

FRIENDS OF VALLEY GARDENS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY 26th MARCH 2025 from 6.30pm
AT THE BROSTOFF HALL, ST PETER'S CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE ROAD

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the last AGM March 2024
4. Matters Arising not covered later in the meeting
5. Reports: Finance and Membership
Volunteer Gardeners
Tree Trail
6. Resignation and re-election of Trustees
7. Reports by North Yorkshire Council –
Kate Dawson, Community Assets and Engagement Manager
Kirsty Stewart, Parks and Grounds Area Manager (West)
8. Any other business **(to be advised prior to the meeting)**
9. The next AGM will be held in March 2026

The meeting closed at

After a short break Stuart Holland of Harrogate Civic Society will give a talk about the Harrogate Planning Forum, which will assist the new Harrogate Town Council after it is formed following elections on 1st May 2025.

FOVG AGM MINUTES

ST Peter's Church, Harrogate

6th March 2024:1830 | *Meeting called to order by* Peter Holmes

In Attendance

Trustees: Peter Holmes, Anne Grange and Andrew Jordan. PH chaired.

Guests: Kate Dawson, Community assets and engagement Manager. Jonathan Clubb, Head, parks & grounds. Paul Cook, Curator of RHS Harlow Carr Gardens.

22 members of FOVG.

Plus named guests: Total 25

Apologies: Liz Chidlow, Steve Chidlow, Martin Fish, Jane&Peter Blayney, Chrissie Holmes, Eleanor McClea, Bill Willard, Pam Grant, Andy Bolton, Stuart Holland, Carolyn Green, Anne Smith and Ian Barrass.

Approval of minutes and reports

The minutes from the 2023 AGM were circulated via email to members. No issues or comments were raised and were therefore accepted as accurate. The Finance and Membership report by AG was circulated via email. No issues were noted. The Trustee Report by AJ was circulated via email. No issues were noted. Volunteer Gardeners Report by Liz Chidlow was circulated via email. No issues noted.

Resignations and Re-elections.

All Trustees resigned and put forward their intention to be re-elected. PH put this to a verbal vote. Appointments were unanimously accepted. Martin Fish resigned as President of FOVG. Paul Cook was proposed as the new incumbent. PH put this to a verbal vote. Appointment was unanimously accepted.

Report from Kate Dawson & Jonathan Clubb.

Kate and Jonathan covered a wide variety of subjects. There was an emphasis on the further commercialization of parks and gardens. The regular markets were seen as a success and further events including pop up parties, theatre shows, (wind in the willows – July), Beam light show, and Junior park runs were planned.

The following subjects were covered :-

- Herbaceous borders – Removed due to being considered unsightly.
- Dahlia Beds – Extended and rear area cleared.
- New plants – 300 new plants to be planted this summer.
- Lake Beds – Changed to new style and asked to wait until flowers bloom to judge how they appear. Two new urns installed and planted.
- Golden Metasequoia – Replaced.
- Colonnade – April Clematis planting.

Questions from members

The following questions/issues were raised by members:-

Well Beds: General consensus was the teardrop shape was too small and would encourage ball games/gatherings. Reply: the size of the beds were considered appropriate to also encourage picnicking and sitting and that these beds were for all visitors to the VG, not just for plant/flower enthusiasts. Re stated that members should wait for summer before final judgment.

General consensus was still that the beds were too small or badly proportioned for the area.

General consensus was that beds were being removed and not replaced. Reply: some beds removed but highlighted the new rose arch to be installed. A point was raised that the rose arch was relatively small. Reply was that the roses would grow out and expand over time.

General consensus was that economies of cuts were affecting quality of VG. Reply: No cuts planned including gardeners'. Any cuts were being targeted at managers and supervisors. Efficiencies were to be found by merging 8 teams into 1.

1940's Day:

Friends of Valley Gardens arranged the 1940s Day successfully for many years. Still, it became obvious that the event was becoming too large with too much red tape and expenses for our small committee to continue, so the event was transferred to the larger organisation, Harrogate International Festivals which held it for one further year.

Enforcement of Dog Lead Policy: General consensus was that it should be enforced more rigorously. Reply: This was considered very challenging. The main challenge being the lack of enforcement officers for on the spot fine collection. Responsible ownership was encouraged but not easily enforced.

Statement from member "Dog Lead Policy, either have one and enforce it or get rid of it"

Bike riders: Reply, Same issues with enforcement. More signage suggested.

Pitch and Putt: Reply, P & P will go and be replaced with a junior jump track. Consultation was complete, including the most appropriate surface. AJ stated compacted surface not appropriate. Liaison with similar groups was ongoing regarding surface material and no decision has been taken yet. A final report is imminent.

Nursery Future: Reply, A business case was pending with a preference to continue the policy of local growing but no decision on the location. All opinions at present were speculation.

OMWPR maintenance: Points raised regarding guttering, pointing and painting. Kate to follow up with answers.

Damaged Lamp post's Reply, Jonathan is aware and that this was an issue for the Highways dpt. No updates at this time.

Memorial Seats: Reply, A difficult and sensitive subject. Policy on seats was being reviewed and looking at options. Possible solution would be new terms and conditions for new seats that would not allow for seats becoming shrine's.

Roofing for Colonnade: Reply, there is no plans for roofing the colonnade. Reasons given were cost and it being Grade II listed.

Markets/events monies raised: Reply, money raised from VG commercial events were not ring fenced for VG. Money goes into “a pot”.

Donation Posts: Reply, Delayed due to council changes. Also issues with technology and security. Jonathan has no control over the decision.

Waste Bins: Reply, Paused due to council restructure.

Handkerchief tree status: Reply, Its still alive, was surveyed and that it will stay.

Bandstand Overhang from trees: Reply, looking into the issues.

Progress on the Sensory Garden: Reply, very difficult to maintain as regularly waterlogged. It is constantly being weeded, mulched and has been planted with new plants, suitable to the conditions, at a cost of £200

Team Restructure timeline? Reply, Parks and Ground changes due May/June. Over 200 staff are affected.

Vacancy rates in Parks and Gardens? Reply, Didn't have figures as there is constant change/churn.

AOB

No further business was put forward.

Next Meeting

The date of the next AGM was proposed as March 2025.

Meeting closed

The meeting was closed at 19:17

Paul Cook presentation

Paul Cook gave a very interesting and engrossing presentation on his role as curator of RHS Harlow Carr.

Paul's presentation also explored the history of RHS HC, including many photographs.

Friends of Valley Gardens AGM
26th March 2025 6.30pm
Brostoff Hall, St Peter's Church,
Cambridge Road, HG1 1PB

Reports by Andrew Jordan, Liz Chidlow, Peter Holmes and Anne Grange

Gardening Volunteers

To maintain the standard of the gardens, it was decided to increase the number of gardening days from once a fortnight to once a week from September 2024. Numbers fluctuate but a solid group of 12 volunteers regularly attend for an average time of 24 hours per month. Gardening every Wednesday is having a positive effect on our areas of responsibility, especially the Rockery.

We have purchased an A-frame to display a recruitment poster for the Gardening Volunteers which has proved a success.

The Friends have agreed that the Sensory Bed requires a redesign, initial proposals have been discussed and a meeting with NYC planned, to take this idea forward.

The Tree Trail

Just before Easter 2024 the lectern and Information Board for the Valley Gardens World Tree Trail was installed on Elgar Walk. The first batch of the printed version of the trail was warmly received as 1000 copies were distributed, resulting in another 1000 copies of a second edition being printed in November 2024. The second edition contains some extra or revised photos/text and the more attractive map to match the lectern. The online version was progressively updated during 2024 via Tom Holleman as webmaster and at this moment matches the printed version.

Old Magnesia Well Pump Room

Thanks to the marvellous team of volunteers, we were able to open this building for two Sundays each month during the season and regularly receive positive feedback from members of the public.

The Pump Room is now in need of repairs, following a meeting with Christopher Harrison, Parks and Ground Operations Manager (West) it was agreed that NYC would paint the exterior lower areas of the Pump Room. We are working to find a specialist heritage roofing company to replace the guttering on one side and carry out minor roof repairs. The interior will also need repainting in the future.

Steps in the Japanese Garden etc.

Funds have been allocated to repair the steps up to the top path and the new bench in the Japanese Garden. Peter Blayney has pointed out that the padlocks on the King Edward VII Memorial Gate have seized up and this makes repainting difficult.

Sun Pavillion Plaque

The Harrogate Civic Society Plaque Committee are currently working on a new plaque to honour this important building. The original Friends of Valley Gardens was founded by Anne Smith to save this building.

Yorkshire in Bloom Competition

In July we had the judges from Yorkshire in Bloom in Valley Gardens, thanks to the organization by Pam Grant and the Harrogate in Bloom team, North Yorkshire Council, gardeners and managers and Friends of Valley Garden volunteers, the garden achieved the top Platinum Award.

Membership

At the end of 2024 we had 87 members. These include individuals, households, corporate and honorary members. Our membership numbers vary from year to year due to people moving away from the Harrogate district and new members joining because they love Valley Gardens and appreciate the amount of work involved and the cost of maintaining the Gardens to such a high standard. We are grateful for the help we receive from volunteers but realise that not everyone has time to get involved.

Treasurer

A copy of the accounts to 31st December 2024 are attached. I think that most income and expenditure items in the accounts are self-explanatory, although I will explain in more detail one or two of the headings.

Under the heading 'Net Fundraising' the full £332 in donations was collected when opening the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room. Unfortunately, interest in the Local Lotto has declined, so income from that has reduced to £241.

As of the 31 December 2024 the bank balance was £15877. A donation of £9850 was made to North Yorkshire Council to purchase a rose gazebo which was funded by the two £5,000 donations we received in 2023. The Tree Trail lectern, which is sited on Elgar Walk, has not yet been paid for. It was agreed that the invoice would be paid by North Yorkshire Council, and they would issue an invoice to FOVG. This has not yet arrived so has been shown in the accounts as being a 'debtor'.

We have been quoted £650 to repair the steps in the Japanese Garden. This work should be taking place in March.

We received two legacy donations this year, £1124 from Mike Hine via Harrogate Civic Society for the new lights on the Valley Gardens entrance pillars and £1000 from the estate of David Mason.

We can claim gift aid on membership fees and donations, we receive 25% of the value of the donation, this year we were able to claim £2781.

As mentioned by Andrew, funds need to be raised to carry out repairs and decoration to the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room. Any suggestions or help with fundraising would be greatly appreciated.

To help plan our AGM please let us know if you wish to attend. Please email any comments or questions that you may have about the report or Valley Gardens in advance of the AGM so that we can give a comprehensive answer.

fovg@friendsofvalleygardens.co.uk

FRIENDS OF VALLEY GARDENS, HARROGATE
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Income		
Membership subscriptions	844	919
General donations	2324	10210
Local Lotto	241	394
Net fundraising	332	460
Gift Aid	2781	291
	6522	12274
 Expenses		
Plants/Gardening	675	394
Bench for Japanese Garden	0	552
Rose Gazebo	9850	0
Restoration and Repairs	1224	0
Bank charges	62	62
Publicity and administration (note 1)	105	2004
Miscellaneous (note 2)	460	130
	12376	3142
 Net Surplus/(Deficit)	 (5854)	 9132
 Publicity and Administration (1)		
Domain name renewal	0	460
Printing and stationery	5	1440
Zoom meeting	0	9
Insurance	100	95
	105	2004

Miscellaneous Expenses (2)

AGM costs	58	
Volunteer Gardeners 'A' board	179	
Volunteer expenses/lunches	82	0
Member gifts	91	80
Membership	50	50
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	460	130

**FRIENDS OF VALLEY GARDENS, HARROGATE
BALANCE SHEET****AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024**

	2024	2023
	£	£
Current Assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	15877	21731
Prepayments and debtors (note 3)	(5000)	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	10877	21731
 Reserves		
Opening balance	21731	12599
Surplus/Deficit	(5854)	9132
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	15877	21731

Prepayments and debtors (3)

Purchase of the Tree Trail Lectern

Awaiting invoice from North Yorkshire Council