resourcing and covering all that goes on; but we all do make a difference to the planning outcome.

Membership: The membership decreased over the year from 109 at the beginning of April 2022 to 103 at the end of the financial year. Do continue to spread the word on how important our historic parks and gardens are for our well-being, wildlife and the continuity of our valued garden and parkland history.

Website: Our Webmaster continues to give us invaluable support updating the website and setting up Eventbrite for each of our events.

I extend my thanks to **Christina Hill Williams, our President**, who continues to provide her inexhaustible support and kind generous donations from her speaking engagements, seeking opportunities for networking to recruit new members and Trustees and for attending all of our garden visits.

This year I have again prepared a short separate report on our activities from 1 April up to the end of September 2023. This does not form part of our formal AGM but I hope will be of interest. You will find it online on our website.

Bettina Kirkham

Chair of the Berkshire Gardens Trust

BERKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST COMMITTEE

Current Committee members / Trustees are:

Kim Hacker (Membership Secretary)

Alison Mihail

Fiona Hope

Hugh Simon (Treasurer and Secretary)

Bettina Kirkham (Chair)

**Sian Thomas

*Michelle Leek

** standing for election, having been co-opted by the Trustees' committee in March 2023*

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Deborah James resigned as a Trustee on 4 September 2023.

In accordance with the provisions of the Articles, the following officers have been elected by the Trustees for the forthcoming year, to take effect at the conclusion of the AGM:

Bettina Kirkham, Chair

Hugh Simon, Treasurer

TREASURER'S REPORT 2022-3

FINANCIAL SUMMARY (financial year ending 31st March)

	£	£
	2023	2022
INCOME & EXPENDITURE		
Incoming Resources	8,174.94	5,180.76
<i>less</i> Resources Expended	5,865.14	4,084.50
Interest received	27.43	26.82
Net incoming resources for year	2,337.23	1,123.08
 NET ASSETS as at 31st March		
Fixed Assets	222.96	401.04
Cash at bank	11,591.46	9,032.87
Deposit account	10,000.00	10,000.00
Other current assets	937.51	328.09
Total Current Assets	22,528.97	19,360.09
<i>less</i> Creditors	960.55	307.85
Net Assets	21,791.38	19,454.15

The Trust's net assets, which are predominantly held as cash and bank deposits, increased by £2,337.23 over the year, including a £3,000.00 bequest from the estate of the late Rodney Stubblefield, a former Trustee. Subscription income and other donations of £1,681.94 for the year (including Gift Aid £33.59), a surplus of £523.42 on events, and deposit account interest received, were offset by operating costs of £1,817.48 and £900.00 support and advice for the Trust's Charity Commission application. Depreciation on fixed assets was £178.08; there was no capital expenditure in the year.

There were 103 paid-up members in the subscription year ended 31st March 2023, a decrease of 6 members compared with the previous year.

My thanks to Brian Tubman ACMA, who has examined the accounts for 2022-3. The income and expenditure account and balance sheet are set out in the following pages.

Hugh Simon ACMA, Treasurer

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (see note 1 below)**INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

	£	£
<i>Financial year ending 31st March</i>	2023	2022
Incoming Resources		
Donations, bequests and Gift Aid	3,517.94	364.76
Membership subscriptions	1,164.00	1,226.00
Events	3,493.00	3,590.00
	<hr/> 8,174.94	<hr/> 5,180.76
Resources Expended		
Promotions and website	1,122.68	406.33
Publications and research	52.50	287.93
Insurance and memberships	586.40	538.00
Administration and travel	55.90	116.26
Charity Commission application (support and advice)	900.00	-
Events	2,969.58	2,562.40
Depreciation	178.08	178.08
	<hr/> 5,865.14	<hr/> 4,084.50
Interest received	27.43	26.82
Net incoming resources for the year	2,337.23	1,123.08

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st MARCH

	£	£
	2023	2022
TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS	222.96	401.04
CURRENT ASSETS		
Debtors	818.55	302.85
Stock	43.96	25.24
Prepaid expenditure	75.00	-
Deposit account	10,000.00	10,000.00
Cash at bank	11,591.46	9,032.87
	22,528.97	19,360.96
LIABILITIES		
Deferred income	960.55	307.85
	960.55	307.85
NET CURRENT ASSETS	21,568.42	19,053.11
NET ASSETS	21,791.38	19,454.15
FUNDS		
At start of year	19,454.15	18,331.07
Net incoming resources for the year	2,337.23	1,123.08
At end of year	21,791.38	19,454.15

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. **The full Directors' Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023 may be found on the Trust's website: www.berkshiregardenstrust.org**
2. In accordance with the provisions of the Trust's articles of association, the Trustees have elected for the financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2023 to be examined in lieu of a full audit. Mr Brian Tubman ACMA, the Trust's independent examiner, has certified that in his opinion the financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2023 and the balance sheet as at that date show a true and fair view of the Trust's affairs.