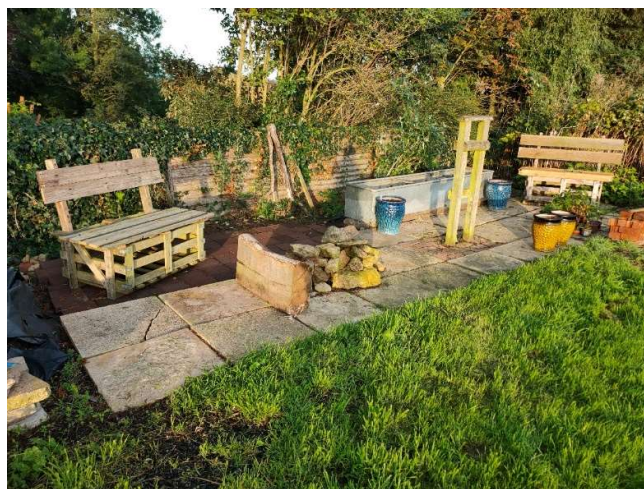




EATCARY

Registered Charity No. 1154857

2023 Annual Report and Financial Statements for 1st April 2022 to 31 March 2023



Our new upcycled patio under construction

EAT CARY

Registered Charity No. 1154857

Annual Report for 2022/23

Introduction

It has been an extremely busy year, with overall increased numbers of workers and certainly increased productivity. We have made better use of the food we produce and have made significant donations of vegetables to the Community Food Larder. Things seem to have accelerated as the year progressed, with more plots opened up, more raised beds created, more intensive use of the polytunnel.

The end of the financial year (31 March) coincides with the time the growing season gets underway, and as usual our report necessarily includes much about activities between the end of March and our October AGM. During that period we also participated in a number of major community events (see below).

Just before this Report was finalised, we were thrilled to discover that, as part of Castle Cary and Ansford's "Britain in Bloom" entry, EatCary has been awarded a cup and certificate as the "best overall" in the "It's Our Neighbourhood" category for which there were 500 entrants from all over the Southwest! We hope to celebrate this achievement at the Feast following our AGM. The category looked for "groups eager to make a difference with an idea or project for positive change" and the judges were impressed by how our ethos is reflected in many aspects of our work: organic, sustainable gardening; lots of growing experiments; involvement of young people; consideration of healthy eating; contributions to the community larder; flexible working; inclusiveness etc



Gordon Ford Trophy for "Best in Your Neighbourhood"

We continue to run our committee on fairly informal lines but meeting all the requirements of the Charity Commission – we agreed and documented this approach when we started the charity. Our Chair "rotates" while Rosemary Rymer continues as our Treasurer and Nuri acts as our very efficient minute taker. We are not a "membership" organisation but we always make anyone who helps at EatCary welcome to our Trustees' meetings and we listen to their views.

At the AGM we will be introducing a major new focus to our work. Informal discussions about a Repair Café began in the New Year, and plans were consolidated in August 2023. Current EatCary Trustees have agreed to bring the Repair Café under the umbrella of the EatCary Charity (CIO). The Café offers a monthly event for the community to repair items with support from volunteers. This matches EatCary's constitutional aspirations of using resources sustainably and educating the community (including ourselves of course) in the principles of repair, recycle, reuse. We also hope the Repair Café will serve to open avenues for new participation, publicity and revenue for EatCary.

Site improvement and maintenance

The erection in 2022 of a dog-proof fence between our growing areas and Ansford Academy's has proved very beneficial, as we can be certain now that the school's therapy dogs cannot roam freely on our site.

We have applied to the Co-op community support granting body for funding to replace the ageing skin of the polytunnel and repair its doors. Decisions concerning the way forward with this will be made In November 2023. A big thank you to Stephen Rymer for ongoing support and emergency repairs to the polytunnel watering system and to Rosemary Rayner for continuing the work Jonnie Cuffe began to repair and set up the autopots, which have functioned brilliantly this year.

The policy of leaving areas of our site for "no-mow" wilding and only mowing and cutting back where necessary during the growing season has reduced demand on the power equipment, and although it is ageing we are able to keep the equipment functioning without major costs. Tim has undertaken temporary repairs to the machine store roof. However next spring / summer the felt will need replacing at an estimated cost of £200 for materials.

Pressure on space is growing, and two of the disused main beds have been reclaimed (one by Rosemary Rayner, who is experimenting with no-dig principles by laying compost over cardboard over grass.) We may need to create more beds before next spring, especially with the increased demand from young scout groups. We have extended the principle of woodchip paths and intend to continue to create these in the coming year.

Tim, Dave and Simon have created new, virtually indestructible raised beds of solid wood. These seem to be the best place to grow carrots, and the protective netting has kept the badgers and other intruders off. We have managed to keep some of the older raised beds going, and are continuing too with the development of our "hugel humps".

We have put our various small commercial growing "tunnels" to better use this year, and Dave has created some wonderfully simple but hopefully effective butterfly cages for the large brassicas.

Dave has added remarkable artistic touches to our site: a wonderful sunflower mural on the compound wall, and now (with help from Noah and Oscar) has produced from old pallets a couple of surprisingly comfortable benches which are currently placed on the new 'patio' - existing paving slabs have been cleaned up and augmented by re-purposed storage heater blocks, and an old drinking trough is being turned into a planter.



Culinary herbs in one of the new raised beds.

We do need to ensure that we maintain all these features adequately. The willow arches are in need of TLC, and the pathways always need mowing, and with every new feature we introduce some attendant maintenance issues.

We continue to make our own compost, and Dave has worked hard to maintain our composting bins. We still have plenty of spent mushroom compost as well as Dimmer soil improver, plus chopped up comfrey, leaf mould etc. We would like to be self-sufficient in compost but are not yet likely to achieve this completely. We have been mulching more this year, using our grass mowings and chopped comfrey. Nettle and comfrey liquid feed seemed to work well on the tomatoes. We have learnt that it is essential to keep soil in good condition and well fed with nutrients if we are to get successful crops.

Growing regime

We experienced different challenges with the weather this year – an early dry spell had us worried for a bit, but subsequent periods of rain throughout the summer meant the need for additional watering was minimised. Larger plants were each provided with an upside down watering bottle and thirsty plants like fennel and celeriac were mulched with grass, leaf mould or compost to reduce evaporation and keep the ground cool and moist as well as providing extra nutrients. The polytunnel watering system worked well. It is hard to convince all our workers that more water is not needed, both in the polytunnel and outside – this is an issue we must address as overwatering can be damaging and s wasteful.

The “To Do” list is still important for some of our team. It is pinned to the noticeboard in the polytunnel but also sent out to our WhatsApp group. But the whole business of how we record what we do and label things we sow and the things we plant out is still an enormous challenge which we need to tackle. We want people to feel free to grow what they want and experiment but at the same time we must ensure at least some level of crop rotation, efficient use of polytunnel and plot space and labelling that lasts. We had a sowing plan devised by Laura, and all the seeds carefully filed by Rosemary, with cards to record what we had sown and when, but it has been difficult to encourage workers (including ourselves) to be disciplined about recording. In addition we had numerous donations of seeds, very welcome but difficult to integrate into the system. We are trying to devise new approaches. Despite these difficulties we have achieved better successional sowing and less wastage of seed this year, and certainly a wider range of crops.



Plaiting the onion crop

We decided at the end of last year that we should grow lots of onions and leeks as these are popular and easy to grow. We decided too to abandon brassicas and potatoes which seem fraught with difficulty although a much needed food supply. But we reneged on this to good effect and are encouraged to go on experimenting with these important vegetables. The main problem is adequate protection from pests while maintaining organic principles. Careful choice of the varieties grown might help with this and we hope to focus more on our choice of seed varieties in the coming year..

We are particularly proud of having kept up our supply of a wide variety of salad leaves through the winter and spring. Salads, kale and pak choi were sown on the wetbeds late autumn 2022 then planted in polytunnel beds, while winter lettuce varieties surviving outside came into their own in late spring.

We have recognised that the polytunnel is not warm enough for the early sowing of many crops, and Rosemary Rayner kindly and enthusiastically started off numerous vegetables on her windowsills at home in February, and brought them in later to the polytunnel to pot on or plant out. This is a strategy we hope to repeat.

An area of development has been our soft fruit and fruit trees. The blackcurrants in particular did well after their move last year, and the fruit trees are coming on well after surviving the drought conditions in their planting year. We have had a good first crop of Victoria plums and the apple trees are growing nicely.

It would take up too much space to give details of everything we grew, but we continued to experiment with new crops and new methods some of which we will repeat. We are fortunate to have enough space for everyone to follow their enthusiasms.



Trying out an exciting new recipe – hot & spicy cucumber and pork soup

Recipes and cooking

Throughout the year we have shared recipe ideas for the crops we grow, and at our tea breaks have sampled things we have cooked. In particular one member of the group has introduced us to Thai cookery, focussed on some of our hottest chillis. A glut of cucumbers led us to cucumber soup, cucumber sorbet, and a wonderfully hot cucumber and chicken stew. Encouraging others to healthy eating is one of our objectives which we hope to pursue further in the coming year.



Growing herbs.

Apart from the culinary herbs we grow in the raised bed by the poly tunnel we also have a plot specifically for growing herbs, all of which Bernie has shown us can be used for making herbal tea infusions. We grow a wide variety of herbs, and this year we have added a beautiful lemon verbena which makes a delicious and refreshing tea when drunk cold in the summer. Another new addition is tarragon. Bernie says she has only used this in cooking so far but will be exploring its health-enhancing qualities as she does with so many of the herbs we grow. She has shown us how herbs can be used for making simple tinctures (rosemary is great for helping aid concentration and memory), and salves for soothing insect bites, nettle stings etc, and recommends the lavender massage oil to soothe achy muscles after hard work in the garden.

Recruitment and links with other organisations and agencies.

We have had more interest from new would-be workers this year. The pattern seems to be that some just come once and never again, but a few “stick” and become regular members of our slowly growing team. We introduced a regular Wednesday lunchtime session as well as our Saturday afternoons, and this has certainly suited some of our newcomers who want to work when others are there and be guided in what to do.

Bad weather at the start of the season made it difficult for the local Scouts' Beavers and Squirrels (even younger than the Beavers) and the Toybox Preschool to start work although they were keen to do so, and space was allocated to them. When they did the weather got too hot for them, and then the summer holiday started so their groups ceased to meet, and the very successful crops they grew would have gone entirely to waste had we not done a certain amount of tending and harvesting for them. The children gain enormously from their gardening experience, and we need to discuss with the leaders better ways of resolving these issues. We have already had additional requests for designated space for the coming season, including from the cubs.



The Squirrels' magnificent sunflower

One Ansford Academy student helped us as part of her silver Duke of Edinburgh Award. She seemed to have very green fingers and was an enormous asset. We hope to be proactive in recruiting further young people volunteering as part of their Duke of Edinburgh scheme activities.

Events

We held a plant sale at the Market House as part of one of the Saturday coffee mornings which meant we disposed usefully of excess seedlings and also raised money for our funds as well as awareness of our existence. .

On 6th July several members of EatCary gathered at the community garden to meet with the judges of Britain in Bloom competition. We were lucky to have one of our younger members who joined for the morning from Ansford Academy to help show the two judges around our garden. This was all really well received and the judges were very complimentary about what we were growing and were interested in our ethos and work within the community. We have just heard the amazing result, which is included at the start of this report.

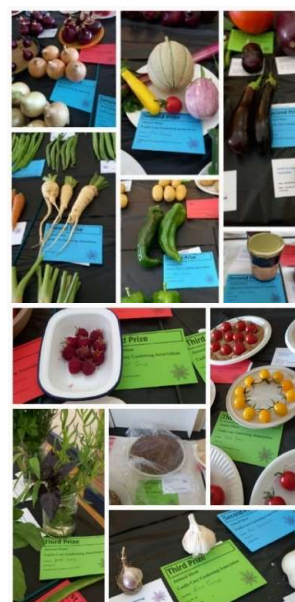
We participated in the Gardening Association annual flower and vegetable show held at Caryford Community Hall on 5th August. We entered our vegetables, flowers and homemade produce into as many of the categories as possible and we were very successful, winning 11 prizes in total plus a cup. It was fantastic to be amongst so many other local producers and the event garnered much interest in EatCary.

27th August 2023 saw us taking part in Castle Cary's event "Fun on Field". This is a community event with locally produced drinks and food, charity stalls and fun activities for young and old. We set up our stall next to the Repair Café, displaying our produce and providing information to the public about EatCary. We gave away Cucumber Cordial samples made from our own cucumbers. The Repair Café offered their services focussing on bike repairs and managed to service a number of bikes for local families.



A window ledge display at All Saints' Harvest Festival

Recently we provided All Saints Church with produce for their Harvest Festival. The displays were wonderful and we are assured that all the produce will be offered to those in need within the community.



Successes at the Gardening Show

Financial Review

Expenditure on raised beds derives from the remaining earmarked funds from the generous bequest from Jannine Taylor in memory of her late husband. The new beds are made of solid wood and should last many years. There are two other major expenses: firstly on compost, which will remain a drain on our resources until we manage to increase our own production or find free sources; secondly on the scythe which we now need to put to good use for an autumnal cut of our "no-mow" areas to prevent a takeover by bully weeds. Sundries includes some seeds and plants, although we have had many donations of seeds and plants (many by our regular workers) which keeps this figure low.

The EatCary Trustees are very conscious that our financial reserves are gradually depleting and it is urgent for us to seek ways of raising further funds in order to pay for renewing aging equipment, and in particular replacing the polytunnel skin. Since the end of the financial year this report covers we have held a coffee morning which raised enough for a year's insurance. We hope to make this a regular event.

The future

Our main aspirations for the coming year are:

- Further increase our work force, including people of diverse ages and background
- Consolidate the link with the new Cary Repair Café and apply its principles to our own equipment and tools.
- Renew our lease
- Make sure we waste none of the food we produce, and that any surplus goes to people who need it.
- Develop recipes and promote cooking skills appropriate to our crops
- Achieve funding to renew the polytunnel skin
- Relate our gardening approaches to climate resilience, biodiversity and environmental sustainability

EAT CARY
Legal and administrative information

Charity Registration Number: 1154857;
Date of registration: 4 December 2013
Financial Year: 1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023

Trustees at 1 April 2022:

Bernie Logan
Tim Earle-Marsh
Rosemary Rymer
Nuri Fontanals
Laura Tilling

Formally elected at 2022 AGM: having been co-opted during the year preceding
David Holmes
Rosemary Rayner

Resignation at 2022 AGM: Laura tilling (Third term of Office ended)

Third terms of Office ending at 2023 AGM: Tim Earle-Marsh, Rosemary Rymer.

(Note that Trustees completing their third term of office must stand down at the AGM and may not be re-elected until the AGM following.)

Objects:

To advance in life and help local people through providing support and activities which develop their skills, capacities and capabilities to enable them to participate in society as mature and responsible individuals.

To advance the education of the public, including the pupils at Ansford Academy, in the subjects of horticulture, gardening, cooking, healthy eating and related topics.

To advance the education of the local community in the sustainable use, protection and improvement of the natural environment.

Correspondence address:

Marshland, Station Road, Castle Cary, BA7 7BX

Primary Bankers:

The Co-operative Bank Community Direct Plus account

EAT CARY
Registered Charity No. 1154857

Statement of financial activities for the year ended
31st March 2023

	2022/23	2021/22
Income analysis:		
Donation	£. 50.00	£ 931.12
Total income	£ 50.00	£ 931.12

Expenditure analysis:		
Infrastructure		
Raised Beds	£ 260.00	£ 260.00
Accessories for Beds	£ 112.68	
Mushroom compost	£.125.00	
Scythe	£ 203.50	
Water butt		£ 36.99
Water timers	£. 27.95	£ 51.90
Padlock, key safe, etc		£ 40.08
Sundries	£ 206.69	£ 67.30
Insurance	£ 100.80	£ 100.80
Total expenditure	£1,136.62	£ 588.07

Bank reconciliation		
Balance at 31.03.22:	£1,936.15	£1,593.10
Income for year:	£ 50.00	£ 931.12
Expenditure for year:	£1,136.62	£ 588.07
Balance at bank on 31.03.23:	£ 892.10	£1,936.15

Independent Examiner's Report on the Receipts and Payments Accounts

Report to the Trustees of Eat Cary (Registered Charity Number 1854857) on the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparations of the accounts; you consider that the audit requirement of sections 43(2) Charities Act 1993 (the Act) does not apply. It is my responsibility to state on the basis of procedures specified in the General Direction given by the Charity Commissioners under section 43(7) of the Act, whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commissioners. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you trustees concerning any matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent Examiner's Statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention

- which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with section 41 of the Act, and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the Act have not been met, or
- 2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Date: 6-10-23

Name: GEORGE LAWSON

Address: UNDERWOODS
WESTON BAMPFYLDE
YEDVIL
SOMERSET
BA22 7HU.