

Friends of Old Durham Gardens

Registered Charity no: 1164516



Annual Report 2023

Approved by Trustee Members

6th March 2024



1. Introduction.

This thirteenth Annual Report is an account of the activities of the Friends of Old Durham Gardens for the calendar year 1st January to 31st December 2023. Old Durham Gardens is an historic 17th and 18th century walled garden and orchard. Originally restored by Durham City Council, it is now owned by Durham County Council and is listed on Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens (Grade II). Since the formation of the Friends of Old Durham Gardens in 2010, regular maintenance and replacement planting have transformed the gardens. Although much work is still needed, our many visitors have praised the efforts of trustees, volunteers and local groups in maintaining and developing the gardens for public enjoyment, including as a venue for enjoying live music events and plays with refreshments. We were also able to hold our Wassail event in February after it was cancelled in 2022 due to covid. The gardens were available all year as an outdoor space to enjoy exercise, fresh air and nature; visitors enjoyed the lower garden all day and every day, and the upper walled garden was open as usual on Thursday and Sunday afternoons throughout the season.

2. Acknowledgements.

As ever, the work of Friends of Old Durham Gardens would not be possible without the significant support and work of many people. We would like to express our thanks and appreciation to:

- The Trustees and other volunteers, whose physical and administrative tasks have kept the maintenance and development of the gardens on track, and helped increase accessibility and use of the gardens by the public.
- Durham County Council staff, who continue to support us in our efforts.
- The local organisations and businesses who have provided us with physical help over the years, including students and staff of Durham University.
- All our neighbours for their continued support, which is much appreciated.
- Lastly, but certainly not least, we would like to express appreciation for the time and support given by our members, friends, volunteers, local organisations, funders and all the members of the public who have enjoyed the gardens and given us encouragement. Whether these efforts were offered in the form of administrative support, gardening and labour, financial contributions or simply promoting the group – we thank you.

3. Chair's Report.

The Friends of Old Durham Gardens welcome you to our thirteenth Annual Report, and hope that you find it interesting. 2023 saw a full programme of gardening, volunteering and events. Despite our Wassail to encourage the trees, it was not a great year for fruit due to the weather, something we had in common with gardens and allotments throughout the area. There were some good crops of apples and pears in the upper walled garden which offers protection from the elements, and the medlars performed very well; there were plenty of damsons in the orchard, but frost got the blossom on the peach and apricot, and the orchard apples crop was thin. Let's hope for a better year this year!

One area that did thrive was the wildflower meadow, and this report contains some beautiful photographs of meadow flowers in the spring.



Wassail

Our band of volunteers has continued to grow, including a number of students from the University who have become 'regulars' and several corporate groups. Having many hands is so important to us, and we have been able to keep all parts of the gardens in good shape, including several pruning days in the winter and summer (plums and gages). In the coming year we intend to start work on the walled garden parterre to introduce low hedges in the narrow channels; this will be a priority project but we will still work hard to maintain and develop the gardens as a whole.

Unfortunately, we have had a few problems to deal with this year, including rotten seats in the lower garden, which we hope to replace thanks to a generous donation from DPD who have been volunteering with us this year and made us one of their fundraising projects. In the summer, one of our windows was broken by a ball bearing gun and needed to be replaced by the Council, which was done very promptly. As I write, the same problem has just recurred which is very sad given that the gardens are a public space to be enjoyed by all. Finally, our tulip bulbs were attacked by either animal or avian vandals, so we are trying different ways to protect them this year!

The gardens have continued to provide a local, outdoor public space for the community to exercise and enjoy nature throughout the year. Our visitor numbers have been good, helped by our programme of events, including successful Wassail, Music in the Gardens and Shakespeare in the Gardens and Heritage Open Days. Let's hope that the 2024 season will enable the gardens to flourish, to be beautiful and fruitful, and to enhance the lives of visitors and volunteers.

Joy Brindle (Chair, Friends of Old Durham Gardens).

4. Review of 2023.

As a registered charity, Friends of Old Durham Garden CIO has a Constitution which sets out our “charitable objects” as follows:

To promote for the benefit of the public generally, without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, race or political, religious or other opinions, any charitable purpose, within the area known as Old Durham Gardens in Durham City (herein after known as the area of benefit), connected with the enhancement and improvement, maintenance and protection of the environment and landscape. Nothing in this constitution shall authorise an application of the property of the CIO for the purposes which are not charitable in accordance with [section 7 of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005] and [section 2 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008]

4.1 Friends Group Infrastructure.

On the 9th June 2017, a Self-Management Agreement was agreed and signed by the Friends of Old Durham Gardens (FODG) trustees and Durham County Council (DCC). This sets out the role of both parties in relation to the gardens. In summary, DCC continues to own the property and provide infrastructure maintenance, while FODG provides all ‘soft’ maintenance for the gardens except the bulk grass cutting in the lower walled garden. We also make arrangements to open the walled garden to the public, and to encourage visitors and inform them about the gardens and their history.

An associated joint Conservation Management Plan for the gardens is nearing completion; the key area to be added is the Durham County Council conservation work undertaken in 2020.

4.2 Funding.

Our income during 2023 has come from Friends’ subscriptions, events and donations, all of which are much appreciated. We have been able to invest in further metal edging to the upper garden parterre, and in trees, plants and tools. During 2023 we have not applied for any specific capital grants, but have received a kind donation from DPD who made us one of their fundraising charities: this will go towards replacing the rotten seats in the lower garden. This is one of the priorities identified in our review of capital requirements conducted in 2022 which also includes seat bases.

We are in discussions with the Council about improving access to the terrace by providing a ramp/platform and improving the surface of the path in this area. We also hope to raise funds for improvements to the gazebo interior, including some display space, and for some improved signage.

4.3 Membership and communication.

The Friends Group, who each donate an annual subscription to support work in the gardens, currently stands at 136 Friends. In 2023 we increased the suggested annual donation for new members of the Friends Group from £5 to £7.

We also have a wider group of contacts, all of whom have registered with us for updates on the gardens, including events. Our current register stands at over 1000.

We communicate with our Friends and contacts via newsletters, email and our website and Facebook page. It is our intention in 2024 to make improvements to our website.

4.4 Gardening.

4.4.1 Lower Garden.

In the **orchard**, the new greengages bought to replace six trees blown down in 2022 by Storm Arwen are doing well and even bore some fruit in 2023. Unfortunately another large greengage tree was blown down this winter, taking with it a young greengage nearby, so replacements will be needed in 2024. The twelve new apple trees planted in 2022, including varieties new to the gardens (Margaret, Foxwhelp, Harvey, Joaneting and Winter Pearmain) are becoming established. We are nurturing these carefully, and look forward to their fruit in years to come. We were once again able to prune most of the fruit trees in the orchard during 2023, and are continuing this programme in 2024. We hope the weather will be kind and give us a good crop in the coming year.

A highlight of the year was the flowering of the **wildflower meadow** along the North wall in 2022. The pictures overleaf speak for themselves!

The **rectangular borders** of fruit and rose bushes in the lower walled garden received plenty of attention from regular volunteer and University groups. The roses flowered beautifully. In 2024 we hope to add more fruit bushes (currants) to these borders in keeping with period planting. We have also carried out maintenance of the **long terrace border** at the top of the lower walled garden, and intend to do more replanting of this area.

**Lower walled garden: the new wildflower meadow,
before (2022):**



And after (2023):



4.4.2 Upper walled garden.



The upper walled garden was in good shape in 2023 due to plenty of input from volunteers. The walls protected the blossom, and we had good crops of plums, apples, pears and particularly medlars, which continued to be a great talking point with visitors, many of whom had never seen these fruits before.

We continued our programme of installing **metal edging** to the lawn to improve the appearance of the upper walled garden and to enable easier mowing; we hope to add more during 2024. We invested in a thorough maintenance and repainting of the beautiful Newton Hall seats which were donated to us a number of years ago, to keep them in good shape since they are now such a feature of the walled garden, loved and appreciated by visitors. The **herbaceous plants** in our external parterre squares have thrived, and we once again enjoyed a magnificent display of old flowers in the summer. We plan to make the **parterre** a key priority for 2024, enhancing the inner diamonds with low-growing Phillyrea hedges.



Seat repairs

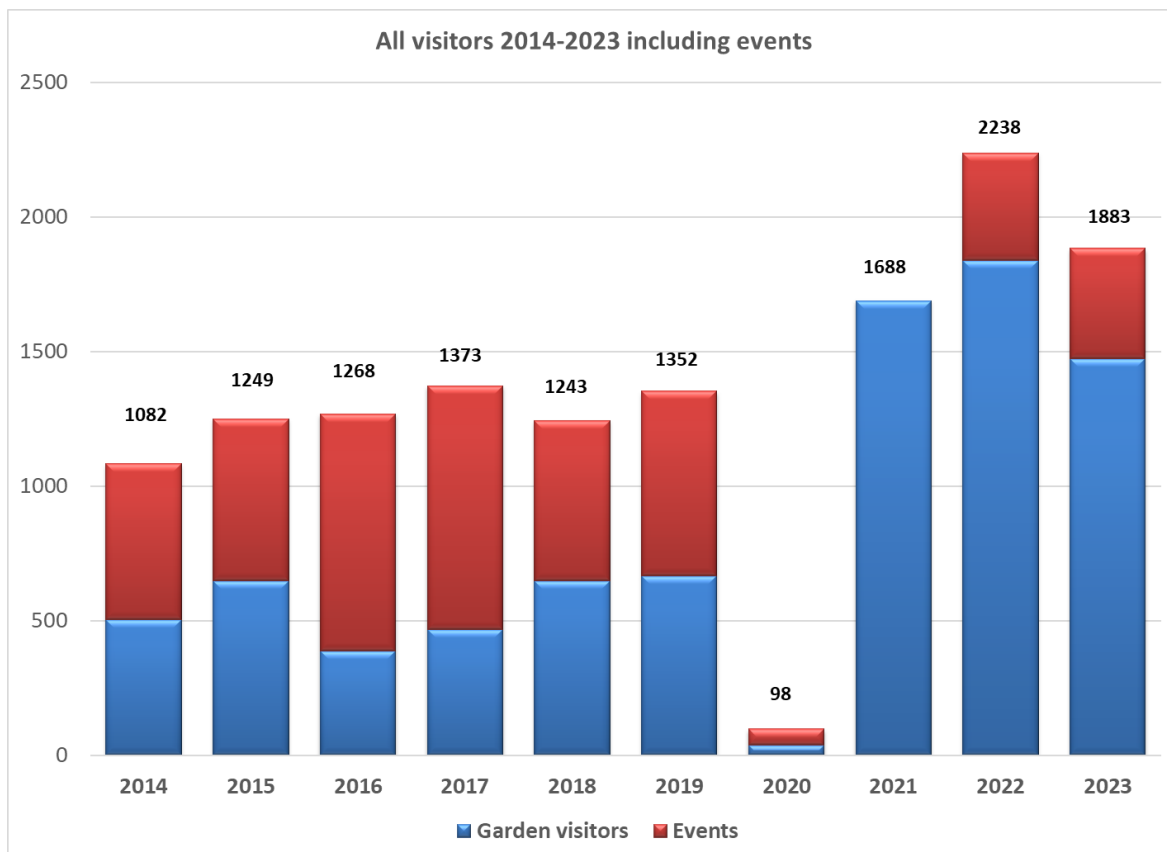


Broken windows

4.5 Open days, events and visitors.

Old Durham Gardens lower walled garden and orchard are enjoyed by the community all year round, and we saw many people enjoying them this year, making use of the open space to take their exercise and enjoy nature. We believe through observation and anecdotal evidence that the gardens continued to be a tremendous asset to local people in 2023.

The table below shows our garden visitors in blue, and those who attended events in red. The increase in 'blue' visitors from 2021 is due to our beginning to include lower walled garden visitors for the first time in that year, to give a more accurate representation of garden use; these were counted on the days when the upper walled garden was open (Thursday and Sunday afternoons from Spring to Autumn), when volunteers were present to do the count. This gives a more accurate idea of visitors on those days, but clearly excludes all visitors at other times. 2023 was another good year for visitors, although down on our peak year of 2022, the first full post Covid year. The reduction in event visitors is due to a lower attendance (230) at the July music event, which we believe was due to clashes with other events. Although this is inevitable during the busy summer months, we are trying hard to avoid major clashes in 2024.



We had many positive comments about our Wassail, Shakespeare and Music in the Gardens events, a flavour which is given in the photographs below. All these activities give local musicians, dancers and performers an opportunity to entertain visitors and local people alike, providing a showcase for many talented people. We very much appreciate the continued support of all our performers.



4.6 Relationships.

The Friends Group has established good links with the Friends of Pelaw Wood, the Friends of Flass Vale, Durham Wildlife Trust, Durham University, East Durham College Houghall Campus, DPD, Northumbrian Water, the Department for Work and Pensions, Durham Passport Office and other organisations interested in volunteering. During 2023 we have had particularly strong support from student volunteers from Durham University, several of whom have joined our regular team of volunteers; in October, the student volunteering group came to the gardens to film part of a video promoting voluntary work in the community. We have good relationships with community groups promoting gardening and heritage. In 2023 we took part with other voluntary groups in a workshop on the impacts of community volunteering in heritage and cultural projects organized by Durham University as part of a wider pilot study on the social and economic impact of cultural and natural heritage in County Durham.

Old Durham Gardens is one of the organisations supporting the Northern Saints Trails, and is on the route of the Way of Love (see the Northern Saints Trail website for details including a video showing Old Durham Gardens.

<https://www.thisisdurham.com/northernsaints/trails/the-way-of-love-p1054061>).

These relationships are essential in maintaining the gardens for the community, and in providing a wide range of people with the opportunity to make a difference and enjoy themselves by volunteering, and we look forward to working with partners again in 2024.



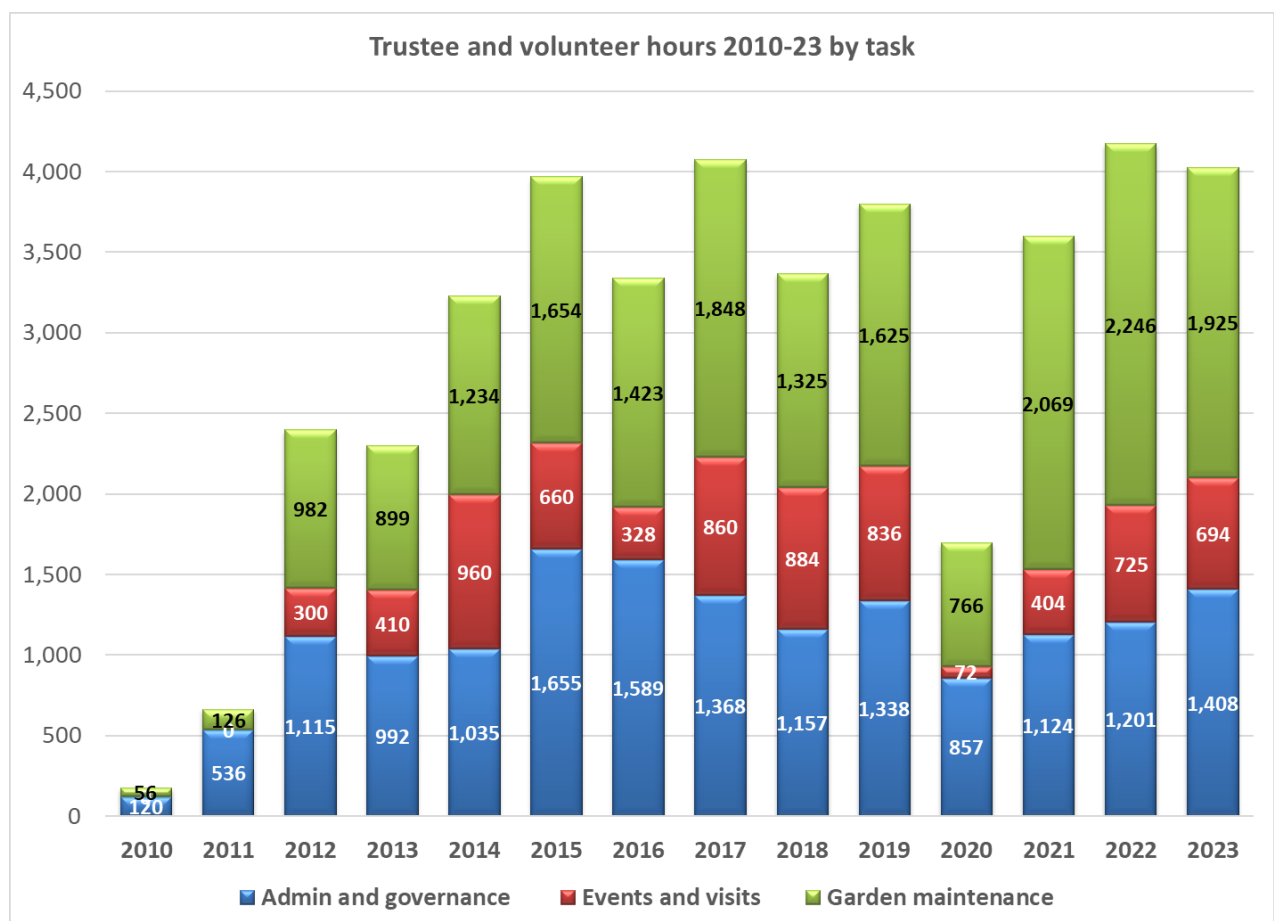
Volunteers hard at work during 2023

4.7 Public Benefit

The trustees believe that the activities undertaken in 2023 are within their powers and duties, and fully support the Objects of the Friends of Old Durham Gardens, thereby increasing public benefit. Using Heritage Lottery Fund guidelines which assign values to different tasks, we estimate the financial value of our volunteering in 2023 at £71,987.



As the chart below shows, 2023 has been another great year for volunteering. The increase in our administrative hours is due to our having added some new members to our team of trustees in 2023, which is excellent news! Our gardening hours are looking healthy too - thank you to all our volunteers for their efforts!



5. Financial Statement.

Financial Statement for the period 1st January to 31st December 2023

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31st December 2023

Receipts	2023	2022
Donations	3347	1280
Membership Subscriptions	968	903
Grants	0	0
Events	1382	987
Electricity Support Grant	201	199
Gift Aid	0	498
Insurance Claim	0	0
Total Receipts	5898	3867
Payments		
Plants and Maintenance	2333	1260
Tools and Machinery	1985	600
Administration	840	1015
Bank Charges	72	72
Return incorrect donations/GASDS	24	0
Events	1037	533
Infrastructure Projects	1844	1499
Capital Items	0	699
Electricity	239	175
Total Payments	8374	5853
Net Receipts/Payments	-2476	-1986
Bank and Cash at start of period	6742	8728
Bank and Cash at end of period	4266	6742
Statement of Assets and Liabilities		
Cash Assets		
Current Account	4266	6742
Other Assets		
Tools and equipment purchased since Sept 2010**	15214	14329
Liabilities***		
	0	0
Net Assets/Liabilities	4266	6742
** The second-hand net realisable value of the sheds, tools, equipment, ladders and gazebos is deemed negligible at £2,900.		
*** The trustees are not aware of any liabilities at 31/12/2023.		

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2023

1 Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful for the support given by our members through their annual subscriptions and their generous donations. We gratefully acknowledge the many hours of voluntary work provided by so many different people and organisations without which the ongoing maintenance and development of the gardens could not be achieved.

2 Receipts and Payments Account

The receipts and payments account summarises the movement of cash into and out of the Friends Group during the financial year. In this context "cash" means the bank account where cash can be paid in and readily withdrawn to pay for debts as they become due.

3 Grants, Donations, Subscriptions and Gift Aid

- a) Grants were not sought nor received during 2023 as we were able to undertake minor improvements to the gardens using our own resources. Our planned expenditure in 2024 will now require some grant income as our own resources have been minimised over previous years.
- b) Specific donations were received for plants and trees, for maintenance of our upper walled garden seats and from visitor groups, our Friends, plus general gazebo visitors. Company volunteers from DPD organised a fund raising which will be matched by DPD management for which we are very pleased (these funds will be received in our 2024 January accounts). A special thank you goes to the family of Paul Beard, a founder Trustee of Friends of Old Durham Gardens, who generously donated funds from several events they organised in his memory.
- c) Annual membership subscriptions total increased slightly due to more people becoming Friends, which is welcome news. The subscription for new members was raised to £7.00.
- d) Gift aid (GA) and Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme on valid donations were not claimed during 2023. A claim for 2022 and 2023 calendar year is underway for receipt in 2024.
- e) From January to April 2023, we received £201.00 from the government's electricity support grant via our supplier. This is more than our actual spend and the monies received are recorded in the accounts as credits.

4 Administration

This includes: Insurance, web-site name and hosting, Dropbox subscription, fuel, stamps, volunteer refreshments, new door keys and examiner fees, etc.

5 Events

In 2023 we had a full series of events: Wassailing, Music in the Gardens and Shakespeare events which were held successfully, as were Heritage Weekend activities. We hope to have another full series of events in 2024.

6 Payments

Trees, plants, miscellaneous equipment, and additional metal edging for the parterre diamond borders were all purchased in 2023. The metal edging will be installed in 2024 and this will complete our upper walled garden edging project.

7 Bank

Unity Trust Bank Plc, Nine Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HB

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE FRIENDS OF OLD DURHAM GARDENS, DURHAM

I report on the accounts of the Friends of Old Durham Gardens for the year ended 31 December 2023 which are as set out on the attached pages.

Respective Responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner

The Charities Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The Charities Trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state 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 Commission. 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 as Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view" and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent Examiner's Statement

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

1) Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act;
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 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.


T J Hafdman
CTA 

7 Elvet Waterside
Durham DH1 3DA
8 February 2024

6. Friends Group Trustees.

- The Trustees of the Friends of Old Durham Gardens form the Management Group. They attend monthly meetings and ensure that the business of the Friends Group is conducted to meet the aims of the group in a responsible manner. There were five serving trustees and one co-opted committee member on 31st December 2023. We are allowed 15 maximum, and are keen to recruit new Trustees and committee members to spread the load of our activities; we are happy to note that three of our volunteers agreed to become co-opted members of committee from January 2023.
- Under our constitution as a CIO, all Members of the Management Committee shall retire from office by three year rotation at the end of the applicable annual general meeting, but they may be re-elected or reappointed. Trustees may resign at any time.
- Trustees may be appointed following a review of their application form by the other trustees or by invitation of the trustees as agreed at a meeting of the trustees.
- All trustees are given a copy of our constitution and the Charity Commission document CC3, The Essential Trustee, which details the duties of a trustee so that they fully understand their obligations.
- The new trustees sign the minute book at the meeting they were appointed at, confirming that they have received, read and understand the requirements of being a trustee. Trustees sign the Trustee Declaration of Eligibility and Responsibility Form.
- Trustees are the 'members' of the CIO and have monthly meetings plus other meetings and communications to undertake all CIO activities.

<i>Current Trustees (Dec 2023)</i>	Date Joined Trustees	Re-election Date
Joy Brindle (Chair)	July 2016	2025
Angela Lee (Membership Secretary)	September 2011	2026
Chris Lee (Treasurer)	September 2011	2026
Martin Roberts	January 2012	2025
Christine Wiecek (Secretary)	June 2014	2025

Co-opted committee members (2023)

Chris Mallia
Irene Cox
Lillian Briggs
Anita Dunseith

In closing this section about our trustees, we would like to remember Paul Beard, one of our Founding Trustees, who died in 2023. Paul was a great friend and a great plantsman, without whom the Gardens would not be what they are today.



7. Principal Office

The address for postal communication purposes is:

Old Durham Gardens
c/o 10 Durham Moor Crescent
Durham
DH1 5AW

Old Durham Gardens physical location is:

Old Durham Gardens
Old Durham
Bent House Lane
Durham
DH1 2RY

(Please do not send any mail to this address as there is no postbox).

Website: <http://olddurhamgardens.co.uk/>

Email: olddurhamgardens@gmail.com

8. Approval Of This Report

On behalf of the Trustees of the Friends of Old Durham Gardens, this Trustees Annual Report is approved for submission to the Charity Commission as a fair reflection of the charity's activities for the year 2023 as agreed by Trustees in March 2024.

Joy Brindle
Chair, Friends of Old Durham Gardens.