

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