Scotland's Garden and Landscape Heritage
Ninth Annual General Meeting, Saturday September 2nd, 2023
at Bannockburn House, Stirling

1. Welcome and Apologies

Bob welcomed everyone to this AGM at Bannockburn House, the 9th for SGLH, and the first physical AGM since 2019.

Present:
Board members: Matt Benians, acting vice chair; Bob Luther, treasurer and acting secretary; Christopher Dingwall, vice chair; Marilyn Brown; Judy Riley; Sarah Barron and Hannah Tweedie.

Members**:** Lesley Cumming, Claire Wallace, Iain Jolliffe, Bea Dower, David Simpson, Adam Swan, Chloe Bennett, Graham Shawcross, Adam Gillingham, Catherine Niven, Christina Knussen, Catherine Erskine, Peter Erskine, Simon Stuart, John West, Jean Harthill, Rory Pyper and Marion Shawcross (minutes).

Apologies:
Anna Buxton, Jane Armstrong, Fidelity Dean, Shiona Mackie, Patricia Andrew, Alison Allighan, Shona Munro, David Lockhart, Margaret Stewart.

Proxies:
Patricia Andrew, Alison Allighan, Shone Munro and Doreen Wilson.

2. Election of a Chair for the meeting

Catherine Erskine proposed, and Claire Wallace seconded, the election of Matt Benians as Chair for the meeting.

Bob stated that the minutes of the Eighth Annual General Meeting, which were on the website, did not need to be formally approved at the meeting. A vote of thanks to the office bearers was proposed by Peter Erskine and endorsed by the members for their work in keeping the charity going.

3. Reports

Acting Chair's Report

Matt Benians illustrated the achievements during the year 2022-2023 with a PowerPoint Presentation.

GGEL recording project:

The project is in its 2nd year. The project is the trial of a draft toolkit for researching and assessing non-inventory sites. Assessments have been undertaken for 18 sites. There have been 5 steering group meetings and 6 volunteer meetings to date. The next volunteer meeting will be on 21st September.

Conservation Advisor:

Alison Allighan, SGLH's Conservation Advisor for many years, predating the establishment of SGLH, has advised that, because of increasing work at the Gardens Trust, she wishes to stand down. The Trustees express their sincere gratitude to Alison for preparing responses to many conservation enquiries. It was acknowledged that her wealth of expertise and knowledge will be missed. In recognition of her immense contribution, the Trustees have agreed that she should receive Honorary Life Membership of SGLH.

The Trustees are delighted to announce that Bea Dower is taking on the role of Conservation Advisor. A small Conservation Sub-Committee has been formed so SGLH can continue to provide independent advice on Inventory and non-Inventory sites in Scotland.

Vanessa Stephen Conservation Fund:

This fund has been created to support SGLH's conservation activities, which were very important to Vanessa. Vanessa was a Trustee of SGLH from its inception in 2015, and she became Chair in 2022. She cared deeply about Scotland's cultural heritage and had a passion for gardens and designed landscapes. During her year out she travelled to Italy to visit and record gardens in Florence and Tuscany. As a practising landscape architect, she prepared Conservation Management Plans for historic and designed landscapes, including Mavisbank House, Arniston House, Culzean Castle and Country Park, and Invercauld Estate. SGLH has received a grant award from the Mushroom Trust to fund the Conservation Advisor's Post.

Blackie House Library and Museum visit in March 2023

Dr Bill Zachs shared with us some of his antiquarian book collection. Numbers were limited to ensure an intimate audience and careful handling of books. A further visit can be arranged, and the members present indicated a strong interest. Thanks were given to Anna Buxton for writing the newsletter article on the visit.

Hospitalfield House and Gardens, Arbroath in June 2023

In the morning we had a guided tour of the house; followed by a tour of the grounds, led by Christopher Dingwall, including the redesigned walled garden and restored fernery. After an al fresco lunch we visited the Mortuary Chapel in Arbroath's West Cemetery, designed by Hospitalfield House's last owner, Patrick Allan Fraser.

The Pleasaunce

Issue 10 was published in early 2023 and contained articles on Rhododendrons, Dunbar's Close, Cottage Garden Societies, Landscape Contemplation in 18th century Scotland and a History of Professional Arboriculture in Britain, plus book reviews. This was the second edition compiled and edited by Judy Riley, and on behalf of the Trustees and members, Matt expressed our gratitude to Judy. Past editions of the 'The Pleasaunce' are available

as pdfs on the website. Editions 7, 8 & 9 have been downloaded over one thousand times each. Issue 6 has so far been downloaded or 'hit' fifteen hundred times.

E-Newsletter

Two editions of the E-Newsletter, Spring and Summer, were published and another is due for Autumn/Winter. Matt expressed thanks to Hannah for her work in preparing the newsletter, assisted by David Lockhart, our newly appointed Trustee.

Website

Matt reminded members to check the website regularly for news of forthcoming events, and past editions of The Pleasaunce. Documents about Glorious Gardens, garden history information sheets, and minutes of business meetings can be found in the Resources section.

AHSS – joint lecture

Judy Riley gave the joint AHSS/SGLH lecture on Tyninghame Gardens.

The Gardens Trust

SGLH attends the Gardens Trust quarterly Board meetings.

Board Meetings

SGLH Trustees meet quarterly.

Christopher Dingwall, Vice Chair and Honorary Research Advisor, received the Ken Martin Memorial Award for services to Scotland's Trees for the Arboricultural Association Scottish Branch. It is awarded to recognise those who have made an outstanding contribution to arboriculture and tree management, or understanding, in Scotland.

The next edition of the Pleasaunce will examine Scotland's post war landscapes.

This year's AHSS/SGLH joint lecture will be on Monday 13th November at Augustine United Church on George Fourth Bridge, on the subject of Designed Landscapes of the Recent Past. Following up the success of the Branklyn Study Day, a Study Day on Pomology is proposed. Pomology is the branch of botany devoted to the study of fruit trees and their fruits.

4. Accounts

4.1Treasurer's report

Bob introduced the annual accounts. A deficit of £61 was generated during 2022. Total income was £13,169 of which £8,152 was related to projects, and £5,017 to unrestricted funds. On the balance sheet date of 31 December 2022, the unrestricted reserve was £6,004.

Conservation work accounted for expenditure of £1,138.

Membership is steady at around 140. Receipts from subscriptions are slightly up from 2021.

N.B In 2015 the Garden History Society of Scotland had 152 members. This was down to 85 for SGLH in 2016 but has climbed steadily since. Bob hopes to increase numbers to 150 this year.

The Vanessa Stephen Conservation Fund currently stands at £2,425 which includes donations and money from sale of her books. It will shortly be credited with £3,500 from the Mushroom Trust. The funds will be exclusively used for conservation.

Current unrestricted reserves stand at £3,000 which is very close to current annual running costs. Regrettably, financial prudence has made it necessary to terminate the agreement with Archaeology Scotland to fund a volunteer coordinator.

4.2 Increase in subscriptions

The current tight financial situation has led to the proposal to increase subscription fees, which have not been raised since 2015, to take effect from 1st January 2024. Matt summarised the current and proposed fees for individuals, joint members at the same address, students, corporations and lifetime members, for both online and postal subscriptions. The new scale is attached as Annex 1.
The request to raise subscriptions was unanimously agreed.

The financial situation prompted some discussion of the value of trying to involve more students and the ways this might be done, by having more direct contact with landscape students during their course. Christopher recalled the loss of attracting independent students through the National Trust course he ran, when the NT retracted its activities. Matt referred to HES' round table plan to bring together organisations in the field of landscape and garden heritage. He has completed a questionnaire on SGLH's behalf and will attend the proposed round table discussions.

Catherine Niven asked if money could be re-diverted to a coordinator post if finances improved. There was a query about other sources of funds, but Bob thought that neither HES nor the Heritage Lottery fund would be likely to give a grant for this purpose. Sarah Barron suggested SGLH might approach some Local Authorities, in Aberdeenshire and Perthshire for example, to ask if they would sponsor a Glorious Garden Project in the same way that East Lothian had helped financially with the project in their area. Claire Wallace from Aberdeenshire said there were active garden clubs in the region with an interest in historic gardens.

A number of people suggested having a leaflet about SGLH to inform and attract new members. Christopher said he uses a banner and leaflets when he talks at events, and he thinks a leaflet is essential. Generally, there is some hesitance about increasing the reliance on paper materials. The important thing to do would be to direct interested people to the website.

5. Elections of Trustees

5.1 Election of new trustees

Fiona Gordon and David Lockhart were elected unanimously as new Trustees, nominated by Judy Riley and seconded by Bea Dower. These two appointments bring the Trustee numbers up to nine, the full complement.

5.2 Re-election of trustees

The two trustees standing for re-election, Marilyn Brown and Sarah Barron were re-elected unanimously, nominated by Chloe Bennett and seconded by John West.

6. Any Other Business

Judy spoke about 'The Pleasaunce' and how encouraging it was to hear the number of hits the journal attracts. She was happy to report that for the next issue she has an article from Pat Lorimer and Rob Close on the Crawick Multiverse which places the design of Charles Jencks in the context of his other gardens. The theme of the journal will be 'Gardens from the Recent Past'.

Judy shared with the members some of the issues we are facing when trialling the GGEL toolkit. The computer literacy of volunteers is very varied. We may have taken some expertise for granted and perhaps should offer more training and support. The toolkit itself does not increase motivation, but personal contact does. The meeting on 21st September will be an opportunity to look at the progress of the project bearing in mind GGEL (and SGLH) are run totally by volunteers.

Sarah asked the members to let her have any ideas about potential visits for next year.

The AGM was formally closed at 12.00 noon.

Annex 1

Scale of SGLH subscriptions effective from 01.01.2024

		On line	Postal
Annual	Single	£30	£40
Annual	Two members same address	£50	£60
Annual	Student	£0	
Annual	Corporate	£100	
Lifetime	Single	£350	£500
Lifetime	Two members same address	£500	£750