



TRUSTEE PACK

2023

FEBRUARY 2024



CALLING NOTICE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
TUESDAY MARCH 5TH 2024 6.30PM
At Wetherby Prep School 48 Bryanston Square

5th February 2024

Dear Trustee,

Please accept this letter as a calling notice for the 2023 Annual General Meeting of Montagu Square Garden Trust.

Included with this letter

- Agenda for the AGM
- Committee Report for 2023
- Accounts and Financial Report for 2023
- Draft minutes of the last AGM held on 6 March 2023

Yours sincerely,

Montagu Square Garden Trust

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020 3987 5050



AGENDA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) TUESDAY MARCH 5TH 2024 6.30PM At Wetherby Prep School 48 Bryanston Square

- 1.To consider and approve the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 6th March 2023
- 2.Matters arising
- 3.To receive the Annual Report of the Committee
- 4.To consider and, if thought fit, to accept the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st December 2023
- 5.To levy the Garden rate for the year to 31st December 2024
- 6.To elect the Committee for the year to 31st December 2024
- 7.Any other business

After the AGM there will be a talk "London Plane Trees" by our Garden Consultant Stephen Crisp. More details on Page 11.

Note:

Prior to the Garden Trust AGM, there will be the Annual General Meeting of 'M' members of the Montagu Square (EMS) Limited at 6.05pm.

Step free access is available from the mews behind Wetherby School to the 1st floor Hall. Please contact Westbourne Management if you require assistance using this. Their number is 020 3987 5050.

We know that some residents prefer to receive information by hand, but the Trust is keen to send out more information digitally to those who would prefer paperless communication. Please use the QR code to sign up to our mailchimp account. MailChimp is GDPR compliant and you can unsubscribe from the mailing list at any time.



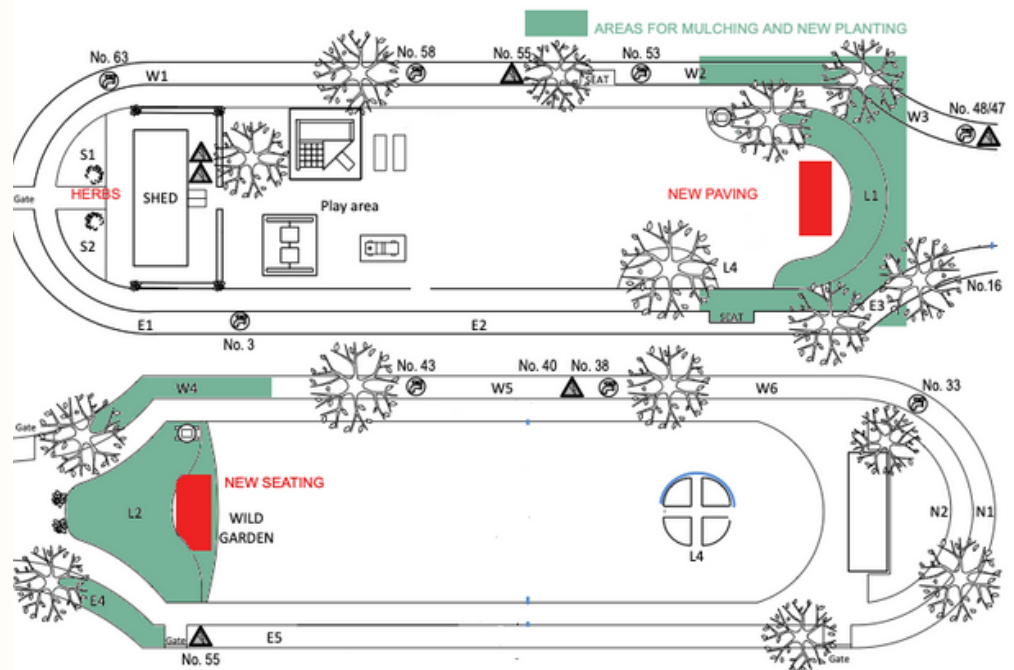


COMMITTEE REPORT

Our 15 magnificent London Planes, are such a feature of the garden along with the other smaller trees. These are now being monitored by Clear Cuts Trees, working alongside Westminster Council as each of the Plane trees are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. Clear Cuts advised us this year to increase our annual Massaria inspection to every six months. Going forward, no one quite knows how these 200 year old specimens will respond to extreme weather. The drought of 2022 was followed in 2023 with again unusual weather. A warm winter and spring, a moderately hot summer and warm wet autumn. The plane trees responded with a sparse canopy, arriving later in the spring, and they were still in leaf in December.

Joseph Jones & Co continue to be our gardeners. They now meet twice a year in Spring and Autumn with Stephen Crisp, our garden consultant, to develop the yearly plan. Our objective is to create an interesting, naturalistic and dense shrubbery around the entire perimeter of the garden. which will create more privacy within the railings. The hedges are a constant focus. The better sections of hedge will be hand clipped to encourage them to grow higher and thicker. In the bigger gaps there will be new planting and existing shrubs will be trimmed to encourage bushy growth. We have asked Joseph Jones to not use power trimmers throughout 2024.

Our main focus for regeneration this year is the large central Rhododendron bed and its adjacent borders. Some shrubs have been coppiced, other heavily pruned, and this Spring there will be further pruning and new planting. Approximately 2 tons of top soil and mulch will be delivered, for this section of the garden. We also hope to create a new woodland seating area in the North Garden looking towards the rose garden.



In the South Garden we are looking at the best varieties of rosemary and will be seeking advice from Jekkas Herb Farm. We will also be paving around the semicircular bench in the South Garden and replacing the uprighters at the base of some of the Plane trees. A more long range improvement is the repair of the walls around the electricity substation. This will need to a collaborative effort with The Portman Estate and UK Power Network.

This year we re-introduced our Summer Party and tested a new format. The party started as an event for families, with face painting, ice cream and other activities and by 9pm dancing was in full swing!! An enormous thanks to Berkshire Hathaway and Home House for organising the event and to Bethan Lewis-Powell who collected a wonderful selection of prizes from local businesses. Thank you for all your feedback which has all been noted. We raised £4,320 in support of good causes.



We are very grateful to three residents who gave substantial private donations. One enabled us to decorate the square with more Christmas lights, which we celebrated with an informal switch-on event on 1st December; the second to plant up the new shrubbery and buy two new benches adjacent to the play area and the third to plant a new Whitebeam in the South East border in memory of the donor's husband, replacing a magnificent tree blown down in 2022.

The garden is for everyone living around the Square and the Committee is always keen for people to join us at our meetings and give us feedback. We produce a bi-annual newsletter which we hope everyone has received. The newsletters are also available on our website www.montagusquare.org. We have an instagram account - www.instagram.com/montagusquare. Two new notice boards on the South Entrance and on the substation have been installed.

Sue Smith continues to liaise with Councillor Barbara Arzymanow in respect of the recycling bins on George Street at the south end of the square, as well as over combatting anti-social behaviour. She has managed to get the bins for recycling clothes & electrical goods removed. A triumph worthy of mention as much of the contents of these bins ended up in the Garden!

On June 10th 2023 we took part in London Open Gardens. It was a beautiful day and there were many picnics and more than a 100 visitors. Many thanks to Noella Hacquard who liaises with London Parks & Gardens on behalf of the Trust, and mans the gate for the entire day and organises the refreshment. Open Gardens will be back 8th June 2024. We are also hoping to host Shakespeare in the Garden in June this year.

Finally, there have been a few sightings of people walking their dogs on and off the lead in the Garden. Please remember that dogs are not allowed in the Garden.

The Committee

Many thanks this year to everyone on the Committee who have given their valuable time to make the Garden the lovely and uplifting place that it is.

The current Committee is made up of the following Trustees:

Anne Bristow (Co-Chair), Peter Blott (Co-Chair and Treasurer), Sarah Lang, Sue Smith, Martin Bikhit, Noella Hacquard, Belle Antolini and Julio Castro. Westbourne Management act as clerk to the Trust.

If any Trustees would like to join us they would be most welcome.



ACCOUNTS

year ended 31 December 2023

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE - GENERAL FUND

	2023	2022
Income	£	£
Garden rates received	95,721	73,423
Misc. income	3,365	559
	99,086	73,982
Expenditure		
Gardener & garden improvements	39,956	31,252
Clerk's Fee	9,780	9,780
Tree work	16,458	10,994
Insurance	1,051	866
Water	4,757	504
Electricity	3,021	1,164
Sundries	3,033	1,423
	78,056	55,983
Excess of income over expenditure	21,030	17,999
Allocation to reserves		
Painting fund	2,000	2,000
Play area refurb	0	21,522
Surplus / (Deficit)	19,030	-5,523

BALANCE SHEET AND RESERVES

	31 Dec 2023	31 Dec 2022
Assets and liabilities	£	£
Cash at bank	37,144	19,058
Other current assets	5,720	3,737
Creditors and Accruals	-371	-1,331
	42,493	21,464
Reserves		
Painting fund	20,696	18,697
Surplus /(Deficit) Prior Years	2,767	8,290
Surplus /(Deficit) Current Year	19,030	-5,523
Accumulated Surplus	21,797	2,767
Total Reserves	42,493	21,464

ACCOUNTS continued

OTHER INFORMATION AND NOTES

	31 Dec. 2023	31 Dec. 2022
Hanging Basket fund	£	£
Reserve at start of year	2,540	3,553
Donations received	3,721	3,357
Paid out in year	<u>-4,807</u>	<u>-4,370</u>
Remaining reserve	1,454	2,540
Play area refurbishment project		
Voluntary donations received	£0	54,360
Play area expenditure	£0	<u>-75,882</u>
Allocated from general fund	£0	-21,522
Agreement of total cash at bank at period end		
General fund	37,144	19,058
Play area voluntary donations	£0	£0
Hanging basket fund	<u>1,454</u>	<u>2,540</u>
Total cash at bank	38,598	21,598



FINANCIAL REPORT

Financial Commentary

The trust received £95,721 from the garden rate levy in 2023 (2022 - £73,423). Overall the trust recorded a surplus for 2023 of £19,030 (2022 - deficit £5,523). Total reserves at the end of 2023 were £42,493 (2022 - £21,464).

As at 31st December 2023 the garden rate arrears were £17,237 (31st December 2022 £26,080).

The Garden Trust administers the procurement of hanging baskets on the Square. These are paid for by voluntary donations and are accounted for separately from the Trust's main funds. In previous years, the cost of the baskets has exceeded the amount of donations received. There are sufficient reserves to cover the cost of the baskets for 2024 but not beyond that.

Garden Rate Levy for the Year to 31 December 2024

The Committee recommends an increase in the garden rate levy for 2024 of 2% (a rate of 1.393 pence in the pound on the annual values taken as 8% of the 2005 building insurance values). This increase is recommended to absorb some of the inflationary pressure on the Trust's expenditure and allow continuation of garden improvement projects.



DRAFT MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE MONTAGU SQUARE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Held at 6.30pm on Monday 6th March 2023 at Wetherby Prep School

ATTENDEES Peter Blott (Acting Chair and Treasurer), Anne Bristow,(Co-Chair) Sarah Lang, Chris Morris, Martin Bikhit, Sebastien Goldenberg, Salvatore Giorgio (WBM), Mary Hicks, P.Vardavas, Zainab Gulamhusein, David Lane, Sara Lane, Bethan Lewis-Powell, Alan Bristow, Jeremy Lang, Maria Koutscudakis.

IN ATTENDANCE Stephen Crisp

Peter Blott opened the meeting by welcoming all the attendees. Anne Bristow spoke about the new play area and phase 2 of the project as outlined in the newsletter circulated beforehand.

1.To consider and approve the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 1st March 2022. The minutes were approved.

2. Matters Arising. There were no matters arising from the last minutes.

3. To receive the annual report of the Committee. The report of the Committee had already been circulated with the Trustee Pack and published on the garden website. Anne Bristow gave a report on what has been happening in the garden. At the last AGM there had been talk about higher hedges and privacy in the garden. The topic had been discussed at length within the Committee throughout the year but ultimately it had been decided that the garden needed a fresh pair of eyes from someone who understood the challenge and could advise on new plantings that will be there for future generations. The Committee had been recommended Stephen Crisp, Head Gardener at Winfield House (Regent's Park USA Ambassador's Residence).

After introducing himself, Stephen Crisp outlined elements of his vision for the garden. He emphasised the importance of building upon the historical position and role of the garden as well as recognising its limitations. The garden was not originally designed with hedges but would have been bordered with shrubberies. Light and soil conditions vary in different locations around the garden and consequentially hedging will not be successful everywhere. Instead he recommended filling gaps with shrubs rather than hedging. The planting he had in mind included mostly drought and shade resistant shrubs, evergreen and flowering plants. Another task would be to improve the conditions of the soil by mulching to retain the moisture especially during the summer months.

DRAFT MINUTES continued

Stephen Crisp also spoke about lawn improvement, pruning and Masaria inspection. For new trees, his recommendation is to plant North American oaks (English oaks in central London are prone to be attacked by a parasite called Oak Processionary moth). Some herbs could be planted in the garden, as requested by one of the residents, but only in some of the sunniest spots on the south side of the garden.

Stephen Crisp will be visiting the garden once or twice a year and meet with the Committee and gardeners.

4. To consider and if thought fit to accept the accounts of the Trust for the year ended 31st December 2022. Peter Blott outlined that the key financial item in the year had been completion of the play area work at a cost of c.£76,000. The project had been financed mostly by voluntary contributions of c.£54,000. This was an amazing achievement for which the Committee is very grateful.

Other expenditures were in line with budget. The area of concern was the large amount of arrears. Westbourne Management and the Committee had worked together and recovered a good part of the debt but there was still work to be done.

The accounts were approved.

5. To levy the garden rate for the year to 31st December 2023. It was proposed to increase the rates by 8% to allow for inflation and the accomplishment of the new planting projects for the improvement of the garden. This was approved.

6. To elect the Committee for the year to December 2023. The Committee was re-elected. Peter Blott invited any Trustee who wanted to join the Committee to step forward as help is always welcome. Peter Blott thanked all the Committee members for their efforts and in particular Sue Smith for dealing with Westminster Council on matters regarding the safety and cleanliness of the square which are matters outside the Trust's jurisdiction.

7. Any other business. Mrs. Vardaras had previously enquired about replacing a tree that had fallen down last February with a tree in memory of her late husband and she had offered to pay for it. Anne Bristow said that the Committee was happy to accept her kind offer and added that Stephen Crisp will recommend the right tree for its replacement.

The meeting closed at 7:25 pm with Peter Blott thanking all the attendees.



POST AGM TALK

Stephen Crisp Garden Consultant

There will be a 20-minute talk on London Plane Trees by Stephen Crisp. We're thrilled to announce that Stephen Crisp will be joining us for this year's AGM to give a talk on London Plane Trees. Those who attended last year's AGM and heard Stephen's presentation can attest to how interesting and entertaining his talk was. With his vast knowledge of history and horticulture, Stephen has a remarkable ability to engage his audience. We're grateful for Stephen's willingness to share his insights with us, and we hope you'll join us for this exciting event.

When Stephen Crisp took up the job of head gardener at Winfield House, the private residence of the US ambassador in London's Regent's Park, he knew he wanted to improve the 12.5-acre garden. What he had found on his first visit to London's second largest private garden was a 19th-century landscape, with borrowed views of Regent's Park, overlaid with a revived 1930s' garden that had been added to in the intervening years. It was, he says frankly, "frayed round the edges and lacking in vision." Aged 27, and fresh from a five-year post as head horticulturist at Leeds Castle, Stephen set out to make it one of the best private gardens in central London. Thirty years later, with the garden featured on the covers of two recent books, he feels he's got there.

His position as head gardener is unique in that his boss changes every four years. "I've always tried to be the fixed point," he explains. "I run the garden for the long term, and treat it spiritually as if it's mine, but actually I'm just a custodian." Although it's a home to successive ambassadors Winfield also functions as a venue for high-level meetings and lavish events. Stephen spent his first six months observing the garden, and decided it should be managed not as a collection of plants or themes but like a private estate that follows the spirit of the lightly wooded 19th-century landscape envisioned by Regent's Park's architect John Nash. Making it environmentally sustainable was a priority, and Stephen proudly declares that he and his team of two recycle every scrap of green waste on site, use pesticides minimally, mulch vigorously and create a variety of habitats for wildlife, including dead tree trunks for woodpeckers and bats. The approach to the house needed to make a bigger, more elegant statement so out came the paved driveway and the 29 x *Cuprocyparis leylandii* that were obscuring the long windows. Today's visitors see a restful combination of *Magnolia grandiflora* trees, clipped box and green planters filled with seasonal blooms.

For Stephen sustainability also means managing resources. "There is no point in developing a landscape if you can't then maintain it," he says. His scheme for the Summer Garden, the tired rose garden originally laid out in 1983, is a graphic arrangement of grasses, shrubs and perennials, with a canopy of square-clipped olive trees, that needs half the maintenance. Interestingly, there are few rare or unusual plants in the garden – he considers the breeding of echinaceas in shades of yellow and orange, for example, to be plain ridiculous.

Like many talented designers Stephen also finds inspiration from outside the world of plants. Frank Lloyd Wright's designs for stained glass were the starting point for the Summer Garden. He's a collector

of watercolours, mid-century glass, ceramics, contemporary prints. It's a passion he traces back to his boyhood in Walthamstow in east London when, from the age of ten, he would spend his earnings from a Saturday job on trinkets from antique stalls. He'd also been fascinated by his grandfather's chrysanthemums, and having grown geraniums in an abandoned greenhouse in his primary school he moved on to veg and other flowers at secondary school where, with remarkable boldness, he persuaded the teachers to move a glasshouse to a spot where it wouldn't be vandalised. He was offered a job in a local park but also wrote to the RHS to find out how to train to be a gardener. Some months later he was accepted for the two-year horticulture course at RHS Garden Wisley where, he says, he made the transition from boy to man.

Hungry for more experience, he applied there for an international place at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania and was accepted.

"Horticulturally that was like going from the 19th to the 21st century," he says. "Everything was much more modern, and the fountain gardens were so incredible." At the end of an exhilarating year he won a scholarship to the sub-tropical garden at Tresco, on the Isles of Scilly.

Both these trainings provided the groundwork for key aspects of his job at Winfield: Tresco gave him an appreciation of plant material in terms of form and texture, while Longwood showed him the possibilities of decorative horticulture. An essential part of the job at Winfield is creating the floral arrangements inside the house and in marquees. He shows me photos of his displays that show his flair

for the bold and dramatic. With typical forthrightness he says, "There are lots of great gardeners and lots of great florists but there aren't that many who can combine the two, and I think I do. Floral design is about scale, proportion, context and theming. It's using the same disciplines that I use in the garden."

Stephen is keenly aware of the lucky breaks he's had and grateful for the encouragement from people in the industry and the relationships he's developed with other head gardeners. He manages to squeeze in some mentoring but would like to help more young horticulturists, and do more designing. For the moment there's the new garden that spirals round the new US Embassy building at Nine Elms in south London to be established. But with the blueprint for the long-term management of Winfield House garden now set in place, the handover to Stephen's eventual successor should be an easier proposition. □

NEXT MONTH Biologist and gardening columnist for *The Telegraph*, Ken Thompson.

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FOR THE ATTENTION OF: