



Chair's Review 2013 to 2024

Last year was very special for Bandstand Beds as it marked our 10th anniversary on Clapham Common. From our humble beginnings it has been an incredible journey so far, with many significant milestones along the way.

I became a BBA member back in 2013, when the growing year began with a squash and bean swap and rounded off with a cook-up at the Notre Dame Estate community hall – our first ever autumn feast. Despite the success of this event and the BBA project so far, Fiona Law decided to step down as chair, resulting in an emergency meeting being called to discuss how the organisation might continue... Having shown a keen interest in community gardening and the work on Clapham Common, I was persuaded to stand for election as chair.

When I took over as chair in February 2014, BBA had the beds by the café at the Bandstand, and a growing area for fruit bushes in front of the toilet block near the children's playground. Although our outdoor growing space was limited, our gardening activity on the Common began to attract attention and keen new members started to get involved. Seeing this increased interest in our project, Lambeth Council offered us some derelict land on the Common (known locally as 'the dump') to turn it into a community garden. Tentatively, Diana Linskey, BBA treasurer at the time, and I decided to take on the challenge.

Following some serious landscaping help from Lambeth Council, volunteer days to clear the site and successful funding applications, by July 2015 the derelict piece of land was ready for our polytunnel to be installed.

Although a major landmark in the development of our garden, the polytunnel was seen by some local residents as a 'visual intrusion'. For many other users of the Common, though, our increased visibility attracted a positive reaction and interest in becoming part of our community project. Bandstand Beds membership numbers swelled, and with regular gardening sessions, workshops and our annual events such as Common People on the Bandstand and our autumn feast, BBA became a flourishing community asset.

Recognising the success of our community garden Lambeth Council offered us another section of derelict land to take on that would double the size of our growing

space. How could we refuse, especially as they were willing to help by levelling the ground as they had before?

By now, in addition to being a wonderful outdoor space for people of all ages to meet, garden and socialise, we would often prepare and share fresh food made with our produce. To do this properly, we needed somewhere to prepare and cook food on site. To this end, in February 2017 a new shipping container arrived kindly donated by This is Clapham – and we set about building a field kitchen.

A year later, new pathways had been installed in the extra section of the garden and the field kitchen was fully functional, allowing us to provide hot and cold refreshments at our gardening sessions. However, with more people now taking part in BBA activities – and all that tea drinking – it became apparent there was another essential facility some of us desperately needed on site. So, thanks to another successful funding bid our composting toilet was installed at the end of 2019. Perfectly timed for the arrival of Covid, when all the nearby public conveniences closed.

An unexpected challenge for gardeners during the pandemic was the scarcity of commercially produced compost and topsoil – it became like gold dust. Although we recycled some of our garden waste in black compost bins, most of it was being sent to landfill. And the compost we were producing wasn't enough to meet our needs. To address this sustainability issue, we sought permission from Lambeth Council to install three composting bays on the site adjacent to our community garden. With funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and the help of The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) the bays were fully installed and ready for an inaugural composting workshop in October 2021. As part of this project, Lambeth also allowed us to plant a small fruit orchard in the strip beside the bays at the edge of the green waste site.

Of course, not all BBA activities take place in the community garden or at our other two growing spaces on the Common. Over the years our volunteers have been involved in many other projects elsewhere on the Common. These have included working with The Spinney in 2018 to create CCMAC's Colour Your Common project, organising a planting session on the Common for National Tree Week in 2021, and creating some hügelkultur beds in the area beside the new children's playground.

During BBA's ten years on Clapham Common, the impact of the climate crisis has become worryingly apparent to everyone. As gardeners and food growers, we are increasingly conscious of the importance of raising environmental awareness and working in harmony with nature to support wildlife wherever we can. Back in 2019 one of our young gardeners, Tom, created a small pond in the garden, which now supports a thriving frog population. The pond also plays an important part in the Wild Times sessions which take place in the garden on Monday afternoons, run in partnership with

Froglife. Other wildlife organisations we have formed strong links with include Buglife and Butterfly Conservation, and both organisations have run workshops at the garden.

Each year at the Bandstand Beds seems to be busier than the previous one, and 2023 was no exception. We usually kickstart our growing season by joining Capital Growth's Good to Grow campaign at the end of April, but this year we got off to an earlier start. We had been approached by Christopher Wellbelove, Deputy Lieutenant for Lambeth, who asked if we might be able to help Clapham's homeless charity, the Ace of Clubs, transform their overgrown garden into a working growing space. Keen to lend a helping hand, on Saturday 1 April a band of BBA volunteers headed along to Ace to carry out a massive clear up, and build some new raised beds. We later supplied the Ace of Clubs with plants for the new garden. And later in the year, we were thrilled to have them join us with a fantastic produce stall at our annual feast in September.

Our feast is the pinnacle of the year's growing season at the garden. There's always delicious food made with our homegrown produce, lots of fun-filled activities and a fundraising raffle with prizes generously donated by local businesses. BBA donated £1,200 raised at the feast to the Ace of Clubs to further improve their garden, and we are looking forward to working with them again this year.

As well as our regular gardening sessions on Saturday mornings, Monday afternoons (with Froglife) and Wednesday evenings in the summer, we also host workshops and other activities in the garden. Throughout 2023, our regular gardening sessions were well attended, and both Mondays with Froglife and Saturdays have included some fantastic workshops – along with lots of tea, cakes and lunch prepared on site.

One of our aims in 2023 was to provide more activities for children and with this in mind we set up a series of Saturday morning gardening Get Growing sessions for young people, aged 7+. Also, on a sunny afternoon in June around 50 pupils from Heathbrook Primary School were heard crossing the Common, making their way to our garden for a workshop with Butterfly Conservation. Once divided into groups, the children learnt about the importance of butterflies, sieved compost and planted pollinator-friendly wildflower plug plants in troughs to take back to school.

With the extra children's activities last year, BBA held approximately 120 workshops and gardening sessions, resulting in more than 2,000 participant experiences. Through our partnership with Froglife's Wild Times, this includes engagement with 58 people living with dementia and 27 carers. An impressive amount of engagement considering BBA is completely volunteer led.

So, what is the secret of BBA's success and why do people give up their time to be part of it?

Here's what one of our members, Clinton, told me: *'I never dreamt that volunteering at Bandstand Beds would be so enjoyable, so rewarding and so fulfilling. I get a good physical workout every week, clearing, weeding, and digging. And then there is feeling part of the community – with a friendly, down-to-earth group of volunteers. After a couple of hours' hard work, we sit down together and enjoy a welcome cup of tea with cakes and biscuits that we take in turns to bring and share. I've only been doing it for a short time, but already feel part of a unique environmental community project that has a deep-rooted impact in and around Clapham Common. I have felt welcomed and valued by everyone right from my very first day and feel that I've made friends for life.'*

It is always great to receive positive feedback and recognition. This year, BBA entered London in Bloom for the second time, and we were over the moon with the award we received. BBA was marked as outstanding!

Since becoming chair in 2014, I feel proud to have been part of BBA's amazing journey so far, from its humble beginnings at the Bandstand to the amazing community garden we now have in the heart of Clapham Common. It's been a bumpy ride at times but along the way, I too have met and made friends with some wonderful people. Long may Bandstand Beds continue!

David Dandridge

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BANDSTAND BEDS ASSOCIATION
BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023 £	2022 £
Current assets		
Cash at bank and in hand		
Co-operative bank	9,324	6,984
PayPal	69	533
	<u>9,393</u>	<u>7,517</u>
Liabilities	-	-
Net assets	<u>9,393</u>	<u>7,517</u>
Total funds of the Charity		
Unrestricted Income Funds	9,006	7,517
Restricted Income Funds	387	-
Total Charity funds	<u>9,393</u>	<u>7,517</u>

The financial statements were approved and authorised by the Trustees on 15 February 2024 and are signed on their behalf by:



David R Dandridge Chair



Elizabeth David Treasurer

BANDSTAND BEDS ASSOCIATION
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Year ended			Year ended		
	Unrestricted	Restricted	31-Dec-23	Unrestricted	Restricted	31-Dec-22
	Funds	Funds		Funds	Funds	
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income from:						
Membership subscriptions	713	-	713	711	-	711
Donations	6,790	-	6,790	8,226	-	8,226
Fundraising	860	-	860	-	-	-
Grants	-	6,225	6,225	-	-	-
Total income	8,363	6,225	14,588	8,937	-	8,937
Expenditure on:						
Equipment	1,480	4,557	6,037	-	-	-
Gardening supplies	514	355	869	767	58	825
Construction & maintenance	605	58	663	2,640	126	2,766
Workshops	786	220	1,006	390	-	390
Refreshments	539	164	703	542	16	558
PayPal fees	174	-	174	56	-	56
Insurance	-	252	252	293	-	293
Signage & leaflets	160	117	277	100	-	100
Room and van hire	222	15	237	244	500	744
Furniture	379	-	379	330	300	630
Website	-	-	-	240	-	240
DBS check	24	-	24	92	-	92
Charitable donations made to Community organisations	1,991	100	2,091	-	-	-
Total expenditure	6,874	5,838	12,712	5,694	1,000	6,694
Net surplus & movement of funds	1,489	387	1,876	3,243	(1,000)	2,243
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward	7,517	-	7,517	4,274	1,000	5,274
Total funds carry forward	9,006	387	9,393	7,517	-	7,517