

Friends of Antrim Castle Gardens

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to August 31st, 2023

Friends of Antrim Castle Gardens – Registered Charity in N.I. No: 104814
Friends of Antrim Gardens NIC No.: 104814

The Trustees' Annual Report

Year Ended 31st August 2023

The trustees present their report and the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31st August 2023.

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a voluntary association. It is governed by a constitution. The trustees have had regard to guidance issued by the Charities Commission of Northern Ireland on public benefit in carrying out their statutory duties in the governance of the charity.

The charity is governed and managed by the Committee, who are also the charity's trustees. The trustees who served the charity throughout the period are shown below.

The Committee carry out their governance role throughout the year by way of meetings on a regular basis to review the performance of the charity and to make decisions regarding the charity's financial and operational matters. The trustees govern the activities of the charity in line with the objectives set out in the governing documents of the charity, namely the charity's constitution.

Objectives and activities

The Objectives are to advance education in horticulture and gardening and to promote conservation and protection of the environment of Antrim Castle gardens and Clotworthy House for the public benefit in Antrim and surrounding districts (the "area of benefit"). The charity carries out its activities on a "not for profit" basis.

The strategies employed to assist the charity to meet these objectives include the following:

1. Encouraging, fostering and creating an interest in horticulture, good gardening, horticulture heritage, conservation and other related areas through maintenance of a gardening space in Antrim Castle Gardens and Clotworthy House;
2. Providing an opportunity for members of the Society and the public to participate in organised visits to other gardens enhancing their knowledge of horticulture and providing an opportunity to foster friendships.

The main achievements of the charity during the year are as follows:

- **September 2022** – Sarah Beatty, Chairperson, gave a talk to the Rotary Club in Dunadry Hotel. This included the history of FoACG and what we do, the Queen's Award for Volunteers and other awards the group has won.
- Kelli arranged a visit to Helen Waddell (1889-1965 Scholar & Writer) House. Volunteers helped in the garden.
- **October 2022** – Halloween gathering. Walk and talk with Don Kelly starting from Clotworthy House and ending at Pogue's Entry. Discussing the history of the Castle and the fire almost a century ago.
- **November 2022** – Christmas Craft Fair in Larne Town Hall, organized by Kelli manned by four of our volunteers.

- Two volunteers attended the Council-organised 'Spirit of Volunteering' Awards
- Ceremony at the Theatre at the Mill, Mossley.
- **December 2022** – Christmas wreath making and table decorations with Caroline.
- Christmas meal outing at Ellie Mays.
- **January 2023** – Quiet time of the year for gardening but walks arranged in the grounds.
- **February 2023** – Benvarden (walled-garden) trip and lunch.
- Lottery application for funding was unsuccessful.
- Teresa O'Boyle, our garden co-ordinator, left FoACG.
- **March 2023** – Purple crocus bulbs sown in the grounds by garden volunteers. Lord Mayor took part. The bulbs were donated by The Rotary Club.
- Sarah Beatty, Chairperson, resigned. She had held this post since 2016.
- **April 2023** – Pogue's Entry cleared, It had not been available to us for more than a Year at a time. We stopped Friday craft work.
- We formed several WhatsApp groups for professional communication.
- **May 2023** – Coronation weekend. We were involved in the Community project. Deputy Mayor, councillors and the public were put to work in the garden at Clotworthy House. We appeared four times that day on local and TV national news.
- A bus trip to Seaforde Gardens and Tropical Butterfly House.
- **June 2023** – Garden Ireland Show. For all three days of the Show volunteers Provided the plant creche service for the visitors and we sold some quiz sheets.
- Plant Swap Hub – we are making it visitor friendly. Visitors have the opportunity To contact us via a comments box. Their thoughts and suggestions are welcome.
- **July 2023** – trip to Hazelbank where we had a guided tour of the new Coronation Garden.
- Ulster Bar Corner opening – volunteers attended.
- **August 2023** – Volunteer visit, which included a guided tour, to Drenagh Gardens, Limavady.
- Revised – Constitution
 - management committee terms of reference
 - volunteer and trustee roles and responsibilities
- Started helping Women's Aid in their garden in Fountain Street, Antrim.

The trustees are satisfied that the performance of the charity during the year, in terms of both financial and operational results, is in line with the charity's constitution and key objectives.

Financial review

The net income for the year was £11751.95. The surplus for the year will be added to capital reserves brought forward.

Future plans

- The Group is working on 'Back to Basics' – more time spent on gardening, concentrating on individual strengths/motivations & interests

- Annual Halloween Walk
- Initiate link with Greenmount College
- Refreshing the cut flower area and cottage bed
- Closer contact with other volunteer organisations
- Continue with seasonal adjustments in the scarecrow area
- Horticultural study trips and guided educational trips to other gardens
- Seed planting demonstrations for the public
- Christmas night out in December
- Guest speakers
- Greenhouse
- Introduce fruit bushes
- Book/seed hub – free for the public
- Start Saturday group in the garden for working people

The committee will continue to govern the company in line with the constitution in order to achieve the objectives noted above.

Trustees

The trustees, who are also the Committee, who served the charity during the period, together with those who have served since are as follows:

Mr Subhash Treon - Chairperson
 Mr Rodney Gillen - Secretary
 Mrs Diane Greenwood - Treasurer
 Mrs Eileen Black
 Mrs Pat McQuillan
 Mr. Chris Hodkinson
 Mrs Anne McAuley

Trustees' responsibilities

The trustees (who are also the Committee) are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations. The Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;

The directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose, with reasonable accuracy at any time, the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the law. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The accounts have been prepared on an Income and Expenditure basis.

Signed by order of the Committee on their behalf

Diane Greenwood Treasurer

Dated 2nd October 2023

Address

Independent examiner's report to the charity trustees of Friends of Antrim Castle Gardens

I report on the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31 August 2023, which are set out on pages X1 and X2.

Respective responsibilities of charity trustees and examiner

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

It is my responsibility to:

- ☐ examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act
- ☐ follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commission under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act
- ☐ state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention.

Name: Ian Lindsay retired Chartered Accountant

Address: 5 Marmont Park, Belfast, BT4 2GR.

Date: 2nd October 2023