

Bohemia Walled Garden Association
Trustee Annual Report
For the year January 2016 -December 2016
Charity Commission report & for AGM April 22nd 2017

About 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 set in Summerfields Wood and 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 from April 2011. It is located within the Summerfields Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Structure, Governance and Management

The BWGA is run completely by volunteers. In May 2016 BWGA gained Charity Registration (number 1167167) and is now a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The organisation is now managed by charity trustees and governed by the BWGA Charity Commission Constitution for a CIO with voting members other than its charity trustees. 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.

Three trustees were identified for the application (All previously elected as BWGA officers at the AGM 2016). All the trustees will be presented for election as CC trustees at the 2017 AGM by the BWGA membership. There will be a drive to recruit more trustees as there is a three year rule for serving trustees. The BWGA trustees aim to involve BWGA members in the running of the association.

The BWGA trustees are supported by other BWGA members on a committee who have delegated roles. BWGA members, plot-holders, and volunteers, overseen by trustees are involved in the every-day 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 and to be submitted to the CC and to the BWGA members for the AGM. Trustees have had regard for this requirement.

These are the BWGA aims that enable our Charity Commission objects to be achieved:

- to restore and put back into active use the Victorian walled garden within the nature conservation area of Summerfields Wood
- to develop plots to rent out for the growing of vegetables and fruits
- to obtain, through fund-raising, enough monies to carry out repairs to the damaged area of the eastern boundary wall to restore the garden to its original state
- to make the entrance to the garden accessible to all
- to maintain and keep the garden within the walls in good repair, safe and secure

Raising awareness of the site's historical, social and horticultural value, including the Bohemia Estate heritage area and Summerfields Wood (LNR).

- to open the garden for community events, open days, cultural and artistic events
- to promote the garden at other local events raising awareness of the historical, social and horticultural value of the site
- to work in sympathy with the Summerfields Wood as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Working with the community

- to work with schools and other local community groups within the garden
- to provide activities/workshops (horticulture, natural and historical heritage)
- to encourage volunteers and plot-holders to share their horticultural knowledge
- to publicise the garden widely in the community
- to consider Health and Safety **within** the garden
- to collaborate with local community groups and like minded organisations

To consider environmental issues

- to work in a sustainable manner that encourages recycling
- to develop ongoing water collection
- to develop use of renewable energy source (Solar/wind powered toilet)
- to use natural materials when possible

Lease requirements

- to raise money and obtain grants to reinstate the fallen east wall
- to inform HBC the estates department officer of events, developments etc.
- to inform HBC of current BWGA trustees and officers
- to promote and encourage members to participate in joint projects with the HBC Rangers in Summerfields Wood

The 2016-2017 Business Plan update gives details of achievements in 2016 and an action plan for 2017.

Members of the BWGA committee as elected at AGM 2016

Chair	Mary Dawson
Secretary	Susan Thomson
Treasurer and IT	Darren Windley
Committee member	Christine M'baye

Committee members for sub groups Chris Stovold, Caroline Eaves, Alexander Wilberforce. They have all left the committee for personal reasons. We thank them all for their contributions.

Current Management Structure from May – December 2016 **Charity Commission Trustees and committee members**

Trustee	Mary Dawson Chair
Trustee	Susan Thomson Secretary
Trustee	Christine M'Baye Treasurer
Delegated roles	Darren Windley operational Treasurer Dot Hill Plot Management from November 2016

Fund raising and Income

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

In 2016 total income was £2659.24 made up of donations of £505.04, plot fees £619.85 and events £1,534.35. The donations included Birkbeck Garden History Group, Sales of Bohemia Walled Garden book by Heather Grief and from a collecting box in Trinity Whole foods.

BWGA ended the year with an unrestricted surplus of £762.34.

In a typical year to cover our expenses we need to raise £1,500. We received the first instalment of the Heritage Lottery Fund grant this year of £48,500.

Expenditure

In 2016 we suffered the loss of our wooden shed through a deliberate act of arson and that meant we had to replace some items that have increased the expenditure. A new gazebo, plastic cups, first aid kit and plastic tables were capital items bought as a result of the fire. The replacement of the shed will happen in 2017.

New expenditure this year has been incurred by Web & Email Services and bank fees for using BACS/CHAPS which will be ongoing.

Heritage Lottery Fund expenditure totalled £2,296.30. Total BWGA expenditure was £1896.90

Financial Management

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

The BWGA have added the ability to manage our bank accounts via NatWest Bank Line and chosen to make and receive payments by BACS. Plot Fees from 2017 can be made by BACS and throughout 2016 members expenses and other payments (like insurance, membership fees) have been made electronically. The financial controls online are the same as physical cheque payments which need two authorisations.

The accounts will be examined by the Hastings Voluntary Action for which a fee is charged.

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. BWGA was awarded £97,000. The wall restoration fund over the previous 3 years fund raised £4,000, of which £2,000 is the BWGA contribution to the project. £2,000 being held as contingency.

Completed 2016

Natural history/heritage – Four environmental workshops

Research and workshops for active learning for children and families on the garden and wood biodiversity. The information gained to be used on the Interpretation board and worksheets and posted on the web site.

The general public and two schools were involved in 'partnership' with the 'Wild things' project RSPCA Mallydams Wood, Fairlight Hastings. Sussex Wildlife Trust provided activities about birds. Local Botany experts shared information for wild-flower identification. A local moth expert did a talk and show of local moths. Stories and art activities about woodland animals, and the garden history were also provided. BWGA volunteers supported these activities. Numbers attending (public) 114 at 2 events. Schools at 2 events 138.

History Booklet

Research and publication of a user friendly history of the Bohemia Victorian Walled garden, Bohemia Estate and the Brisco family. Natural heritage of the garden and wood. The booklet is a summary of the Past, the Present and hopes for the Future. This booklet was launched at the HOD in September 2016 and is available as a hard copy and on line at www.bohemiawga.org.uk

Interpretation Board Design

Information from the Natural Heritage workshops will help to explain the history of the garden and area, natural heritage information, with a map and notices of upcoming events.

Open days and Workshops

Heritage Open Day – Sun 11th Sept 10am to 4pm

Talks about the history of the garden and launch of booklet. Natural heritage activities, Victorian games from 'Hahahopscotch'. Talk about Kitchen gardens. Attendance 169.

Pumpkins and Heritage Apples – Sun 23rd Oct 10am to 4pm

Pumpkin carving with BWGA grown pumpkins popular as ever! Pumpkin soup and a community chef provided free tasters and apple recipes. Talk by an expert on Sussex Apples was well received and art activities for the children. Attendance 278.

Plans for 2017 /18

Build and installations

Rebuild of the fallen east wall.

Building of the path through the wood to the garden entrance. Installation of the interpretation board and way-markers. Way-markers by a local artist. Plans for the build, in consultation with Hastings Borough Council (HBC) and a builder are active. Discussions regarding licenses and other issues are ongoing.

Horticulture workshops: March 2017

A survey for plot holders was completed and dates in March arranged. Bookings will be taken in January 2107 first for plot-holders and extended to members as places are available.

Celebration Event to include Traditional skills workshops (e.g. Spinning and basket making)

On completion of the wall, the path, interpretation board and way-markers installation there will be a celebration of the project. The Web site is being updated and the evaluation process is ongoing.

Current Grant applications

Application to local organisations (Rotary Club) for a new shed are in hand.

Hastings List of Heritage Assets

The application for the Bohemia Walled Garden to be included in this list of recognised and valued open spaces within Summerfields Wood Estate has been approved by the panel and is due to be ratified in 2017 by HBC.

Publicity and information

The web site has been updated to www.bohemiawga.org.uk and it has a 'member only section' where members can access meeting minutes for example. Also a new email address info@bohemiawga.org.uk was introduced.

Relevant records are now stored in Google Drive and emails are now sent to members by Mail Chimp.

The History Booklet first edition (HLF) has proved very popular. It will be updated at the completion of the HLF project.

Postcards about the BWGA have been revised and reprinted. The interpretation board and way-markers will improve information (HLF project). A friendly newsletter is written 3 times a year and is available on the web site.

Events are publicised in the local newspaper, colourful posters are distributed and information is on Facebook, Twitter and our Web Site.

Plots

All plots have been in use throughout the year and any vacant plots have been swiftly taken up by the next person on the waiting list. Chris Stovold took over the Plot Management until November when it was taken on by Dot Hill.

There are 'no charge' plots for educational purposes. St Mary Star of Sea school continues to cultivate their plot. HEDGE (the home education group) also have a plot and will be sharing it with Treasure Tots in 2017. Treasure Tots (pre-school group) continue to visit the garden and use the 'mud area' for play as do older children!

A plot has been allocated to two residential homes (adults with special needs) for the residents to learn more about growing. A special school for young people with emotional behaviour difficulties are also growing vegetables on a 'no charge' plot.

Plot fees are still £1.20 per square metre as from January 2016. Plot-holders can access the garden at any time.

Garden management and tasks

These tasks continue: planting and weeding of community borders, grass cutting and path maintenance, clearing vegetation of the outside wall for inspection for the build & access, compost management, water harvesting, and many day to day tasks. Monitoring of the waterless toilet is done regularly.

Insurance, Health and Safety and Security

The public liability insurance which is up to £10million is renewed each July and HBC are informed. Risk assessments are done for the events at the garden and updated regularly. Security will be improved by the rebuilding of the east wall (HLF project). The use of security cameras are being discussed to increase security. The trustees continue to consider security at the garden having strict locking procedures. Door lock codes are changed regularly.

Groups who use the garden

BWGA continues to welcome diverse groups to the garden. Groups like Treasure Tots (pre-school group) schools and individuals. We use a booking form and complete risk assessments as appropriate. The garden is occasional used for private functions.

Education

Educational sessions for schools, families and children. We continue working with other organisations like the RSPCA Mallydams 'Wild Things project' funded by Reaching Communities. Members of residential homes and a special school, home education group have no charge plots. These sessions often use the local Nature Reserve of Summerfields Wood to encourage the learning about the flora and fauna of the garden and wood. Engaging with local experts as possible and information learnt will be available on the web site (HLF project).

Opening Times

The garden is opened most (weather dependant) Wednesdays and Sundays 10 -12 in the growing season March -November. On public and other booked events as needed.

Volunteers

The BWGA is completely run by volunteers and we welcome more from the local community. We arrange some social outings for volunteers. We continue to aim to use the varied skill of our volunteers.

Events 2016 (not HLF)

Easter 2016 April 2016

A woodland trail walk and tree identification with chocolate egg rewards and other Easter treats. Attendance 108

Summer Garden Party July 2016 (arranged by Chris Stovold)

Music and singing from local groups. A drumming session and a bee art activity for children. Raffle, plants, craft and cakes for sale. Attendance 182.

Other

One birthday party celebration (private with small donation to BWGA). Bush-craft and drama session for members of the 'Pocket Park ' (a community group that BWGA work in partnership with).

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

This does NOT include group attendance numbers and the many volunteer and plot-holder attendance numbers.

Outreach and Consultation

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.

A member of the BWGA gave a talk to the residents at a local care home. Some of whom knew the garden when they were young. Two of the trustees attended a forum in Scotland of the Walled Garden Network whose theme was 'Community Gardens '.

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

We attended a meeting with a representative of the Trust for Conservation Volunteers regarding a possible grant application to enhance the surrounding wood and area.

In 2017 we will join with others, lead by the Alexandria Park Green house Group to be part of the local Chelsea Fringe event.

Positive outcomes/ making a difference

The activities and work of the BWGA have:

- 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 2016. We thank HBC Officers and Rangers for their support and actions in relation to the plans for the rebuilding of the east wall.

This report has been compiled by the BWGA trustees:

Signatures

Chair: Mary Dawson _____

Secretary: Susan Thomson _____

Treasurer: Darren Windley
(Trustee registration 09 01 17) _____

Trustee: Christine M'Baye _____

DATE