



Triangle Community Garden

created and cultivated by people of all ages and abilities at Ransom's Recreation Ground, Hitchin

Annual Review 2012-13

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Please join us for our

AGM

Weds 13 November
Ransom's Pavilion,
SG5 1RB, 7- 9pm

Light refreshments

All welcome!

Welcome to our Annual Review for 2012-13

This has been a year of change for the Triangle Garden, and although change is never easy to manage, I think we have ended up stronger and more enlightened as a result.

Personality-wise we were sad to say goodbye to **John Cliff**, who managed our Growing Ability and Growing Gang projects since their inception. He leaves us to concentrate on Growing People, his mental health project in Letchworth, and on setting up a national professional register for Horticulture Therapists. We're very grateful to John for his hard work and commitment to our projects and look forward to collaborating with him again should the opportunity arise.

From a very strong shortlist, we appointed **Liz McElroy** to replace John at Growing Ability/Gang, and to project manage and grow our community activities, particularly promoting the use of the Pavilion and Garden by the community. Liz was already working at Growing Ability and had recently qualified as a Horticulture Therapist. Her talent for networking, past career in management, experience with kids' Eco Clubs, and her intimate knowledge of the workings of Growing Ability, made her the perfect choice for the post, and we are delighted with her appointment. You can read her report on page 2.

Changes on the ground: we have seen the **Forest Garden** start to take shape, extending outside the Triangle Garden along the banks of the River Hiz. In a piece of wonderful serendipity, just as we were sourcing the forest garden plants, we were approached by **Waitrose Hitchin** looking for a community tree-planting project to celebrate the 75th anniversary of their partnership with John Lewis. They are also funding a Forest Garden information board which will recognise their sponsorship and the legacy this will bring to the community.

We're delighted to have welcomed new volunteers this year both at practical activities and on the organisational side. We have two new trustees Louise Wills and Kadine James, who were invaluable in the project manager recruitment process. Emma Reynolds and Kate Hendry have joined us on the Garden and Events committees alongside stalwarts Rachel Cottey and Rosie Rigg, who has been busy with Growing Clearer Minds at the Garden again this year.

A massive **thank you** to all those who **help and support** the Garden's work, whether at events, at the Garden, behind the scenes, making cakes, sharing or retweeting our news, or simply turning up at things!

You deserve a say in what we do, so I urge you to apply for membership of the Garden – which is currently free – so you can vote at our AGM. Follow the links on our website...

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees.

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

Hitchin Community Gardens is a charity No 1145243, company limited by guarantee No 07676360. For more information please contact Liz McElroy on 07887 725962, email liz.trianglegarden@gmail.com or write to Liz McElroy, Triangle Garden Project Manager, c/o Htci, 27 Churchyard, Hitchin SG5 1HP.



Growing Ability

Growing Ability and the Growing Gang are our two projects for adults with learning difficulties. **Growing Ability** is a social and therapeutic horticulture project based at our allotment and the Triangle Garden.

Growing Gang is our work experience community-based gardening scheme which currently tends two allotments at Ransom's Rec as well as helping a gentleman with his allotment whilst he is recovering from a stroke. The gardeners maintain the small garden outside the Church House in Hitchin as well as gaining gardening experience in the Triangle Community Garden.



During the winter months gardeners from Growing Ability were given scrap books to **plan their plots** for the growing season. Inspiration came from the sorts of foods they liked eating like soup, roast dinners, pizzas, or desserts. The gardeners then planned when they would sow seeds, plant on and harvest produce. The groups have been involved in preparing food throughout the year, such as soups, curry and desserts, using fruit and vegetables grown on the allotment.



The year cannot go by without mentioning the weather, a crucial component to gardening! The slow cold start to the year meant we were very late sowing, and indeed, what we did sow was eaten by hungry pests or affected by the frost. Then in total contrast the sun arrived which necessitated constant watering, which was worth it due to the **astounding crops** of potatoes, gooseberries, runner beans, courgettes and rhubarb, so much so we were able to sell off the surplus produce to local people in the Rec as well as to local restaurant The Highlander. Growing Gang has now planned to sell their surplus allotment produce again next year.



Growing Ability have been on **three trips** this year; The Edible Show in March (organised by Growing People in Letchworth), and two separate visits to the Cambridge Botanical Gardens. The first was to visit the winter gardens and the return visit to compare the summer planting. All three trips were very successful and a further visit to Cambridge has been requested by the gardeners.

In April the staff at Growing Ability, who were previously self-employed, were taken on as **contracted employees**; no mean feat for Margaret and Vicky who had to draw up contracts and ensure all was in line with legislation. This was all going on whilst recruiting for a new Project Manager for Growing Ability.

Earlier this year **John Cliff** announced that he would be stepping down as Project Manager, to focus his attentions on Growing People and the Association of Social and Therapeutic Horticultural Practitioners. John has been an inspiration and an integral part of Growing Ability. My personal thanks go to him for his dedication and support shown to the project over the past 6 years.

From top: Growing Ability (Liz McElroy on far right), happy and proud to be Growing Ability gardeners, Growing Gang at the allotments, Growing Gang at the Church House Garden

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Growing Ability continued

In May I took over the role of **Project Manager** not only for Growing Ability and the Growing Gang, but for the Triangle Garden as a whole. The Triangle Garden project management role includes managing and promoting Ransom's Pavilion as a community resource, and scoping and setting up new community/childrens' projects at the Triangle Garden. Volunteers will play a large supporting role in achieving these goals – if you are able to help us in any way please get in touch via liz.trianglegarden@gmail.com

Shortly after I started in post, I put in a bid to Herts County Council's Social Enterprise and Innovation Fund, to set up a **new group** responding to a need for **healthy living** and wellbeing support emerging from some of the gardeners' reviews. In June the funding request was accepted and this September '**Growing Health**' was launched.

Since June we have had 3 new gardeners start with Growing Ability; there are currently 17 gardeners, one of whom comes twice a week. We have one gardener who is currently unable to attend any of the sessions currently timetabled, but we look forward to his return in the near future, once a new spring session is started. We aim to expand our Growing Ability provision by one session per year until the project reaches sustainable capacity.

Thank you to the great team we have; Avril, Charlotte, Rachel and the gardeners' support workers and finally to Margaret and Vicky for all their fantastic support.

Liz McElroy, Project Manager



Gardener profile: Holly (pictured above)

What do you like about Growing Ability?

'This year I have enjoyed growing sunflowers, which I like to save the seeds for the birds; I like gardening on my plot; I like listening to birds in the community garden. I like art so have enjoyed designing and drawing pictures for my folder, Christmas cards, posters for the BBQ and I enjoy writing recipes and drawing pictures of vegetables and fruit.'

What don't you like about Growing Ability?

'Nothing – I like it all' (she laughs!)

What do you do at Growing Ability if it rains?

'We plant seeds and bulbs inside, we make Christmas wreaths and decorations and we do art projects like mosaic pictures, leaf rubbings and drawing or painting pictures. Sometimes we cook or prepare vegetables and fruit which we can then eat.'

What do you like to grow?

'Runner beans, sunflowers, comflowers, dahlias, forget-me-nots, rhubarb, potatoes, carrots and courgettes. I like to take them home to my parents or I eat them at home. My mum makes me rhubarb crumble when I take her rhubarb.'

What keeps you coming to Growing Ability sessions?

'I like seeing my friends and I like gardening and walking and sitting to listen to the birds.'

Do you think the sessions have helped you in your life, and if so how?

'[They help me with] everything actually; walking and keeping fit, listening to birds and meditating, my diet by growing healthy food. I would like to do Growing Health but I go to Church Farm on a Tuesday.'

Thank you, Holly, for telling us a bit about yourself and what you do with Growing Ability.

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The Garden:

The Garden Committee's aim is to develop, enhance and maintain the Triangle Garden as an environmental and educational resource for the benefit and enjoyment of all.

We are now into the second year of the Committee's existence and our garden activities now divide neatly into two parts: work to maintain and enhance the existing community garden on the one hand and the development of our exciting new forest garden on the other. In tandem we have been discussing how we can make the garden more accessible to **interpretation** by local visitors, in particular children.

Our trusty band of last-Sunday-of-the-month **volunteers** have helped us to maintain the garden – keeping on top of the weeds, the willow maze and the wonderful variety of plants. At the same time we have been planning how we can gradually shift some of the planting to ensure that much of the garden can be self-sustaining thus minimising maintenance.

Shifting to a low-upkeep regime in the short-term will help free up our time to plant and develop our new **forest garden**, which has really captured imaginations. There was an undercurrent of excitement as the ground was cleared and planting got underway.

Our thanks go to **Waitrose Hitchin** who funded the trees and shrubs, as part of a community legacy project to mark the 75th anniversary of their partnership with John Lewis. Waitrose partners joined our volunteers to plant trees and shrubs as diverse as almonds, Italian alder, pink and buffalo currants, and blue honeysuckle, which now occupy the strip of land between the Grove Road entrance to Ransom's Recreation Ground and the existing Triangle Garden. The second phase of tree and shrub planting will take place next spring.

Recently the new shrubs have sometimes seemed almost dwarfed by the vigorous growth of nettles and thistles in the area but in truth this has been helpful in hiding the vulnerable young plants from potential vandals. In time as the trees and shrubs become more robust, the area will grow into a **self-sustaining, productive forest garden system**, producing food at all levels: canopy, shrub, and ground cover. This year we teamed up with **Incredible Edible**, promoting local food production in Hitchin, to plant a catch crop of squash plants between the new fruit trees.

An extended period of dry weather in July led to a need for regular watering. Garden Committee members teamed up for **"wet and wild"** sessions that involved giving the new plants a good soaking, although in one case, mis-handling of the hose at full pressure led to me giving myself a good soaking too!

We are now developing new ways to promote the forest garden and our activities, with brand new signs in train and a new **forest garden blog**. Do visit our blog (follow the link on our home page) or come along to one of our regular volunteer days to find out more about this exciting new project.

Melanie Coath, Garden Committee Chair and Trustee



Top: the forest garden site, Above: spring planting session, with Simon Kirbyshire of Waitrose (in cap)

For hire

Affordable community space, for workshops, craft activities, meetings or children's parties.

- from £15 per slot: morning, afternoon or evening (£30 for private hire eg parties)
- fully wheelchair accessible
- kitchen, including electric urn
- toilets, incl baby changing
- 4 adjustable height tables
- 20 adult size chairs
- 12 child size chairs

Ransom's Pavilion

overlooking Ransom's Recreation Ground, Alexandra Rd, Hitchin SG5 1RB
5 mins from the station - for more info please follow the links on the homepage of our website:

www.trianglegarden.org

call Margaret on 01462 459144 or email margaret.trianglegarden@gmail.com

Find out more at www.trianglegarden.org

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Events and Workshops:

This year's range of events and workshops had something for everyone!

Our child-orientated **mini-beast safari** and **pond dipping** sessions in September and March, and **bat walk** in October were well attended and blessed with good weather. Our **veg growing workshops** were popular as usual, and this summer's **practical herbalism** workshop was a big hit.

Our **craft workshops** did not fare so well this year, with too few bookings forcing cancellation of many of the basketry ones. We will have to review whether to continue with these next spring, as uptake has been steadily declining, despite extensive publicity. In contrast, Rosie Rigg's 2012 **Christmas wreath workshop** was a great success and oversubscribed!

We've once again been championing the Garden through our regular **events** during the year: our annual **Apple Day** event in Hitchin's market square last October was as popular as ever, followed by **Halloween** festivities at the Triangle Garden and Pavilion, which proved to be a big draw for young families locally despite a poor forecast. **Open Day** this May was again a shower-dodging affair, but well attended nonetheless with food, drinks, games and stalls from like-minded organisations such as Friends of the Earth, North Herts Bee Keepers and Growing People. Children enjoyed activities such as pond dipping, making paper bumblebees and entering our wacky container competition.

The **Triangle Garden Talk**, as part of Hitchin Arts Festival, brought self-proclaimed botany-geek and foodie James Wong to the town for a fantastic talk on the food growing revolution taking the nation by storm. Thanks to David's Bookshops for recommending him and providing a pop-up bookstall on the night (which sold out!).



Top: bat expert Roger Havard demonstrating the size of a pipistrelle bat, Above: pond dipping fun

Natalie Sutterby (née Offord), Trustee

Triangle Garden Trustees 2012-13

Vicky Wyer	Chair of trustees, publicity coordinator, chair of recruitment panel
Margaret Byrne	Treasurer and bookings clerk, F&G and Pavilion Committee member
John Wyer	Trustee, Finance & Governance (F&G) committee chair
Frances Bogie	Trustee, F&G committee member, Child Protection Officer
Melanie Coath	Trustee, Garden committee chair
Dominic Coath	Trustee, Garden committee member
Natalie Offord	Trustee, Workshops/publicity committee member
Louise Wills	Trustee, Events committee member, recruitment panel member
Kadine James	Trustee, recruitment panel member

Non-trustee Management Volunteers 2012-13:

Rachel Cottey	Events and garden committee member
Kate Hendry	Events committee member
Emma Reynolds	Garden committee member
Rosie Rigg	Garden committee member

We welcome new trustees and committee members – if you're interested in joining please contact us. We're particularly looking for help organising our workshops programme and publicising it.

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Future priorities

In our 2012 business plan we set a series of three year objectives:

- increase the **use of Ransom's Pavilion** by individuals and community groups, seeking to generate surplus income to invest in our work
- set up a volunteer-run **café/kiosk** in the Pavilion to serve park users on afternoons and weekends
- **extend our volunteering opportunities** to enable more people to work on the Garden
- develop a programme of **school visits** to make use of the Garden as an educational resource
- create a **forest garden** along the River Hiz, and develop the Rec as a wild food resource
- develop the use of the Pavilion for **craft sessions** to benefit local children, parents and carers
- **extend the benefits of Growing Ability** to more people by increasing the number of sessions by one a year to 2017.

Since then we have worked hard to achieve increased **community use of the Pavilion** and establish the **forest garden**. Increased income from the former has allowed us to employ Liz for an extra day a month to manage the Pavilion and further develop other Triangle Garden community objectives, such as involving more people in volunteering at the Garden, and starting to scope café possibilities at the Pavilion. A lot to achieve in two days a month! But slow and steady solutions are the most sustainable in our experience.

We are shifting away from the idea of school visits (response from schools was generally poor) and more towards provision of **children's activities outside school hours**, which actually fits in better with Pavilion availability. Hitchin Fun Club's visit this summer (the second year running they have booked a day out at the Garden) has reinforced that potential for us.

NHDC's plans to refurbish the **play area** in Ransom's Rec have prompted our own ideas for improving the park, particularly around the Pavilion.

Growing Ability is aiming to start a fourth session in the spring, and there is potential local demand for **art** and **cooking sessions** for adults with learning disabilities, which would fit in well with our longterm plans for the Pavilion.

As well as prioritising our objectives, we'll be seeking your views on the new strapline we're proposing, to sum up what we do: **'Connect, Grow, Enjoy!'**

Vicky Wyer, Chair of Trustees

Growing Clearer Minds

Growing Clearer Minds (GCM) is a local programme of projects to help people with experience of mental distress, get involved in environmental projects that **improve their mental and physical health**.

This summer GCM set up a therapeutic outdoor arts and crafts project at the Triangle Garden, creating a beautifully woven **willow arch** with the help of local willow artist Hazel Godfrey.

'Making the small decorative pieces to decorate the archway required dexterity and patience,' said GCM coordinator **Rosie Rigg**, 'the ladies who took part are proud to have created **a legacy** for all to enjoy.'

GCM is a partnership between Mind in Mid Herts and the Triangle Garden, funded by the national EcoMinds grant programme.



Triangle Garden Tree of Life

Above: In December 2012 we collaborated with HertsAid to plant a Mulberry tree as a 'Tree of Life' at the Triangle Garden, to celebrate World Aids Day. Peter Lilley MP attended (second from right) and was subsequently invited to become patron of HertsAid, which is a local charity supporting people affected by HIV/Aids and raising awareness of sexual health.



Above: Growing Clearer Minds' creative willow arch project

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Treasurer's Report:

The Triangle Community Garden Apple Day and Open Day events were very successful last year – as was the talk given by James Wong which was well attended.

I would like to thank those organisations and people who have supported us through donations, sponsorship and raffle prizes:

Waitrose
Town Garden
David's Bookshop
Bowles & Wyer
Growing People Letchworth
Church Farm Ardeley
Growing Strong at Hillcrest Nursery
The Picture Framers
LBM Stationery

Particular thanks are due to Waitrose who have provided us with funding to set up the Forest Garden as part of the 75th anniversary of their partnership with John Lewis.

We would like more people to join our Friends scheme which we set up last year - details are on our website. Regular contributions provided by this scheme will help us plan the finances for the upkeep of the Triangle Garden and the development of the Forest Garden.

The Pavilion is proving popular for children's parties and as a meeting space for community groups. Several groups used it on a regular basis last year including Hitchin Hackspace and Getting Crafty.

Growing Ability – the number of Gardeners has increased and it is hoped to attract some more to enable the group to be self-sufficient now that there is no more block funding available.

The Growing Gang have worked hard on the upkeep of their gardens at Church House and the Music School and have sold some of the surplus produce from their allotment to help raise some funds towards the running of the group.

Thank you to the following organisations that have provided grants and donations for Growing Ability and the Growing Gang:

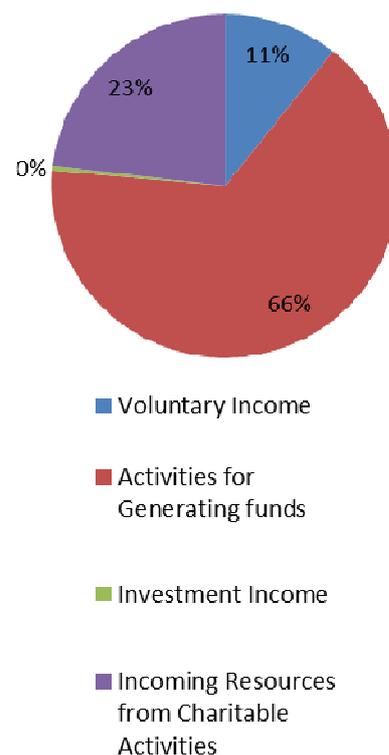
The Rotary Club of Hitchin Tilehouse
Bowles & Wyer

Abbreviated accounts are included with this report. The full accounts in the format required by the Charities Commission are available on our website.

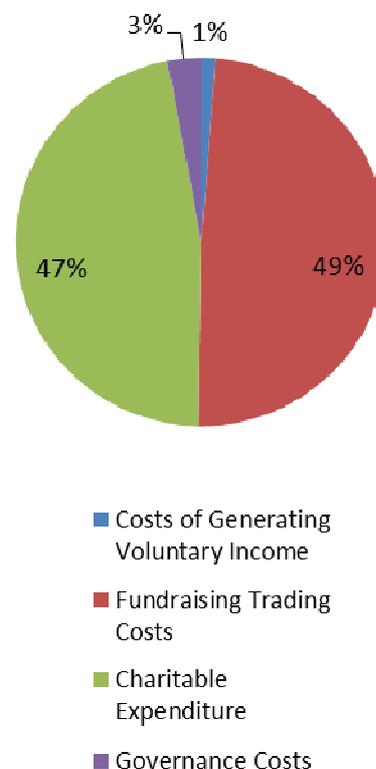
Margaret Byrne
Treasurer

Note from the Chair: I would particularly like to thank Margaret for her hard work and unfailing support. Margaret is not only our Treasurer but also our workshops booking clerk, Pavilion booking clerk and stalwart event volunteer. She also keeps us up to date on employment law and has produced a brilliant set of easy-read notes to accompany the employment contracts for our learning disabled Pavilion cleaners. She is a largely unsung heroine and I don't know where we'd be without her – thank you Margaret! Vicky

Incoming resources



Resources expended



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Hitchin Community Gardens: Income and Expenditure for the year ended 31st August 2013

	TCG & Pavilion	Ability Projects	Total This Year	Total Last Year
Incoming Resources				
Voluntary Income	847	172	1019	4701
Activities for Generating funds	5206	45	5251	5240
Investment Income	35	0	35	25
Incoming Resources from Charitable Activities	1832	14382	16214	28530
Other Incoming Resources	0	0	0	0
Total Incoming Resources	7920	14599	22519	38496
Resources Expended				
Costs of Generating Voluntary Income	66	0	66	370
Fundraising Trading Costs	2585	0	2585	3730
Investment Management costs	0	0	0	0
Charitable Expenditure	2474	14787	17261	18098
Governance Costs	154	93	247	785
Other Resources Expended	0	0	0	0
Total Resources Expended	5279	14880	20159	22983
Net Incoming Resources before Other	2641	281	2360	15513
Recognised Gains and Losses				
Other Recognised Gains and Losses	0	0	0	0
Net Movement in Funds	2641	281	2360	15513
Total funds Brought Forward	7049	15656	22705	7192
Total Funds Carried Forward	9690	15375	25065	22705

Hitchin Community Gardens: Balance Sheet as at 31st August 2013

	TCG & Pavilion	Ability projects	Total This Year	Total Last Year
Fixed Assets				
Tangible Fixed Assets - Equipment	855	0	855	1438
Total Fixed Assets	855	0	855	1438
Current Assets				
Stock	0	0	0	0
Debtors and Prepayments	738	186	924	923
Cash at Bank and in Hand	9151	15674	24825	21833
Total Current Assets	9889	15860	25749	22756
Current Liabilities				
Creditors and Accruals	248	485	733	142
Deferred Income	542	0	542	542
Total Current Liabilities	790	485	1275	684
Net Current Assets	9099	15375	24474	22072
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	9954	15375	25329	23510
Amounts falling due after more than 1 Year				
Deferred Income	264		264	805
Net Assets	9690	15375	25065	22705
Funds of the Charity				
Triangle Community Garden Fund	6514	0	6514	5251
Pavilion Fund	3176	0	3176	1798
Growing Ability Funds		15375	15375	15656
Total Funds	9690	15375	25065	22705