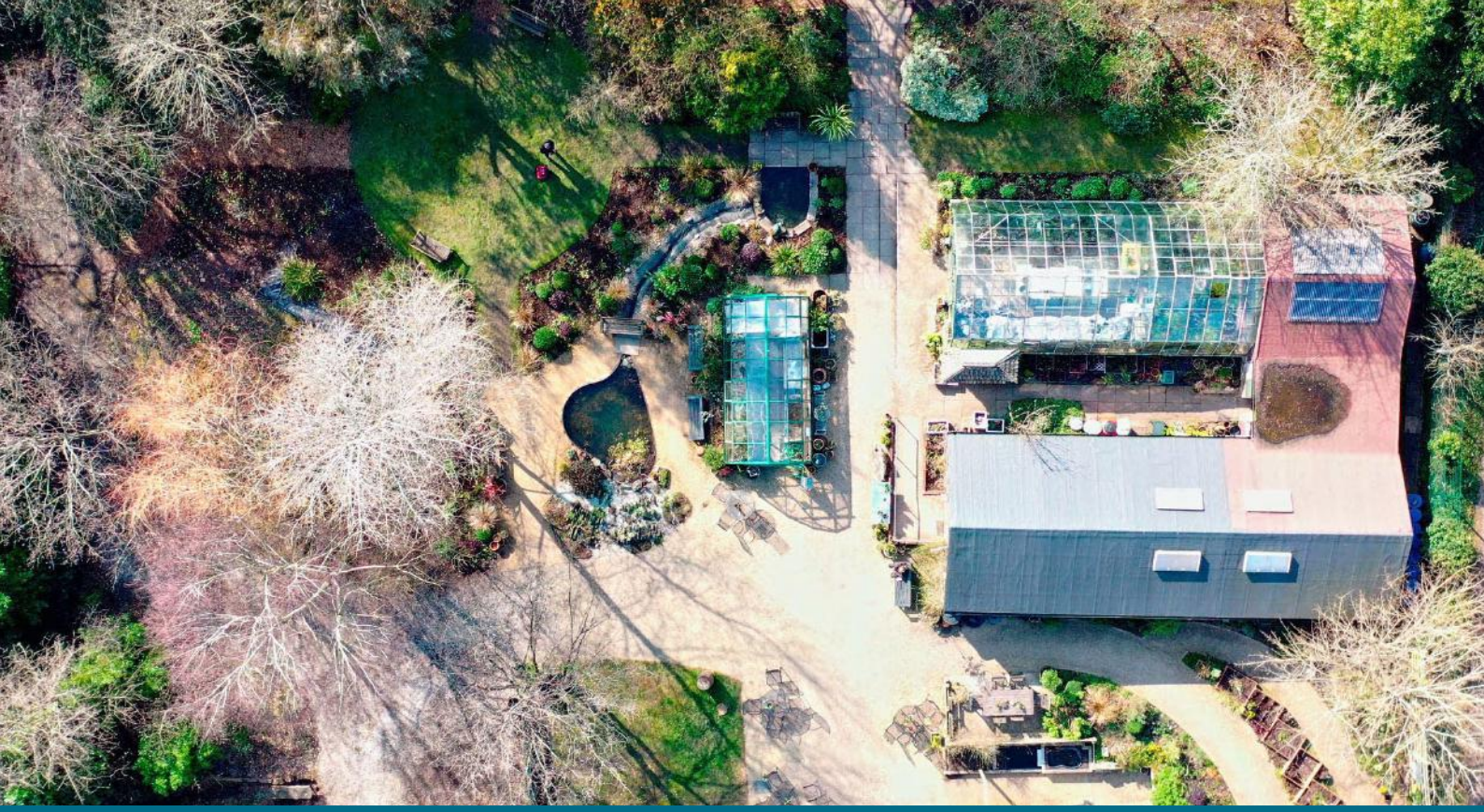


Annual Report 2022

Martineau Gardens

Message from the Chair of Trustees

Tim Bruton

Chair of Trustees

Our Trustees

Tim Bruton; Peter Arnold; Liz Hensel; Tom Walking; Felly Nkweto Simmonds; Peter Townley MBE, (outgoing Glenys Thomas)

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2021—22 annual report for Martineau Gardens. The twelve months this report covers saw significant change in the gardens, from the end of Covid restrictions to the appointment of a new CEO.

The gardens remained a place of safety, community and connection for visitors as Covid restrictions eased. We continued to support our therapeutic horticulture volunteers, working in smaller groups with additional staff until the need for social distancing eased.

As the world and the gardens opened up, we were pleased to involve more than 30 staff, volunteers and trustees in the recruitment of our new CEO, Jenni Fryer.

Jenni joined the team at the beginning of September, working alongside retiring Gill Milburn until the end of November, when the handover was completed.

A big thank you to Gill for her hard work whilst at the gardens, including steering the charity through the turmoil and uncertainty of the pandemic.

One of the last jobs for Gill, along with a team of staff and volunteers was collecting the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service from Lord-Lieutenant of the West Midlands, John Crabtree OBE at Birmingham Hippodrome.

The award, given in 2020, recognises the contribution of all the volunteers who have been part of the gardens throughout its history.

This amazing recognition came as we entered into our 25th year with the work of the gardens featured on ITV just as we prepared to start celebrations.

> We'd like to thank all of our funders and supporters this year for their support in continuing to fund our work.

The impact of lower visitor numbers, reduced venue hire and the increased pressures on funders and donors has made fundraising challenging.

We finished the year by starting to make plans

for a new building to replace the Mollie Martineau building, which has reached the end of its usable life as our headquarters. There's more about the new building and the designs later in this report, but please get in touch to find out more.

We also started work on our amazing new gates, working with metal sculptor Tim Tolkien, along with volunteers and local schools, as part of a project generously funded by the Birmingham 2022 Festival.

I'd like to thank Glenys Thomas for her many years of contribution to the gardens. Glenys stepped down as a trustee this year, but remains a huge part of the Martineau Gardens team, helping out on a weekly basis.

A huge thank you to our volunteers and staff for their hard work in such uncertain times. The dedication and commitment of our team is second to none.

Finally, we remember our volunteers Rudy and Gordon, who are deeply missed.

Volunteers Claire and Munsab were delighted to collect the Queen's Award from John Crabtree OBE Lord-Lieutenant of the West Midlands at a ceremony at Birmingham Hippodrome. Our volunteers were recognised in 2020 but the pandemic delayed the event. It's a huge tribute to everyone who has volunteered since the gardens first opened 25 years ago.

This year saw the appointment of our new CEO, Jenni Fryer, who joined Martineau Gardens in September 2021. Taking over the reins from retiring CEO Gill Milburn, Jenni has now been in post for just over a year and has taken the lead on the building project. A self-proclaimed non-gardener, she's now a proud plant owner, thanks to some coaching from the team.

Covid may have caused the cancellation of our Christmas party but we did manage to thank our volunteers in style with a Martineau Gardens hat, just in time to keep them warm for the winter. Our volunteers work 51 weeks a year to keep our gardens looking amazing and we're incredible proud of the work they do.

It's been brilliant to have two amazing new projects to plan for, our new gates and our new building. We've welcomed volunteers and local schools to come and join us to plan for both, with a busy few weeks with lots of cake, conversation, ideas and opportunities. You can find out more about the building later in the report.

Therapeutic Horticulture

Therapeutic horticulture (TH) uses gardening together as a way of improving peoples' wellbeing. The gardens are a safe and secure place where people can mix socially, make friends and learn practical skills that will help them to improve their feeling of connectedness, contribution and confidence.

At a time of social isolation and increased anxiety due to the pandemic, the need for the gardens to be open to support our volunteers was higher than ever. While we remained closed to the public, April saw our TH volunteers working hard to maintain the gardens, benefiting from connection and companionships in smaller groups with additional staff to facilitate social distancing.

As restrictions eased, it was great to welcome more volunteers and visitors back to Martineau Gardens as we moved closer to 'business as usual'.

Projects this year included the restoration of the bird hide, enhancing this lovely spot to observe our prolific bird population.

Volunteers also worked incredibly hard on the renovation of the wildflower meadow, creating a wonderful circular space packed full, of a diverse range of flowers.

Throughout the year the green woodworking group has been a focal point for Thursdays, when volunteers have come together to learn the skills of working with green wood and have produced some works of art and love.

> "This is the only place in my life where it's OK just to be me"
>
> *Therapeutic Horticulture Volunteer*

The importance of time spent in nature has become much more widely acknowledged and experienced since the onset of the pandemic. This has resulted in a marked increase in the number of people contacting the gardens enquiring about joining the therapeutic horticulture programme.

We measure impact using quantitative evidence in the form of individual wellbeing assessments. We asked our volunteers to rate (0-10) how important they felt their volunteering at Martineau Gardens was to their overall wellbeing.

The average score was 9.4, with 85.6% scoring 9 or 10. Nobody scored below 7.

We also welcomed groups of young people from Baskerville School and Queen Alexandra College to work in the gardens on a weekly basis, along with a regular group from Freedom from Torture.

Our supported work experience provided a valuable opportunity for learning for young people from a local Pupil Referral Unit, Baskerville School and Queen Alexandra College, for the latter part of the year.

Green woodworking

Bird hide restoration

Environmental Education

School visits

We welcomed schools back to the gardens in May and it was wonderful to see so many pupils enjoying the freedom of being outdoors. Sixteen different schools visited over 24 days, some who were regular visitors to the gardens and some who were visiting for the first time.

Juliette, our Environment Education Teacher worked with several of our current volunteers to become Education Guides. The school sessions were shared out between them and feedback from the schools was very positive.

> "My bestest part was fishing in the pond"
>
> *Reception pupil,*
> *Welsh House Farm Community School*

Family activities

Activities continued online via Facebook live videos with spring seed crafts in April, recycled Easter baskets in May, and a final online video session on bee craft in August.

In-person family activities resumed in the remaining weeks of the summer holidays, when we welcomed families to 12 sessions which almost all sold out. We also trialled 2 days of family drop-in sessions, which were well attended, and a day with newly arrived families staying at nearby Kensington Hotel.

It was a busy autumn with children's nature and craft activities at the Autumn Event, and Autumn and Halloween sessions during October half term. Finally, in February 2022, we ran Stick Man and Wonderful Wildlife family sessions, which all sold very well.

Wellbeing and welcome

This year's lockdowns and social distancing brought into sharp focus the need for access to safe outdoor green spaces and for meaningful connections to help beat social isolation. We launched Martineau Mondays, a day of tai chi, yoga, mindfulness and creativity to respond to this need and it's been an incredibly valuable resource to many people.

Our visitor welcome team, along with our staff and other volunteers, continue to offer a warm welcome and a cuppa to all of our visitors. We are proud that the gardens remain free to enter six days a week for everyone who visits us and there is no expectation of spend (although donations are very welcome!)

Wildlife and conservation

We carry out conservation activities to preserve habitats within the SLINC, and other areas. Our long-standing wildlife volunteers keep monthly records of the wildlife that finds a home at Martineau Gardens. Thanks to their diligence, we have longitudinal records (logged with EcoRecord) on birds, moths, fungi and more, with 16 new species added in 21-22 alone, including two moths classed as Nationally Scarce, proving that our site has a high level of biodiversity for a suburban area.

Our year in numbers

- Grants 66%
- Sales 20%
- Donations 8%
- Charitable services 3%
- Friends 3%
- Bank Interest 0%

- TH Salaries 41%
- Public Engagement 22%
- Premises and overheads 13%
- Charitable services 9%
- TH Costs 8%
- Cost of sales 4%
- Building development 3%

Our people

80 *Therapeutic Horticulture Volunteers*

16 *Visitor Welcome Team*

12 *Events Volunteers*

7,000 *Visitors*

8 *Corporate Volunteers*

6 *Trustees*

5.9 *Staff (FTE)*

Let's grow together

South East Elevation

North East Elevation

The coming year brings exciting plans to create a new headquarters for the Martineau Gardens team, volunteers and our visitors.

Our staff, volunteers and visitors have been involved in creating plans for a new space which will replace our current building.

The Mollie Martineau building has been at the heart of Martineau Gardens for many years and we believe it was built in the 1950s.

It's now come to the end of its working life as it's become energy unrateable and must be demolished under the terms of our lease.

Trustees have agreed plans to replace the Mollie Martineau building, along with the hot-house, which has become too unstable to use, with a new building, which will be the home of the organisation for many years to come.

CEO Jenni Fryer said, "Creating the plans of the new building has involved hundreds of visitors to the gardens, including volunteers, schools and groups. We know Martineau Gardens is incredibly important to many people and sits at the heart of a brilliant community.

"Making sure everyone was involved in the process of designing our plans was really important.

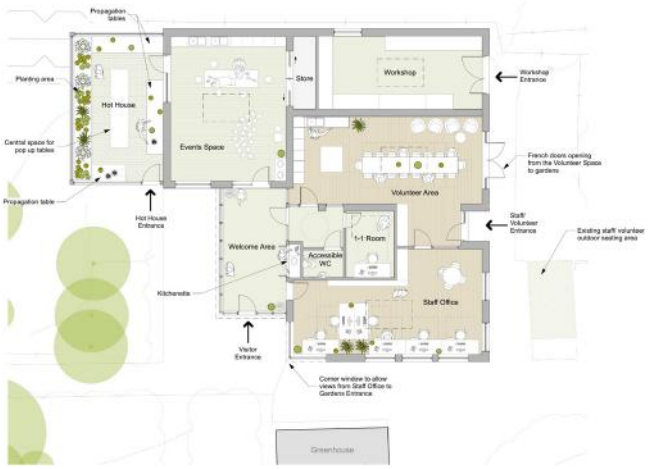
"We worked with APEC Architects, who focus on end-user participation in the design process, to run a series of workshops for staff and volunteers, as well as a survey which went out via our social channels to all of our stakeholders.

"They've created a design which we think reflects what we need to continue to grow what we do at Martineau Gardens, in a way that is sympathetic to the gardens and continues to offer the same friendly welcome for all of our visitors."

The new building plans include:

- A new volunteer area with a fully equipped kitchen and dining space, so we can eat together in all weathers
- An activity space which offers indoor working for the volunteers and schools who visit us, as well as a space which can be hired by community groups

Donate at www.justgiving.com/martineau-gardens, via our website www.martineau-gardens.org.uk/support-us or contact us on info@martineau-gardens.org.uk



- A staff office which provides a secure, warm working space for our team, overlooking the garden so we can keep an eye out for visitors
- Workshop space so the team of volunteers who maintain our site and buildings can continue their good work
- A new visitor welcome space which is clearly visible as people arrive on site and offers somewhere for visitors to find out what we do and have that all important cup of tea
- A new hothouse which will provide working and planting space for our volunteers, as well as more growing space
- An accessible disabled toilet
- A small private meeting room for one-to-one meetings and for a quiet moment if any volunteers need it
- Cedar cladding along with solar panels, rainwater harvesting and an air source heat pump, making the building as green as possible.

Plans for the build are currently at pre-planning application stages (October 2022) so the designs pictured are the latest available.

> "The new building will be a fantastic asset for the gardens and the wider community and we'd love see people donate, support our events and help us fund a safe, warm, welcoming space for all of our visitors."

It is estimated that the build will cost in the region of £500,000 which will be raised through a a variety of routes.

"We are already talking to major funders, but we are also hopeful that people who visit the gardens and have been part of its long history will show their support by making a donation or getting involved in fundraising," said Jenni.

We need everyone who loves the gardens to support the building if they can, as we know everyone is having to make some difficult choices on spending.

Our charitable objectives

We provide:

A safe and welcoming space which enables adults, young people and children to connect with nature and improve their wellbeing.

Long-term social and therapeutic horticulture and related programmes, which facilitate improved wellbeing and the development of transferable skills of vulnerable people. Including but not exclusively: people with mental health issues; brain injury; Autistic Spectrum Disorder; Special Educational Needs or those living with dementia.

High quality, affordable, Environmental Education for children of school age and engaging family activities using the natural landscape and features of Martineau Gardens to encourage outdoor play.

Gardens and woodland managed along organic principles with biodiversity and sustainability at its core and which seeks to enhance visitor understanding and appreciation of food growing, caring for the environment and the positive impact a green space has for a local community.

Our Team

Back Row: Jenni Fryer (CEO), Felicity McCabe (Administration), Isis Bradshaw (TH Support), Jane Bradshaw (Deputy), Sarah Hill Daniel (Marketing and Communications)

Middle row: Cameron Wilson (Apprentice Gardener), Kim Knowles (TH Support), Jacky Hotchin (Therapeutic Horticulture), Juliette Green (Environmental Education), Stewart Holmes (Therapeutic Horticulture)

Front: Alec Middleton (Event Host)

Not pictured: Ruth Harvey (Fundraiser)

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www.martineau-gardens.org.uk

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