



# Painswick Rococo Garden

Preserving heritage,  
protecting habitats  
and providing a place  
to connect with nature

**ANNUAL REVIEW**

2022



Over the year we welcomed an encouraging number of visitors with over 55,000 coming to enjoy the Garden

“ ”



# WELCOME

Our activities in 2022 were punctuated by our relocation from our long-term operational base in the historic Coach House which was in many ways the main event of our year. This 19th century building had provided us with essential facilities for many years. The arrangement had worked extremely well and it had proven its worth particularly during the pandemic when its flexibility allowed us to weather the various travails which came our way. We were sad to have to leave behind the building and many happy memories. However, we were able to establish new temporary facilities to welcome our visitors which will remain in place until a permanent visitor centre can be developed.

The move itself went very smoothly which is a tribute to our team, their planning, patience and overall tenacity.

Over the year we welcomed an encouraging number of visitors, with over 55,000 people coming to enjoy the Garden. This level of visitor support works very well for us as it not only contributes financially to our charitable work but also allows visitors to enjoy an uncrowded, high-quality experience.

Like all gardens, the Rococo Garden changes throughout the year, making every visit a little different. On top of this we add other ways of engaging with this very special place, including children's trails, open air theatre performances and creative workshops. These all allow the visitor to simply take in the Garden for its own beauty or perhaps enjoy an activity with the Garden as a serene backdrop.

Another extension of our offering in 2022 was the formalising of the partnership on-site with what is now the Exedra Nursery, allowing us to provide an extensive range of plants for sale in a very attractive setting.

I continue to be grateful to our devoted staff and volunteers. I remain particularly grateful to our Garden Director and Head Gardener whose collective efforts saw us so smoothly through our premises relocation whilst keeping the Garden open to the public. This was no small achievement.

I am also grateful for the support of our stakeholders and the visiting public whose continued loyalty allows us to preserve the horticultural gem that is the Painswick Rococo Garden for the present and future enjoyment of all.

**David Hardie**  
Chair of Trustees



The Enchanted Garden



The Coach House



# The Painswick Prospect

by Cathryn Spence

**Dr Cathryn Spence is the country's leading expert on the work of Thomas Robins the Elder who depicted the Garden in glorious detail in 1748. In this extract adapted from her recent book, she describes and interprets his "Painswick prospect".**

The Hyett family were primarily from Gloucester and saw themselves as such, owning and leasing substantial land holdings in the city. In 1733 Charles Hyett's (1686-1738) poor health encouraged him to purchase from the Adey family Heryngs Farm in Painswick. Charles hoped that the hill air would be more beneficial to his asthma than the Gloucester smoke. On the site of the farm he built himself a country house of silvery hewn Cotswold stone in the Palladian style and named it Buenos Aires. Of the original farmstead he kept the brewhouse and bakehouse, the gables of which can be seen to the rear of the main house in Thomas Robins's 1748 view. To the right of the house Robins included the grand stable block with its oeil-de-boeuf window, as well as the more formal garden area in front of the house, which had been laid out by Charles.

Tucked away behind Buenos Aires in a hidden combe, Charles' son Benjamin Hyett (1708-1762) laid out one of the most important eighteenth-century gardens. It was almost entirely forgotten until John Harris's rediscovery of Robins in the early 1970s led to a revival of interest in the gardens which Robins had depicted. As a result, in 1984, Lord and Lady Dickinson were encouraged by architectural historians Timothy Mowl and Roger White to embark upon the formidable task of restoring the garden, using Robins's painting as their guide.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, Robins's watercolour had been unprotected since it had been painted and light damage had resulted in a loss of colour, particularly in the variation of the shades of green. However, it remains a delightful and intriguing view of an early rococo garden, commissioned by Hyett as a companion piece to Robins's view of the family home in Gloucester, Marybone.

The Painswick prospect is signed and dated 1748. In it, Robins adopts a bird's-eye view of the estate in an attempt to show us the entire garden. This results in a flattening out of the contours and obscures the real incline of the narrow valley. Hyett's choice of the hidden combe not only added a fantasy element to this Arcadia, but also served to protect the garden from the prevailing south-westerly winds, allowing for the cultivation of the more exotic plant species being introduced at this time.

Robins brings to life contemporary garden activities: there are vignettes of enormous dogs (which can only be wolfhounds), farm hands and another self-portrait - Robins appears in most of his finished paintings, fans and engravings. He can be spotted sitting under a tree to the right of the octagonal dovecote, sketching the view. The defined straight-edged border of the painting comprises eighteen different species of exotic shells, together with wildflowers including forget-me-knots and bittersweet.

Robins records a layout that combined all the elements of a delightful rococo garden. On the far right, the asymmetrical Red House, with its Gothick-arched windows and red ochre lime wash, served as a retreat in which to enjoy the long vista down the valley towards the pond. Immediately after the Red House, the central path passes through



thick shrubbery and then continues through a double formal hedge, probably of beech, but perhaps yew, the faded colours making it impossible to be certain. On both sides the ground is planted with a young orchard. Above the hedge-lined walk is a more formal, ornamental flower garden with the white Exedra dominating the area almost like a crown. In front of the Exedra is a pond, with its geometric pattern repeated in the centre of the Kitchen Garden.

1. White & Mowl, 'Robins at Painswick', Garden History, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 163-178.



# THE PAINSWICK PROSPECT



The Red House and Exedra are linked by a serpentine path that skirts the more mature woodland. Due to the loss of colour it is now difficult to distinguish some details, but below the Kitchen Garden there is a series of water features, including Middle Pond and Swan Pond, with a small square pond lying between them.<sup>2</sup> Excess water must have passed from Middle Pond to Swan Pond via an arched drain, which may have formed a grotto. The effect would have been planes of water at different levels, stepping down the garden. Below the Swan Pond, and dividing this more formal area from the Wilderness, is a tunnel arbour. Dotted throughout the garden are further eyecatchers, rustic and stone structures and plantations, which include a Gothick alcove at the end of a beech walk and a Plunge Pool presided over by a statue of the great rural god Pan. From this vantage point, and this point only, Pan can survey the entire garden.



To find out more about this book and to purchase, please [click this link](#).



The Eagle House

2. Middle Pond had been filled in and became a bowling green by 1820.



## Dr. Cathryn Spence, Author

Dr. Cathryn Spence is the author of *Nature's Favourite Child: Thomas Robins and the Art of the Georgian Garden*. It is full of fascinating information about the artist whose paintings provide a rare glimpse into the lost Rococo gardens of the mid-18th century.

Dr. Cathryn Spence is an academic, writer, curator and conservation consultant who has written extensively on the rococo period. Her book on Thomas Robins *Nature's Favourite Child: Thomas Robins and the Art of the Georgian Garden* is available from the Rococo Garden Shop, from John Sandoe Books, or from the author via [thomasrobinselder@gmail.com](mailto:thomasrobinselder@gmail.com)



# CELEBRATING OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

2022 challenged us in many ways. We began the year with a successful snowdrop season and by September we had waved goodbye to our operating base of many years. We implemented significant organisational changes, but also grasped a number of new opportunities. Here's what we achieved.



Credit: Trish Bloodworth



Credit: Claire Barnes



Credit: Andrew Pooley



Credit: Derrick Whitmore



Credit: Claire Barnes

## Snowdrops

The year started with the first restriction-free snowdrop display since 2020 and our visitors found the snowdrops an inspiring and uplifting spectacle. Press coverage for the display was great and included mentions in *The Observer* and appearances on ITV and Sky News. Our Garden team provided learning opportunities to visitors by delivering free snowdrop talks throughout the snowdrop season.



## Did you know:

There are **over 5 million snowdrops** in the Garden

## Engaging family trails

Our first family trail of the year was a new *I-Spy Garden Trail* that engaged our younger visitors in searching for historic features as they explored the Garden. This was followed by a brand new trail called *Dragon Eggscape* featuring a lost baby dragon. Our summer holiday *Enchanted Garden Trail* was a great hit, with lots of happy families enjoying the beautiful, willow-sculpted fairies, dragons and boggarts. *The Big Bat Trail* in October featured all kinds of fascinating bat facts to discover, and to close the year our *Unipiggle and the Festive Freeze* trail provided wintery magic.

## Working with local artists

Local artists featured on our café walls and included Cath Hodsman, Carol Hardie, Alison Vickery, Jacqueline Hammond and Chris Bingle. Helen Taylor exhibited inspiring sculptures using needle-felting and wet-felting techniques and Natasha Houseago, our artist-in-residence, worked on her wood carvings in the Garden, transforming timber felled due to Ash dieback into wonderful pieces of sculpture.

## Shop products

Vacating the Coach House building came with the challenge of designing a new shop space with the aim of increasing our range of home-made food and drinks using produce from the Garden. 2022 was a bountiful year for apples, mulberries, medlars, elderflowers and bees, resulting in popular jams, chutneys, honey, juices and ice cream. *Pan's Pale Ale* and *Red House Amber Ale* made by the Fresh Standard Brewery in Minchinhampton joined the range along with a brand new raspberry and rosemary gin made in partnership with Sibling Distillery in Cheltenham.



## CELEBRATING OUR ACHIEVEMENTS



Credit: Brita Willoughby Dyer

### Exedra Nursey

In April 2022 we entered into a new partnership with Exedra Nursery who initially stocked an extended range of lovely plants outside the Coach House. By the autumn they were operating from a new area onsite selling a range of plants, bulbs and gardening goods. Our visitors have benefited from their beautifully curated shop space and horticultural expertise.



Credit: Simon Pizzey

### Goodbye to our Coach House

In September 2022, we left our long-term base in the Coach House and moved to a brand new location on-site. Read more about this project on page 10 and 11.



Credit: Mikal Ludlow Photography

### Crowdfunder success

We launched our first ever public Crowdfunding campaign to help fund our new temporary visitor facilities. The campaign went live at the end of July and by September we raised £27,317 from 226 supporters. Whilst the final figure fell short of the target, we were delighted when a generous benefactor offered to top up our shortfall to help reach £60,000. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who donated to the campaign to secure the Garden's future.



### Television appearances

We were pleased to host the team from BBC's *Bargain Hunt* programme in 2022. Presenter Christina Trevanion filmed a piece in the Garden to accompany the series' usual auction house antics in the locality. The episode was broadcast on BBC1 on 5 December.



Credit: Richard Atkinson

### Events

For many, the highlight of the year was attending one of our outdoor theatre events. The Handlebards' performance of *Twelfth Night* sold out quickly, prompting us to add an extra night. Theatre group IKP returned to the Garden to perform *Rapunzel* for family audiences, and our members were also treated to special midsummer private evening opening in June to enjoy a private view of the artworks created by our artist-in-residence Natasha Houseago.

### Carol Concert and Longfield Hospice

The reinstated Rococo Garden Carol Concert took place in St Mary's Church, Painswick, and was a joyous celebration with seasonal readings and lusty singing of classic carols. Best-selling author Katie Fforde delivered a reading, and Croft Primary School and Painswick & Corinium Community Choirs sang. We also partnered with Longfield Hospice to recycle Christmas trees locally after Christmas to raise funds for their work and provide us with bark chippings.

## OUR THREE KEY AIMS

Painswick Rococo Garden employs 25 staff members, supports over 60 volunteers and is guided by 9 trustees. Together our mission is threefold:

▶ **Preserve** the heritage of the Garden for future generations

▶ **Protect** our natural habitats, wildlife and plants

▶ **Provide** a place to escape, explore and connect with nature

### Did you know:



In 2022, we issued **115 Garden entry vouchers** to support local charities



# ACHIEVING OUR KEY GOALS

We have set ourselves **three key goals for the future:**

## Restoring Garden Features

We want to continue to restore lost Garden features.

## Repair and maintenance

We want to complete outstanding repair and maintenance work.

## Replacement visitor facilities

We need to move our operation to a new entrance building.

## Replacement Visitor Facilities

The historic Coach House was home to the Trust from 1988 when the Garden was first opened to the public and was adapted over the years to house a café, shop, office and toilets. The long-term lease on the building and access routes was due to expire in June 2024 and comprehensive plans had been made for replacement facilities for which planning permission was granted in 2019. However, these plans had to be put on hold during the pandemic and in 2021 were deemed unaffordable.

Meanwhile, the Coach House building was sold to new landlords in 2020 who terminated the lease as soon as they were able, giving three months' notice. So, in September 2022 the Trust was obliged to move its operational base to new transitional temporary accommodation on land owned by the charity adjacent to the historic Garden.

The site was developed quickly to ensure that the Garden could remain open to the public. Thanks to the extraordinarily hard work of staff, volunteers and a small number of expert contractors, the site was connected to essential services, infrastructure was bought and business-critical equipment was hired in a very short time. The move itself was achieved in two weeks in September, during which the Garden remained open at weekends.

A Crowdfunder appeal raised a remarkable £60,000 which enabled the move to be completed and provided a significant boost both to morale and our financial position. After a challenging period operating the Café and Shop from a series of wooden sheds at the end of the year, the site's converted shipping containers arrived just before Christmas to allow the temporary site to become fully operational.

## Other projects

Whilst we were very much focused on the move of our operational base, we were able to continue with day-to-day maintenance and conservation work to keep the high standards of horticulture and presentation for which we are known. We were also able to undertake some planning work on our project to restore lost garden features. Research was undertaken into a niched seat surrounded by a pedimented arch, situated above the Plunge Pool and depicted on Thomas Robins' 1748 picture. Initial conversations with possible donors took place to establish some seed funding to get the project under way, and plans made to start exploratory works.

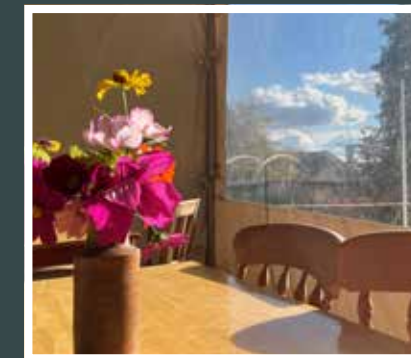
## Changes to our visitor facilities



Our Coach House base in summer, before we left



Access ramp under construction



The Café marquee in autumn



Temporary Café shed



Temporary Shop/Reception shed



Empty Coach House interior before handover to our landlords



# OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Our future plans will focus on these key areas:

## Writing a new business plan

After three years of responding to events outside of our control, we are planning to embrace our future and create a business plan which ensures Painswick Rococo Garden Trust is a resilient conservation organisation fit for the future. We will continue to review our operating model to maintain and develop our financial performance.

## Creating a site masterplan

As we look to the future, we will create a detailed plan for the site to address future requirements and to improve our temporary visitor facilities. This site masterplan will address the needs of visitors, staff and volunteers and will form a key part of our future planning to envision our longer-term visitor facilities.

## Developing an outreach programme

We want to reach a wider and more diverse set of local community groups and support their needs in a way that benefits them. We will undertake research through a consultation process to initiate a more formal outreach programme.

## Volunteers

Our volunteers are vital to the overall function of the Garden. We will investigate ways our volunteers can support our work with the local community, and how our volunteers can support us in achieving our key aims. In return, they will benefit from developing new skills investment in their lifelong learning.

## Visitors

We will continue to focus on maintaining a high-quality visitor experience whilst sharing the unique heritage of the Garden. This will be achieved by focusing on how the Garden is used, who accesses it and how we can involve a wider range of people in its heritage and interpretation.

## Did you know:



Our volunteer-run **secondhand bookshop** raised **£2,300**

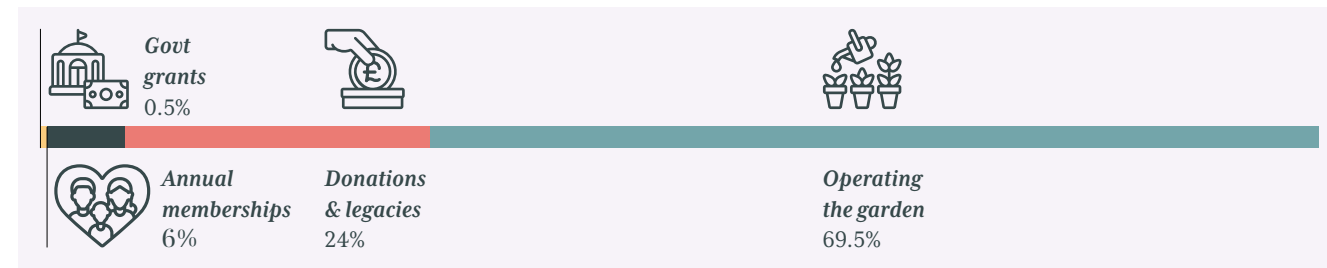




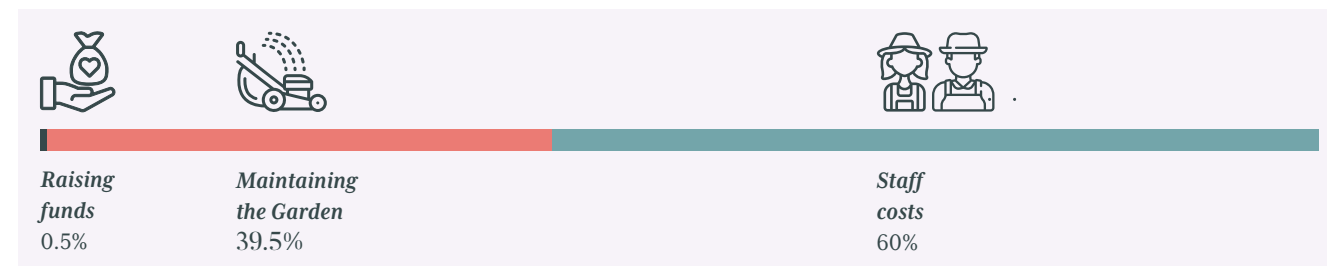
# FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2022

Our full Annual Report and Accounts are published on the Charity Commission website. Find them using our Registered Charity Number: 1107844

## Income in 2022 **£480,516**



## Expenditure in 2022 **£424,916**



# SUPPORT OUR WORK

There are many ways you can support Painswick Rococo Garden:

- Visit us*
- Donate to our work*
- Become a member*
- Volunteer with us*
- Buy something in our Café or Shop*
- Visit our second-hand bookshop*
- Become a trustee*
- Buy us Garden equipment from our Amazon wish list*
- Bring a friend who's not been here before*
- Sign up for one of our events or courses*
- Book a talk with one of our Gardeners*
- Remember us in your will*

To find out about any of the ways to support us listed above, see our website, or email [info@rococogarden.org.uk](mailto:info@rococogarden.org.uk)



# DONATE TO OUR WORK

Painswick Rococo Garden is a registered charity (1107844). You can support our work in preserving heritage, protecting habitats and providing a place to connect with nature.

To make a secure one-off donation via Crowdfunder, visit [www.rococogarden.org.uk/donate](http://www.rococogarden.org.uk/donate).

Alternatively, you can use the QR code below to go directly to our Crowdfunder page:



To find our more and get involved please contact us:

## **Painswick Rococo Garden**

Gloucester Road  
Painswick  
Gloucestershire  
GL6 6TH

T: 01452 813204

E: [info@rococogarden.org.uk](mailto:info@rococogarden.org.uk)

# rococogarden.org.uk



If printed, please consider recycling this document responsibly.

**Photo credits:** Claire Barnes, Deb Hopton Photography, David Hamilton, Andrew Pooley, Derrick Whitmore, Painswick Rococo Garden, Trish Bloodworth, Britt Willoughby Dyer, Simon Pizzey, Mikal Ludlow Photography, Dominic Hamilton, Richard Atkinson and Jenny Smith.

**Design:** [lostandfoundcreative.co.uk](http://lostandfoundcreative.co.uk)