

Trustees' annual report for the period,

From: 1st February 2024, period start date, to: 31st January 2025, period end date.

Charity name: Oldway Gardens Group

Charity registration number: 1196635

Charities registered address: 18 Cecil Avenue, Preston, Paignton, TQ3 1LW

Charities activities address: Oldway Gardens, Oldway Road, Paignton, Devon

Names of charity trustees who manage the charity:

Tim Eley, President

Peter Welsby, Chair

Susan Saunders, Vice Chair and Treasurer

Joanne Jones, Secretary

Pauline Baker, Assistant secretary

Summary of purposes

The conservation and preservation of the flora and fauna and natural environment of Oldway Mansion Gardens for the benefit of the public including the advancement of education of the public to celebrate the history and traditions of the gardens to connect the community to its heritage and to develop interest and skills in proficient gardening and estate management.

Summary of main activities in relation to above

Education/training/arts/culture/heritage/science/environment/ conservation/heritage/recreation

The Oldway Gardens Volunteer Group took over and has looked after the maintenance of Oldway Mansion Gardens, since September 2019, after the council which owns the site, ran out of money. The site consists of 17 acres of grade 2 listed gardens and is a public park, completely open to the general public 365 days of the year, there are no gates. The main garden design was by Achille Duchene, completed in 1902, and consists of grassed parkland, two distinctive parterres, herbaceous borders, terraces, flower beds, sub tropical areas, a grotto rockery, pond and stream, designed by F.W. Meyer, water plants and wooded areas. There are many birds, small animals, insects and amphibious creatures that inhabit the gardens. We have a programme of sustainability for the future, whilst preserving the past.

We have kept in mind the guidance from the charity commission to ensure that we are entirely independent of the local council, are free to make our own decisions on administration, finances and legal matters, we have our own management plan and policies. Our own committee which meets regularly and we meet with council officials to advise them on what we are doing and wish to do in the future.

We are completely inclusive with sixty active volunteers of all ages and backgrounds, we do not discriminate. We have volunteers with physical disabilities, with mental health problems, with learning difficulties who come with carers. We have groups of community payback persons with their supervisors; we have groups of children from the local primary school with their class teachers and helpers, and also young persons doing their Duke of Edinburgh awards. All are welcome.

We actively encourage all our volunteers to share with others the skills that they have, whilst developing skills in those who wish to learn, in their knowledge of plants and wildlife and their gardening skills. Others, who prefer to use their hospitality skills, look after our plant stall, providing a selection of plants donated or grown by ourselves, or look after our tea hut, providing refreshments to all the visitors to the gardens. Other volunteers with skills in building and maintenance mend gardening equipment, build benches, make planters, bird boxes and related wooden items for the gardens and sale to visitors, from our gardeners' yard and its related buildings. We grow our own plants mainly from cuttings and believe in sustainability. We provide tours of the gardens to any visitors that want them. We have developed popular family garden trails to encourage visitors, and do our own administration.

We keep a register and between 17th November 2021 when we became a charity and 31st January 2025, our volunteers logged up just over 37,215 hours of recorded voluntary work. Unrecorded work goes on behind the scenes continually as well. We estimate that at an average recommended wage of £17 per hour, we should be able to match fund if bidding for a grant, of £632,655.

The group's trustees look after the day to day running of the group, overall gardening management, supervision, administration, accounts, running the web site, social media and marketing, we also have a full committee of 12, whose personnel are delegated to look after the newer volunteers, to understand their previous gardening skills, training needs, plus projects and areas that they might prefer to work on, and also to design and run a rota system for the plant stall and tea hut. The trustees disseminate information to the committee at regular meetings where everyone's advice, thoughts and idea are welcomed, minutes are published and talked through with all volunteers.

The group has a management system in place, which includes full risk assessments, health and safety, training procedures and policies.

The group has a good relationship with Torbay Council who owns the Oldway Estate and their company SWISCo collect our garden waste that we were disposing of ourselves and they also mow the two large fields on the estate with large tractor mowers, which we were mowing with small hand petrol mowers, at no charge to the group.

The Group has developed a really good relationship with the local ministry of justice department, who provide us with teams of Community Payback personnel, and supervisors, every week, who work on projects that we set them, overseen by our Vice Chair.

We support young persons working on their Duke of Edinburgh awards, and several persons with disabilities, who attend with their carers and enablers.

The group has established a good relationship with The Oldway primary school that has its back gate opening to the gardens. The school children use the gardens for nature studies and we have involved them in a pollinating project, giving and opening several beds for them to sow wild seeds into and tend them.

The group's president is involved with the Royal Horticultural Society and locally with South West in Bloom, part of Britain in Bloom, as a judge. The Oldway Gardens Group is actively encouraged to participate in the yearly competition for the, "In your neighbourhood award".

The group's chair is actively involved in supervision of all volunteers and the persons from the Community Payback teams on a daily basis.

The group's lady vice chair and treasurer is a qualified tour guide and provides guided tours of the gardens including the history of the Singer family who established the estate. She is also qualified to produce all our risk assessments.

The group's secretary, as well as administration, looks after our social media content. We have a web site, www.oldwaygardens.co.uk, which links to everything.

The group's newest trustee, as well as acting as assistant secretary, manages all aspects of our tea hut, produces and organises all our family trails and is our main first aid person.

The group has a good relationship with the Paignton and Preston Community Partnership, the main Torbay Community Partnership cover the insurance for all volunteer groups in Torbay. All trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or other benefits, only legitimate expenses.

In planning our activities for the year we kept in mind the Charity Commissions guidance on public benefit at our trustee meetings, where everything is minuted.

With our changing climate, one of our goals has always been sustainability. In our sub tropical climate area, where we have many different ferns, shrubs and trees, our rockery is thriving with heathers, rock plants, and echiums, also our pond is flourishing with donated water lilies, irises, grasses, bull rushes, and around the pond, persicaria, primroses, cowslips and lavender, attracting, bees, dragonflies, butterflies, and many different birds, and other wildlife. We have continued to coppice and clear overgrown and self seeding trees and bushes that have taken over the gardens in the last 100 years, opening up the views and providing a safer environment for visitors.

During the season from February to October, our plant stall is open 5 days a week, manned by volunteers, providing an income to enable the group to purchase equipment and plants, as well as growing them, for the gardens. Our tea hut is open 7 days a week, manned by volunteers, providing refreshments to visitors, as well as where our garden trails begin and end. Again, all proceeds go into sustaining the work of the charity. Heritage and Garden Tours take place and provide a wealth of information about the history of the Singer Family. One of the old grass tennis courts is hired out to provide a safe place for dog training sessions.

Our normal days of garden volunteering are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and throughout this year, depending on the weather, all the jobs that need tackling were dealt with. The Community Payback teams also come in over the weekend and get to work on the heavy jobs.

February 24 - Bench repairs continue. Log seat and table area created from a felled tree. 600 blue bells and snow drops planted. First plants stall of the year. Volunteers make new stable doors for units in gardener's yard.

March 24 - Rustic fencing created from pollarded bush branches, put up in lower gardens. Lime Walk trees pleached. At committee meeting It was decided to dismantle old tea hut as the set up now considered too dangerous, with calor gas and no running water. Cutting back of bushes and trees stopped whilst bird nesting season.

April 24 - Our tea "shed" opened from the gardener's yard in the refurbished stable door unit, with a family Easter trail organised. There were over 880 children plus adults that took part. The plant stall volunteers also decided to operate from the gardener's yard due to the inclement weather. Volunteers Pot up of over 1000 Osteospermum plugs. Pete Welsby invited to talk on Riviera FM about Oldway Garden Volunteers. Two volunteers visited local school to talk to youngsters about gardening.

May 24 – New tea hut put up, electricity installed, all installations carried out as a donation by local company. Fallen palm tree removed as it couldn't be saved. Local school plant wildflower seeds in donated beds. We had our AGM, where all trustees re appointed and all agreed to appoint our newest trustee, Pauline Baker. As Tim Eley has moved permanently to Cornwall, it was agreed that Pete Welsby take over as chairman, but we would like Tim to become president as we need his horticultural expertise. Meeting with Devon Garden Trust regarding legacy left for Oldway Gardens. Plant stall now back to it's position on terrace above east lawn.

June 24 – The new defibrillator was connected to side of new tea hut. New tea hut opened. Ongoing problems with 1905 ram pump that pumps water from local stream to our grotto and pond, luckily the company that originally made it and has the parts, still exists, but it is the council's responsibility.

July 24– The group played host to the Judges from South West in Bloom, including celebrity judge Jon Wheatley, who were judging Paignton in Bloom along with our gardens in the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' Category' awards. We used the opportunity to have a grand opening of the tea hut and volunteer social. BBC Spotlight came to visit.

August 24 – Major roof clearing exercise going on of the build up of ten years of growth on units in gardeners yard. This has solved the dampness issue. Discussions took place on autumn planting for spring and summer display in 2025. Reorganisation took place, with new lay out of plants and potting area in gardener's yard.

Sept 24 – Refurbishment of ornamental metal gates to gardens. The old tea hut was re erected in gardener's yard and adapted to become a potting shed. SWISco put up seven dog waste bins in gardens after many requests. We had a discussion about doing a Halloween trail, deciding that it would be good to dress up and pull all the stops out to make it a good one. We were given a Devon Volunteers award for encouraging Health and Well-being.

Oct 24 – Mention of our group by our MP in the House of Commons. Two trustees attended the regional award ceremony for South West in Bloom, where we were awarded the Michael McGahey trophy for 'Exceptional Community Effort', an RHS Community award for 'Community Engagement' and another Outstanding grade in the It's Your Neighbourhood Award. South West in Bloom Judges Comments:

"The excellent Oldway Gardens, a Park which has been developed involving the local community, is one of the finest IYNs to be seen in the South West. Throughout the tour we saw lots of well selected plants, many of high quality. The significant tree plantings in Oldway Gardens are of note. The excellent Oldway Gardens and the developing partnership with IYN's and SWISCO can only yield even greater results. Level 5 OUTSTANDING - "It's Your Neighbourhood Award"

Feedback from Jon Wheatley, South West in Bloom Chairman:

"As to the future, continuing along the existing plan and seek to base future initiatives along the principles adopted by Oldway Gardens, which is one of the most positive Bloom initiatives I have seen in recent years. What an excellent project, the Oldway Gardens Volunteer Group. You have set your sights very high and have to date achieved such a lot. The community approach you have adopted needs to be celebrated in the many facets of this estate. Congratulations. Have fun & keep going. Areas for Development - Keep the current ethos and continue to involve the wider community. There must be a TV Programme in this".

Nov 24 – Two page write up in local press about the group, and both our chairman and assistant secretary were interviewed on local radio. Halloween trail attracted 1650 children and adults and was a huge success. Closure of tea hut and plant stall for the winter. With the aim to stabilise the grotto structure which is grade 2 listed volunteers have started the process of clearing the area surrounding it. A 30ft self-seeded sycamore tree directly above the grotto urgently needs removing as the weight is a major issue. We would like to access some of funds that were

bequeathed specifically for the maintenance of Oldway Gardens (£124k), and are held by the Devon Gardens Trust.

Dec 24 – We gained an award from Devon Garden Trust - For 'originality and creativity in the historic Oldway garden's'. Christmas social took place in gardener's yard for volunteers.

Jan 24 – The volunteers continue to carry out general duties in the gardens. In the gardener's yard cleaning and the maintenance of tools, and making and building up the stock of planters for the new season taking place. We are aware that 2025 will see some dramatic changes in building work being carried out on the mansion which will place major constraints on our day to day activities within the grounds and requires a flexible ever changing approach to the work we do.

Financial Review

Bank: business account with National Westminster, Bristol City Centre, branch, with cash in bank at 31st January 2025 of £37,305 of unrestricted funds.

Our main sources of income has been from plants, hand made wooden planters and other crafted garden items, tea hut sales, donations and from our family trails.

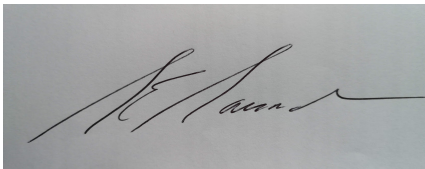
Future plans

To continue to build on what we have achieved.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Saunders', written on a light-colored background.

Mrs Susan Elizabeth Saunders

Trustee, treasurer

31st August 2025



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

OLDWAY GARDENS GROUP

1196635

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01/02/2024

To

31/01/2025

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Plant stall income	6 493	-	-	6 493	7 451
Tea hut income	10 676	-	-	10 676	5 908
Other income	760	-	-	760	1 201
Additional donations	1 369	-	-	1 369	2 547
Interest	505	-	-	505	286
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	19 803	-	-	19 803	17 393
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	19 803	-	-	19 803	17 393
A3 Payments					
Plant stall and garden expenses	3 276	-	-	3 276	994
Tea hut expenses	3 943	-	-	3 943	2 061
All other garden and tea hut costs	3 907	-	-	3 907	4 460
Administrative expenses	787	-	-	787	572
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	11 913	-	-	11 913	8 087
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Garden equipment	1 730	-	-	1 730	591
Defibrillator	1 200	-	-	1 200	-
Sub total	2 930	-	-	2 930	591
Total payments	14 843	-	-	14 843	8 678
Net of receipts/(payments)	4 960	-	-	4 960	8 715
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	32 345	-	-	32 345	23 693
Cash funds this year end	37 305	-	-	37 305	32 408

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash in Bank	37 304	-	-
	Cash in hand	1	-	-
			-	-
	Total cash funds	37 305	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	