



MINUTES

18th Annual General Meeting

Held on Monday 24th July 2023 at 3.30pm
at the Castle Arts Centre, Castle Park, Frodsham

The papers for this meeting had been circulated to Members by email or post, as requested. These papers comprised the AGM Notice & Agenda including the wording of the proposed Special Resolution, the Minutes of the 17th AGM and the Directors' & Trustees' Report and Financial Statement for the year ended 31st January 2023.

Prior to the meeting, attendees were given a guided tour by knowledgeable Kath Gee, a member of the CGT Research & Recording Group. Edward Kemp designed the grounds of the mid-19th century Castle Park House and many of the magnificent original trees still survive. Afternoon tea was then served including delicious cakes provided by members. Fortunately, the pleasant weather allowed for socialising in the courtyard to the Castle Arts Centre.

1.0 Welcome and Introduction

On behalf of the Council of Management, David Cash welcomed our Patron, The Viscount Ashbrook, Lady Ashbrook, members and guests. He thanked everyone for attending Cheshire Gardens Trust's 18th AGM on the occasion of the anniversary of the first main meeting to discuss the formation of CGT, also held at Castle Park, nineteen years before.

2.0 Attendance and Apologies

- 2.1 Forty-six members and guests were in attendance
- 2.2 Apologies had been received from eleven members

3.0 Minutes of the 17th AGM at Abbeywood Gardens, Delamere on 20th June 2022

- 3.1 The Minutes had been circulated by email or by post prior to 3rd July 2023. No amendments to the minutes were required. The Minutes were duly proposed as an accurate record of the meeting by Margaret Blowey, seconded by Gordon Darlington and accepted by the meeting.

4.0 Matters Arising

- 4.1 There were no matters arising.

5.0 Annual Report – Key Points

5.1 *General*

Members may recall that at last year's AGM, it was announced that the future of CGT was at risk unless more volunteers stepped forward. Volunteering need not be onerous and can just mean relieving existing volunteers of just one part of their role. For example, last year we are grateful to announce that Gwynneth Owen volunteered to take over circulating news items by email, which allowed Sue Eldridge to concentrate on her role as Newsletter Editor.

We are also most grateful that after the meeting in 2022, Peter Young volunteered to become a Trustee which, to some extent, relieved the quorum issues of the Council of Management. However, trustee numbers are still low, hence the Special Resolution to be discussed later in the meeting.

Members were encouraged to step forward to help out in a small way within their own area, such as keeping an eye on planning applications affecting designed landscapes and notifying us of any sites which may be at risk. Assistance at one-off events would also relieve pressure on regular volunteers.

David Cash refreshed attendees' memories of the charitable remit of Cheshire Gardens Trust: -

- To spread understanding of parks and gardens and help others appreciate their purpose and history
- To encourage the making of new parks and gardens and safeguard the ones we have.
- To encourage local communities to appreciate and care for the parks and gardens in their area.
- To find out and record the history of parks and gardens in their area.

David warmly thanked the Events Group for organising the AGM and those members who contributed the delicious cakes. Special thanks were offered to Kath Gee for her tour of Castle Park and to all members of the individual Groups for their contributions throughout the year.

5.2 *Events Group*

Group leader, Margaret Blowey, thanked the team and everyone who had supported the talks and visits during the previous year. Events had been very well attended and a full return to garden visits had been most welcome. The group was planning events for next year and suggestions from members were invited. events@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

5.3 *Research & Recording and Conservation Groups*

Barbara Moth, leader of both groups, directed attendees to the achievements in these core aims as detailed in the Annual Report.

Barbara especially drew the meeting's attention to CGT's workload in relation to planning issues. The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee which in reality means that CGT deals with all planning applications relating to Cheshire's registered plus non-registered designed landscapes. A long-term aim this year with the help of the Gardens Trust, CGT hopes to gain more support from Historic England.

Once again CGT has been consulted directly by the National Trust regarding the important issue of flood alleviation work at Lyme Park in addition to the upgrading of visitor facilities. This relationship is most rewarding.

If members are passionate about designed landscapes, Barbara welcomed any support for these two Groups, if only by members being observant in their own areas and passing on concerns and information to herself or Sue Bartlett either directly or by email:

planning@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk research@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

5.4 *Newsletter*

Editor, Sue Eldridge has continued the publication of quarterly Newsletters of a very high standard. Unfortunately, the Newsletter Support Group is now reduced to three due to personal issues and Sue herself has stated that she wishes to resign in May 2024, having been in her role since January 2017. The group works collectively and new volunteers should be aware that it is not necessary to write articles – contributing ideas and offering guidance are also most valuable. Ideas, photographs and articles are always welcome from the general membership in furtherance of our aim to raise awareness of Cheshire's rich parks and gardens heritage.

newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

5.7 *Website*

Similarly, comments, news items and photographs for the Website are most welcome, particularly in enlarging its record of Public Parks and supporting the Parks Friends Groups. Photographs from members are always welcome to update and enlarge our collection and help to keep the website looking fresh.

info@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk

Tina Theis' continuing work on the Newsletter digital index means that a wide range of subjects, places and people can be searched via the Search Box at the top righthand corner of each website page. Grateful thanks to Tina for her invaluable work.

5.9 *Membership and Volunteers*

Although our general Membership numbers remain steady, the Trust continues to be short of fresh volunteers to help maintain our aims and activities. Tina Theis' contribution to the website is a good example of one person giving their time and skill to one particular area of the running of the Trust.

Taking the minutes of the Council of Management could be a shared role, not necessarily requiring volunteers to become a Trustee.

Crispin Spencer was again thanked for his sterling work as Membership Secretary.

6.0 Financial Review and Accounts

6.1 Treasurer, Martin Slack drew the attention of the meeting to the Financial Statements set out on pages 13 to 17 of the Directors' & Trustees' Report for the year ended 31 January 2023, approved by the Council of Management on 27 June 2023 and circulated to all members prior to the AGM.

6.2 Martin stated that the historically accrued surplus funds of £16,000 is a potential problem. The Trust's objective is to spend money on its stated charitable aims and only hold sufficient funds to support annual working costs. The Student Bursary project had lost

momentum over the period of covid and this had not been continued due to lack of active volunteers. However, a fresh requirement for funds may be in the form of supporting the Trust's essential Planning Role which is now under review.

6.4 There were no questions from the floor and Martin was thanked for his contribution.

7.0 Council of Management – Special Resolution

7.1 Due to the lack of active volunteers, the number of Directors/Trustees had been in breach of the Articles of the Charity as it is currently 4, not the required 7. Therefore a Special Resolution was presented to the meeting as follows:-

Subject to the agreement of the Charity Commission, Article 32 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association shall be amended as set out below;

The current wording:

32. The number of members of the Council of the Charity shall be determined by the Charity from time to time as a General Meeting but shall not be less than seven or more than fifteen members.

Shall be amended to:

32. The number of members of the Council of the Charity shall be determined by the Charity from time to time at a General Meeting but shall not be less than four or more than seven members.

7.2 A query raised from the floor was that an odd number would be more workable. However, it was explained that the Trust was struggling to maintain members on the Council of Management. Three members would not be a workable number and the Chair has a casting vote.

7.3 The adoption of the Special Resolution was put to the meeting, with no objections. It was, therefore, agreed that the Treasurer would submit the amendment to the Charities Commission.

8.0 Elections to the Council of Management

8.1 Over the previous year, Peter Young had been co-opted onto the Council and was willing to stand as a Director and Trustee. Margaret Blowey, David Cash and Gordon Darlington were willing to stand again and all four were accepted by the meeting. No further nominations or volunteers from the floor were forthcoming.

8.2 It was stressed that anyone could attend Council meetings to contribute on particular topics or just to find out how the meetings work. There are approximately six meetings per year, face to face or via zoom. Members can find out when and where meetings are held by checking the calendar on the website or contacting current CoM members.

9.0 Plans for the Future

Information presented by Barbara Moth of the Research & Recording Group and Planning & Conservation Group:

- 9.1 *CGT Exhibition at Lion Salt Works 17th July to 30th October 2023*
Having heard Barbara's talk on the subject, West Cheshire Museums had approached the Research & Recording Group asking them to work with the Lion Salt Works, Marston to produce an exhibition 'Salt and Local Parks & Gardens'. This is an excellent advertising opportunity for CGT and underlines the importance of the R&R Group's work.
- 9.2 *Women of the Welfare Landscape Exhibition*
This travelling exhibition curated by researchers from Liverpool School of Architecture runs from July 22nd to September 3rd 2023 at Styal Mill. Again, via contact from an online lecture, CGT members are invited to a special guided tour of the exhibition on 3th August. The exhibition focuses on Brenda Colvin, founding member and president of the Institute of Landscape Architecture, who designed the landscape of Styal Village. This new contact with Liverpool University may have future implications for the Trust.
- 9.3 *Heritage Open Day at Queens Park, Crewe – 16th September 2023*
In collaboration with the Gardens Trust, CGT is taking part in a trial event to spread the aims of the Trust and hopefully to attract new local members. Working with volunteer support officers from the Gardens Trust and officers from the Cheshire Archives, Barbara and the R&R Group are creating an informative display plus child-friendly activities entitled the People's Pop-Up Park Museum which will run from 10.30 to 16.30 in the grade II* Registered Queens Park.

There will be a public park quiz, a park-related Lucky Dip, Tudor Posie-making and historic Children's Games as well as archive material related to the park. Barbara requested assistance with park photographs for the new display boards, help with the sourcing of plants and volunteers to help in the park on the day and also at the additional CGT stall in the Heritage Centre on 9th September.

Members were asked to contact Barbara directly or via the CGT website. The Events Group will be circulating information via email. In connection with this event the CGT book on Edward Kemp has been reprinted at a price of £5 and was available at the meeting.

10.0 Any Other Business

10.1 *Cheshire Gardens Trust 25th Anniversary Year 2024*

It was noted that 2024 would be a special year for CGT and that in 2004 our launch had taken place at Arley Hall, with generous support from The Viscount Ashbrook. Lord Ashbrook kindly suggested that we return to Arley to celebrate this special event at our next AGM. His offer was greeted enthusiastically.

11.0 Thanks

No further business was raised so David Cash closed the meeting at 4.00pm with thanks to Lord & Lady Ashbrook, all attendees, the members of the Events Group for the organisation of the afternoon, to the Castle Park Arts Centre for their hospitality and to members of the various Working Groups for their continuing valuable work and support of the aims of Cheshire Gardens Trust.