

# **AGM 2012 Management Committee Report**

Bohemia Walled Garden Association  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT  
**For the year ended 31st December 2011**

The Management Committee submit their annual report and financial statement for the Bohemia Walled Garden Association (BWGA) for the year ended 31st December 2011.

## **Background**

The Bohemia Walled Garden Association was formed in 2009 in order to bring the Victorian Walled Garden at Summerfields back into active use for horticulture and associated cultural and educational activities. The garden is owned by Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and is located within the Summerfields Woods Local Nature Reserve (LNR) but is not part of the LNR. The project is supported by the Friends of Summerfields Woods Local Nature Reserve.

## **Structure, Governance and Management**

The Bohemia Walled Garden Association has a Management Committee governed by the constitution adopted on 9th March 2009. Day-to-day management of the Association is vested in the members of the Management Committee, who must be elected and co-opted under the terms of the constitution. The Management Committee work as a team.

## **Management Committee responsibilities**

The members of the Management Committee are responsible for ensuring that the BWGA has an appropriate system of financial controls. They are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Association, for safeguarding the assets of the Association, and for taking reasonable steps to detect and prevent any financial irregularities. They are also responsible for the health and safety of volunteers working in the garden, for the health and safety of visitors to the garden, and for ensuring that the Association complies with relevant statutory legislation. The Committee are responsible for developing projects and events for the benefit of members and the wider community.

## **Members of the committee during 2011**

Secretary Sue Thomson  
Treasurer Juliet Wickham  
Chair Bob Hart  
Minute Sec Sally Hick

## **Achievements during 2011.**

Agreed a tenancy at will with HBC - BWGA is now legal tenant & Custodian of the WG. Supported the HBC Rangers Green Day in the woods event in April. Continued to receive publicity & support from Bohemia Village Voice Supported a book sale at St Peters church Hall that provided funds for the BWGA £400+ Ensured an official presence at all Sunday & Wednesday work days throughout the year Created a shelter with funding from the Grey Owl Society Provided space in the north east corner of the garden for a beehive. Continued to work using the WG Business Plan & Drawings prepared by Chris Jukes in 2010. Continued to maintain a regularly update website for the public & members to consult. Developed a presence on the Clubbz website for community groups events and information. Finished repairs to the concrete shed that is now renovated with appropriate storage inside

Provided water storage on all sheds & shelters with capacity of at least 2000 litres of water

A Wooden shed is available for shelter and meetings.

Paid for a professional tree surgeon to prune trees surrounding the garden. Costing £500

Agreed to funding for the installation of a compass/sundial, now increased to £300.

Purchased 4 fruit trees (2 apple & 2 pear) at a cost of £100, which were planted in January 2012.

Received funding via HVA of £492 to improve the surface of the southern perimeter path.

Provided a 30 sq. metre plot for each nearby primary school (St. Paul's & St. Mary's).

Worked with the Forest School ("Excellence Cluster"), enabling children to use garden as base.

Promoted "The Garden Philosophers" group, to involve thoughtful analysis and sharing of ideas.

Thanked by St. Paul's headteacher & students who donated £100.

Liaised with HBC to repair the coping stones on the walls.

Liaised with South Coast College, to provide volunteering opportunity for students.

## **Plans for 2012**

Consider taking part in HOD, Hastings Week & other developing events during 2012.

Continue to promote the Walled Garden locally & regionally using media and the Internet.

Develop a team of members to obtain grant funding to repair the fallen wall.

Develop a team of members to obtain grant funding for horticulture & health promotion issues.

Appoint a safety officer to monitor safety issues and produce risk assessments for all garden uses.

Continue to use specialist arboriculturists where necessary to reduce trees surrounding the garden.

Use funding to improve southern part of perimeter path to meet the needs of all users.

Provide a basic urinal facility on site whilst a design for compost toilet facility is developed.

Develop a sundial /compass art feature.

Develop the existing heritage planting scheme to emulate the gardens Victorian origins.

Continue to encourage the participation of St. Paul's & St. Mary's primary schools.

Continue to develop connections with artistic, educational & cultural individuals/groups.

Continue to educate & encourage novice gardeners to produce their own food.

Thank you

The BWGA Management Committee would like to thank all BWGA members, volunteers and partners for their support during 2011.

This report was approved by the Management Committee on 0 March 2012

and signed on its behalf by:

\_\_\_\_\_

Chair: **Bob Hart** Treasurer: **Juliet Wickham** Secretary: **Susan Thomson**

# AGM 2012 Chairs REPORT

## **BWGA Chair report for year ending 31st December 2011**

During 2011 work has continued inside the garden and all plots available for horticulture were in use with a small waiting list. Members who would like to take on a plot needed to ensure their interest was registered on the BWGA website. It is apparent that not all registrations were done in this way and an important reminder about tetanus protection will need to be passed on to all people who work in the garden by some other method.

It has been a productive year for the Bohemia Walled Garden Association (BWGA) with the initial increase of members who have plots from 2010 having their first full year of harvests. The cost of plot fees will be considered at the AGM in 2012.

The lease for BWGA to use the Walled Garden was signed in 2011 and the BWGA have use of the site for the next 25 years. It is essential that the model for using the garden that develops over the coming years is sustainable with a reasonable number of members / plot users taking an active interest in the running and maintenance of the walled garden. Two local schools use the garden and the children both enjoy and benefit from the experience of planting crops and the harvest. Plot fees are not charged for this type of user. Two members who have experience with keeping bees have set up a hive in the north east corner of the garden and the spring will indicate whether the bees have survived their first winter.

The HBC Contractor, Booker & Best (B&B) took most of the year to install coping stones where they were damaged or missing and we are pleased that HBC, after a little encouragement, insisted on a good standard of replacement and required the contractor to ensure that corner stones were properly installed. This particular bit of restoration took just over 10 years to achieve and is an indication that HBC does not respond to requests immediately.

April 2011 saw the first open day of the year when HBC Rangers organised a Green Day in the Woods event in Summerfields, with the intention of informing the public about the LNR on their doorstep, to inform people about and promote the Friends of Summerfields Wood (FOSW). As a part of the Green Day the BWGA hosted events where the grass reception area was particularly useful. During 2011 and into 2012 HBC Rangers have supported FOSW task days in the woods and the BWGA continues to promote and support the FOSW.

The Garden was open to the public in September 2010 for Heritage Open Days (HOD) on two days and was again open for the Sunday during Hastings Week in October 2011. A special thanks to Mary for taking charge of this event. The Ice House at Summerfields that formed part of the heritage offering for HOD in 2010 received lots of visitors who were directed or guided towards the Walled Garden Unfortunately in 2011 despite being included in the national and local listings it was not unlocked and open to visitors due to lack of volunteers to remain there during the day. Within the HOD listings It was also felt that the BWGA had to state that the

garden was not disability accessible because of potentially slippery wooden steps and mud on surfaces. The BWGA continues to encourage HBC to make efforts to improve access to the garden that is now a destination for the public who might not normally enter the woods. The committee will be seeking a decision at the AGM on whether to stage further open days during 2012.

A grant from the Grey Owl Society was effectively used to create a shelter and during the year a visit from the Grey Owl Society enabled their members to see the use of the grant. For the shelter one BWGA member Michell continued with his excellent work excavating for lost bricks and Adrian had used them to construct a paved surfaces within the Grey Owl shelter and elsewhere. After their visit to the Walled Garden members from Grey Owl enjoyed a visit to the surrounding woodland.

As reported at last years AGM, in November 2010 the BWGA failed to secure funding from the BIG Lottery at the last hurdle when we failed to secure enough telephone votes. Since that time there have been no further attempts to obtain the funds to repair the wall. Some funding organisations, like local landfill operators (Biffa or Veiola) require a 10% match funding requirement and a commitment for a minimum number of days for public access. These are possible funding solutions but would require the commitment of garden users to meet some of the expectations. There is a hope that some members will take forward the application process. During the year we received a donation of £100 from Soul & Rainbow Environmental Education Action Group (SAREEA) that has recently been wound up and we thank them for this contribution to BWGA funds. There were also other donations including over £482.25 from the Bohemia Book Fayre that will be repeated this year (2012) on 19th April.

There were no arts events as happened in 2010 with the Coastal Currents event but it is hoped that the BWGA is able to promote and develop the cultural, craft and artistic opportunities that a secure open air venue offers. In the past events have generated an income for the garden and more importantly brought new visitors into the woods. It might be sensible to develop some ideas for the coming summer. A suggestion to organise a harvest picnic event in Sept 2011 was suggested but did not materialise due to the need for members to develop and promote the day but this year with advance planning the garden could host more events.

The BWGA recognises the need to ensure that all paths inside the garden are safe for those with mobility difficulties and also for wheelchair users and has made improvement to paths over the past year. The need to improve disability access inside the garden and on its approaches is still recognised as something that needs to be addressed and the BWGA will liaise with interested groups & HBC in order to seek improvements to paths outside the garden. Funding of £492 from HVA to improve paths inside the garden has been received and the proposal is to improve surfaces on the south side of the garden. When HBC has improved access issues outside the garden we will be able to welcome a range of new users and visitors who currently find it impossible or not easy to get to the garden.

Early November 2011 saw the first Sunday when for just two hours each month BWGA members, mainly derived from plot users, devote time to communal tasks. The need to clear parts of the walls of dead ivy and level parts of the garden to enable

an area to be created for a small toilet / urinal area were decided as priority tasks for the new initiatives. Whilst membership of the BWGA remains free and plot rental is kept to a minimum the need for volunteers to assist with tasks is likely to remain an ongoing commitment if all maintenance and improvements are not to be outsourced.

In 2010 the BWGA intended to seek funding to provide a reduction of overhanging branches around the garden but this has now been paid for by BWGA by the use of a professional tree surgeon. We realise that further pruning of trees is still required and more pruning will occur in April. This type of expenditure does require income from donations, events and plot use fees.

A small committee composed of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Minute Secretary has considered issues such as the use of the Grey Owl funding, maintenance issues, developing open days and improvements within the garden. A big thank-you to all members who provided entertainment, information and refreshments on these days.

Since the development of a website for members [bohemiawga.weebly.com](http://bohemiawga.weebly.com) there has been the opportunity to comment or suggest projects or improvement suggestions for the garden. Recently a suggestion to install a "Compass / Sundial" has been approved with an increased maximum spend of £350 for this art installation. Another suggestion was to plant an area inside the garden with appropriate fruit trees and these have now been purchased and planted. 2 apples trees (Lord Lambourne & Egremont Russet) and 2 pear trees (Louise Bonne of Jersey & Williams).

In order to promote the existence of the Bohemia walled Garden to the wider community information about the garden and its objectives is available on a website [bohemiawga.weebly.com](http://bohemiawga.weebly.com) and through the ESCC information system ESCIS. During 2011 a presence has been developed on the ClubbZ website where information can be found on the [bohemiawga@clubbz.com](mailto:bohemiawga@clubbz.com). There are also online photograph galleries via Flickr & Picasa and these do depend on members offering their appropriate images for public display.

When the aims of the BWGA were drawn up there were two main threads of the garden use. Horticulture is currently the main use for the garden and the care restoration and interpretation of the Victorian asset is the other important activity. The underlying theme was to create a sustainable model of activity that would ensure the cycle of decay and destruction and waste of an asset was not repeated. Education & training in horticulture was considered important as well as promoting sustainability issues and interpretation of the past uses.

Because of those issues in future years care must be taken to ensure that the primary use of the garden is not just as an allotment and all users should consider what special aspect of horticulture they are able to demonstrate as explained during plot registration. The way that available funds from donations are spent also needs to be considered during 2012 so that cost centres such as horticulture, art, restoration and maintenance etc begin to develop their own budgets and funds to enable projects to be developed.

I hope during this and future years more users of the garden and members of the

BWGA will take an active part in hands on care of the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) supporting Friends of Summerfields Wood (FOSW). This will demonstrate to Hastings Borough Council that that there is an active interest in Summerfields Woods.

During the AGM members attending will have the opportunity of choosing the unpaid committee who administer the running of the BWGA and it is essential that there are also volunteers to take responsibility for some of the other essential tasks that are necessary to inform members organise tasks and keep the garden safe. Importantly in accordance with the responsibilities of the committee, the safety of garden users is a priority and it is now essential to have in place a safety officer who can ensure safe working occurs and paths structures, events etc are safe.

I must thank Sue, Secretary of the BWGA for the enormous amount of work that is involved in answering enquiries, seeking funding, keeping members informed and much more and Sally for accurately recording the content of meetings. Finally a thank-you to Juliet for being the Treasurer during 2011.

Bob Hart ( Chair BWGA 2011)

Friday 9th March 2012