



Scotland's Garden and Landscape Heritage
Virtual AGM 22nd November 2022 at 11.00

1. Welcome and Apologies

Bob welcomed all to the virtual AGM, saying that 24 members had registered to attend.

Present:

Board members: Matt Benians, acting vice chair; Bob Luther, treasurer and acting secretary; Christopher Dingwall, vice chair; Marilyn Brown; Judy Riley; Sarah Barron; Marion Shawcross (minutes).

Members: Colin McLeod, Patricia Andrew, Chloe Bennett, Anne Hardcastle, Alison Allighan, Hilary Gunkel, Jean Harthill, Jacquie Fernie, Iain Jolliffe, Colin Ellis, Deborah Mackay, Susan Bennett, John West, Anna Buxton, David Simpson.

Apologies:

Nick Bennett, Peter Burman, Fiona MacKelvie, Morna Knottenbelt, Barbara Morris, Peter Fitch, Freyda Taylor, Hannah Tweedie, Peter Metcalfe, Lesley Cumming, Sheila Sim, Carol Jefferson-Davies, Alison Spence, Adam Gillingham, Annie Rhodes, Gill Parker, and Vanessa Stephen.

2. Election of a Chair for the meeting

Bob Luther proposed, and John West seconded, the appointment of Matt Benians as Chair for the meeting.

3. Reports and Accounts

3.1 Minutes

The minutes of the 2021 AGM were taken as read, subject to the correction of spelling mistakes. The issue was raised of whether virtual meetings were provided for in the Constitution, and Bob confirmed that they were.

3.2 Activities during the year

3.2.1 GGEL Progress Report

Judy reported that the project was well underway with 25 volunteers, some very experienced and others not, but all very enthusiastic. The aim of the project is to pilot the toolkit. The toolkit which has 5 sections, has been edited by Judy, Marion and Dianne. There is a Steering Committee, comprising of two East Lothian council staff; Bob and Judy from SGLH; Dianne, the volunteer coordinator, from Archaeology Scotland; Bea Dower, from MVGLA and Dr. Julie Candy from HES. Bea Dower is the professional landscape architect undertaking the significance assessments for the GGEL sites. It is useful having the link with HES, even though they declined to fund the project.

An introductory session was arranged for the volunteers in the John Gray Centre, followed by a field visit to Amisfield. A number of meetings, workshops and small groups have been held. The volunteers are working in groups of two or three, working on one or two sites. Two reports have been submitted and a number more are nearly ready.

Matt thanked the GGEL team on behalf of the trustees and the membership.

3.2.2 East Lothian Archeology fortnight

David Sowerby, a GGEL volunteer, contributed an online presentation on 'Saltcoats Castle, East Lothian and the Livingstones'.

3.2.3 Visit to Branklyn Garden 16th June 2022

This was a very good day beginning with 3 talks relating to rhododendron exploration, preservation and cultivation from Leonie Paterson, RBGE archivist, Dr. Allan Elliott, RBGE biodiversity conservation manager, and Jim Jermyn, property manager and head gardener at Branklyn. After lunch Jim Jermyn and one of his colleagues guided two groups around the garden.

Thanks go to Christopher Dingwall for organising a very successful day.

3.2.4 Joint AHSS/SGLH lecture 14th November 2022

Judy Riley gave a very enlightening lecture about the 'Ornaments and Obelisks – Changes at Tynninghame in the early 19th century'. Judy's lecture marks the publication of her informative and very readable book on 'Tynninghame: Landscapes and Lives'.

Matt thanked Judy for her work on behalf of SGLH.

3.2.5 The newsletter.

A newsletter was sent out in spring, and another newsletter will be published before Christmas.

3.2.6 Website

Matt advised members to check the website regularly for news, events and items of interest to garden history enthusiasts.

3.2.7 Regret for cancellation of activities

Unfortunately, the September visit to Helensburgh, to see the Hill House and Hermitage Park, had to be cancelled because of lack of take up. Reasons given were other events and holidays.

The two-day workshop on Dunglass, organised primarily by Berwickshire Naturalists' Club, with collaboration of SGLH and AHSS, was also cancelled because of low numbers.

3.3 Activities under discussion for 2023

It is planned to hold 3 events in 2023. The first will be a spring visit to Blackie House, in the Lawnmarket, on the 11th March 2023.

Judy has set up this visit to Bill Zach's antiquarian library. He has some rare early books on gardening for us to see, including a William Adam book and one of Humphrey Repton's red books.

3.4 Accounts

Bob introduced the annual accounts, which have been circulated to members. They have been accepted by the independent auditor, who concludes that SGLH has enough reserves to cover ongoing costs and meet the requirements the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

Membership runs at 144, including 30 life members and 24 student members. On page 8 of the report, accruals refers principally to GGEL work.

The adoption of the accounts was proposed by John West and seconded by Patricia Andrew and carried by the membership.

4. Election of Trustees

4.1 Re-election of trustees

Three trustees are standing for re-election, Matt Benians, Hannah Tweedie and Christopher Dingwall. They were re-elected by acclaim.

One trustee, Marion Shawcross, is standing down.

4.2 Christopher Dingwall on sabbatical

During the year Christopher Dingwall requested a sabbatical from the Board, in order to devote more time to a book which he is editing for the 18th century Scottish Studies Society. He is currently sorting the illustrations, a task which entails a lot of work. He also wants to re-visit a book he wrote a while ago on Scottish garden history to bring it up to date for publication under the provisional heading of 'The Landscaping of Scotland'. He expressed gratitude to the Board for allowing him time away, and to Matt for offering to pick up the duties of Vice Chair. He said he is happy to continue taking on queries in his role as Honorary Research Advisor to SGLH.

4.3 Office bearers and friends

Matt reminded the members that Bob combines two roles, treasurer and acting secretary, and thanked him for his work. The Board welcomes suggestions for new office bearers and also for people who would wish to become 'friends', able to assist in particular areas, complementing the skills of Trustees. Please contact Bob with suggestions.

Matt thanked Alison Allighan on behalf of the Trustees for her conservation work: she responds to queries about inventory and non-inventory sites on the Board's behalf.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 AGM 2023

It is the Board's intention to hold the next AGM, for 2023, in person, with a lecture to follow the formal business.

5.2 Attendance survey

John West raised the survey recently undertaken. Matt highlighted the key findings that members are keen to visit lesser-known sites, preferably at weekends, and attend lectures combined with tours. There followed some discussion about the problems of finding sites with easy public transport and the issues of car sharing. Matt and Sarah who comprise a visit sub committee will take these matters into account in their planning.

5.3 Caldwell, East Renfrewshire

John West advised that the longstanding planning application appears to be near conclusion and that it is highly likely that new housing will be allowed on the designed landscape, regardless of the loss of heritage. It might be the last chance to visit the landscape. Matt will follow up with John.

The AGM was formally closed at 11.45

Informal discussion – main points

- Dunira, near Comrie, is a potential site for a visit, as it is a derelict, inventory site. It has a new owner who is building a new house and planning to reinstate Thomas Mawson's terraces. It is not accessible by public transport and there is no provision for parking.
- Consideration could be given to hiring a minibus if visiting Comrie.
- There would be merit in revisiting the Japanese garden at Cowden, as a lot of work has been done since SGLH's early visit. It is a popular destination.
- Hospitalfield is a candidate site. It is in Arbroath, which accessible by train. It has a restored fernery, and garden designed by Nigel Dunnet.
- Learney House was suggested by Susan Bennett. It has a garden designed in 1747, which has been neglected since. SportSportUK has an office there but a google search shows there is holiday accommodation as well. The garden is kept tidy. Near Aberdeen airport.
- Caldwell, mentioned earlier, is not accessible. The developer respects the William Adam heritage to the neglect of the landscape, despite a good case to protect it put forward.
- John feels there is little respect for landscape unless it is by Capability Brown.
- Matt drew attention to Basil Spence's Scottish Widows building in Edinburgh, where care is being taken with the building renovation, but consideration for Sylvia Crowe's landscape is missing.

- Taymouth Castle: Christopher said that a lot of development is going on there. Developers are restoring a number of garden buildings, which have been ruined for years.