

Bohemia Walled Garden Association
Trustee Annual Report
For the year January - December 2017
Charity Commission report & for AGM April 28th 2018

The Bohemia Walled Garden Association (BWGA)

The BWGA was formed in 2009 with the purpose of restoring, preserving and utilising the 19th Century Victorian walled garden in the Summerfields Wood. It aims to bring it back into active use for horticultural, educational, heritage and cultural activities.

The garden is owned by Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and leased to the BWGA for 25 years until 31 March 2036. The lease was renewed on the 5th January 2018 in line with the BWGA change of status to a Registered Charity. The garden is located within the Summerfields Wood which is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Structure, Governance and Management

The BWGA is run completely by volunteers. It is a registered Charity (Registration Number 1167167) as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members other than its charity trustees. The organisation is managed by charity trustees and governed by the BWGA Charity Commission Constitution. It follows Charity Commission (CC) guidelines and must report annually to the CC to affirm its obligation to function for the 'public benefit' and to uphold the BWGA/CC objects.

The BWGA trustees are supported by other BWGA members on a committee who have delegated roles. BWGA members, plot-holders and volunteers, are overseen by the trustees in the everyday running of the garden, events, fund raising and educational activities. The local community is encouraged to participate in all the above.

The BWGA Charity Commission Objects:

- (1) To promote for the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.
- (2) To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment.
- (3) The provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure-time occupation in the interests of social welfare for the public at large with the object of improving their conditions of life.

To be a Charity it is necessary for the trustees to understand and to have regard to the 'public benefits' that the charity aims to provide as in the objects. The Trustees Annual Report is to show how these objects are being achieved. It is presented to the BWGA members at the AGM.

Members of the BWGA committee as elected at the 2017 AGM

Trustee(Chair)	Mary Dawson
Trustee(Secretary)	Susan Thomson
Trustee(Treasurer & IT)	Darren Windley
Trustee	Christine M'baye
Trustee(Plot Secretary)	Dot Hill

Trustees appointed since the AGM on the 22nd April 2017

Trustee	Nigel Sinden
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Fund Raising and Income

Funds are raised at all public events from the sale of refreshments and donations which are used for the ongoing maintenance and development of the garden.

Additional income comes from the fee charged for use of a plot in the garden.

In a typical year to cover our expenses we need to raise £1,500.

This year's income was virtually the same as in the previous year and is as a result of the tremendous support we get from the local community.

Expenditure

Our insurance cost increased as we changed insurance providers and amended the cover to reflect the organisations status as a Registered Charity.

There was an increase in event expenses for a variety of reasons. We took part in the Chelsea Fringe Festival that coincided with our summer open day and this had a registration fee. The popularity of pumpkin carving on pumpkin day meant we had to run to the local supermarket and purchase additional pumpkins to avoid upset children!

As the numbers attending events increases, we need to purchase more items. (Serviettes, coffee, tea, etc.). We also purchased additional drinking cups and folding tables.

Given we are a volunteer run organisation; we naturally reimburse out of pocket expenses to members/trustees e.g. using their own equipment (i.e. home printers) or vehicles (i.e. parking expenses). With the ongoing work in the background towards the rebuild of the fallen wall, there has been a small increase in this area.

Grant applications

We made successful applications to the Hastings & St Leonards Muffin Club and The Magdalen and Lasher Charity for grants to assist with the purchase of a replacement member welfare shed. The previous shed was deliberately destroyed in 2016. The grants awarded show in the accounts for this year, but will be used to purchased the shed next year.

Financial Management

The BWGA operates two bank accounts with one for day to day transactions and the other for the Heritage Lottery Funded project.

The BWGA have the ability to manage their bank accounts online and can make and receive payments by BACS. Plot fees can be made by BACS and we make payments by BACS for members expenses and other expenditure (like insurance, membership fees). The financial controls online are the same as physical cheque payments that need two authorisations.

Our accounts are examined by Hastings Voluntary Action for which a fee is charged. The accounts are presented at the AGM and sent to the Charity Commission.

The accounts for this year show a deficit as this is due to there being expenditure of HLF funds in this year (2017), but the initial HLF grant was awarded in the previous year (2016). Therefore nothing should be inferred by having a deficit and this is just the way that the accounts are structured.

Project: The Heritage Lottery Grant

'Restoration and Development of the Bohemia Victorian Walled Garden for heritage, learning and enjoyment'. The second Heritage Lottery grant was successful. The BWGA was awarded £97,000 in March 2016. From our own fundraising efforts, we raised £4,000 of which £2,000 is the BWGA contribution to the project and £2,000 is being held as contingency.

On the completion of the HLF project there will be a celebration event. This will include a traditional skills workshops. The web site will be updated and the evaluation process is ongoing.

Natural History

Following on from the Natural History environmental workshops in 2016, a wild flower identification walk was organised in May 2017 where we had 25 new visitors to the garden. Workshops and events regarding Natural History influenced the animal illustrations in the History Booklet and on the new signage, the interpretation board and way-markers. Environmental education worksheets will be posted on the web site.

Signage-Information board, way-markers and a wall notice board

These items were installed during the year. The large information board was purchased from Fitzpatrick Woolmer. The excellent graphic design was by Kristina Alexander and the animal drawings were by Danielle Castelino. It was installed by the Ranger, Nick Hennessy from Hastings Borough Council. He had the help of a group of young people and staff from the Education Futures Trust (EFT) and garden volunteers.

The beautiful animal way-markers were designed and created by a local Wood Artist Nick Meech. He and the Ranger installed the way-markers. Nick also ran four woodwork/carving sessions, for the EFT group, the Home Education group, garden members and at the Pumpkin day. It was important to have community engagement as this was a criteria for the HLF grant.

The large way-markers will have banners that can be attached to them to show when the garden is open for tasks and events.

History Booklet

The first edition of the booklet has proved very popular. This booklet was launched at the Heritage Open day in September 2016 and can be downloaded from the our website. It will be updated when the project is completed. In 2017 we had additional copies printed.

Horticulture Workshops

These were held and evaluated during March 2017. There was a good attendance. The evaluation concluded that plot-holders would like to meet together to share knowledge. A plot-holder and volunteer gathering was organised in October which was enjoyed. It included a talk and advice on how to use Permaculture methods and designs for members plots.

The Wall and Path build

This has been postponed to Spring 2018 owing to structural concerns. A Structural Engineer was engaged by Hastings Borough Council (HBC) in 2017 to determine the additional work needed and the new costings were sent to HBC. HBC agreed to assist with the additional costs by way of a grant. The trustees will oversee the wall build as per the contract with the commissioned builder. We signed a grant agreement with HBC which requires we keep records and accounts relating to expenditure, health and safety and insurance details of the build. We will keep BWGA members informed of any closures that may be needed during the build.

Local Heritage Asset List

The HBC Cabinet met on 6th March 2017 and approved the BWGA application to be added to this list. The Bohemia Walled Garden is now listed as a "local heritage asset", along with and part of the Bohemia Estate. The List can be viewed on the HBC website. The research material prepared to support the nomination has been archived by the Historic Environment Record and is available for public use.

Insurance, Health and Safety and Security

The BWGA has public liability insurance and this is renewed annually. Owing to a change in the organisations status changing to a Registered Charity, a new insurance provider was chosen with revised cover. We produced a 'Safeguarding' policy which is available on the web site. The BWGA does risk assessments for all events and activities at the garden. The risk assessment is based on a template policy before being customised for each activity. The templates are reviewed regularly.

Publicity, Information, Members and Supporters

We have a presence on two Social Media platforms; Facebook and Twitter. The garden has its own web site which contains a vast amount of information about the organisation. At the end of the year we had 873 Facebook "likes" and 50 "followers" on Twitter. Events are also publicised in the local newspaper and posters displayed at various locations around the local area.

Thanks to the HLF grant, we now have a new interpretation board outside the garden which has a colourful map showing items of interest in and around the woods and the history of the garden. It combines a free space for displaying information to the public.

We issued two newsletters in May and December which updated our supporters and members of our achievements. The newsletters are displayed in the garden, on the web site and on Social Media.

We use a product called MailChimp to administer and communicate with our members and supporters. There are two lists maintained of members and supporters. The difference between members and supporters is that only members can vote at the AGM and includes all plot holders and active members who contribute in an active way to the garden's upkeep or development. Supporters are those who are keen to know what is going on and how to support us through our events. At the end of the year we had 212 supporters and 79 members.

Opening Times

The garden is opened most (weather dependent) Wednesdays and Sundays 10 -12 in the growing season March-November.

Volunteers

The BWGA is completely run by volunteers and we welcome new members from the local community. We continue to aim to use the varied skills of our volunteers. Some volunteers come for a season, some for a reason and others make up the backbone of the garden volunteer team.

Groups who use the garden

There are areas for educational purposes at no cost. St Mary Star of Sea School had to give up up their 8 raised beds due to the retirement of the teacher and regular volunteer who had brought the children for several years. Treasure Tots/Home Education group used their space and visited the garden often in 2017. Christ Church School now have an area that they intend to use for a project in 2018.

BWGA continues to welcome diverse groups to the garden. We use a booking form and complete risk assessments as appropriate. The garden is occasionally used for private functions such as children's birthday parties. Some film makers used the garden during the year.

Plots

All plots have been in use throughout the year and any vacant plots have quickly been taken up by the next person on the waiting list. Following issues with plot boundaries, two of our members designed and installed our own unique, black BWGA plot markers. These are made from recycled plastic and should last a very long time.

We have a mix of sizes of plots for our members. Plot fees remain at £1.20 per square metre as from January 2017.

Some of our member plots will be unavailable while the builder works on building the fallen wall. We have been able to find them alternative spaces during this period.

We updated our plot holder terms of use at the end of 2017 and issued timetable for the renewal procedure for 2018. Plot renewal notices are sent out at the start of January.

Education

Educational sessions for schools, families and children are arranged as requested. We continue working with other organisations like the RSPCA Mallydams 'Wild Things project' funded by Reaching Communities. St Paul's School, year 2 came one morning with about 100 children and staff. Christ Church School used an educational area in 2017.

The Educational Futures Trust ran a course in the Summerfields Wood for young people who also assisted with the signage project and enjoyed the woodwork sessions. It was very interesting to see how well they engaged when doing practical tasks, when having difficulties in the school environment. An evaluation interview was done with the group for the HLF report. It was very positive and the EFT thanked the BWGA on Twitter and Face book.

Planning is underway for a new gardening project to be run by the Recovery College which is NHS funded (Mental health and well-being) in 2018.

Outreach and Consultations

The BWGA aims to be informed and to work with others who are involved in plans to improve the area around the garden. We help expand the public interest in green open spaces for the benefit of all.

Trustees attended the Hastings Voluntary Action AGM and a HBC consultation forum regarding possible plans for the area surrounding the garden and Summerfields Wood.

There has been consultation with other organisations to promote the garden and the surrounding area.

Garden Management and Development

In the tool shed a sturdy shelf made of scaffold boards was installed to increase the storage space. An annual inventory of tools and useful items was completed and recorded. The lawnmower needed repairs. A volunteer replaced worn-out parts to extend the life of this essential tool.

The welfare shed was burnt down in 2016. We were successful in obtaining donations to the value of £500 for a replacement wooden shed. It is planned to purchase another shed from a local supplier which will be put in place once the wall repair-work is finished.

The terraced area needed attention The wooden retaining wall to the top section was unsafe due to rotten timbers. New planks were purchased and installed. The logs that hold back the soil from the path had rotted. These were replaced with fresh logs.

In the composting area the wooden 3-bay compost unit had rotted and become unusable. One of our members supervised the construction of a low-cost replacement.

The pumpkin patch was maintained by one of our volunteers for provision of pumpkin seedlings for the pumpkin carving event: 50 plants were grown.

A new woodland path was created in response to a request from the HBC Park Ranger. This is to the left of the entrance to keep visitors away from the insecure steps.

The water butts are maintained by volunteers, which are essential to the establishment and growth of plants within the walled garden.

The community flower borders are overseen by two experienced and long time volunteers and the borders continue to blossom with delightful colours and many wildlife friendly plants.

Other events in 2017 (not part of HLF)

Easter

This event was organised by members including many parents. There was a woodland adventure which involved following a story of the Lost Wisdom Egg. We had a walk through the wood, with magic wands made by the children. They met forest characters, musicians, a forest dragon, a beautiful lady and her daughter who made magic potions to clean the polluted pond water. Finally we met a monster who was not very scary! The walk was led by the Story Teller with her Boy Guide. The egg (made by members which was huge) was found and chocolate eggs were given as rewards. Public attendance 172 and 18 volunteers. Over £300 was raised.

Summer Open Day 'Visit the Secret Garden'

This was part of the local Chelsea Fringe festival. We had music from local groups and some talks. There was a plant stall, a raffle, children's activity and the garden's now famous tea and cake stand. Public attendance 191 and 16 volunteers. Over £700 was raised.

Outreach event at the Alexandra Park Greenhouse Group Open day

We had a stand at the Alexandra Park Chelsea Fringe event where information was given to about 50 people.

Mid summer members party (June)

This was organised by two members. The weather was very dull that evening but very well enjoyed by all who came for Pimms and shared food.

Heritage Open Day: "The wonder of Trees and Moths".

This linked in with the Woodland Trust Tree Charter project. There were talks by our local Tree expert, who is a Tree Registrar and the lovely local moth lady. A moth trap was done in the garden the previous evening to the event. The children did art work for the Tree Charter petition. There was music and singing in the afternoon by Harmony One, The Acapella Bellas and The Wobblies. It was a very windy event but the rain kept away! Public attendance 154 plus 10 volunteers. Over £400 was raised. *Comment on evaluation sheet: 'wonderful secret garden and well tended!'*

Pumpkin and Wood Carving Day

A very popular annual event. The pumpkins are grown in the garden but we had to buy extra because the attendance that day was 342 (adults and children)!

The garden cooks made 24 litres of pumpkin soup which still sold out before the event finished! The woodwork class which involved making mallets was manic at times. Nick Meech, the Wood Artist worked solidly for three hours! There were stories and magic too. *Comment from a child 'best day of the year!'*. Over £380 was raised.

Numbers attending the garden at planned events during the year were 1118.

Total fund raising before expenses £1,868. These figures are similar to last year. We are aware that there is a safe capacity that can attend the events and that we as volunteers can actually cater for. We consider that 250 at an event is ideal.

The numbers counted does not include group attendance numbers and the many volunteer and plot-holder attendance numbers over the year.

Positive outcomes/making a difference

The activities and work of the BWGA has:

- increased confidence in socially isolated people.
- increased community participation and friendships.
- increased horticultural knowledge for novice gardeners.
- increased awareness of local history through talks and the booklet.
- increased appreciation of the natural surroundings.
- increased working in partnership with others through consultation.
- increased volunteer and membership participation.

Conclusion

The BWGA works for the benefit of as many people as possible so they can enjoy the environment of this lovely garden and area. We ensure that the walled garden is conserved, protected and improved for future generations to enjoy.

The BWGA trustees would like to thank all BWGA members, volunteers and partners for their support in 2017. We thank HBC Officers and Rangers for their support and actions in relation to the plans for the rebuilding of the eastern wall.

This report and the action plan show how the BWGA continues to meet the Charity Objects.

This report has been compiled and approved by the BWGA trustees:

Chair: Mary Dawson _____ /____/____

Secretary: Susan Thomson _____ /____/____

Treasurer: Darren Windley _____ /____/____

Trustee: Dot Hill _____ /____/____

Trustee: Christine M'Baye _____ /____/____

Trustee Nigel Sinden _____ /____/____