

SHROPSHIRE PARKS AND GARDENS TRUST

Registered Charity Number 1202152

SECOND

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 20th March 2025

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2024

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2024 - 2025

The Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Registered Charity Number 1202152, set up to replace the Former Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust, Registered Charity Number 1076257, which was set up as a Charitable Trust in 1997.

The new CIO was registered by the Charity Commission for England and Wales on 2 March 2023 and all the assets and members of the former Trust have now been transferred to the new CIO. This is the second AGM of the new CIO.

The objects of the CIO are:

To advance the education of the public in the art and science of parks and gardens by:

- a. Promoting the understanding, conservation, protection, improvement and re-creation of Parks and Gardens and designed landscapes; and
- b. Promoting for the benefit of the public the preservation, enhancement and re-creation of whatever Parks and Gardens and designed landscapes may exist, or have existed, in and around the present or historic boundaries of the County of Shropshire.

Chairman's Report 2024 – 2025

Your Trustees have worked hard this year to continue to develop the Trust for the future, and particularly to address the problem of our falling Membership. Our numbers have dropped sharply since Covid, so we have appointed a consultant to help us improve our publicity and increase our membership. The first step will be to update our website and leaflets and publicise them to a wider audience in the hope of attracting new members.

We have also been improving the services we offer to members. Stephen Packer organised another excellent programme of visits and lectures for us, which he has summarised below.

Tom and Gisele Wall put together another two editions of our colourful magazine, keeping us up to date on the visits and talks we have had during the year, as well as on other interesting aspects of gardens and gardening.

Chris Gallagher continued the important work of responding to planning enquiries on behalf of both ourselves and the Gardens Trust, while our Treasurer, Rose Gibson, kept our accounts in order, and Daphne Capps kept our memberships up to date.

However, we have not had a Secretary all year, and this work has had to be covered by other Board Members. Currently we only have seven Trustees, and these gaps in our Board mean that it is increasingly difficult to keep up with all our work.

We will simply not be able to continue if we cannot fill these vital posts soon. The work we do is important to the future of parks and gardens in Shropshire, as well as providing enjoyment for members, and we very much want to continue to promote the Trust and increase our membership, but we are beginning to run out of energy.

I am resigning as Chair, as I think it is time for someone with some new ideas to take over, although I will continue as a trustee for the time being.

I do ask you all to think very hard whether you could help the Board carry out our work. Much of the work of these posts could be divided between several different people, instead of being done by a single Board member as it has been in the past.

We urgently need a Chair and a Secretary, just to continue our core work, but we also need a Publicity Officer, to work closely with our consultant, a Magazine Editor to source material for the magazine and someone to organise our important work of finding out more about what survives of the historic gardens in Shropshire and adding the information to the Historic Environment Record (HER) held by Shropshire Council.

Please talk to any of our Trustees if you feel you could take on some of the work of the Board and would like to know what the work entails. Any help that you can give us will be gladly received.

Treasurer's Report for the Financial Year January – December 2024

The Trust made a loss in 2024 of £1,351. This was despite our decision last year to pause the bursaries scheme and is largely because of reducing membership and increasing costs - a familiar story.

The reduction in membership is less severe than appears from the accounts, as around £400 of the income ascribed to 2023 was prepayments for 2024 membership, but it is still something which we need to address, and the Board has therefore decided to invest in professional help with re-design of our publicity and promotional materials, the cost of which will appear in the current year's accounts.

We also considered increasing the cost of Membership but decided that we would hold the fees at the current level for at least another year, as we feel that increasing the level of fees could lose us members, which is the opposite of what we want.

We will continue to save on postage by limiting the number of mailings, and by using e-mail where possible.

Our Auditors James, Holyoak & Parker Ltd have in the past very kindly audited our accounts at no cost to us, but have now let us know that they will be unable to continue to offer their services free of charge, but will have to charge us a fee in the region of £150 plus VAT. We recommend that we continue to use their services and thank them for all the work that they have carried out for us without charge in the past.

Planning and Conservation Report 2024-2025

The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee for Planning Applications affecting Registered Parks and Gardens. Planning applications are referred to SPGT for consideration via our colleagues at the Gardens Trust, or increasingly, are sent directly to SPGT from the planning departments at either Shropshire Council or Telford & Wrekin Council and tend initially at least to follow a more or less consistent pattern, i.e. submission by the applicant, notification as above, followed by our (carefully crafted and reasonable) written response. Often, that is where the process ends for a given application. Statutory consultees are rarely notified as to the result of these applications and rarely do we have the time to check on the outcomes.

You may recall that I reported to the last AGM, back in March 2024, that we had been consulted about an application to fell a group of Horse Chestnut & Scots Pine trees that had been planted around a small single storey 'boat house' dating from the mid-1950's, adjacent to Water Lane in Frankwell, the better to erect an oversized (in our view) 'architect designed' two storey structure that would be both completely out of scale as well as of an intrusive design in that location, and which would negatively impact upon the Setting of the Grade II Registered 'Quarry Park and Gardens across the river Severn. This had been rumbling on for months and eventually went to Planning Appeal, where unfortunately the applicant's blandishments were sufficient to convince the Inspector to approve the application, subject to (ludicrous) assurances given regarding protection of the trees during the building process, only then immediately to submit an application to remove said trees, which thankfully has been turned down to by Shropshire Council. Given the applicant's 'previous' however, it seems unlikely that we have heard the last of this one.

Also 'live' around this time last year, but of somewhat more positive outcome – just – was an application to build three oversized 'bungalows' within Market Drayton's principal Conservation Area, which in their original form would have been clearly visible from the Grade II* 'Pell Wall House' and from its Registered Park & Garden. Numerous objections and re-applications later, the applicant eventually opted to sink the buildings into excavated terracing (itself potentially intrusive, albeit more locally) and to reduce the roof angle, thus further reducing the height of the roofline. This was enough to persuade the Council's planning committee to approve it, although it remains to be seen how it will look in practice.

Of similar outcome was an application to build a 'Lodge /chalet building' next to the Carp 'fishing lake' within the Grade II Registered Park & Garden at Badger, near Wolverhampton (Shropshire is such a big county). We originally objected to the extension of this development and especially of the four large rectangular breeding ponds adjacent to it, as being detrimental to the Significance of the Park & Garden, although these were approved notwithstanding. Carp fishing has traditionally been the preserve of the lone enthusiast, inured to cold and wet, but is now being promoted as a family entertainment, complete with barbecues and WhatsApp groups. This is clearly a vision shared by Shropshire Council's planning committee who approved the application. Again, it remains to be seen how this will turn out.

In between the above, we have also been consulted on numerous other smaller proposals, some of which involved Listed Buildings, but which needed no response from us. Of far greater import however, and having the potential for long term damage to the Significance both of two Registered Parks and Gardens (Walcot and Linley Hall, both Grade II RPAGs), 51 other Grade I, II* and II Listed Buildings, 10 Scheduled Monuments, 3 Conservation Areas, as well as the Shropshire Hills 'National Landscape' (AONB) itself, and with also parts of the nearby 'Vale of Montgomery Landscape of Historic Interest, is an application to build a 1 MW wind turbine on lands to the east of Colebatch, near Bishops Castle (the proposed development site lies within the AONB). This will be a very large turbine, of some 50 m (164 ft) to hub height, 80 m (262 ft) to blade tip, and with three rotors describing a circle of diameter 60 m (197 ft). A response to this application is being prepared and will be submitted shortly.

Chris Gallagher, Vice-Chair

Events

For 2024-25 we have had a full programme of events which include a series of visits from May through to September followed a series of winter lectures.

On Thursday 2nd May we visited Downton Gorge for a guided walk led by Tom Wall. In June we had planned a summer garden party at Hodnet Hall. However, it was necessary to cancel this due to the low number of bookings which failed to reach the minimum required by the caterers.

On Sunday 14th July the residents of Stiperstones Court in Shrewsbury opened their gardens for members to visit. The weekend visit on Sunday 21st July to Broadward Hall, near Clungunford was well attended. On Thursday 15th August we travelled out of the county to Derbyshire for a double visit. The morning began with a visit to Griselda Kerr's Dower House garden followed by a tour of Melbourne Hall in the afternoon. This was the most popular visit, being attended by twenty-two members and guests.

The final visit was on Thursday 12th September to Hawkstone Hall & Gardens. This was a self-guided audio tour of the gardens and the hall.

The Winter Talks Programme began in October with a talk by Brian Vowles on the development and restoration of the gardens and grounds of Biddulph Old Hall. As a result of this talk, we have arranged a visit there for June this year. In November Danny Wells spoke to us on the subject of the Art of the Garden, an interesting look at how gardens have been depicted in art.

In the new year, Simon Gulliver gave us a fascinating insight into the life of John Claudis Loudon and his wife Jane Webb, as he described it 'an amazing Victorian double act.' He was followed in February by Gareth Manning who gave us a brief history of Japanese garden design, based on visits he had made to the country.

For the March talk, coinciding with our AGM, we have Neil Cook from Hanbury Hall talking to us about how the formal gardens have been restored.

For 2025 we have another full programme of visits planned. This begins in April with a visit to Chillington Hall. In May we travel to the south of Shropshire to Action Scott Hall and in June we make our follow-up visit to Biddulph Old Hall in Staffordshire. For July we make a two-day visit to Monmouthshire to look at two gardens designed by Henry Avray Tipping – Wyndcliffe Court and High Glanau Manor. Our final visit of the year is to Apley Castle in Wellington.

We are now in the process of planning our Winter Talks Programme for 2025-26 with bookings already in progress.

All the visits and talks have been reasonably well attended and already bookings are looking good for the visits we have planned.

Steve Packer, Events Organiser

Election of Trustees for 2025– 2026

The COI currently has 7 Trustees:

Chairman	Mary King
Vice Chairman	Chris Gallagher
Membership Secretary	Daphne Capps
Treasurer	Rose Gibson
Committee Member	Imogen Sambrook
Committee Member	Kathryn Herbert
Events Organiser	Stephen Packer

Under the terms of Clause 13 (1) of our Constitution, one third of the Charity Trustees shall retire from office at every General Meeting of the members of the CIO. Retiring Trustees may stand for re-election.

The Chairman, **Mary King**, is retiring by rotation at the AGM and not standing for re-election as Chairman but will stand for re-election as a Trustee.

Kathryn Herbert is retiring by rotation at this AGM and standing for re-election

Further nominations for Trustees are welcome. Any Members wishing to put forward nominations for themselves or someone else may do so either by sending them to the Chairman before the meeting or at the meeting in person.

Nominees must be proposed and seconded by members of the CIO and have agreed to their names being put forward.

SHROPSHIRE PARKS & GARDENS TRUST
(Registered Charity No. 1202152)

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT
YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2024

		<u>Year Ended 31.12.24</u>		<u>Year Ended 31.12.23</u>
	£	£	£	£
<u>Receipts</u>				
Subscriptions	847		1,837	
Lectures & Visits	1,436		1,859	
Summer Event	-		-	
Donations	75		-	
Gift Aid	-		253	
	<hr/> 2,358		<hr/> 3,949	
Bank Interest	<hr/> 220		<hr/> 138	
		2,578		4,087
<u>Payments</u>				
Hire of Room	554		428	
Speakers	339		200	
Insurance	218		198	
Printing & Publicity	536		783	
Entry Fees & Coach Hire	1,391		1,347	
Secretarial Expenses	265		213	
Sundries	167		70	
Website Costs	300		300	
AGT Membership	159		199	
Bursaries	-		-	
		<hr/> (3,929)		<hr/> (3,738)
Net Surplus/(Deficit)		(1,351)		349
Balance at Bank brought forward		<hr/> 15,810		<hr/> 15,461
Balance at Bank carried forward		<hr/> <u>14,459</u>		<hr/> <u>15,810</u>

We have examined the accounts together with the books, vouchers and documents relating to Shropshire Parks and Gardens Trust for the year ended 31st December 2024 and the balances in hand at that date. In our opinion the books have been properly kept and the above account is in agreement with the books, vouchers and documents submitted and explanations given to us.

JAMES, HOLYOAK & PARKER LTD,
Chartered Accountants,
1 Knights Court
Archers Way
Battlefield Enterprise Park
Shrewsbury, SY1 3GA

James, Holyoak & Parker Ltd

12/2/25