



**Association of the Friends  
of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden  
Registered Charity Number 291159**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

**Fiftieth Annual General Meeting  
Thursday 19 March 2026 at 7pm**

**AGENDA**

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of AGM held 20 March 2025
- 4 Annual reports. To receive reports from:
  - i. Chairman
  - ii. Membership Secretary
  - iii. Treasurer
- 5 Annual accounts: to approve the financial statements
- 6 Committee elections.
  - a) To re-elect the following:  
Lucy Davies  
Eva Barrett  
Chris Radford
  - b) To elect the following:  
Lydia Daniels
- 7 Honorary Auditor: to approve the appointment of Edward Holcombe ACA
- 8 Any other business

# **Association of Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden**

## **Minutes of the forty-ninth Annual General Meeting**

**Held at the Frank Lecture Theatre on Thursday 20 March 2025 at 7 pm**

### **1 Welcome**

The Chairman of the Friends, Lucy Davies, welcomed approximately 34 Friends in the theatre and 29 joining by Zoom. The Agenda, Chairman's Report, Membership Report, Trustee's Report and Financial Statement have been made available on the website and she hoped that all had been able to access it. The Chair, Treasurer and Membership Secretary will give a brief summary and answer any questions.

### **2 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Jekka McVicar, Professor Jane Memmott and Nick Wray

### **3 Minutes of AGM held 20 March 2024**

The minutes of the 2024 AGM which had been agreed by the Committee shortly after the meeting were unanimously approved.

#### **4 (i) Chairman's Report**

See full report. To summarize, 2024 started on a high note with excellent talks including from the designers of the Guangzhou Garden, which was opened in May with attendance by the UoB Pro Vice-Chancellor Evelyn Welch and Deputy Lord Mayor of Bristol, Asher Craig.

We will be bidding farewell to Michaela Mottershaw, the Botanic Garden trainee soon. Support for the trainee is one of the important contributions made by the Friends. Her reflections can be read in the latest edition of the Newsletter. The Easter Sculpture Festival was excellent as was the Jazz evening with the Blue Notes and Bristol Ukes. The Bee and Pollination Festival went well including some excellent talks.

The accounts show a healthy surplus. The new membership system Membermojo has been launched in earnest. In the 50-20 anniversary year – 50 years since the establishment of the Friends and 20 years since the Garden moved to the Holmes - we are hoping for a spike in membership.

The Minutes of the 2024 Committee meetings show the strenuous efforts of the membership sub-committee.

The year was finished off in style with the Luke Jerram Tipping Point event, which turned the Garden from a peaceful green space to Dante's Inferno.

The Chair thanked the Committee, Nick Wray and the Garden Staff and visiting UoB Staff for their support. She also thanked the members of the Friends for their practical and financial support without which we could not operate. She has really enjoyed her first year as Chair and is looking forward to celebrating the anniversary events this year.

#### **4 (ii) Membership Report**

See full report submitted to Committee. Jose Tarnowski, the new Membership Secretary, gave a summary. She works very closely with Eva Barrett who has been a stalwart in moving membership to the Membermojo system.

During the year we attracted 646 new members and ended the year with 2,436 members including 51 life members and 42 Benefactor members. 2024 was a big year of transition to the new system. The move to

this new database was really vital. It is fully compliant with GDPR and much more straightforward for administrators and user friendly for members. The majority are able to update and renew details easily. The system went fully operational on 1 January and all members are now managed through Membermojo.

The key consideration was to make sure that it is inclusive – not everyone has e-mail or is able to go on-line. The system works for those who want online functionality but also for those who wish to use manual forms and pay by cheque or cash. The volunteers in the Welcome Lodge have received details of the new system which generally has gone well. Training has been offered for those who would find it helpful.

Lucy has been running monthly coffee 'catch up' sessions for members with queries and these have been useful.

Inevitably transition entails ongoing work. E-mail queries have been responded to on a daily basis. The sub-committee continues to meet to deal with any issues that arise.

We are very pleased with how it is going so far. It is hoped that the celebratory events and the Easter Festival will bring in new memberships and renewals.

Any member with a query is welcome to e-mail Membership.

The Membership Secretary invited questions. There were none.

#### **4 (iii) Treasurer's Report**

Paul Mugford gave the Treasurer's report, the full version of which has been posted onto the website. He highlighted key issues as follows and invited members to raise any questions.

In 2024 subscription income dropped slightly from £62,000 to £60,000. This is our core income. Benefactor income also dropped a little. There is always a turnover in membership and the post-Covid spike in membership is still having an effect when a lot of new members joined but did not renew. The Jazz Concert generated a profit of just over £3,000. Plant sales amounted to just over £5,000 driven by Chris Purvis and Chris Radford. Another £1,400 had been raised from the sale of hand-knitted fingerless gloves at the Tipping Point event.

The Friends received over £1,000 in fees paid for talks given by our volunteer visiting speakers.

We received two significant donations: £60,000 from the David Machin Will Trust with a nominal sum still due and £20,000 from the family of Alice Maltby who arranged for a Deed of Arrangement in her Estate to make this available to us. We will need to decide carefully how to utilize these funds.

Gift Aid amounted to £11,300. Interest on deposits made over £10,000. We have an account through CAF (the Charities Aid Foundation) which enables us to make deposits of our choice with a variety of banks much more easily.

Subscription income and Gift Aid amounted to 41% of our income, but 74% excluding the two large donations.

Expenditure-wise, the subvention is our major outlay. This is an agreed monthly payment to the Garden to use as it wishes. Last year this amounted to £43,500 and a further £27,000 supported the trainee. We ensure that we have reserves to enable the University to employ a trainee every 2 years.

Postage is the biggest single administrative cost. This has reduced from £14,500 to £9,500 because the Newsletter has been reduced from 4 times to 3 times a year. Non-recurring costs included 2 laptops for the new membership system which has enabled one database and GDPR compliance. We no longer need to hold members' bank details. One of the reasons for not using direct debits was because of increasing costs. We do pay small charges for the use of Sum-Up in the Lodge and Stripe for on-line payments. The effect of these changes will be seen next year.

We hold £62,500 in the Cecily Jones Fund but we are only able to use the income from this and not the capital.

The profit and loss account shows a brought forward balance of £155,000 from last year. We do not yet know how the large legacies will be spent, so the operating profit is shown as £14,500.

### **Questions:**

Lydia Daniels asked if Gift Aid would increase as a result of the new Membermojo system. There is provision for members to tick the GA box on the on-line application form so this should be easy. It will be a year of transition, and we will see the results next year.

Sue Hart asked how long it would be before the Newsletter goes digital. The Chairman replied that this had been a year where the focus was on bringing in the new membership system. The Newsletter will be revisited in the future. It is very important – not only for informing members but also as PR.

### **5 Approval of the Annual Accounts**

The accounts had been approved by the independent assessor Edward Holcombe. Members agreement was proposed by Jean Martin, seconded by Jinx Newley and unanimously approved.

The Chairman thanked Edward Holcombe for his work on the accounts.

### **6 Committee Elections**

Committee members retire by rotation every 3 years. Patricia Davie and Janet Newland are willing to stand again. They were proposed by Jean Martin and seconded by Lucy Davies. Re-elected unanimously.

Robert Bristow, Ian Knight and Jose Tarnowski, who had been co-opted to the Committee during the last year are willing to stand for election. They were proposed by Janet Newland and seconded by Pat Davie. Elected unanimously.

### **7 Honorary Auditor**

The re-appointment of Edward Holcombe ACA as Independent Examiner of the accounts was proposed by Eva Barrett and seconded by Rebecca Tregarthen. Approved unanimously.

### **8 AOB**

There was none.

The Chairman expressed her thanks and to all those who attended the meeting which closed at 7.25. It was followed by 'Killer Plants' a fascinating lecture from wildlife film maker Steve Nicholls looking at the world of carnivorous plants.

## REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

In January 2025 the forest fires in California reminded us all of the fragility and volatility of global weather patterns around the world. We had the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Friends to distract us from this as well as reflecting with the Garden team on the 20 years since they had moved to the Stoke Bishop site. We were also primed for action with our new membership management system, Membermojo, as it started in earnest in January. Friends offered help at the Welcome Lodge as well as a listening ear at our monthly Coffee Catch Ups. I would particularly like to thank the membership sub-committee, ably led by Jose Tarnowski, and the administrative team at the Garden for all their help as we successfully switched to this new system over the course of the year.

The year got off to an elegant start with a "Tea with Jekka" event in the Garden. A select group of Friends were treated to a tour of the European Herb Garden by our president Jekka McVicar followed by botanical herb teas served in the sun in bone china teapots. The spirals of steam in the spring sunshine was an image I wished I could capture for you all - but it didn't show up on the photo! I would like to thank Jekka for her continued support for all that the Friends do in their charitable work, most notably her interview in the Bristol Life magazine in the Spring where she told the story of the Friends. I would also like to thank Pat Davie for running the Events committee who oversaw our anniversary activities, the highlight of which for me was the publication of Froggie's book for children, based on her newsletter articles over many years. We also had a visit from the Vice Chancellor, Evelyn Welch, who came to thank all volunteers for their efforts and mark the two important anniversaries from the perspective of the University of Bristol. There are still a few anniversary celebrations to come before the end of the anniversary year in June so watch out in the enews!

We were delighted with the success of the Easter Art and Sculpture Festival. I would like to thank Tony West and Lydia Daniels who co-ordinated the whole event with the skilful support of Andy Winfield. Despite the mixed weather, we welcomed a pleasing number of visitors, and we were able to operate our new Membership system mainly using QR codes which seemed to run very smoothly. The plant sale was once again a roaring success and many thanks to Chris Purvis and her team. The volunteer guides were on hand to give new and familiar faces tours of the Garden, and many were eager to see the emerging growth at the new Guangzhou Garden. Thanks are due to one of our most experienced and knowledgeable guides, Ann Brake, as she has stood down from her evening talks to various charitable and voluntary groups, and to Roger Mellors who continues this valuable outreach. I was delighted to present our guide coordinator Jane Perkins with Life membership to thank her for her tireless organisation of the guides this year, and for many years past, and liaising so well with the Friends whenever our paths crossed.

The lectures throughout this year have been consistently entertaining and informative and thanks are due once again to Sally Meadows for her wizardry in finding such great speakers. We are also delighted that Ian Knight and Rob Bristow are able to provide high level technical support for the talks and lectures. Although we are very pleased with the numbers attending by Zoom, we do hope more members will feel able to join us in person as there is a great atmosphere in real life!

The Friends have continued their regular contribution to the running of the garden. We have completed our support of the trainee Michaela Mottershaw and have started the process with Joseph Roberts. The accounts for the year to December 2025 showed a healthy surplus. We therefore start the year in a steady position. We have donated money for a pleasing number of garden initiatives as is our remit and look forward to expanding what we can do if possible.

Of course, we were sad to hear of the end of the running of the Royal Horticultural Society courses after so many successful years. We wait to see how we can help the Garden and its staff as they explore other directions.

We receive many positive comments from members about the high standard of our newsletters. The editorial team of Pat Davie and Jean Martin ensures that the standard is consistently high and educational. Thanks are also due to David Myring for his creative input to the layout of the newsletter. Roderick Macleod has for many years distributed the enews and coped magnificently with some administrative changes that the use of Membermojo prompted. We could not do it without him and many thanks are due. We are confident that the streamlined digital setup we have in place now will save volunteer time in the long run.

On the corporate side I would like to thank Almondsbury Garden Centre, Rolls Royce, World Odyssey and Butcombe Brewery who have continued their support of the Friends. We are sorry that Cleeve Nursery has now closed and thank them for their many years of support. The committee is hoping to expand this area of operations, and a new subcommittee has been formed to explore options.

The Jazz Concert was another success this year with the perennial band the Blue Notes with Hannah Wedlock. This is a major fundraising event which takes many hours of careful organisation. Many thanks are due to Roger Mellors and Pat Davie for their continued dedication and we welcome Lydia Daniels who has stepped forward to help with the organisation of this popular event.

In August 2025 the Bee and Pollination Festival was also another success. Janet Newland was the mastermind of the whole thing, working in close collaboration with Nick, Andy and the Garden staff, so thanks to all. The lectures and demonstrations which run as a part of this festival were a particular highlight for me with many excellent and thought-provoking topics and speakers.

We ended our year in robust health. I would like to thank all my fellow Committee members for their continued support and am delighted that Lydia is standing and both Chris and Eva have agreed to stand again. We are also welcoming Charmaine Hawkins as a co-opted member.

Finally, my thanks to the Curator, Nick Wray, and all the Garden staff who are always so supportive of the Friends' activities.

**Lucy Davies**

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION : HOW HAS THE YEAR GONE?**

2025 was the first full year with the Membermojo online membership system in operation as the system went fully operational on 1st January 2025. All members, both new joiners and those renewing, are now managed through Membermojo although the system has been deployed to be inclusive and works for members who wish to join or renew or update their details online, and also those who prefer to use the time-honoured manual options. There is still the option to pay by cheque or cash although we see that diminishing over the next few years. The system has more than proved its worth. It now requires significantly less volunteer administration input to manage the membership and deal with queries sent in by Friends. The system has proved itself to be resilient, cohesive, easy to use and interrogate. It is also fully compliant with data and privacy regulations (GDPR).

The regular e-news newsletters are an opportunity to highlight any membership-related issues to the Friends, and in addition Lucy Davies as Chair has continued the monthly 'coffee catch-up' sessions which are an open invitation for Friends to ask questions about the new membership system, or indeed anything else. There were a handful of queries at the early catch-up sessions but in latter months none have been raised, which suggests that as far as the Friends are concerned the Membermojo system has bedded in well. The most frequent query encountered in the early days was that the member wished to have a paper card rather than using the electronic membership card issued by Membermojo. The system now advises members that they can request a paper membership card at the Welcome Lodge where the volunteer enters the relevant expiry date.

The team of volunteers at the Welcome Lodge have really stepped up to the plate in terms of issuing the paper membership cards and also dealing with new joiners and renewals presenting at the Lodge, whether these are processed online via the Membermojo QR code in the Lodge, or by the time-honoured system of completing a paper form which is passed to the Membership Secretary for entering into Membermojo. For the sake of clarity and consistency the paper forms for new members/renewals were tweaked include a clearer set of tick box actions for the Welcome Lodge volunteer to complete.

Members who have no email address on their Membermojo membership record have to be contacted about renewal by letter. The number of such members is now just 39 so this is not an onerous task.

A further change enacted during the year was the outsourcing of the process of printing and posting the three newsletters sent out to members through the year. In the past the Friends have relied on the sterling support of Mike Austin to organise the process of getting the newsletters sent out by courier service after volunteers had spent a few hours 'stuffing' the newsletters into the franked envelopes. However with the demise of the local courier service which had been used the decision was taken to outsource the whole process of printing and posting the Newsletters and this worked very well for the winter newsletter mailing in November.

The background image for the electronic membership cards held in Membermojo has been revised for the start of the new year 2026. This will take be done at the start of each year.

## **THE NUMBERS**

### **New members joining**

In the full year 2025 we attracted 533 new households, 837 new members in total, considerably higher than the previous years 2024 and 2023. It's noticeable that the monthly figures for new joiners through the summer months were higher than in 2024 and the excellent summer weather will undoubtedly have played a part in this.

In addition, the opportunity of events celebrating the two major anniversaries in 2025 (50 years of the Friends and 20 years since the move to The Holmes) presented opportunities to promote the Garden and the Friends as an important and positive aspect of life in Bristol.

The two regular major Garden events, the Easter Sculpture Festival at Easter (April 2025) and the Bee and Pollination Festival (August 2025), are opportunities to attract new members. This year's events attracted new members at a similar level to the previous year. Inevitably attendance at these events is dependent on the weather that particular weekend.

### **Total membership numbers**

At the end of 2025 we had 1,535 memberships, 2,337 individual members in total, compared to slightly higher figures of 1,598 and 2,436 at the end of 2024. These figures take into account the 'churn' of membership through the year as, despite high numbers of new members joining during the past year, inevitably a number of existing members choose not to renew their membership. As reported last year some 760 members who previously paid by annual Direct Debit, plus 60 who have traditionally had Standing Orders set up, are no longer able to pay by these methods and need to proactively renew their membership via Membermojo once they receive the communication inviting them to renew. An extensive programme of communications was undertaken to advise these members of the change as part of the implementation of Membermojo.

In an attempt to understand the 'churn' phenomenon an exercise was undertaken to analyse Membermojo numbers in terms of the net gain or loss of members each month throughout 2025. The figures indicate a net loss of only 91 individual members over the course of the year.

### **Benefactors and life members**

During the year we were pleased to offer honorary Life Memberships to Jekka McVicar and Jane Perkins in recognition of the support they have given to the Garden. We have a total of 44 Life memberships and 25 Benefactor memberships. We have seen a slight decline in the number of Benefactor memberships over the past couple of years.

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO THE YEAR AHEAD**

Now that a robust and future proof membership system is in place, attention can be given to maximising all opportunities to promote the Garden and the Friends to ensure the Garden remains a vibrant well-attended jewel in Bristol's crown, an important and positive aspect of the life of the city.

**Jose Tarnowski**

**Membership Secretary**

**January 2026**



## TRUSTEES' REPORT

### The Association of Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden

Hollybush Lane, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 1JB

Charity No. 291159

### Report of The Trustees for the year ended 31st December 2025

#### Constitution

The objects of the Association are to advance public education in, and to promote research into, Botany and its related subjects and to publish useful results of such research. In pursuance of these objectives the Association supports the work and further development of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden.

The Botanic Garden is unique in the West Country and the plant collections have been chosen to provide teaching and research resources for the University. Its mission to educate, communicate and conserve has also established a valuable amenity for local schools and a cultural attraction for the public.

#### Committee

Management of the Association is vested in a Committee (the Trustees) and its powers and duties are set out in the Constitution, including the procedures for appointment, nomination and election. Regular meetings of the Committee provide opportunity to apply risk management criteria in the assessment of the viability of potential fund-raising initiatives, whilst being dutifully aware of its charitable objectives.

The following members served the Committee during the year:

Lucy Davies	Chair	Patricia Davie	Vice Chair
Paul Mugford	Treasurer	Chris Radford	Secretary
Josephine Tarnowski	Membership	Jean Martin	
Eva Barrett		Janet Newland	
Rebecca Tregarthen		Robert Bristow	
Ian Knight			

Nicholas Wray, Curator of the Garden, and other volunteers as appropriate may attend Committee meetings in an *ex officio* capacity.

Important aspects of the Committee's role are to encourage new members of the Association and to stimulate interest in the Garden through a variety of events and activities. Income generated by such initiatives, and from members' subscriptions and donations, after meeting expenses, is used to support the maintenance and development of the Garden. The Committee acknowledges the support of those members who have become involved directly in Friends activities and 'hands-on' work in the Garden.

#### Accounting system

Our accounting system is a simple cash book approach that is acceptable to the Charities Commission and reflects the straightforward financial activity of the Association. This means that we record income and expenditure when it happens whilst taking care to note any significant items due (not paid or received) for the current year.

## **Income**

During the year membership subscriptions dropped to £57,841 (£60,433) as has Benefactor member subscriptions £3,750 (£4,800). Whilst there is always some movement this may have been slightly increased due to the move away from Direct Debits to an invitation to renew.

Plant sales amounted to £5,157 once again driven by Chris Purvis and Chris Radford. Our volunteer speakers who visit groups, generated £340. The Jazz event generated a further £2,899.

A residual legacy of £5,564 was received from the Machin Will Trust with a further £2,964 from individual Donations. Gift Aid generated £23,877 (Note: for two years 2023 and 2024). The Education and Training Fund, set up in 2014 to enable the Garden to employ trainee horticulturalists, continues to benefit from Benefactor subscriptions, Corporate and Life Memberships.

Interest on deposits was £11,744 (£10,461).

Subscription Income (Subscriptions plus Gift Aid) £86,718 accounts forms some 74% of the Associations total income of £116,018.

## **Use of funds**

We continue to support the work of the Garden and during 2025 this included a regular maintenance and development payment amounting to £44,860 (£43,574) plus Trainee support at £13,375 (£27,052). The reduction was due to delay in appointing a new trainee placement.

Our most significant recurring operating cost, apart from the above, remains stationery, printing and postage at £9,758 (£9,658).

Bank and card charges have benefitted from our move to the MemberMojo membership system.

## **Reserves**

Having set aside the Cecily Jones Trust Fund -of £62,565 (as custodians we can only use the interest) and the Education and Training Fund (ETF) at a nominal £62,000 (£56,000) we currently hold £160,238 (£131,639) in the general fund. This includes the two substantial legacies received in 2024 (£80,000) that we continue to hold for more significant projects.

The ETF underpins our undertaking to support further rolling Trainee costs over 2 years.

## **Investments**

All funds are held with either Lloyds Bank or Flagstone and, nominally, with Barclays Bank.

Our move to the Charity Aid Foundations (CAF) Charity Deposit Platform (CDP) and operated through Flagstone enables us to access a range of fixed term deposits.

## **Insurance**

The Association's activities are covered by a Public / Employers' Liability Insurance Policy under the Affiliated Societies Insurance Scheme operated by the Royal Horticultural Society.

**Independent examiner**                      Ed Holcombe A.C.A

**By order of the Trustees**                      **February 2026.**

**The Association of Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden**  
**Registered Charity No 291159**

**Income and Expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2025**

	2025 £		2024 £
<b>INCOME</b>		<b>INCOME</b>	
Membership Subscriptions	57841		60433
Benefactor Membership	3750		4800
Corporate Membership	1250		500
Donations	2964		4879
Legacies	5564		82000
Social Events - Jazz concert	2899		4332
Gloves and Christmas wreath			1441
Plant sales	5157		5114
Book Sales	168		41
Gift Aid (2023 and 24)	23877		11371
Interest received	11744		10461
Visiting Speakers	340		1065
Lectures	78		
Sundry receipts / petty cash (rounding)	386		
	<u>116018</u>		<u>186437</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Garden support and development	44860		43574
Education & Training and other Support	9750		4000
Garden Support - Trainee	13375		27052
Social Events -Jazz Concert			1128
Lectures	1147		899
Term Deposits Management Fee (CAF/Flagstone)			156
BACS Bureau			1944
Card Charges (Sumup / Stripe)	987		402
Entertaining			638
Equipment			1028
Insurance & affiliation	147		145
Stationery & Printing	4683		4621
Postage	5075		5037
Service charges/ subscriptions	1023		758
Sundry (Software)	105		95
Miscellaneous	277		516
	<u>81429</u>		<u>91993</u>
<b>Surplus/(-) for the Year</b>	<u>34589</u>	<b>Surplus/(-) for the Year</b>	<u>94444</u>
<b>BALANCE SHEET as at 31st December</b>		<b>BALANCE SHEET as at 31st December</b>	
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>Net Assets</b>	
Barclays Bank C/A	4604		4209
Lloyds Bank C/A	(2,542)		3710
Lloyds Business Savings	12366		8191
Petty cash	173		56
Restricted: CAF Charity Deposit Platform / Flagstone	270201		234048
	<u>284802</u>		<u>250214</u>
<b>Profit &amp; Loss Account</b>			
Brought forward	250214		155770
Major donations (Legacies)			80000
Net profit /loss (-)	34589		14444
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>284803</u>		<u>250214</u>

Approved on behalf of the Committee

**P Mugford (Honorary Treasurer) January 2026**

**Independent Examiner - Ed Holcombe ACA**



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# **Association of Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden**

## **Minutes of the forty-ninth Annual General Meeting**

**Held at the Frank Lecture Theatre on Thursday 20 March 2025 at 7 pm**

### **1 Welcome**

The Chairman of the Friends, Lucy Davies, welcomed approximately 34 Friends in the theatre and 29 joining by Zoom. The Agenda, Chairman's Report, Membership Report, Trustee's Report and Financial Statement have been made available on the website and she hoped that all had been able to access it. The Chair, Treasurer and Membership Secretary will give a brief summary and answer any questions.

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Apologies had been received from Jekka McVicar, Professor Jane Memmott and Nick Wray

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The minutes of the 2024 AGM which had been agreed by the Committee shortly after the meeting were unanimously approved.

#### **4 (i) Chairman's Report**

See full report. To summarize, 2024 started on a high note with excellent talks including from the designers of the Guangzhou Garden, which was opened in May with attendance by the UoB Pro Vice-Chancellor Evelyn Welch and Deputy Lord Mayor of Bristol, Asher Craig.

We will be bidding farewell to Michaela Mottershaw, the Botanic Garden trainee soon. Support for the trainee is one of the important contributions made by the Friends. Her reflections can be read in the latest edition of the Newsletter. The Easter Sculpture Festival was excellent as was the Jazz evening with the Blue Notes and Bristol Ukes. The Bee and Pollination Festival went well including some excellent talks.

The accounts show a healthy surplus. The new membership system Membermojo has been launched in earnest. In the 50-20 anniversary year – 50 years since the establishment of the Friends and 20 years since the Garden moved to the Holmes - we are hoping for a spike in membership.

The Minutes of the 2024 Committee meetings show the strenuous efforts of the membership sub-committee.

The year was finished off in style with the Luke Jerram Tipping Point event, which turned the Garden from a peaceful green space to Dante's Inferno.

The Chair thanked the Committee, Nick Wray and the Garden Staff and visiting UoB Staff for their support. She also thanked the members of the Friends for their practical and financial support without which we could not operate. She has really enjoyed her first year as Chair and is looking forward to celebrating the anniversary events this year.

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See full report submitted to Committee. Jose Tarnowski, the new Membership Secretary, gave a summary. She works very closely with Eva Barrett who has been a stalwart in moving membership to the Membermojo system.

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this new database was really vital. It is fully compliant with GDPR and much more straightforward for administrators and user friendly for members. The majority are able to update and renew details easily. The system went fully operational on 1 January and all members are now managed through Membermojo.

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Inevitably transition entails ongoing work. E-mail queries have been responded to on a daily basis. The sub-committee continues to meet to deal with any issues that arise.

We are very pleased with how it is going so far. It is hoped that the celebratory events and the Easter Festival will bring in new memberships and renewals.

Any member with a query is welcome to e-mail Membership.

The Membership Secretary invited questions. There were none.

#### **4 (iii) Treasurer's Report**

Paul Mugford gave the Treasurer's report, the full version of which has been posted onto the website. He highlighted key issues as follows and invited members to raise any questions.

In 2024 subscription income dropped slightly from £62,000 to £60,000. This is our core income. Benefactor income also dropped a little. There is always a turnover in membership and the post-Covid spike in membership is still having an effect when a lot of new members joined but did not renew. The Jazz Concert generated a profit of just over £3,000. Plant sales amounted to just over £5,000 driven by Chris Purvis and Chris Radford. Another £1,400 had been raised from the sale of hand-knitted fingerless gloves at the Tipping Point event.

The Friends received over £1,000 in fees paid for talks given by our volunteer visiting speakers.

We received two significant donations: £60,000 from the David Machin Will Trust with a nominal sum still due and £20,000 from the family of Alice Maltby who arranged for a Deed of Arrangement in her Estate to make this available to us. We will need to decide carefully how to utilize these funds.

Gift Aid amounted to £11,300. Interest on deposits made over £10,000. We have an account through CAF (the Charities Aid Foundation) which enables us to make deposits of our choice with a variety of banks much more easily.

Subscription income and Gift Aid amounted to 41% of our income, but 74% excluding the two large donations.

Expenditure-wise, the subvention is our major outlay. This is an agreed monthly payment to the Garden to use as it wishes. Last year this amounted to £43,500 and a further £27,000 supported the trainee. We ensure that we have reserves to enable the University to employ a trainee every 2 years.

Postage is the biggest single administrative cost. This has reduced from £14,500 to £9,500 because the Newsletter has been reduced from 4 times to 3 times a year. Non-recurring costs included 2 laptops for the new membership system which has enabled one database and GDPR compliance. We no longer need to hold members' bank details. One of the reasons for not using direct debits was because of increasing costs. We do pay small charges for the use of Sum-Up in the Lodge and Stripe for on-line payments. The effect of these changes will be seen next year.

We hold £62,500 in the Cecily Jones Fund but we are only able to use the income from this and not the capital.

The profit and loss account shows a brought forward balance of £155,000 from last year. We do not yet know how the large legacies will be spent, so the operating profit is shown as £14,500.

### **Questions:**

Lydia Daniels asked if Gift Aid would increase as a result of the new Membermojo system. There is provision for members to tick the GA box on the on-line application form so this should be easy. It will be a year of transition, and we will see the results next year.

Sue Hart asked how long it would be before the Newsletter goes digital. The Chairman replied that this had been a year where the focus was on bringing in the new membership system. The Newsletter will be revisited in the future. It is very important – not only for informing members but also as PR.

### **5 Approval of the Annual Accounts**

The accounts had been approved by the independent assessor Edward Holcombe. Members agreement was proposed by Jean Martin, seconded by Jinx Newley and unanimously approved.

The Chairman thanked Edward Holcombe for his work on the accounts.

### **6 Committee Elections**

Committee members retire by rotation every 3 years. Patricia Davie and Janet Newland are willing to stand again. They were proposed by Jean Martin and seconded by Lucy Davies. Re-elected unanimously.

Robert Bristow, Ian Knight and Jose Tarnowski, who had been co-opted to the Committee during the last year are willing to stand for election. They were proposed by Janet Newland and seconded by Pat Davie. Elected unanimously.

### **7 Honorary Auditor**

The re-appointment of Edward Holcombe ACA as Independent Examiner of the accounts was proposed by Eva Barrett and seconded by Rebecca Tregarthen. Approved unanimously.

### **8 AOB**

There was none.

The Chairman expressed her thanks and to all those who attended the meeting which closed at 7.25. It was followed by 'Killer Plants' a fascinating lecture from wildlife film maker Steve Nicholls looking at the world of carnivorous plants.

## REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

In January 2025 the forest fires in California reminded us all of the fragility and volatility of global weather patterns around the world. We had the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Friends to distract us from this as well as reflecting with the Garden team on the 20 years since they had moved to the Stoke Bishop site. We were also primed for action with our new membership management system, Membermojo, as it started in earnest in January. Friends offered help at the Welcome Lodge as well as a listening ear at our monthly Coffee Catch Ups. I would particularly like to thank the membership sub-committee, ably led by Jose Tarnowski, and the administrative team at the Garden for all their help as we successfully switched to this new system over the course of the year.

The year got off to an elegant start with a "Tea with Jekka" event in the Garden. A select group of Friends were treated to a tour of the European Herb Garden by our president Jekka McVicar followed by botanical herb teas served in the sun in bone china teapots. The spirals of steam in the spring sunshine was an image I wished I could capture for you all - but it didn't show up on the photo! I would like to thank Jekka for her continued support for all that the Friends do in their charitable work, most notably her interview in the Bristol Life magazine in the Spring where she told the story of the Friends. I would also like to thank Pat Davie for running the Events committee who oversaw our anniversary activities, the highlight of which for me was the publication of Froggie's book for children, based on her newsletter articles over many years. We also had a visit from the Vice Chancellor, Evelyn Welch, who came to thank all volunteers for their efforts and mark the two important anniversaries from the perspective of the University of Bristol. There are still a few anniversary celebrations to come before the end of the anniversary year in June so watch out in the enews!

We were delighted with the success of the Easter Art and Sculpture Festival. I would like to thank Tony West and Lydia Daniels who co-ordinated the whole event with the skilful support of Andy Winfield. Despite the mixed weather, we welcomed a pleasing number of visitors, and we were able to operate our new Membership system mainly using QR codes which seemed to run very smoothly. The plant sale was once again a roaring success and many thanks to Chris Purvis and her team. The volunteer guides were on hand to give new and familiar faces tours of the Garden, and many were eager to see the emerging growth at the new Guangzhou Garden. Thanks are due to one of our most experienced and knowledgeable guides, Ann Brake, as she has stood down from her evening talks to various charitable and voluntary groups, and to Roger Mellors who continues this valuable outreach. I was delighted to present our guide coordinator Jane Perkins with Life membership to thank her for her tireless organisation of the guides this year, and for many years past, and liaising so well with the Friends whenever our paths crossed.

The lectures throughout this year have been consistently entertaining and informative and thanks are due once again to Sally Meadows for her wizardry in finding such great speakers. We are also delighted that Ian Knight and Rob Bristow are able to provide high level technical support for the talks and lectures. Although we are very pleased with the numbers attending by Zoom, we do hope more members will feel able to join us in person as there is a great atmosphere in real life!

The Friends have continued their regular contribution to the running of the garden. We have completed our support of the trainee Michaela Mottershaw and have started the process with Joseph Roberts. The accounts for the year to December 2025 showed a healthy surplus. We therefore start the year in a steady position. We have donated money for a pleasing number of garden initiatives as is our remit and look forward to expanding what we can do if possible.



Of course, we were sad to hear of the end of the running of the Royal Horticultural Society courses after so many successful years. We wait to see how we can help the Garden and its staff as they explore other directions.

We receive many positive comments from members about the high standard of our newsletters. The editorial team of Pat Davie and Jean Martin ensures that the standard is consistently high and educational. Thanks are also due to David Myring for his creative input to the layout of the newsletter. Roderick Macleod has for many years distributed the enews and coped magnificently with some administrative changes that the use of Membermojo prompted. We could not do it without him and many thanks are due. We are confident that the streamlined digital setup we have in place now will save volunteer time in the long run.

On the corporate side I would like to thank Almondsbury Garden Centre, Rolls Royce, World Odyssey and Butcombe Brewery who have continued their support of the Friends. We are sorry that Cleeve Nursery has now closed and thank them for their many years of support. The committee is hoping to expand this area of operations, and a new subcommittee has been formed to explore options.

The Jazz Concert was another success this year with the perennial band the Blue Notes with Hannah Wedlock. This is a major fundraising event which takes many hours of careful organisation. Many thanks are due to Roger Mellors and Pat Davie for their continued dedication and we welcome Lydia Daniels who has stepped forward to help with the organisation of this popular event.

In August 2025 the Bee and Pollination Festival was also another success. Janet Newland was the mastermind of the whole thing, working in close collaboration with Nick, Andy and the Garden staff, so thanks to all. The lectures and demonstrations which run as a part of this festival were a particular highlight for me with many excellent and thought-provoking topics and speakers.

We ended our year in robust health. I would like to thank all my fellow Committee members for their continued support and am delighted that Lydia is standing and both Chris and Eva have agreed to stand again. We are also welcoming Charmaine Hawkins as a co-opted member.

Finally, my thanks to the Curator, Nick Wray, and all the Garden staff who are always so supportive of the Friends' activities.

**Lucy Davies**

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION : HOW HAS THE YEAR GONE?**

2025 was the first full year with the Membermojo online membership system in operation as the system went fully operational on 1st January 2025. All members, both new joiners and those renewing, are now managed through Membermojo although the system has been deployed to be inclusive and works for members who wish to join or renew or update their details online, and also those who prefer to use the time-honoured manual options. There is still the option to pay by cheque or cash although we see that diminishing over the next few years. The system has more than proved its worth. It now requires significantly less volunteer administration input to manage the membership and deal with queries sent in by Friends. The system has proved itself to be resilient, cohesive, easy to use and interrogate. It is also fully compliant with data and privacy regulations (GDPR).

The regular e-news newsletters are an opportunity to highlight any membership-related issues to the Friends, and in addition Lucy Davies as Chair has continued the monthly 'coffee catch-up' sessions which are an open invitation for Friends to ask questions about the new membership system, or indeed anything else. There were a handful of queries at the early catch-up sessions but in latter months none have been raised, which suggests that as far as the Friends are concerned the Membermojo system has bedded in well. The most frequent query encountered in the early days was that the member wished to have a paper card rather than using the electronic membership card issued by Membermojo. The system now advises members that they can request a paper membership card at the Welcome Lodge where the volunteer enters the relevant expiry date.

The team of volunteers at the Welcome Lodge have really stepped up to the plate in terms of issuing the paper membership cards and also dealing with new joiners and renewals presenting at the Lodge, whether these are processed online via the Membermojo QR code in the Lodge, or by the time-honoured system of completing a paper form which is passed to the Membership Secretary for entering into Membermojo. For the sake of clarity and consistency the paper forms for new members/renewals were tweaked include a clearer set of tick box actions for the Welcome Lodge volunteer to complete.

Members who have no email address on their Membermojo membership record have to be contacted about renewal by letter. The number of such members is now just 39 so this is not an onerous task.

A further change enacted during the year was the outsourcing of the process of printing and posting the three newsletters sent out to members through the year. In the past the Friends have relied on the sterling support of Mike Austin to organise the process of getting the newsletters sent out by courier service after volunteers had spent a few hours 'stuffing' the newsletters into the franked envelopes. However with the demise of the local courier service which had been used the decision was taken to outsource the whole process of printing and posting the Newsletters and this worked very well for the winter newsletter mailing in November.

The background image for the electronic membership cards held in Membermojo has been revised for the start of the new year 2026. This will take be done at the start of each year.

## **THE NUMBERS**

### **New members joining**

In the full year 2025 we attracted 533 new households, 837 new members in total, considerably higher than the previous years 2024 and 2023. It's noticeable that the monthly figures for new joiners through the summer months were higher than in 2024 and the excellent summer weather will undoubtedly have played a part in this.

In addition, the opportunity of events celebrating the two major anniversaries in 2025 (50 years of the Friends and 20 years since the move to The Holmes) presented opportunities to promote the Garden and the Friends as an important and positive aspect of life in Bristol.

The two regular major Garden events, the Easter Sculpture Festival at Easter (April 2025) and the Bee and Pollination Festival (August 2025), are opportunities to attract new members. This year's events attracted new members at a similar level to the previous year. Inevitably attendance at these events is dependent on the weather that particular weekend.

### **Total membership numbers**

At the end of 2025 we had 1,535 memberships, 2,337 individual members in total, compared to slightly higher figures of 1,598 and 2,436 at the end of 2024. These figures take into account the 'churn' of membership through the year as, despite high numbers of new members joining during the past year, inevitably a number of existing members choose not to renew their membership. As reported last year some 760 members who previously paid by annual Direct Debit, plus 60 who have traditionally had Standing Orders set up, are no longer able to pay by these methods and need to proactively renew their membership via Membermojo once they receive the communication inviting them to renew. An extensive programme of communications was undertaken to advise these members of the change as part of the implementation of Membermojo.

In an attempt to understand the 'churn' phenomenon an exercise was undertaken to analyse Membermojo numbers in terms of the net gain or loss of members each month throughout 2025. The figures indicate a net loss of only 91 individual members over the course of the year.

### **Benefactors and life members**

During the year we were pleased to offer honorary Life Memberships to Jekka McVicar and Jane Perkins in recognition of the support they have given to the Garden. We have a total of 44 Life memberships and 25 Benefactor memberships. We have seen a slight decline in the number of Benefactor memberships over the past couple of years.

## **LOOKING FORWARD TO THE YEAR AHEAD**

Now that a robust and future proof membership system is in place, attention can be given to maximising all opportunities to promote the Garden and the Friends to ensure the Garden remains a vibrant well-attended jewel in Bristol's crown, an important and positive aspect of the life of the city.

**Jose Tarnowski**

**Membership Secretary**

**January 2026**

## TRUSTEES' REPORT

### The Association of Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden

Hollybush Lane, Stoke Bishop, Bristol BS9 1JB

Charity No. 291159

### Report of The Trustees for the year ended 31st December 2025

#### Constitution

The objects of the Association are to advance public education in, and to promote research into, Botany and its related subjects and to publish useful results of such research. In pursuance of these objectives the Association supports the work and further development of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden.

The Botanic Garden is unique in the West Country and the plant collections have been chosen to provide teaching and research resources for the University. Its mission to educate, communicate and conserve has also established a valuable amenity for local schools and a cultural attraction for the public.

#### Committee

Management of the Association is vested in a Committee (the Trustees) and its powers and duties are set out in the Constitution, including the procedures for appointment, nomination and election. Regular meetings of the Committee provide opportunity to apply risk management criteria in the assessment of the viability of potential fund-raising initiatives, whilst being dutifully aware of its charitable objectives.

The following members served the Committee during the year:

Lucy Davies	Chair	Patricia Davie	Vice Chair
Paul Mugford	Treasurer	Chris Radford	Secretary
Josephine Tarnowski	Membership	Jean Martin	
Eva Barrett		Janet Newland	
Rebecca Tregarthen		Robert Bristow	
Ian Knight			

Nicholas Wray, Curator of the Garden, and other volunteers as appropriate may attend Committee meetings in an *ex officio* capacity.

Important aspects of the Committee's role are to encourage new members of the Association and to stimulate interest in the Garden through a variety of events and activities. Income generated by such initiatives, and from members' subscriptions and donations, after meeting expenses, is used to support the maintenance and development of the Garden. The Committee acknowledges the support of those members who have become involved directly in Friends activities and 'hands-on' work in the Garden.

#### Accounting system

Our accounting system is a simple cash book approach that is acceptable to the Charities Commission and reflects the straightforward financial activity of the Association. This means that we record income and expenditure when it happens whilst taking care to note any significant items due (not paid or received) for the current year.

## **Income**

During the year membership subscriptions dropped to £57,841 (£60,433) as has Benefactor member subscriptions £3,750 (£4,800). Whilst there is always some movement this may have been slightly increased due to the move away from Direct Debits to an invitation to renew.

Plant sales amounted to £5,157 once again driven by Chris Purvis and Chris Radford. Our volunteer speakers who visit groups, generated £340. The Jazz event generated a further £2,899.

A residual legacy of £5,564 was received from the Machin Will Trust with a further £2,964 from individual Donations. Gift Aid generated £23,877 (Note: for two years 2023 and 2024). The Education and Training Fund, set up in 2014 to enable the Garden to employ trainee horticulturalists, continues to benefit from Benefactor subscriptions, Corporate and Life Memberships.

Interest on deposits was £11,744 (£10,461).

Subscription Income (Subscriptions plus Gift Aid) £86,718 accounts forms some 74% of the Associations total income of £116,018.

## **Use of funds**

We continue to support the work of the Garden and during 2025 this included a regular maintenance and development payment amounting to £44,860 (£43,574) plus Trainee support at £13,375 (£27,052). The reduction was due to delay in appointing a new trainee placement.

Our most significant recurring operating cost, apart from the above, remains stationery, printing and postage at £9,758 (£9,658).

Bank and card charges have benefitted from our move to the MemberMojo membership system.

## **Reserves**

Having set aside the Cecily Jones Trust Fund -of £62,565 (as custodians we can only use the interest) and the Education and Training Fund (ETF) at a nominal £62,000 (£56,000) we currently hold £160,238 (£131,639) in the general fund. This includes the two substantial legacies received in 2024 (£80,000) that we continue to hold for more significant projects.

The ETF underpins our undertaking to support further rolling Trainee costs over 2 years.

## **Investments**

All funds are held with either Lloyds Bank or Flagstone and, nominally, with Barclays Bank.

Our move to the Charity Aid Foundations (CAF) Charity Deposit Platform (CDP) and operated through Flagstone enables us to access a range of fixed term deposits.

## **Insurance**

The Association's activities are covered by a Public / Employers' Liability Insurance Policy under the Affiliated Societies Insurance Scheme operated by the Royal Horticultural Society.

**Independent examiner** Ed Holcombe A.C.A

**By order of the Trustees** **February 2026.**

**The Association of Friends of the University of Bristol Botanic Garden**  
**Registered Charity No 291159**

**Income and Expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2025**

	2025 £		2024 £
<b>INCOME</b>		<b>INCOME</b>	
Membership Subscriptions	57841		60433
Benefactor Membership	3750		4800
Corporate Membership	1250		500
Donations	2964		4879
Legacies	5564		82000
Social Events - Jazz concert	2899		4332
Gloves and Christmas wreath			1441
Plant sales	5157		5114
Book Sales	168		41
Gift Aid (2023 and 24)	23877		11371
Interest received	11744		10461
Visiting Speakers	340		1065
Lectures	78		
Sundry receipts / petty cash (rounding)	386		
	<u>116018</u>		<u>186437</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Garden support and development	44860		43574
Education & Training and other Support	9750		4000
Garden Support - Trainee	13375		27052
Social Events -Jazz Concert			1128
Lectures	1147		899
Term Deposits Management Fee (CAF/Flagstone)			156
BACS Bureau			1944
Card Charges (Sumup / Stripe)	987		402
Entertaining			638
Equipment			1028
Insurance & affiliation	147		145
Stationery & Printing	4683		4621
Postage	5075		5037
Service charges/ subscriptions	1023		758
Sundry (Software)	105		95
Miscellaneous	277		516
	<u>81429</u>		<u>91993</u>
<b>Surplus/(-) for the Year</b>	<u>34589</u>	<b>Surplus/(-) for the Year</b>	<u>94444</u>
<b>BALANCE SHEET as at 31st December</b>		<b>BALANCE SHEET as at 31st December</b>	
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>Net Assets</b>	
Barclays Bank C/A	4604		4209
Lloyds Bank C/A	(2,542)		3710
Lloyds Business Savings	12366		8191
Petty cash	173		56
Restricted: CAF Charity Deposit Platform / Flagstone	270201		234048
	<u>284802</u>		<u>250214</u>
<b>Profit &amp; Loss Account</b>			
Brought forward	250214		155770
Major donations (Legacies)			80000
Net profit /loss (-)	34589		14444
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<u>284803</u>		<u>250214</u>

Approved on behalf of the Committee

**P Mugford (Honorary Treasurer) January 2026**

**Independent Examiner - Ed Holcombe ACA**

# **Independent examiner's report to the Trustees of Association of friends of Bristol University Botanic Garden**

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the company for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025 which are set out on pages 1 to 12.

## **Responsibilities and basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act')

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

## **Independent examiner's report**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1) accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by section 130 of The Act; or
- 2) the accounts do not accord with those accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Name: Edward Holcombe ACA

Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales (ICAEW) – 3174840

Address: 4 Branscombe Road, Bristol, BS9 1SN

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> April 2026