

SHROPSHIRE PARKS AND GARDENS TRUST

Registered Charity Number 1202152

FIRST

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 21st March 2024

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2023

SHROPSHIRE PARKS AND GARDENS TRUST

FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**6.30pm Thursday 21st March 2024
Shropshire Wildlife Trust Headquarters
193 Abbey Foregate Shrewsbury SY2 6AH**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Chairman's Report
3. Treasurers report
Resolutions:
 - i. To receive the Report of the Hon Treasurer for the financial year January – December 2023
 - ii. To approve the appointment of the Auditors James, Holyoak & Parker Ltd
4. Planning and Conservation
5. Events and Winter Lectures
6. Election of Committee
7. Date, Place, and time of next Annual General Meeting:
Thursday 20th March 2025

The AGM will be followed by refreshments and a lecture at 7.30pm:

The Legacy of the SPGT Bursary Scheme by Stuart Francis MCIHort

Stuart Francis is a professional gardener and award winning garden designer. He received a Bursary from the SPGT in 2018 and will tell us how the funding enabled him to take a course in Garden History which has helped him expand his career.

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2023 - 2024

The Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Registered Charity Number 1202152, set up to replace the Former Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust, Registered Charity Number 1076257, which was set up as a Charitable Trust in 1997.

The new CIO was registered by the Charity Commission for England and Wales on 2 March 2023 and all the assets and members of the former Trust have now been transferred to the new CIO. This is the First AGM of the new CIO.

The objects of the CIO are:

To advance the education of the public in the art and science of parks and gardens by:

- a. Promoting the understanding, conservation, protection, improvement and re-creation of Parks and Gardens and designed landscapes; and
- b. Promoting for the benefit of the public the preservation, enhancement and re-creation of whatever Parks and Gardens and designed landscapes may exist, or have existed, in and around the present or historic boundaries of the County of Shropshire.

Chairman's Report 2023 – 2024

Your committee has worked hard this year to continue to develop the Trust for the future. As we informed members at the AGM last year, we were advised that our Trust Document, drawn up when the Trust was set up in 1997, was out of date and no longer in line with current legislation or with the way we want to run the Trust, so last year we registered Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with the Charity Commission for England and Wales, with a revised constitution which was circulated to all members last year. We have now transferred the assets of the former Trust to the new CIO.

Harriet Devlin organised another excellent programme of visits and lectures for us and supervised all our Summer Visits before moving to Edinburgh, after which Stephen Packer took over managing the lecture programme and organising next years visits.

Hugh Devlin put together two editions of our colourful magazine with the help of Tom and Gisèle Wall, before moving to Edinburgh with Harriet. Chris Gallagher continued the important work of responding to planning enquiries on behalf of both ourselves and the Gardens Trust, while our new Treasurer, Rose Gibson, kept our accounts in order, and Daphne Capps kept our memberships up to date.

However, we have not had a Secretary all year, and this work has had to be covered by other Committee Members. Gaps like this in our Committee mean that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with all our work.

We need a Secretary and a Magazine Editor urgently, just to continue our core work, and our important work of researching and recording gardens in Shropshire continues to be on hold as we have no one to organise it.

We will simply not be able to continue if we cannot fill these vital posts in the near future. The work we do is important to the future of parks and gardens in Shropshire, and we very much want to continue to promote the Trust and increase our membership, but we are beginning to run out of energy. I am beginning to feel that I have nothing left to give, and I know the rest of the committee feel the same.

I do ask you all to think very hard whether you could help the committee carry out our work. Much of the work of these posts could be divided between a number of different people, instead of being done by a single committee member as it has been in the past.

Please talk to me if you feel you could take on some of the work of the committee and want to know what the work entails. Any help that you can give us will be gladly received.

Treasurer's Report for the Financial Year January – December 2023

As you will see, the 2023 accounts show a small surplus for the year. This is slightly misleading, as it includes approximately £350 of 2024 membership payments received in November, so the overall outcome is that we effectively break even.

Costs have of course been rising, and while we have increased our subscription rates, membership numbers haven't increased to compensate. One of the main ways in which we have saved money is by suspending the bursary scheme until our finances are more robust. We are also trying to save on postage, both by limiting the number of mailings, and by using e-mail where possible.

Planning and Conservation Report 2023-2024

The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee for Planning Applications affecting Registered Parks and Gardens. Planning applications that are referred to SPGT for consideration via our colleagues at the Gardens Trust, or which increasingly, are sent directly to SPGT from the planning departments at either Shropshire Council or Telford & Wrekin Council, tend initially at least to follow a more or less consistent pattern, i.e. submission by the applicant, notification as above, followed by our (carefully crafted and reasonable) written response. Often, that is where the process ends for a given application.

Statutory consultees are rarely notified as to the result of these applications and rarely do we have the time to check on the outcomes. Such was an application at the end of March 2023 to build a largely underground dwelling on the site of, and largely within the structure of, a former sunken water reservoir within the Grade II Registered Park & Garden (RPAG) of *Condover Hall Park*, complete with horse paddock, stables and extensive tree planting. This application was refused, and we have, to date, heard no more of it.

Also in March 2023 was an initial application, as well as a Listed Building Consent (LBC) application, for the change of use of the Grade II* *Berwick House* to a wedding venue, with an enlarged car park adjacent. Historic England had indicated their support for the application and indeed had been fully consulted prior to the application. As it was felt that the location of the car park could be mitigated with careful planting, we offered our assistance in this respect, should it be required.

Around the same time, came a second application (following an initial, largely similar proposal a year earlier) for the demolition and replacement of a small, discreet, single storey building in Frankwell, on the north bank of the Severn which, it was declared, had previously been a boat house. This overlooks the Grade II Registered *Quarry Park and Dingle Gardens* on the south of the river, dating from at least 1719, when Henry Jenks, then Mayor of Shrewsbury, funded the planting of over 400 Limes within the park.

The replacement proposed for the existing building is a two and a half storey, architect designed, rowing clubhouse, with gym, meeting, and practice rooms and with an wholly inappropriate zinc-clad roof, which we felt to be completely out of keeping with its surroundings as well as likely causing or leading to the loss of a key screening group of mature trees adjacent, which would exacerbate its negative visual impact upon the setting and hence the Significance of the *Quarry Park and Dingle*. This application was refused and has now been taken to Appeal by the applicant. We repeated our objections in writing to the Inspector and await his decision.

The Grade II Registered *Chetwynd Park*, near Newport, has similarly been subjected to many applications for housing development within its immediate setting, all of which have so far been resisted. The recent Telford and Wrekin *Local Plan Review 2020-2040* provided an opportunity to explain to Council planners our understanding of the importance of Chetwynd Park as a key designated Heritage Asset, and to emphasise the contribution made by its setting to Chetwynd's undoubted Significance. Following this, the Council has opted to maintain the *status quo*, with no new housing allocations currently proposed for Chetwynd's immediate setting.

The setting of heritage assets, in particular of Registered Parks & Gardens, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, is a key contributor to their Significance. A case which highlighted threats to all three of these was a proposed bungalow development of November 2023 within a part of the Conservation Area of Market Drayton, North Shropshire, which also formed part of the setting of the Grade II* Listed *Pell Wall*, built 1822-8 by the architect Sir John Soane, of the Grade II Registered *Pell Wall Park & Garden*, and of six other Grade II & II* Listed Buildings within and adjacent to it.

We submitted a detailed objection to this application, stressing the importance of setting and illustrating it with contemporary watercolours of the house and park, including the proposed development area itself. This led to the application being withdrawn, although as the latest in a series of such schemes proposed by the same applicant, we are keeping a weather eye out for future designs on, and in, the same area.

Educational or other colleges located in Registered Parks & Gardens within the countryside are themselves a frequent source of development applications affecting these Heritage Assets. The Grade II* Lilleshall Hall in North Shropshire, set within the extensive Grade II Registered Lilleshall Hall Park & Garden, is home to the National Sports and Conferencing Centre, which in its drive to provide ‘...*world-class facilities to sports clubs and organisations both nationally and internationally, as well as to the local community...*’ is continually upgrading the facilities it is able to provide. The many dwellings located within its extensive parkland areas, similarly, generate a variable number of applications throughout the year. An agreed *Development Framework* document produced on behalf of SPGT by *Ashmead Price Landscape Architects*, anticipates future development needs within the life of the study and guides managers at Lilleshall on their effective location within the historic landscape.

A comparable document prepared by the same consultants for the Grade II* Listed *Acton Burnell (Concord College)*, provides a similar framework and guidance for the form and location of planned developments within and affecting this historic site. Two major applications were received in November 2023, one for an upgrade to the existing Sports Hall, with agreed landscaping and associated tree removals, and a more substantial proposal for a Boarding House and Staff Accommodation building, again with agreed landscaping, extensive tree plantings and more limited tree removals. Advice was given at a site visit to discuss these proposals, including the opportunity and need to preserve the genetic complement and hence appearance (phenotype) of existing ancient field boundary and later-18th/19th century Oak trees on site, via a project to grow on replacements for these individuals from their own acorns.

Finally, two applications have been considered over the year for the installation of photovoltaic panels on the roofs of cricket clubhouse buildings. The first of these (in June 2023) was located within the Grade II* Registered Park & Garden of *Davenport House*, directly facing the Grade I Listed *Davenport House* itself. Permission was granted for this development, notwithstanding the high historical interest of both the house itself (1726, by Francis Smith of Warwick) and especially of its surrounding parkland, which was painted in 1753 by Thomas Robins the Elder, who may also have had a hand in its design.

The second photovoltaic application came more recently (February 2024) and was for a Cricket Pavilion within the Grade II Registered Park & Garden of *Orleton Hall* and the setting of the Grade II* Listed *Orleton Hall*. Here the Cricket Pavilion was remote from the house at the eastern edge of the park, and not facing it directly as at Davenport. In addition, the flat roof of the building sloped away from the park and out of the Registered Area. We considered that in this case, the impact of the array on the Registered Park would be minimal and suggested only that a Structural Engineer be engaged to assess the loading of the panels (amounting overall to 0.9 metric tons) on the roof itself.

Chris Gallagher, Vice-Chair, SPGT.

Events

Summer Visits 2023

The following varied and interesting programme of visits was enjoyed by all participating members:

Sunday 21 May

Whittington Castle and Fernhill Hall

We had a tour of Whittington Castles's complex fortifications, gardens and structures followed by lunch in the castle café. We were then welcomed to Fernhill Hall by the owners Veronica and Charles Lillis to view the house by Edward Haycock, the topiary gardens they have created around it, the parkland and rhododendrons.

Thursday 22 June

Hatton Grange

We were joined by members of Staffordshire Gardens and Parks Trust for a visit to Hatton Grange, designed by Thomas Farnols Pritchard, guided tours around the gardens and afternoon tea.

Thursday 6 July

Wildegooose Nursery

We visited the walled gardens at Millichope Hall where Jack and Laura Wilgoss have created an independent nursery specialising in violas and herbaceous plants. The visit included a talk on the magnificent, curved glasshouse dating from the 1830s, tea and cakes.

Thursday 21 September

Oteley Estate

The Oteley Estate is located on the shores of the Mere at Ellesmere. Accessed via the rolling parkland and through the original stable yard, the 10 acre garden is home to a wide variety of trees, shrubs and extensive lawns. Within the gardens are many features from the original house, which was demolished in 1959, including a boathouse, tower and Swiss Cottage. Tea and cakes were served in the café.

Winter Lectures 2023-24

Thursday 19 October

Birkenhead Park – The People's Park

Rob Belcher told us the fascinating story of the history of the park and its journey to World Heritage status.

Thursday 16 November

Downton Gorge – The Matchless Valley

SPGT member Tom Wall told us about the remarkable designed landscape of Downton Gorge near Ludlow.

Thursday 18 January**Wollerton – A Year in the Garden**

Pip Smith BSc MA MCIHort took us through the history and development of the garden and how it changes with the seasons.

Thursday 15 February**Towards an Archaeology of Roman Gardens**

Dr Roger White explained how Roman gardens have been revealed to us not only through the vivid frescoes which revolutionised gardening in the 18th century, but through modern archaeology which shows how they were planted and used.

Summer Visits 2024

A full program of visits is now being planned and further information will be given at the AGM.

Election of Trustees for 2024 – 2025

The COI currently has 6 Trustees:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Chairman | Mary King |
| Vice Chairman | Chris Gallagher |
| Membership Secretary | Daphne Capps |
| Treasurer | Rose Gibson |
| Committee Member | Imogen Sambrook |
| Committee Member | Kathryn Herbert |

Under the terms of our Constitution, one third of the Charity Trustees shall retire from office at every General Meeting of the members of the CIO. Retiring Trustees may stand for re-election.

The two Trustees retiring by rotation and standing for re-election at this AGM are:

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Vice Chairman | Chris Gallagher |
| Membership Secretary | Daphne Capps |

Further nominations for Trustees are welcome. Any Members wishing to put forward nominations for themselves or someone else may do so either by sending them to the Chairman before the meeting or at the meeting in person.

Nominees must be proposed and seconded by members of the CIO and have agreed to their names being put forward.

SHROPSHIRE PARKS & GARDENS TRUST
(Registered Charity No. 1202152)

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT
YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2023

| | <u>Year</u> <u>Ended</u> <u>31.12.23</u> | <u>Year</u> <u>Ended</u> <u>31.12.22</u> |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| | £ | £ |
| <u>Receipts</u> | | |
| Subscriptions | 1,837 | 1,433 |
| Lectures & Visits | 1,859 | 1,335 |
| Summer Event | - | - |
| Donations | - | 95 |
| Gift Aid | 253 | 254 |
| | <hr/> 3,949 | <hr/> 3,117 |
| Bank Interest | <hr/> 138 | <hr/> 14 |
| | 4,087 | 3,131 |
| <u>Payments</u> | | |
| Hire of Room | 428 | 409 |
| Speakers | 200 | 488 |
| Insurance | 198 | 198 |
| Printing & Publicity | 783 | 667 |
| Entry Fees & Coach Hire | 1,347 | 1,138 |
| Secretarial Expenses | 213 | 397 |
| Sundries | 70 | - |
| Website Costs | 300 | 300 |
| AGT Membership | 199 | 202 |
| Bursaries | - | 500 |
| | <hr/> (3,738) | <hr/> (4,299) |
| Net Surplus/(Deficit) | 349 | (1,168) |
| Balance at Bank brought forward | <hr/> 15,461 | <hr/> 16,629 |
| Balance at Bank carried forward | <hr/> <u>15,810</u> | <hr/> <u>15,461</u> |

We have examined the accounts together with the books, vouchers and documents relating to Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust for the year ended 31st December 2023 and the balances in hand at that date. In our opinion the books have been properly kept and the above account is in agreement with the books, vouchers and documents submitted and explanations given to us.

JAMES, HOLYOAK & PARKER LTD,
Chartered Accountants,
1 Knights Court
Archers Way
Battlefield Enterprise Park
Shrewsbury, SY1 3GA

21/2/2024