

BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM, LITTLE MESOPOTAMIA CIO

England & Wales · Charity number 1185818

Details

Other names BALM

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2019-10-15

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address Ingleberg
Braystones Road
Beckermet
Cumbria
CA21 2XX

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Website www.littlemesopotamia.co.uk

Activities

Objects: THE OBJECT OF THE CIO IS TO PROMOTE FOR THE PUBLIC BENEFIT THE CONSERVATION, PROTECTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE PHYSICAL AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT THROUGH THE PLANTING, CARE, NURTURE AND CULTIVATION OF TREES BOTH INDIGENOUS AND NON-NATIVE.

Activities: Since 2002 over 5000 trees have been planted in Beckermet Cumbria on farm land which has been named Little Mesopotamia as it lies on a site between two tributaries of the river Ehen. The charity aims to nurture and care for an experimental botanical collection, to protect the natural environment for the benefit of wildlife, and to encourage understanding of conservation issues with guided tours.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space
- **What:** Education/training, Arts/culture/heritage/science, Environment/conservation/heritage
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Cumbria

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-04-05	£6,359	£2,891	-	-
2024-04-05	£3,002	£2,714	-	-
2023-04-05	£3,030	£3,567	-	-
2022-04-05	£4,806	£2,304	-	-
2021-04-05	£11,970	£4,135	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Dr THOMAS JAMES TUOHY FSA	Chair	2019-03-21
Lilian Tuohy Main		2019-12-29
Philip Braithwaite		2019-03-21
Yvonne Risager Thomsen Clarkson		2019-03-21

BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM, LITTLE MESOPOTAMIA CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1185818

Accounts

Charity Name: BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM, LITTLE MESOPOTAMIA CIO

Charity Number: 1185818

Financial year end: 5 April 2025

Ref: AR24-CIO-REM-11a

ANNUAL REPORT April 2024- April 2025

The charity owns 12.5 acres which are managed for environmental benefit and to encourage biodiversity. A shed and 8 acres of grazing land within this land have been let for the grazing of sheep.

The land is between two rivers, in the centre of the Village of Beckermest in West Cumberland. Three properties adjoin the land, one of which is The White Mare Public House.

Trustees:

Dr Thomas Tuohy FSA

Philip Braithwaite

Yvonne Clarkson

Lilian Tuohy Main

Tenancy Termination

The tenant was given 12 months notice to quit and the tenancy was terminated on 31 March 2025.

Yvonne Clarkson advised on possible forms of a future tenancy (a Farm Business Tenancy is not appropriate) and Phil Braithwaite was assigned the role of negotiating with the Tenant, who wanted to buy the shed and the largest field, which was naturally refused, and no agreement could be reached about future grazing. The tenant had overgrazed and sheep had poached sections of the lands and he was unsympathetic to the aims of the BALM charity to encourage biodiversity and environmental improvement. An offer of the possibility of grazing with limited numbers of sheep and periods of grazing timings in the future was made.

Maintenance was carried by local farmers and arborists, in addition to PB, TT, LMT, and a volunteer neighbour Mark Jacques.

Visitors 57, advertising through Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Beckermest Parish Magazine.

White Mare wall collapse, Since December 2024 TT has sent several emails to Star pubs (Heineken) from BALM email requesting site visits and emphasizing Health & Safety implication for landlord , but no action has been taken to repair the wall. Instead workers have been sent to clear the narrow path between the property and BALM land, without any advance notice, and left a considerable mess of cut branches on BALM land. We have moved this alongside the collapsed wall to deter trespassers.

Funding for hedges . Cumbrian/Coastal Woodlands keep changing name and staff, who made site visits offering advice, but were unspecific about values of grants. On the suggestion of a local farmer, TT contacted Sandy Brown of Mitchells, Cockermouth, and a site visit with her assistant Joe Taylforth was made on 31 March, with TT and PB. There is no longer a minimum area for grants. Free PSI tests were recommended, together with no large flocks of sheep, but a few in autumn, or 5 small hairy cattle . We discussed grants for hay/wildflower meadows, but DEFRA funding was not yet operating. However funding for fencing and hedging is available and has been applied for.

BALM Accounts 2024-25

INCOME

P Braithwaite £ 1000
 Kate Tuohy Main £ 2000
 Y Clarkson £200
 T Tuohy £1183
 qualifying for Gift Aid..... £4383
 GADS (visitors) £285 sub total £4668

 Way Leave £37
 Rent £500
 Gift Aid £1191.13 paid Dec 2025 sub total £1691

Total income £6359

EXPENDITURE

Insurance NFU £925
 Ledgard £500
 Robinson £1039
 Noble £96
 Ebay plants £161
 Stationary £170 Total £2891

 Excess income over expenditure £3468
 Bank Balance 1 April 2025 £8580

BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM, LITTLE MESOPOTAMIA CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1185818

Accounts

BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM, LITTLE MESOPOTAMI

Charity Number: 1185818

Accounts for period 6 April 2023- 5 April 2024

Income

Donations qualifying for Gift Aid

T Tuohy £1664

Y Clarkson £200

Gate Income (for GASDS) £130.....£1994

Gift aid repayment £508.14

Rent £500

Total £3002

Expenditure

NFU insurance £925

David Noble hedges £91

Michael Robinson maintenance £ 1138

John Ledgard arborist £500

Stationary £60

Total £2714

BALM REPORT April 6 2023 – April 5 2024

Visitor numbers 26 in 5 guided tours. Cumbria Wildlife Trust principal advertiser.

Private visitors included CWT patron, Lord Inglewood, with Lady Inglewood, who visited in May 2023 and presented an Aesculus seedling from the European Parliament in Brussels.

To celebrate the coronation of King Charles III a *Castanea sativa* was planted in November 2023.

Meetings with neighbours on other sides of becks to discuss trees. Kris Long across the Red Beck who has attached bird boxes without permission, was informed that these trees are to be felled, Trees along Black Beck reduced at the request of Alex Partington and Alan Jacques. All of these trees had been large sycamores felled 20 years which have regenerated.

Maintenance continued by trustees, with mechanical assistance from local farmers and arborists. After planting over 20 years ago trees need thinning and lifting. Some trees left as standing dead wood for wildlife habitat.

24.1.24 corrected plans of site for hedges sent to Bryce Cumbrian Coastal Woodlands for future hedging which will be delayed until the end of the current tenancy in 2025. The tenant was given notice that the current tenancy will not be renewed, but with an offer of discussing a different tenancy limiting the number of sheep. Too many sheep have compromised the biodiversity of the pastures and part of the public footpath had been made dangerously muddy and unhygienic by too many sheep sheltering behind trees in the winter. The tenant has not yet accepted that the land should be managed for environmental benefit.

Trustees Meeting 16. 1. 2024. Lilian Main attends her first meeting. A conservation architect, she has bought and is restoring a cottage dated 1722, on the opposite bank of the Black Beck facing the Darjeeling plantation. She will in time handle the BALM website currently managed by a former trustee Andrew Barnes.

March, white camellias offered for Easter church decoration.

BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM, LITTLE MESOPOTAMIA CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1185818

Accounts

HMRC BALM Accounts 2022-23

INCOME

Donations qualifying for Gift Aid

T Tuohy £1500

Sidney Blackmore £250

Andrew Barnes £32

Yvonne Clarkson £100

GASDS 2021-23 £140

Gift aid repayment £508.14 £2530

Rent £500

Total£3030.14

EXPENDITURE

NFU insurance directors 4.5.22 £221.76

NFU management liability 8.4.23 £678.91

Wix website renewal 2022-25 £302.40

Zoltan plants 224.10

5

Michael Robinson, Maintenance 7.7.21-26.5.22 £1047

David Noble hedges 12.22 £122.40

Willow weaving Bradley Feb 23 £1600

Stationary 50

£3567.66

BALM REPORT April 6 22-April 5.23

Visitor numbers low, only 15, due to difficulties in advertising, but some private visits.

25.5.22 visit of Alice Sielle who had given a London plane tree grown from seed. She had made drawings of the tree daily and gave the drawings to the National Garden Museum in Lambeth to raise funds for the museum.

Meetings with representatives of Cumbrian woodlands to assess future hedgerow planting.

2.12. 22 account set up with Nat West allows internet banking, Cumberland retained for cash deposits and paying by cheque.

14.12.22 6th Trustee meeting . with Andrew Barnes ex officio. Report for 2019-2021 shown. Letter sent to tenants withdrawing tenancy termination notice, but the tenancy will not be renewed on expiry in April 2025 as number of sheep grazing too high for a nature conservation charity.

Problems with neighbours' aggressive dog on public footpath passing through their yard. Neighbours reprimanded for spraying weed killer along our side of party fence.

Feb 23 Willow weaving on bend of Kerbeck done by Phil Bradley to halt riparian erosion. More than a metre of land has been lost here since 2001.

BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM, LITTLE MESOPOTAMIA CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1185818

Accounts

BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM LITTLE MESOPOTAMIA

Annual Return 2021-22

Income £4806

Expenditure £2304

BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM, LITTLE MESOPOTAMIA CIO

England & Wales - Charity number 1185818

Accounts

REPORT for period 15.10.19 -5.4.2021

BIOGRAPHICAL ARBORETUM LITTLE MESOPOTAMIA (BALM) CIO

Registered Charity: 1185818

Ingleberg, Braystones Road, Beckermeth, Cumberland CA21
2XX

Trustees

Dr Thomas Tuohy FSA, (chair)
Andrew Barnes,
Philip Braithwaite,
Yvonne Clarkson
Lilian Tuohy Main

Since 2002 over 5000 trees have been planted, many in hedges, on farm land which has been named Little Mesopotamia as it lies on a site between two tributaries of the river Ehen. The project initially involved planting trees dedicated to friends of the founder, Thomas Tuohy, hence the term Biographical Arboretum. The charity aims to nurture and care for an experimental botanical collection, to protect the natural environment for the benefit of wildlife, to encourage biodiversity on the site, and to further understanding of conservation issues with guided tours.

The primary Trustees are the founder, Thomas Tuohy, and Philip Braithwaite, a local farmer who worked as a forester with the National Trust. They carry out maintenance work themselves and also commission and supervise others to carry out work. PB has contacts with agencies that have to be consulted on environmental issues, and with many people who can do work in the arboretum

Andrew Barnes, employed in the nuclear industry for many years has provided help with digital technology, setting up a website www.littlemesopotamia.co.uk, and dealing with Risk Assessment, Health and Safety and Data Protection. He has also set up cameras on the site to observe the wildlife.

Yvonne Clarkson, a land owner, and local councilor for many years provided assistance with legal, planning and financial matters.

Lilian Tuohy Main is an architect who provides assistance with digital technology, and has been involved with the design of leaflets.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

17.10.19 Meeting in Kendal with Steve Trotter, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, for advice on public visits, and public liability insurance. Visits to be advertised by CWT.

7.2.2020 TT and PB gave a presentation in the Beckermeth Reading Rooms. Public visits were offered on 4 dates, advertised by Cumbria Wildlife Trust, and in the Whitehaven News.

19.3.2020 A visit, of 4 people, took place but further visits had to be cancelled because of Covid. Trustee Meetings could not be held because of Covid until August 2021

8.3.2020 Electricity North West finally removed the last of the electricity wires and poles from the site (this had been a continuing issue for about 10 years)

11.3.2020 the ownership of the property was transferred by TT to the charity, with restrictive covenants. YC and PB, acting as trustees for BALM. Valuation of c £84,000.

The tenant was made aware of this change, and in view of his over grazing and cutting of trees without express authority was advised: *The charity is a Conservation Organisation, essentially maintaining a nature reserve with limited access to paying visitors. www.littlemesopotamia.co.uk. Only the central part of the land is let as pasture for sheep, but the trustees are responsible for managing the whole site, to encourage biodiversity and provide an*

undisturbed habitat for wildlife, as far as this can be consistent with farming methods. If conservation and farming become incompatible then the trustees will cease to let any land for pasture.

6.8.2020. Visit from Mike Farrell, Environment Agency, and Gareth Pedley, Wild Trout Trust, to discuss remedies for riparian erosion on the Kerbeck, and timing when work could be done without a detrimental impact on trout spawning.

13.10.2020 on site consultation with Ian Wrigley, Chartered Environmentalist, about impact of over grazing by tenants sheep.

January and February 2020, major pruning of some hedges, this is done on a rotational basis, ensuring there is always a good food source for wildlife in autumn/winter

March 2021 leaflets with a plan of the site printed in Kendal, intended for distribution to visitors

The **public benefit** is largely environmental and ecological, and visits to the site are restricted because of the sensitivity of the site, but also because of the hazardous nature of parts of the terrain. 8 visits per year, limited to small guided groups, were scheduled, but had to be abandoned because of Covid.

However the habitat provided has resulted in an increase in the number of birds, which can also be seen in other parts of the village. This is particularly noticeable in the gardens of the houses along the Black Beck where increased activity of song birds around feeding tables, reflects the success of the undisturbed habitat in Little Mesopotamia. Buzzards, Sparrow Hawks, and Tawny Owls provide an indication of reasonable food supply; Magpies, Woodpeckers and Jays also visit the site. Cameras have revealed the activity of badgers, foxes and roe deer, and otters have been seen in the becks. Regrettably there have recently been sightings of grey squirrels, and hedgehogs seem to have been eaten to extinction by badgers (empty skins used to be found).

Originally conceived as an experimental botanical collection, laid out in an imaginative way to provide aesthetic pleasure in the form of a landscape garden setting, because of the nature of the site on a hill, aspects of this can be appreciated by the public from outside the site, and more closely from a public footpath which passes through two of the fields. Plans have been discussed for dismantling and re siting a derelict Victorian observatory from Barwickstead, the first large house to be built in the village. Re locating this historic monument on a site in the arboretum from which it would be seen in the distance from many angles, this

would serve as an eye catcher, and help to bring the existence of the arboretum to a wider public. This would require planning permission and the raising of funds, but the Charity is prepared to offer a site for the observatory, and would like to promote this project, while acknowledging that strictly speaking this does not fall within the primary charitable purpose of BALM.

Although the number of guided tours will be limited, they should appeal to visitors with an interest in gardens, as well as ecology. It is also planned to make contact with local schools to discuss educational visits, and to offer the site to students for research projects connected with biology and ecology.

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Income and Expenditure Account 15.10-19- 5.4.21

Income:

Donations:

Thomas Tuohy	3850	
Lilian Tuohy Main	3500	
Derek Granger	1000	
Andrew Barnes	184	
Kathleen Cook	126	
Bruce Boucher	100	
	8760

Inland Revenue Gift Aid * 2190

Rental income 1000

Entry fees 20 Total £11970

Expenditure

Legal fees	1640	
Insurance	647	
Maintenance	1573	
Stationary (leaflets)	275	
.....		£4135

Excess income over expenditure £ 7835

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 Bank Balance Cumberland Building Society
 30 April 2021 £5816

- An adjustment for a mistaken claim of £609 in a total Gift Aid payment of 2086.42 made in September 2020 . This was repaid in a in a claim for Gift Aid payment for the period 4.4.20- 30.9.21