



**The Association of the Friends  
of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

**Registered Charity Number 291159**

**Forty-eighth Annual General Meeting**

**Held at the Frank Lecture Theatre, Tyndall Avenue, Bristol**

**Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 7pm**



**AGENDA**

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of AGM held by Zoom 16 March 2023
- 4 Annual reports. To receive reports from:
  - i. Chairman
  - ii. Membership Secretary
  - iii. Treasurer
- 5 Annual accounts: to approve the financial statements
- 6 Committee elections. To re-elect the following:

Jean Martin	Proposed:	Seconded:
Paul Mugford	Proposed:	Seconded:
- 7 Honorary Auditor: to approve the appointment of Edward Holcombe ACA
- 8 Any other business

**Association of Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden**  
**Minutes of the forty-seventh Annual General Meeting**  
**Held by Zoom on Thursday 16 March 2023 at 7 pm**

**1 Welcome**

The Chairman of the Friends, Pat Davie, welcomed 32 Friends linked virtually through Zoom thanks to technical support from Raymond Gallery. The Agenda, Chairman's Report, Membership report, Trustees' report and Financial statement are available on a link on the Friends' website as a pdf file. The Chairman apologized that there had been some problems with the e-news that was circulated on 11/12 March. BT had treated it as spam and stopped it being issued to around 300 e-mail addresses. Roderick Macleod re-sent it with the reports as an attachment.

**2 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Jekka McVicar, President of the Friends, Eva Barrett, Rebecca Tregarthen, Hilary Phillips, Tony West and Susan Bartlett.

**3 Minutes of AGM held by Zoom 17 March 2022**

The minutes as circulated were unanimously approved.

**(4i) Chairman's Report**

See full report. This gives a snapshot of activities of 2022 during which we were recovering from closure and uncertainty. Many have discovered the positive effect on mental health of being outside. It was good to see visitor numbers rise – to see crowds again at the Easter sculpture festival. The introduction of DAISY days helped numbers and is a useful way of enabling all to enjoy open spaces. Friends' numbers have recovered to, and exceeded, pre-Covid numbers. The main fund-raising events, sculpture and bee festivals and jazz concert were well supported.

It is hoped to return to face to face lectures by the autumn. Up to now it had been decided to continue with zoom. This is useful for our speakers who need to travel, such as this evening's speaker, Miranda Bane, speaking to us from Glasgow. We are looking at the possibility of hybrid live/zoom meetings.

It is good to know that we have a succession plan in place with younger blood coming through to the Committee. A big thank you to all volunteers without whom the Friends could not operate – including those individuals noted in the full report. A big thank you also to Nick Wray and his team. The Chairman hopes we can look forward to a successful year.

**4 (ii) Membership Secretary's Report**

See full report. It has been a good year with a large amount of work having been carried out. Membership returned to pre-Covid numbers. New members can now join at the Welcome Lodge and receive their membership pack there and then. At the Festivals there is a table where new members can join as they enter. This has been very successful. Over 130 joined at the Sculpture Festival and slightly less at the Bee Festival.

The current Membership Secretary is pleased to welcome Eva Barrett who will be joining her on membership. Eva is away at the moment, but there will be some role changing on her return. Unfortunately, Jen Walker has had to step back for family reasons. Sue Beech will take over Jen's role and Eva will take over Sue's role.

There has been a good renewal response. At present (January renewals) we are 11% down on households and 16% on numbers but this is not unusual and is normally made up for by those who join from March to June.

All those who can pay by Direct Debit are encouraged to do so. Over the last 6 months we have been changing to electronic DD. This saves postage and eventually will save time.

#### **4 (iii) Treasurer's Report**

The full report is available on the website. If anyone has any questions, please e-mail Paul Mugford and he will reply.

"As a Treasurer, it is a joy to have such a loyal membership, who consistently renew. Subscription income accounts for about 90 per cent of the Association's total income.

The bulk of the Friends' funds go to support the Garden in (1) the general maintenance and upkeep of the Garden and (2) supporting the trainee. Steve Asman has just finished his 2 year traineeship and following recent interviews, a new trainee will be starting. Exact date unknown given possible notice period.

Postage is a major expense at £10,000 pa. Regular discussions as to whether to continue with the newsletter in paper form have decided in favour of continuing.

During the year there has been a major change in the investment of reserves. Previously these were held by Lloyds and Barclays where interest rates had dropped significantly. The Friends have the benefit of the Cecily Jones fund (£62,500) but although this forms part of the reserves, it cannot be drawn on and only the income can be used. This has been moved to a CAF account operated through Flagstone which opens up many deposit accounts to us. In addition to the Cecily Jones Trust money, an additional £40,000 has been invested in the CAF account, this being the cost of maintaining the trainee for 2 years – this money has to be available to meet the Friends' undertaking to the UoB to support the trainee.

Last year we had a surplus of £11,000, which is higher than the previous year. Although this is comfortable, we are not complacent."

The Treasurer thanked the Honorary Auditor, Ed Holcombe.

#### **5 Annual Accounts**

Approval of the annual accounts was proposed by Jean Martin and seconded by Lucy Davies and approved unanimously.

#### **6 Committee elections**

Susan Beech (re-election)	Proposed Susan Redfern	Seconded Tony West
Susan Redfern (re-election)	Proposed Susan Beech	Seconded Janet Hathway
Eva Barrett (election)	Proposed Pat Davie	Seconded Susan Redfern
Lucy Davies (election)	Proposed Tony West	Seconded Pat Davie
Hilary Philips (election)	Proposed Paul Mugford	Seconded Tony West
Chris Radford (election)	Proposed Susan Redfern	Seconded Janet Hathway

All unanimous

Eva will take over from Sue Beech. In due course, Lucy Davies will take over from Pat Davie, Hilary Philips will take over from Paul Mugford and Chris Radford is the new Minute Secretary.

## **7 Honorary Auditor**

The re-appointment of Edward Holcombe ACA as Independent Examiner of the accounts was proposed by Lucy Davies and seconded by Sue Beech. Approved unanimously.

## **8 Amendment to Constitution**

To amend Item 9 para 2: "All payments must be authorised by any two of four persons nominated by the Committee". This is to facilitate the transfer of roles and avoid delays with bank ID procedures. Proposed by Sue Beech. Seconded by Zaria Fraser. Approved unanimously.

## **9 Any Other Business**

The Treasurer drew attention to Gift Aid. Many thousands of pounds have been recovered from HMRC through this and all those who can do so should be encouraged to agree to us making this claim.

The Chairman thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 7.25 pm. It was followed by a lecture from Dr Miranda Bane on continuing her research after completing a PhD with Dr Jane Memmott: 'Pollinator Paradise – pesticide reduction and long –term monitoring in the Channel Islands'.

## Report from the Chair

It feels as though life returned to normal in 2023 and people were more willing to mingle in crowds and some 23,000 people visited the Botanic Garden. To start the garden season we were pleased to have a successful Easter Sculpture Festival with mainly good weather and over 3,200 people visiting to enjoy the preparation and hard work by the Garden team, volunteers and exhibitors. The Friends' ever-popular plant sale raised over £2,200 for the Education and Training Fund and people went home with some of the many books donated by the family of Alice Maltby.

The other regular big event for the Garden is the Bee and Pollination Festival, now moved to the August Bank Holiday weekend to avoid travel issues with the concert on the Downs. This is always well attended and enjoyed by exhibitors and visitors alike and is a chance for people to see all things pollinator related including live bee hives and to learn about the vast amount of research carried out by the University.

The lecture series continued in the spring by Zoom with our President Jekka McVicar on The Myths and Magic of herbs. We travelled down the Mekong with Adam Alexander and then to Guernsey with Miranda Bane and the Pollinator project. Since September we have enjoyed in-person lectures back at the University again whilst still offering the option of Zoom for those who cannot travel into Bristol. Paul Smith talked about reinstating ancient woodlands and James Cross took us on a tour of the Bishop's Palace Garden at Wells Cathedral. In November we were delighted to welcome Adam Frost talking all things gardening.

A new event for the Garden was the Apple Cider Day in October. This collaboration of the University with the Better Cider Project meant that many people were able to enjoy the juice from the apples they brought. It is hoped to make this a regular event. Other regular events which took place are the National Garden Scheme open day and the Festival of Nature.

The Friends' Jazz concert in July was another success, with the perennial Blue Notes and Hannah Wedlock and our new regular 'warm-up' act, South Bristol Ukes. We raised some £3,600 towards the Education and Training Fund.

In March we said goodbye to our previous trainee Steve Asman who now works at a private estate and we welcomed the new trainee Michaela Mottershaw, who is very much enjoying the opportunity she has been given, thanks to the funding by the Friends and this year with a substantial contribution by the Stanley Smith Fellowship.

The RHS have changed their syllabus this year so there is one less course being run compared to the old syllabus, and the cost of living crisis has affected the numbers, but nevertheless there have been some great successes in equipping the horticulturists of the future. The Garden continues to run educational short courses and workshops, and tours for adults and children, thanks to the volunteer guides.

The Garden has partnered with the Bristol Future Talent partnership which works with young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and the first work experience week for 12 students took place in July.

The Garden hosted a visit by the Chinese delegates from Guangdong Province Forestry and Agriculture Department to learn of the conservation of rare species working with the Avon Gorge and Downs Wildlife project, as well as to see the development of the Guangzhou Garden.

The highlight for 2024 will be the opening of the award winning Guangzhou garden which was given to the City of Bristol after the September 2021 Chelsea Flower Show and has been rebuilt, with slight adaptations, in the Botanic Garden. It will finally be planted in spring 2024 ready for opening in April. It will be an amazing addition to the Garden and enhance the visitor's experience to walk past the gently flowing water rather than through the car park towards the glasshouses. The Curator has written at length in the newsletters about the development.

Membership is down on 2022 but that is in some ways not surprising after the initial surge of visitors after the pandemic who may no longer have the time to visit. We still have a very good number of members and we hope to recruit more during the coming season. Many gardens are having problems with their support groups and as a member of the Friends of Botanic Gardens Forum I have learnt of a number of places where they have been disbanded or absorbed into the ownership of the garden. Our Friends' group which has been running since 1975 is still strong and we thank each and every one of you for continuing to help.

We are reviewing the membership record keeping with a view to a more automated system. This has been accelerated by the departure of our Membership Secretary, who it has been difficult to replace especially with the time commitment it requires, and will hopefully mean it is a less daunting task for the new expanded Membership Team. The frequency of the newsletter is being reduced in 2024 to three issues which will keep our ever-increasing costs down, but we hope to maintain contact and update everyone through the enews, the website and social media. We do hope that the few people who do not have internet access will not feel forgotten and we will make sure that all news is available through the Welcome Lodge.

Our thanks to our Corporate members, Cleeve Nursery, Almondsbury Garden Centre, Rolls-Royce and World Odyssey, who have continued their support of the Friends.

Finally a note about cash: the University has become cashless but at present the Friends will continue to accept all methods of payment. Card payments even for small amounts have become more popular and we do now have well-used card machines especially for events, but we are happy to receive cash, cheque and online donations and we hope you will remain a member and enjoy visiting the Garden as often as you are able.

This is my last AGM as your Chair. It has been a fantastic privilege to be in this role for so many years but I could not have done it without the unwavering support of the following people who I would like to thank, both personally and on behalf of the Friends:

**Paul Mugford** was due to stand down, but due to personal circumstances Hilary Phillips was unable to take up the role of Treasurer, and Paul readily stepped back into the breach. Thank you Paul for all you have done.

**Sue Beech** who has recently resigned as Membership Secretary has given an amazing amount of time and effort to the role for 7 years and has been difficult to replace. She has made substantial administrative changes to improve the record keeping and has dealt with some complex banking issues. Thank you Sue, we will miss your contribution and send you all good wishes for your new life in Wiltshire.

**Eva Barrett** joined the Membership Team in early 2023 and has quickly become familiar with everything. She is now involved in developing the newly expanded Membership team, including the latest recruit **Jose Tarnowski** who has only recently joined us.

Despite retiring as Membership Secretary when Sue Beech took over, **Sue Redfern** has continued to assist the team, and is invaluable for her experience and knowledge.

**Lucy Davies** has been shadowing me at every step to ensure a smooth handover and I am sure is now ready to take on this privilege. I will continue to support and guide her when needed but know she is full of good ideas. As a former English teacher Lucy is using her talents to work on the newsletter and has already written a number of articles and lecture reviews. She is also leading the sub-committee looking at more automation of our membership records, which we hope will reduce the hours necessary to maintain.

**Tony West** has been a committee member for many years and Vice Chairman until 2023. He continues to mastermind the Sculpture Festival but is in future going to be an *ex officio* member of the committee. Thank you, Tony, for your friendship and guidance.

**Janet Newland** looks after the Benefactor and Life members, and is a tour guide, as well as working with the Curator in management of the Bee and Pollination Festival.

**Rebecca Tregarthen** looks after the Corporate members as well as changing her career and studying for the RHS exams.

**Jean Martin** is my co-editor of the newsletter, and is very good at spotting what I miss, as well as preparing the copy to go to our graphic designer, **David Myring**, who I must also thank for his patience in dealing with all the last minute amendments and additions.

**Chris Radford** joined the committee last year and has done a brilliant job of summarising the hours of discussions to produce the minutes. She has also raised a considerable sum for the Friends in opening her garden and from plant sales.

**Rob Bristow** and **Ian Knight** have been our technical advisers, keeping the website updated, helping with the Zoom lectures and now they are advising us regarding a potential new format for the membership records.

**Sally Meadows** has arranged all the lectures and liaises with the speakers, often with last-minute changes.

**Jane Perkins** continues to liaise with the Garden office and organise the trained group of guides for a full programme of tours for adults and schools.

**Chris Purvis** continues to organise the very successful plant sales, often tending donated plants at home until the main events.

**Heather Dunford** and **Roderick Macleod** continue to keep everyone informed with the enews.

**Mike Austin** prepares all the envelopes for the newsletters and seed list and delivers the 1000's of letters to OnePost for distribution.

**Roger Mellors** and **Anne Brake** are tour guides and give talks to local groups for which donations are received, this year amounting to £850. Roger is also a garden volunteer and for many years has helped me manage the annual Jazz concert, including running the bar.

Our congratulations to the Garden Director, **Jane Memmott**, who was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, to add to her OBE for services to insect pollinators and ecology; we sometimes forget what talent we have in our midst.

Thank you for the support of our President, **Jekka McVicar**, who continues to run her herb business, giving demonstrations and talks, as well as working with the RHS.

Last but by no means least, a big thank you to the **Garden Team** who work so hard and are always so cheerful and helpful: in the Garden Froggie, Andy, Penny, Vicky, Susan, as well as trainee Michaela and the latest recruit Shiwan, and in the office Corinne, Helen and Joyce.

And finally to **Nick Wray**, who has been project managing the Guangzhou development, whilst carrying out all the usual duties of Curator and formulating a business plan for future developments. Thank you for all the help, support and advice for over 25 years since I became a volunteer, especially for the regular discussions about the Friends, and most of all for your friendship. There have been some low times, especially with the uncertainty surrounding the relocation of the Botanic Garden, but with everyone's help we have an amazing garden for visitors to enjoy.

There are many other people whom I have met over the years - those involved in the Committee, the Friends, the Volunteers and the Garden – thank you to everyone who has made my role so enjoyable. I know that everyone will support Lucy as she takes this on and I do hope she enjoys it as much as I have.

Thank you

**Pat Davie**

**Chair**

**February 2024**



## Membership report

Membership numbers for the year to 31 December 2023 (numbers in brackets are for 2022):

A total of **2428** (2823) members in **1605** (1806) households.

There were **35** (37) **Benefactor Members**. This reduction is due to the death of two members of the Friends' committee, Paul Wood and Alice Maltby. There are 40 (40) **Life Members**.

As can be seen, Membership has decreased in 2023. The most crucial factor was the post Covid membership surge of 2022, when a record 599 new members joined the Friends, many of those (378) 64% did not renew in 2023. Other factors include the increase in the cost of the membership subscription and worldwide inflation, which could have affected the number of households joining in 2023. The combination of these factors led to the 14% drop in membership numbers.

This is my final membership report. I have had the privilege of managing the membership, of the Friends since 2019, over a period of unprecedented change. The fallout from the Coronavirus epidemic and lockdown is still being felt. Technological changes have, and continue, to move quickly. Some increase efficiency, others bring unforeseen problems.

I would like to thank all those people who have given me support during this time: the Botanic Garden office staff, past and present; the Garden team, the Welcome Lodge Volunteers, the Friends' committee, and Eva Barrett, who joined the Committee and team in March, Mike Austin for his superb efficiency with the Friends' newsletter mailings and One Post, Roderick MacLeod and Heather Dunford who manage the e-news, Jen Walker, who was a member of the team managing the Direct Debits until December 2022 and Sue Redfern who encouraged me to take on the challenge and has been a constant support and friend.

Sadly, I leave the role of membership secretary unfilled; the membership team NEEDS a Membership Secretary. Please consider volunteering for this interesting and varied role, it is not just about spreadsheets! I will be staying in a non-committee role to manage the Direct Debit and Standing Order payments until a new person is appointed. (Please contact Pat Davie for further information.)

**Sue Beech** (Retired Membership Secretary)

**On behalf of the membership team Sue Beech, Sue Redfern and Eva Barrett**

**February 2024**

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

### The Association of Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden

Hollybush Lane, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 1JB Charity No. 291159

### Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31st December 2023

#### Constitution

The objects of the Association are to advance public education in, and to promote research into, Botany and its related subjects and to publish useful results of such research. In pursuance of these objectives the Association supports the work and further development of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden.

The Garden is unique in the West Country and the plant collections have been chosen to provide teaching and research resources for the University. Its mission to educate, communicate and conserve has also established a valuable amenity for local schools and a cultural attraction for the public.

#### Committee

Management of the Association is vested in a Committee (the Trustees) and its powers and duties are set out in the Constitution, including the procedures for appointment, nomination and election. Regular meetings of the Committee provide opportunity to apply risk management criteria in the assessment of the viability of potential fund-raising initiatives, whilst being dutifully aware of its charitable objectives.

The following members served the Committee during the year:

Patricia Davie	Chair	Lucy Davies	Vice Chair
Paul Mugford	Treasurer	Chris Radford	Secretary
Susan Beech	Membership	Tony West	Susan Redfern
Jean Martin		Janet Hathway	Rebecca Tregarthen

Nicholas Wray, Curator of the Garden, and other volunteers as appropriate may attend Committee meetings in an *ex officio* capacity.

Important aspects of the Committee's role are to encourage new members of the Association and to stimulate interest in the Garden through a variety of events and activities. Income generated by such initiatives, and from members' subscriptions and donations, after meeting expenses, is used to support the maintenance and development of the Garden. The Committee acknowledges the support of those members who have become involved directly in Friends activities and 'hands-on' work in the Garden.

#### Accounting system

Our accounting system remains a simple cash book approach that is acceptable to the Charities Commission and reflects the straightforward financial activity of the Association. The cash book approach simply means that we record income and expenditure when it happens whilst taking care to note any significant items due (not paid or received) for the current year.

## **Income**

During the year membership subscriptions increased to £62,078 (£54,528), as have Benefactor member subscriptions £5,250 (£4,500). The annual jazz event generated a little less at £3584 due to increased costs. Plant sales amounted to £4,403 driven by Chris Radford and Chris Purvis. A further £455 was also raised through Christmas wreath and book sales.

Legacies and Donations have been low £1,277 (£3,547) with Gift Aid generating £10,097 (£11,669). The Education and Training Fund - set up in 2014 to enable the Garden to employ trainee horticulturalists - continues to benefit from subscriptions from our Benefactor and Corporate members along with Life Memberships. We also received a generous grant of £15,000 from The Stanley Smith UK Horticultural Trust to support Trainee costs.

Interest on deposits has increased to £3,234 (£456).

Subscription Income (Sub + GA) accounts for 72% (96%) of the Association's total income.

## **Use of Funds**

We continue to support the work of the Garden and during 2023 this included a regular maintenance and development payment amounting to £40,705 (£38,766); Trainee support at £17,786 (£21,040) NB. This should be around £25K p.a. but invoice dates vary, and, in addition, we have supported five one-off projects totalling £33,402.

Our most significant recurring operating cost, apart from the above, remains stationary, printing and postage, mainly for the newsletter and seedlist £14,739 (£9,659) due to rising costs.

Bank charges include Bank, Bureau – for Direct Debit maintenance -and Card fees.

## **Reserves**

Having set aside the Cecily Jones Trust Fund-£62,565 (we are custodians of the capital and can only use the interest) and the Education and Training Fund (ETF) at a nominal £50,000 we currently hold £43,205 (£45,930) in the general fund. The ETF underpins our undertaking to support further Trainee costs rolling over 2 years.

## **Investments**

All funds are held with either Lloyds Bank, Barclays Bank or Flagstone.

Our move to the Charity Aid Foundations (CAF) Charity Deposit Platform (CDP) and operated through Flagstone enables us to access a range of fixed term deposits, with minimal administration and inbuilt safeguards, for any funds that are not needed at short notice.

**Insurance** - The Association's activities are covered by a Public / Employers' Liability Insurance Policy under the Affiliated Societies Insurance Scheme operated by the Royal Horticultural Society.

**Independent examiner:** Ed Holcombe A.C.A

**By order of the Trustees**

**March 2024.**

**The Association of Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden**  
**Registered Charity No 291159**

**Income and Expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2023**

	2023		2022
	£		£
<b>INCOME</b>		<b>INCOME</b>	
Membership Subscriptions	62078		54528
Benefactor Membership	5250		4500
Corporate Membership	1650		1650
Stanley Smith UK Trainee Grant	15000		
Donations	1277		3547
Social Events - Jazz concert	4747		5240
Miscellaneous			120
Plant sales	4403		3090
Christmas wreath sales	233		357
Book Sales	222		10
Gift Aid (2021)	10097		11669
Interest on bank deposits etc.	3234		456
Visiting Speakers	850		610
Lectures	1820		
Sundry receipts / petty cash (rounding)	(1)		
	<u>110860</u>		<u>85778</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Garden - Support and development	40705		38766
Garden - Information and improvements	33402		
Garden - Trainee	17786		21040
Social Events -Jazz Concert	1163		893
Lectures	2254		250
Term Deposits Management Fee (CAF/Flagstone)	361		
Banking Charges (Bank, BACS and Card)	2018		2122
Entertaining	362		78
Insurance & affiliation	135		125
Legal Fees			462
Stationery & Printing	7861		6265
Postage	6878		3394
Service charges	29		29
Sundry (Software)	452		146
Miscellaneous	137		459
	<u>113543</u>		<u>74030</u>
<b>Surplus/(-) for the Year</b>	<u>(2683)</u>	<b>Surplus/(-) for the Year</b>	<u>11748</u>
<b>BALANCE SHEET as at 31st December</b>		<b>BALANCE SHEET as at 31st December</b>	
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>Net Assets</b>	
Barclays Bank C/A	4802		2572
Lloyds Bank C/A	-4902		12556
Lloyds Business Savings	1002		
Petty cash	221		131
Restricted: Barclays Bank (Education and Training Fund)	5123		5147
CAF CDP/ Flagstone	41569 )		
Restricted: CAFCDP / Flagstone - Education & Training	45000 )	CAFCDP / Flagstone	138048
Restricted: CAFCDP / Flagstone - Cecily Jones Trust	62565 )		
	<u>155380</u>		<u>158453</u>
<b>Profit &amp; Loss Account</b>			
Brought forward	158453		146705
Net profit /(loss)	(2683)		11748
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>155770</u>		<u>158453</u>

Approved on behalf of the Committee

**P Mugford (Honorary Treasurer) 31 January 2024**

**Independent Examiner - Ed Holcombe ACA**