

Association of Botanical Artists

Treasurer's Annual Report - 2024/2025

Treasurer: Elaine Allison

Accountant: Sharon Mulley ACA

The Association of Botanical Artists's financial position is stable.

Over the six years the organisation has been running, the last two as a charity, we have kept our membership fees low whilst still being able to build a healthy surplus in our funds, due to low running costs because of volunteer help.

Membership fees were £27 during 2024 - 2025 and will remain at £27 for 2025 - 2026.

Our main sources of funding to run the charity remains membership subscription, with recent charitable donations to be used for creation of educational content.

As our membership has increased so has the amount of administration to process the paperwork and this year the Trustees took the decision to use freelance assistance to undertake the processing of the membership details and support with administration.

Our annual operating costs for the year have therefore risen to £5,678

Accounts for 2024 - 2025 can be found below and will be published on the Charity Commission website. (Also included are our accounts for 2023 - 24 as noted in last years Treasurer's report)

Gross annual income for the year to 31 March 2025: £24,034, including a donation of £15,000 from The James and Shirley Sherwood Foundation.

Our annual operating costs for the year have risen to £5,639

That is higher than our previous year in part due to freelance assistance and the costs of BAWW for 2024 - 2025 included within this number.

BAWW2025 summary

The costs for BAWW 2025 were covered by the £10,000 donation generously given by The James and Shirley Sherwood Foundation - no member ship fees were used.

Fees were charged for submission of artwork and artists were able to purchase the frames after the exhibition. We hired a the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists Gallery for the physical exhibition of artwork so part of the gallery hire costs are included in this years accounts. Catalogues were also prepared and sold both at the exhibition and online.

Final costings for BAWW 2025 were less than the donation and will be reported in full in the 2025 - 26 Treasurers report.

The account total on 31st March 2025 was £48,368.

Projection into 2025 - 2026

Over the coming year we again anticipate a continued increase in membership income, with a slight rise in costs for processing. We also expect to have to allocate funds towards specialised digital assistance as one of our skilled volunteers, Alan Cody, will be retiring this year.

We have set to one side the remainder of the generous donation towards the BAWW costs and a new grant of £15,000 from The James and Shirley Sherwood Foundation for our next project which will be to increase the educational resources on creating and understanding botanical art, in relation to botany and conservation, that ABA provides digitally.

Where we are now

We opened a bank account with Unity Trust Bank which specialises in managing charitable bank accounts

ABA's NatWest bank account has been closed

The ABA PayPal account remains open as before

All of our end of year finances were reviewed and verified by our accountant.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Allison', written over a horizontal line.

Name: Elaine Allison

Position: Trustee, Treasurer

Date: 6th Sept 2025

Association of Botanical Artists (ABA)

Trustees Annual Report

Financial reporting period 30 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

Charity registration number: 1202676

ABA was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) by the Charity Commission for England and Wales on 11 April 2023. The Objects of the CIO are:

- i) The advancement of education and ii) The advancement of the arts for the public benefit, in particular, in the techniques, artistic merit and science of botanical art with a view to raising awareness of the environment, biodiversity and conservation of the natural world

1. Objectives and Activities

1.1 Summary of purpose as set out in the governing document.

Association of Botanical Artists (ABA) for everyone – everywhere - every ability

The advancement of education and the advancement of the arts for the public benefit, in particular, in the techniques, artistic merit and science of botanical art with a view to raising awareness of the environment, biodiversity and conservation of the natural world.

1.2 Summary of the main activities in relation to the purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts:

To educate a wider international audience about the importance and beauty of plants:

Botanical Art Worldwide (BAWW 2025)

This summary overview includes the activities in relation to BAWW 2025 for the preparation period up to 31 March 2025, prior to the physical exhibition, online exhibition and associated activities in May and June 2025. Preparations and planning for the physical exhibition and associated digital exhibitions have been undertaken over a period of three and a half years, following the initial proposal received from the American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA) in 2021.

BAWW 2025 is coordinated by ASBA with steering groups in each participating country. The theme of the exhibition is heritage crop diversity, chosen to educate both artists and visitors on the importance of heritage crop plants.

The theme is designed to draw attention to the vast variety of food and useful plants available, in contrast with the relatively few varieties currently used in mass cultivation (ASBA)

34 countries have been confirmed to take part the BAWW 2025 activities, presenting digital exhibitions, physical exhibitions, catalogues and artists demonstrations throughout May and June 2025. ABA is leading the UK steering committee.

Worldwide Botanical Art Day is on 18th May 2025.

The UK's exhibition is titled Looking back for our future , featuring an exhibition of 34 specially created contemporary botanical artworks to be displayed at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists Gallery in Birmingham UK, for 2 weeks from 13 to 24th May 2025. Artists have gone through a rigorous pre-selection and judging process to be able to exhibit at the gallery, ensuring that only works that are accurately depicted and identified go through for public display.

ABA audience engagement online

The ABA website is the main point of engagement with digital exhibitions, blog posts and membership information, supported by activity across Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. ABA is clearly reaching way beyond our immediate membership base, judging by the engagement and viewing audiences that have grown during this period.

Blog posts and reviews: 12 posts, averaging 1 per month

YouTube: there are currently 6 publicly available videos hosted on YouTube. The most recent one was posted in April 2024 with 214 views. Since ABA joined YouTube in February 2017, there have been a total of 5,228 views across the 6 videos, up from 4,110 views the previous year. There is scope to expand on this activity significantly.

- Instagram followers: 7.2k (up from 5.8k followers in April 2024)
- Facebook: 8.2k (up from 6.k followers in April 2024)
- LinkedIn: 472 (up from 231 followers in April 2024)
- YouTube subscribers: 372

There has been some reduction in the viewing numbers for blog posts. The lowest number of views for a post was 230 and the highest number of views was 2.9K, excluding BAWW 2025 content. The team is looking again at the content offered and signposting. ABA has built a strong relationship with significant book publishers and now holds a position as trusted reviewers.

A focus on scientifically accurate botanical art often with an artistic element influenced by the medium:

BAWW 2025: Looking back for our Future: An exhibition focused on biodiversity, celebrating the crops that have been closely associated with the human species over thousands of years.

The BAWW 2025 exhibition has specific criteria for inclusion, with artists needing not only to identify heritage or heirloom varieties to illustrate, often growing the specimens themselves, but they also have to write a short explanatory text to accompany their scientifically accurate pictures. This is the most demanding subject exhibited by ABA members and a number of engagement activities have been undertaken to ensure artists understood the subject criteria, as well as the criteria for exhibition.

Two webinars with Question and Answer sessions have been held online, open to all botanical artists (not just ABA members) with representatives from the ASBA and ABA committees available to answer questions.

Prof. Mark Nesbitt from the Centre for Economic Botany at Kew helped to ensure the criteria were clear. He kindly agreed to provide the foreword for the exhibition catalogue.

Dedicated webpages for the BAWW 2025 exhibition have been designed and created by the ABA team, hosted from the ABA website.

Two Artists Packs have been designed and made available online, with detailed information to support interested artists.

Two judging sessions have been held: one online and a second in-person. Appointed judges included Martin Allen (botanist), Pamela Taylor (botanical artist and botanist), Helen Allen (botanical artist and teacher), Lynn Parker (Illustrations and artefacts curator at RBG Kew)

Botanical chat sessions

Between April 2024 and end of March 2025 two of our volunteers hosted a total of 6 'Botanical Chat' sessions, as part of ABA's educational offering to members. They were held online via Zoom, each hosting up to 20 ABA members at a time, free of charge. They are repeated and scheduled to allow for members across the world in different time zones to attend.

June 2024: 3 sessions on the plant family *Caryophyllaceae*

November 2024: 3 sessions on *Poaceae*

It is the intention to edit these recorded sessions into a series of YouTube videos that can be made available to members of the public.

- **An organisation open to all with no pre-requisite for membership:**

Any UK based botanical artist was welcome to submit artwork for BAWW 2025, without needing to be a member of ABA.

Fees for participating in BAWW 2025 have been kept at a minimum: £22 per image submission

There were 47 submissions, of which 13 did not meet the criteria at the initial digital judging phase. The remaining 34 artworks have been assembled and judged in real life, prior to being framed for exhibition at the gallery. They will also be presented on the ABA website and in the printed catalogue. 29 of the images have been selected to be presented for the worldwide online slideshow shown in all participating countries 18 May 2025.

- **Foster relationships with organisations who offer information on plant identification and plant ecology promoting a wider knowledge and enjoyment of the plant kingdom:**

ABA worked with the following organisation to help plan and prepare for BAWW 2025 and host coordinated events:

American Society of Botanical Artists (ASBA)

Wales Society of Botanical Illustrators (WSBI)

Eden Project

Society of Botanical Artists (SBA)

Royal Botanic Gardens RBG (RBG, Kew)

Birmingham Society of Botanical Artists (BSBA)

Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (RSBA)

Demonstrations and talks Artists demonstrating at the following venues have been coordinated by: RBSA coordinator Moira Ashby, RBG Kew/SBA coordinator Diane Marshall, Cardiff (WSBI) coordinator Linda Joseph, Eden Project organised by Jacquie Ashton.

Royal Birmingham Society of Artists Gallery:

RBSA Gallery

4 Brook Street
St Paul's Square
Birmingham B3 1SA

The team at the RBSA Gallery is keen to host the exhibition over a two-week period. A special day of events is being planned to coincide with Worldwide Botanical Art Day on Sunday 18 May 2025. There will be tours of the exhibition, presentations and awards, plus a chance to celebrate the achievement of organising and hosting BAWW 2025. Invitations will be sent to all ABA members, participating artists and contributors to join us in-person. For the first time, ABA will hold a People's Choice vote, for visitors to the exhibition to decide on their favourite artwork.

A blog post review is scheduled as a follow up for all members.

In-person visit

12 ABA members joined a visit to the Museum of Life Sciences at King's College, London in January 2025. This enjoyable and educational event was hosted by ABA member, Sandra Doyle.

- **Collaborate with members to promote and exhibit their work:**

BAWW 2025

BAWW 2025 has offered the opportunity for non-ABA members to apply to exhibit their artworks in a gallery setting for the first time.

Online exhibitions

ABA held two online exhibitions during the period. Both of these received strong contributions, that have been well received:

- 'Drama' (May 2024-Nov 2024)

90 artworks were included in Drama

- ‘Plants for Pollinators’ (Nov 2024-May 2025)

93 artworks were included in Plants for Pollinators

1.3 Statement on contribution made by volunteers

ABA is run by volunteers, with committee members, the education team and social media team and trustees.

Contributions of artwork, reviews, blogs and other material are very welcome from all our members.

There are seven volunteer members on the Education team, who meet approximately every two months. The team produces regular blog reviews on botanical art books, shows, art materials and exhibitions. Twelve posts were made during the period.

There are currently two volunteer members on the Social media team, with activity on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube. There is an ambition to develop the team and add content that would be suitable for TikTok, to attract a younger audience.

The committee is made up of members of the Social media and Education teams, with additional support from two other volunteers.

We were very disappointed and frustrated to receive notice from our insurers that ABA could no longer recruit and work with volunteer committee members from overseas. Committee members and Trustees must be UK based.

It is important to us that all our members feel valued and that we continue to recruit members from all countries to meet our founding principle that ABA is open to all everyone, everywhere, every ability .

2. Achievements and Performance

2.1 Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity s work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole

In addition to working towards delivering BAWW 2025, the ABA team has been able to consolidate the progress made in the previous year, continuing to attract new members, recruit new volunteers and trustees, enhance the administration and processes for running the charity. In accordance with the goals identified in the 2023/2024 TAR, the following have been achieved:

- ABA website has been simplified
- Administration systems are now operational
- New committee members have joined the team, and two new Trustees have been recruited
- BAWW 2025 has engaged and continues to engage a wide audience, beyond the confines of the current membership base
- Membership figures have continued to grow

ABA administration and processes

All ABA membership administrative practices have been streamlined, to ensure they are secure, data compliant and efficient. The new freelance membership administrator has been able to refine a number of processes and simplify much of the workflow.

Dedicated email addresses for the membership administration and the Treasurer are now operational.

ABA's banking arrangements will be transferred from NatWest to Unity Trust Bank, which is far more suitable for our needs.

Committees, volunteers and trustees

Following notification from ABA's insurers that we could not operate with non-UK committee volunteers, we had to make the difficult decision to request that three of our valued committee members stand down. This has had an impact on the work the teams have been able to carry out and also caused quite a challenge to morale. ABA will continue to work with all our members, being mindful of the restrictions in place.

2025-2026 will see a new era as two long standing Trustees stand down. This is an opportunity for the charity to shape the next phase with new trustees, recruited with specific skill sets.

Membership

There continues to be steady growth in membership numbers. As members can join at any point during the year, there is always a fluctuation in membership numbers throughout the year. At any given time, there may be approx. 10 memberships pending whilst payment is due.

April 2023: 250 members, representing 33 countries April

2024: 321 members, representing 40 countries April

2025: 331 members, representing 40 countries

Administration and processes

ABA is in a good financial position, with sufficient reserves to pay for freelance* and contractor support within carefully defined parameters.

*Membership secretary / Creative support: £670 from December 2024 to March 2025

3. Financial review (see Accounts for full details)

ABA's main source of funding continues to be via membership subscription and charitable grants.

Gross annual income for the year to 31 March 2025: £24,034 which includes a donation of £15,000 from The James and Shirley Sherwood Foundation.

(The Trustees agreed the donation of £15,000 be used toward special projects where possible.)

Current annual operating costs for the year to 31 March 2025: £5,639

Current account as of 31 March 2025: £48,368

4. Structure, Governance and Management

Structure

ABA is structured as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) governed by a Constitution. There are currently five Trustees in post responsible for the general control and management of the charity. The Trustees are supported by committees with responsibility for operational matters and paid for freelance administration support. All Trustees and committee members are volunteers and give their time without financial remuneration or financial benefit.

Governance

The current Trustees are:

Dr Elaine Allison (President)**

Mrs Charlotte Brooks (Chair of Trustees)**

Mr Martin Allen

Ms Maria louannou

Ms Carol Bliss (Treasurer and Secretary)

Trustees can be co-opted by existing Trustees and voted for by members at the AGM.

**Two of the current Trustees are due to step down in the coming months, before the end of 2025

Potential Trustees are invited to apply for the role and given access to governance documents relating to the charity's aims and objectives. They are asked to demonstrate relevant experience, skills and interest in the work of the charity and to meet with the Trustees. Suitable candidates are invited to attend committee meetings as observers. They are required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement and make known if there is anything in law preventing them from serving as a Trustee. If all agree they are then proposed as new Trustees at a subsequent Trustees' or committee meeting (whichever is first).

Management, risk and mitigation

The Trustees have adopted a risk management procedure using a risk register, reviewed annually by Trustees or as required.

There are two areas of risk that the charity continues to address: maintaining sufficient volunteer support to carry out the function of the charity and its administration; changing legislation regarding financial administration of not-for-profit membership organisations, particularly with an international subscriber base. Accurate data can be obtained as required for financial and regulatory purposes.

A skills audit was conducted to identify areas of requirement in the recruitment of new trustees. Two new Trustees joined the team in 2024, with specific expertise in financial reporting and strategic planning. In addition, we recruited professional freelance support to handle the membership administration and following a skills audit, we are

currently recruiting for additional Trustees to join the board with Digital, HR and organisational planning experience.

Following advice from the charity's insurers, it is no longer possible to have volunteers on the committee who are not based in the UK. All recruitment is carried out in accordance with this policy.

5. Reference and administrative details

Charity Name: Association of Botanical Artists (ABA), formerly known as Association of British Botanical Artists (name changed in 2022)

Charity number: 1202676

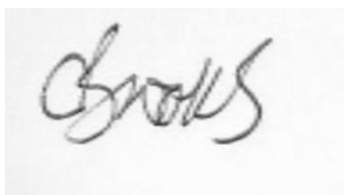
Charity's principal address: 15 Rectory Farm Road, Little Wilbraham, Cambridge CB21 5LB

Name and address of accountant: Sharon V. Mulley A.C.A 43-45 High Street, Little Wilbraham Cambridge CB21 5JY

6. Declaration

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above. Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees.

Signature

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Charlotte Brooks', is shown within a rectangular frame.

Name: Charlotte Brooks

Position: Chair of Trustees

Date: 7 September 2025