



THE GIBBERD GARDEN TRUST

AGM

18th July 2026, at the Garden

Chair's Report

The Gibberd Garden goes from strength to strength with an able team of professionals and a vast number of volunteers in a variety of capacities.

First to our Trustees. A fantastic team with a host of responsibilities. David Farningham our secretary who took on a lot of extra work this year ensuring we had tenants that could move into the Gibberd House.

Lin Hilton who has also worked tirelessly to make the new artist studios a success. Lin and her partner Rob have given up so much of their time to look after our sculptures, she has been given a modest budget to commission further professional care of the sculptures.

Tony Evans who as Treasurer has done stirring work as ever and had to contend with our bank being very, very awkward about continuing to recognise our legitimacy which I know has taken up a lot of his time unnecessarily.

Patricia Mountstevens who despite some imposition has made a determined effort to look after the Gibberd House.

Finally, Matthew Dickin who has put in so much effort to raise grants. £3000 has been raised due to our hosting the Essex Book Festival. New chairs have been purchased for the garden. A promise of £5000 for gardening equipment is now available to us thanks to Matthew's efforts. We have also received a generous bequest from Joyce Collins for which we are very grateful.

As ever Matthew Taylor our Head Gardener and John Flaherty our Garden Coordinator have continued to improve the garden no end with the help of 15 volunteer gardeners who come in every Tuesday rain or shine to look after the Gibberd Garden. Matthew and John went above and beyond with their magnificent repair of the M1 path. This has been redone beautifully and with precision.

Our new membership secretary Ann Davis has done stirring work and endeavoured to get a Newsletter out to members each season and process subscriptions.

Our administrator Ellen Pewsey who has taken command of organising volunteers stocking the barn and shop and looking after private bookings. It has been a tough year for her because finding enough volunteers to keep the place open on Wednesdays and Sundays has been difficult. Some individual volunteers have gone over and above the call of duty to provide cover when otherwise it would have meant closing the Barn.

Behind the scenes Moria Jones and Elaine Baldwin and a small but dedicated group of archivists tirelessly work away at their task to look after the Gibberd legacy. We will be taking delivery of the Frederick Gibberd plans of St John's the Maltings when the Newfoundland University campus shut their doors in September.

The Gibberd house is open every Sunday and stewards give up their time to give the most informative explanation to visitors. Hopefully some of them here today will informally tell you about the House when we later unveil the plaque.

Events in the garden are important to us. This year has seen all the regular events and more. The Teddy Bears picnic so ably organised by Ann Flint last year. The heritage open day. The autumn colour days. The Carol concert which had a different feel about it this last year as it took place inside. It provides an example of fitting a quart into a pint pot! Roisin Quinn was our choirmaster and she encouraged a lot of community singing.

Snowdrop days in February were extended for an extra day as the weather was very kind. More recently we had a successful beer festival raising over £10,000 for the garden. More recently, a first for us, we hosted the Essex book Festival with eminent artist Maggi Hambling and author Darren Coffield interviewed by James Cahill. This was ably organised by Ellen with Cherith Lowry providing a pop up cafe in the garage. A Shakespeare play "A Comedy of Errors" is to be performed at the time of writing, to be followed by a Jazz Festival.

The trustees have worked hard to ensure the financial future of the Garden. To this end we have undertaken major work to convert the upstairs of the Gibberd House into two artist studios. A few years ago our Vice President Mac Quinton had the view to create an exhibition space downstairs. The White Room has been available to artists to exhibit their work for a few years now. Lin has spent a lot of time and energy in ensuring the space is fully utilised.

Building on this the trust obtained a £3000 grant from Essex county council and the local councillor Michael Garnet to renovate the House. The roof was sealed, rotten windows replaced and all the rooms were decorated to a high standard. This has enabled the trust to advertise for artists to take up the places in the studios.

Three new tenants have moved in. David F took the leading role in drawing up tenancy agreements which was no small task. Lin and myself interviewed and agreed to the three tenants. Roger Lee at Parndon Mill kindly wrote to all potential tenants on his waiting list informing them of the new opportunity to rent at the Gibberd House.

On a sad note we lost David Wright at the beginning of this year. A good friend to the Garden, he had been a member of our executive committee and acted as auditor.

Also, of note, our longest serving Garden volunteer, Inger Collins celebrated her 100th with the Garden Team. Inger has made a fantastic contribution to the garden over many years.

So now I can reflect at the end of this report as I said at the beginning. We are building on success and achievements going from strength to strength because of all of YOU who are so wonderfully committed to the Gibberd Garden.

Michael Danvers
Chair of the Gibberd Garden trust