

GREAT DIXTER CHARITABLE TRUST

ANNUAL REVIEW

YEAR END MARCH 2023



1. INTRODUCTION

In many ways we have regarded 2022/23 as a new start. The years of the pandemic are largely behind us but we now have to now plan for a world which is somewhat changed. Costs are higher in terms of fuel, materials and fees. We need to ensure our staff feel secure despite the rising cost of living which we all face. We have to be mindful of pricing to allow us to welcome *all* visitors. We endeavour to provide facilities which, although modest, offer an enjoyable visit. **Above all we need to ensure that the garden continues to thrive, inspire and teach visitors and students. All this while ensuring that the place retains its sense of “otherness”, and that the “*Spirit of Dexter*”, which we know is so precious to all who are associated with Great Dexter, is protected.**

This Annual Review provides a visual overview of the past year at Great Dexter and presents a brief summary of our Annual Accounts (which can be seen in full separately).

2. CHARITABLE OBJECTS AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED

2.1 To Conserve, Maintain and Enrich the Garden for the Benefit of the General Public.

Great Dexter Garden

‘The seeds of Eden, thrown to the wind’.

‘So delighted that we got to visit this beautiful Oasis’.

The gardening style at Great Dexter continues to be daring and bold and inspires gardeners from across the world. The planting philosophy mimics natural plant succession, but at a much higher tempo. Native species, which are left to self-seed through the garden, are interspersed with more exotic and ornamental species further complementing the diverse pollen and nectar resource.

Great Dexter is a “Garden Nature Reserve” Andy Phillips, Lead Ecologist, 2022

Great Dixter highlights how gardening and horticulture can play a crucial role in reversing the loss of biodiversity within the UK. Many of the techniques used at Great Dixter to create and maintain habitats can be replicated in any garden or semi-natural greenspace. Throughout the year ecologists continued to monitor the Garden and wider estate adding to the species count which was demonstrated in the [Biodiversity Audit](#).

In 2022 we welcomed 40,724 visitors to the garden, 5,121 annual ticket holders and 2,466 Friends of Great Dixter.



Tulip Cairo High Garden



Orchids in the Topiary Lawn



Clouds gathering in the Peacock Garden



Early Summer in the High Garden



The Peacock Garden - early morning



The Long Border – early Summer



Kitchen Drive in Autumn



Deepest Winter

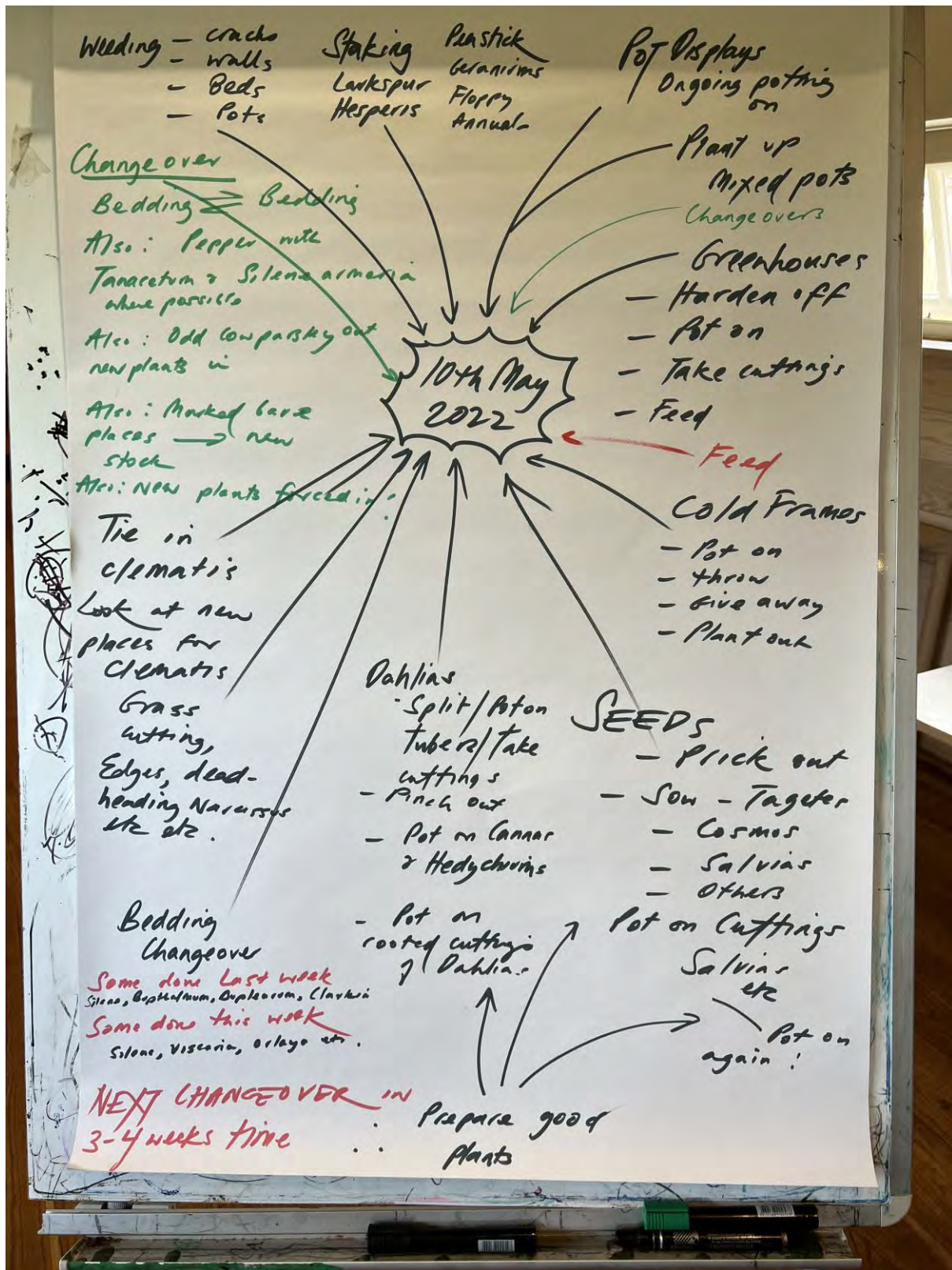
In 2022 Great Dixter received an award from the European Garden Heritage Network - Dixter was awarded second place in the “Management or Development of a Historic Park or Garden” category.

Considerable planning is required to create a garden like Great Dixter. Here is one of the charts that Fergus produces. This one covers a schedule of work for the garden team in before opening in the Spring.

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Prune espalier plants	Tidy out Cephalo. Taxus	Repair lower terrace wall	Mulch young trees	Prune 2 small trees Kitchener	Prune 2 small trees Kitchener
Cut back ferns & Colchicoid Exotic	Tidy up Exotic	Prune free standing fruit	Pick up old wood by horse pond	Gather up old Hay Bales	Prune Cestrum fasciculatum
Finish Sunk Garden Hedges	Prune Salix, Chamaecyparis & Plantain plants	Cut old Rough Hedges	Feed back vegetation on loam pile	Plant up Hamamelis, Philadelphus	Finish Top of 40m oak hedge
Replace on 2nd espalier	Prune willows Horse pond	Prune dead rhod. thorn	Split Sycamore down	Split Sycamore down	Graft new trees
Repair worn lawn areas	Cut back ferns	Tidy Car park frame area	Work through plants in Track	Make new stakes for garden	Prune all Fuchsia
Prune Colchicoid	Prune remaining Hedges	Cut back Hedera helix, Helleborus	Prune 11m Golden King	Prune 11m Golden King	Prune 11m Golden King
Prune Hydrangea Petalocera	Tie in Chamaecyparis, Echinops, Ginkgo	Prune Eupatorium ligularis	Prune Sarcocolla after flowering	Reduce Bay Tree at Entrance	Sow Aubergine seeds
Prune 11m Golden King	Prune all Himalaya cedars	Lift & replant Aspid. latifolia, horizontalis	Prune Ligustrum, Lonicera, Cypripedium, high gate	Prune 11m Golden King	Graft new trees fruit
Weed borders in paving	Weed thistles	Add to bedding areas	Feed old Shrubs	Plant new plants	Replace Clematis, Tacheania, Superb in long border
Get up for village plant sale	Make hurdles supports for garden	Sow Spring seeds	Tidy up all round car park etc.	Cut back Myrtle terrace	Prune 11m Golden King
Work out sowing time-table	Split nursery plants	Prune 11m Golden King	Prune 11m Golden King	Prune 11m Golden King	Prune 11m Golden King

Preparing for Spring



Mind map to plan the bedding changeover

2.2 To Conserve, Maintain and Restore the House for the Benefit of the General Public.



Repairs to the House and wider Estate

Maintaining a Grade 1 Listed property and its contents is a costly commitment and an important element of Great Dixter's work. An ongoing programme of work is in place and each year priorities are identified. An essential repair carried out in 2022 was to restore the leaking Reservoir which was built in 1912. Further work is being carried out on the early 19thC Cart Lodge – one of the first buildings you see when you arrive at Great Dixter.



Replacing the turfs on the Reservoir after the repairs



Preparing for the new season all the floors in the medieval side of the House have to be cleaned and protected.

Sharing the House with visitors

16,587 visitors were welcomed into the medieval side of the House in 2022.

'Wonderful to see brown furniture at its best, such a collection.'

'Delightful and inspiring, taking lots of ideas away.'

'Beautiful and couldn't ask for nicer staff.'

We also decided to open the usually private side of the House to the public. Pre-booked tours on "Lutyens and the Lloyd Family" commenced and proved to be very popular. 160 people attended 16 tours.



The Kitchen – an unspoilt but busy space at Dixter

'The whole experience brought the house to life, a wonderful insight into the extension of Great Dixter and the life of the Lloyd family'. 'You can imagine that Christopher and Daisy are about to emerge from the sofa, the tour leader was so knowledgeable, a wonderful morning'.

The House is also a living space and welcomes many horticulturists, ecologists and artists to stay. Two of our scholars live on the top floor. It is a place for discussion, debate and learning as well as being a historically important building.

Events in the House

As well as being open to visitors the house is used to host many events through the year. In 2022 we were lucky to spend an evening with Anna Pavord in conversation with Fergus Garrett and talking about her new book. Howard Sooley gave the 7th Christopher Lloyd Lecture in June 2022. In addition Howard began filming a series of short films showing how Dixter changes through the seasons and also highlighting the biodiversity at Great Dixter. These films are now available for the visitors to view in the White Barn.

Volunteers in the House

Volunteers assist with a range of important work in the House. This ranges from caring for the archive, repairing the fabrics and polishing the brass.

2.3 To Manage the Woodlands, Meadows and Fields in a Manner which Encourages Biodiversity

Our woodlands are managed with biodiversity in mind, scalloping the edges of the rides, leaving dead wood standing and on the ground, whilst coppicing for firewood and sweet chestnut.

We continued to use as much of our own wood for repairs as well as supplying home-made hurdles, benches, poles, stakes, and pea-sticks for visitors and the wider community.



Using coppiced wood to make products to sell in the shop

Our own charcoal was bagged up for the year, and the shavings from the barn were packaged to sell as kindling as well as being composted and used as packing material.

Our grassland management experiments outside of the garden continued with different grazing/disturbance and cutting regimes creating different sward structures. Monitoring is ongoing.

2.4 To Advance Education in Horticulture and Biodiversity

Providing horticultural education is central to the work of Great Dixter. Significant funding is received from our Friends to allow this programme to continue.



Waiting for students to return

Scholars at Great Dixter

The scholarship programmes started in 2006. We continue to be regarded as the top training place for flower gardeners. The gardening scholarships pave the way for people wishing to become a head gardener in both private and public gardens. We have up to a hundred applications every year for some of these places.

These are all intensive training courses (for 12 months) in our style of gardening, garden management, or nursery production and advocate practice which is chemical free, creative, caring and with biodiversity in mind. All are paid positions with accommodation provided.



Week 1 at Great Dixter – the Scholars start with making hay September 2022



Clearing the Topiary Garden with the garden team



Rose pruning

Five scholarship positions were offered in 2022. Click on the links below to read examples of their reports.

The Christopher Lloyd Scholar-UK – [Rob Flack \(report available separately\)](#)

Rob originally studied fine art and photography. He went on to study and work at Kew, Rowallane, Florence Court and various London gardens.

The Chanticleer North American Scholar-North America – [Andrew Wiley](#) (report available separately)

Andrew comes to us from Martha's Vineyard. He graduated in 2019 and has been working for Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates in Brooklyn, NY. We are delighted to have an on-going relationship with the Chanticleer Board in Pennsylvania, who generously fund this position every year.

[Madelaine LeDew](#) (report available separately) – Part funded by Chanticleer Gardens and Lanakila Gardens.

Madeleine is taking a one year sabbatical from Lanakila Gardens – a private garden in Florida. Madeleine has also worked in organic market gardening for three years.

The Ruth Borun Scholar – [Luke Senior](#) (report available separately)

Luke comes from Tipperary. He has studied horticulture and land management and is interested in garden design and ecologically-based gardening.

The Nursery Scholar – Ros Crowhurst

Ros has joined us having completed her training at Cambridge Botanical Gardens.



Dixter scholar Madelaine La Dew speaking at a local Horticultural Society Event

Volunteers

Volunteers join the team in the garden and help as part of the Estate Team. Some come for one day a week throughout the year, others for a few days or a week at a time.

In 2022/23 we had 8 estate volunteers, 6 nursery volunteers, 12 garden volunteers, and 15 students working in the garden on a short-term basis. Three volunteers also support our work in the house.

Other learning opportunities

In February 2023 we were delighted to welcome back an army of 30 volunteers for the annual volunteer weekend. Students and gardeners and others who are simply interested to take part, spend a weekend working in small teams which are supervised by the Dixter garden staff.



Volunteers and staff at the Winter Working Weekend

A selection of Lectures given by Fergus Garrett in 2022

Fergus gave [over 40 lectures \(detailed separately\)](#) last year to Horticultural Societies, Botanic Gardens, Landscape Architect firms, Community Groups, universities and colleges on Dixter. The “in demand” lecture this year was on Great Dixter’s Biodiversity Audit and how this is relevant to small gardens, towns and cities.

Zoom Lectures in 2022

Zoom lectures became very popular during the pandemic and they have continued through 2022. Subjects have included Composting for Biodiversity and Soil Regeneration- 166 places

Lessons from Last Year – 330 places

Working with Bulbs – the Dexter Way – 369 places

Pruning – 411 places

Painting Pictures with Plants – 896 places

At £15.00 per lecture these have generated £32,580.00 for the Trust.

Symposiums

5 weeklong symposiums both practical and more theory based were offered. These provide an opportunity for very small groups to receive teaching from Fergus in the garden at Dexter as well as visiting other local gardens.

“..I love that we are out there past sunset squeezing in more knowledge, and like having dinner at Dexter so that we can maximize that time.... I always am wanting more Dexter time!”

“I enjoyed seeing it in winter, my last visit there was a summer one. I was able to observe how pruning evergreen plants into various shapes provides a great deal of structure throughout the whole year. Visiting in winter I was able to see the interest provided by the stems and limbs of deciduous plants.”



Symposium members planting in the Solar Garden

Other Adult Education Courses

These included 16 Great Dixter study days and 24 Art and Craft of Gardening course days.

All offer limited free places for community gardeners, Royal Parks apprentices, and others who work in public realm greening.



Course attendees walking the Garden

Engaging with Children and Young People

Pre-school children and their parents or carers visit the gardens throughout the year as part of the Garden Explorers programme. We worked with 972 family groups in 2022/23.

“You manage to fit so much lovely stuff in and we came away completely fulfilled and so happy that we’d been part of it”.

Local schools are also encouraged to bring groups of children for half day sessions with our Education Officer. In 2022 12 primary schools visited Great Dixter as part of a school visit.

We are also able to offer occasional work experience places to young people who would benefit from spending time at Dixter.

Supporting Young Carers

This year we were happy to offer a placement to a local young carer. Bradley has spent one day a week working alongside the Estate Team, trying his hand at gardening, woodwork and numerous other activities on the estate.



A Lesson in Seed Sowing

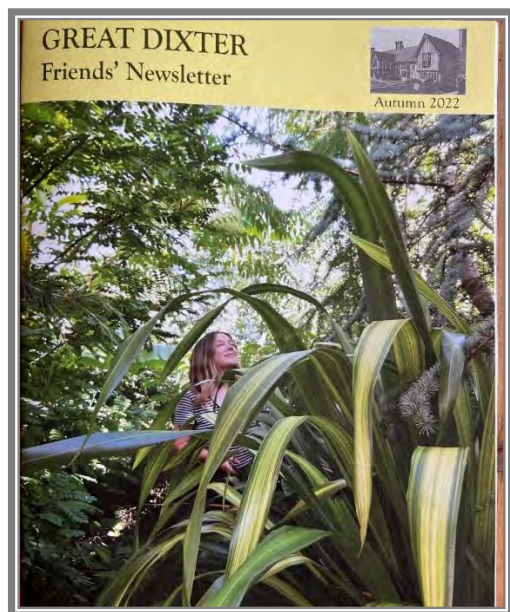
3. FRIENDS AND FUNDRAISING

Thanks to the generosity of our Friends and Donors, £454,040 was generated in 2022/23. £128,000 was raised in 2022/23 to secure the next four years funding for the Christopher Lloyd Scholar as a result of the Club 22 Appeal.

We received considerable support from our many Friends overseas, in particular from North America.

As always events were held to thank Friends for their continued support and the Winter Friend's Event provided something a bit different with access to archive material with Roy Brigden and a ladder making session in the Great Hall with Fergus and the Scholars.

Great Dixter relies heavily on the Friends to support the many areas of work that we undertake. Some have donated £6 per month since Christopher Lloyd died in 2006, some support our biodiversity work, others fund entire posts at Great Dixter. Whatever the level of giving – we are so grateful for their ongoing support.



Friends Receive two Newsletters each year as well as a Great Dixter Journal.



Thanking some Friends of Great Dixter 2022

4. INCLUSIVITY & COMMUNITY

Reporting on how we have achieved our Charitable Objects only tells part of the story of Great Dixter. There are other areas of work that we are proud of and are keen to continue. We offer both work and volunteer opportunities in the garden, wider estate and house to people with a wide range of skills and experience. This is central to our approach.

As well as providing support to gardens large and small across the country we and share our knowledge with a range of smaller community groups, urban greening groups, pocket park leaders and local horticultural societies.

5. BIODIVERSITY & SUSTAINABILITY AT GREAT DIXTER

The Gardens and wider estate of woodlands and meadows continued to be managed with biodiversity in mind. In the wider estate grassland management experiments continued, with different grazing, disturbance and cutting regimes creating different sward structures. Great Dixter continues to be recognised as an exceptional place for nature.



Night time activity in the Plant Fair Field -captured on a night camera



A Hawk Moth - the morning after the night before

Work commenced on the production of a book on the insects of Great Dixter. Nearly 1190 species of insect have been recorded at Great Dixter and one of the latest to be found is the violet carpenter bee (*Xylocopa violacea*). This spectacular black bee with purplish/blue wings is one of the largest European bees and has been moving north in distribution into the UK. At least three sightings have been made of this impressive insect within the garden.

The writing of a Conservation Management Plan for Great Dixter began in early 2023 connecting the biodiversity management of woodland, grassland, and gardens throughout the Estate and providing an innovative conservation vision for the future.

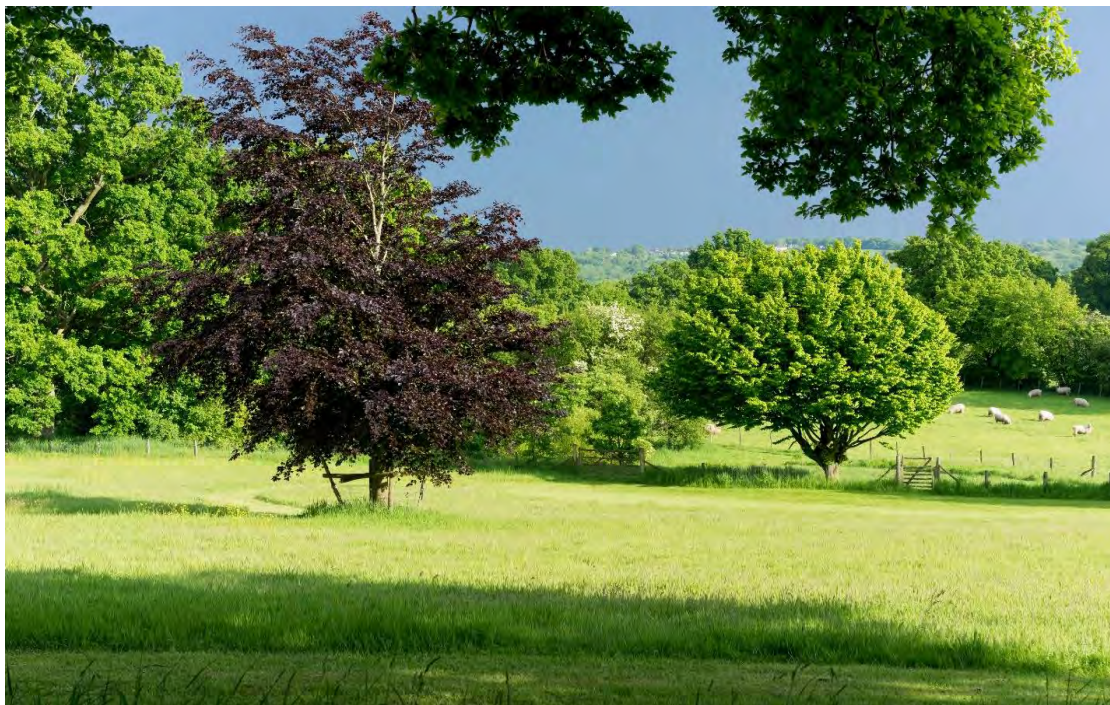
A GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping project has been introduced as part of the management plan process. This will provide a map-based database of biodiversity data, environmental data, and archaeological data for the Estate, which can be used for future reference and analysis. One of the first datasets to have been produced is a detailed pollinator/pollination analysis of the gardens.

One of the first projects to be completed in 2023 will be the Great Park Invertebrate Survey and Biodiversity Audit update. Over 2200 species have been recorded at Great Dixter, an impressive total considering the short period we have been collating data on biodiversity. One of the most important finds has been the first Sussex record of cobalt crust (*Terana caerulea*), a vivid cobalt blue encrusting fungus found growing on tree bark and wooden posts. A species of hoverfly new to Britain was recorded in the Orchard; the larvae of this fly, *Eumerus amoenus*, develop in the bulbs of *Allium* and potato tubers.

In early 2023 we started working with Sound Matters to record the soundscape of Great Dixter. We hope that providing audio links to the life in the garden and wider estate will help to engage our visitors with the need to bring nature back into their gardens.

Every year in August the meadows are cut and the strewings from our species rich meadows are offered to local people to help them create similar environments. Great results have been achieved and over 100 local meadows are created each year using Dixter strewings.

A good friend of Great Dixter has changed their meadow from this ...



.... to this in 7 years.



The findings of the Biodiversity Audit and the impact of Fergus Garrett's lectures have led to changing practice both nationally and internationally. Practice is changing throughout the horticultural world as a result of Great Dixter and other like minded people and organisations. The message has not only been influential but has brought a new dimension and richness to our gardening life.

Great Dixter puts protecting the environment and working towards sustainability at the centre of its work - this informs the way we manage our estate and gardens and the decisions we make.

- Great Dixter and its nursery has gardened peat free since 2007
- We grow the majority of our plants & collect our own seed
- We have a no burn policy
- We make over 20 tonnes of compost a year
- We water sparingly using borehole water
- We use much of our wood for building and making
- We manage the woodland in a sustainable regenerative way
- We use sustainable heating techniques
- We recycle and reuse widely through the estate.

In 2022 1/5 of the garden was watered only four times a year, 1/5 had water twice a year, 2/5 only once and 1/5 no water at all. Our aim is to reduce this further.

We have also started to undertake an audit of our carbon emissions with support from Green Element.

Wool from Dexter sheep is used to accelerate the compost making process.



Steaming compost near the Vegetable Garden



Ancient Ash coppice in Four Acre Shaw



Slow Worm crossing to the Long Border

6. THE NURSERY, SHOP & LOGGIA

Approximately 25% of Great Dixter's income is raised through the shop, loggia and nursery.

The Nursery provides mostly home propagated, peat free plants. It is a place of training for the Nursery Apprentice and the staff contribute to the teaching programme and Friends' events.



The Nursery from the Garden Cottage

The Loggia offers simple seasonal refreshments, as locally sourced as possible. We are aware of the limitations in terms of seating and wet weather shelter and are looking at ways to improve this for our visitors.

The Shop aims to provide locally sourced items alongside some specialist gardening accessories which appeal to the keen gardener.

7. Other News from 2022/23



Great Lives Summer 2022. Matthew Parris, Fergus Garrett, Mair Bosworth and Olivia Laing



Gardeners World Christmas 2022 Nick Bailey and Fergus Garrett



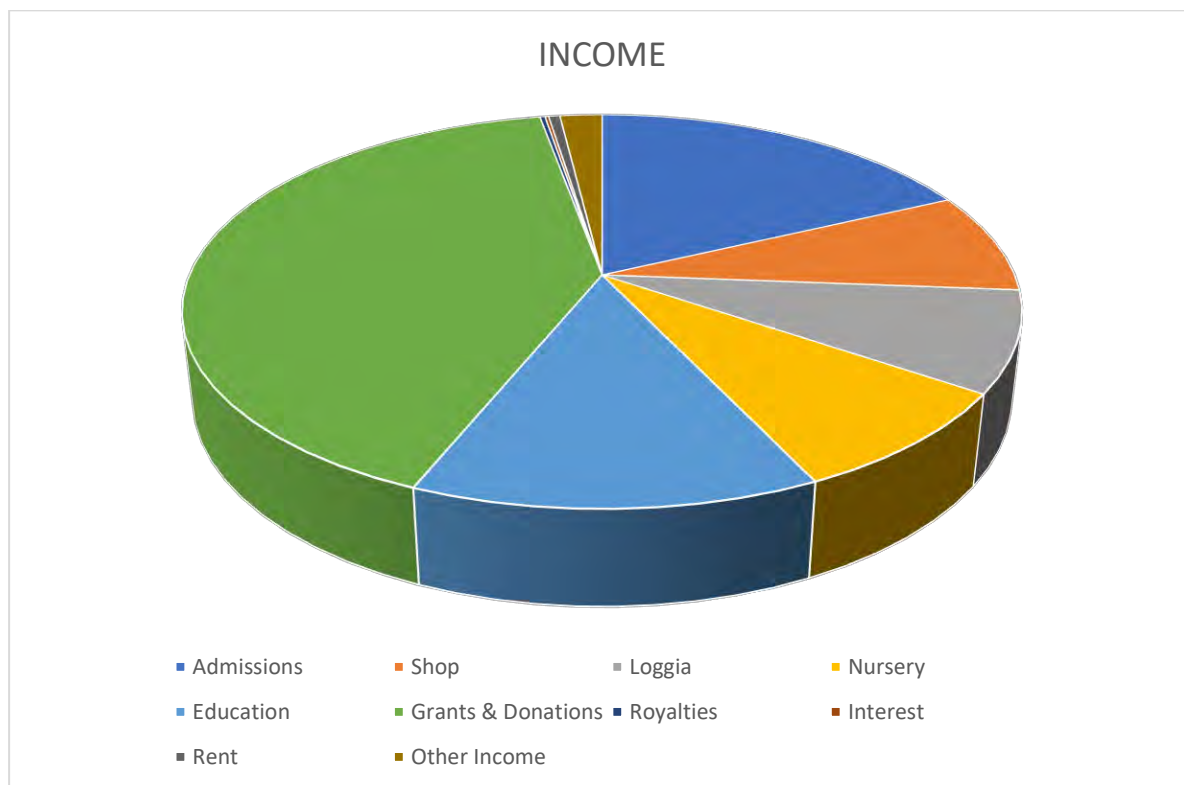
Howard Sooley filming “Biodiversity at Great Dixter” in Spring 2022



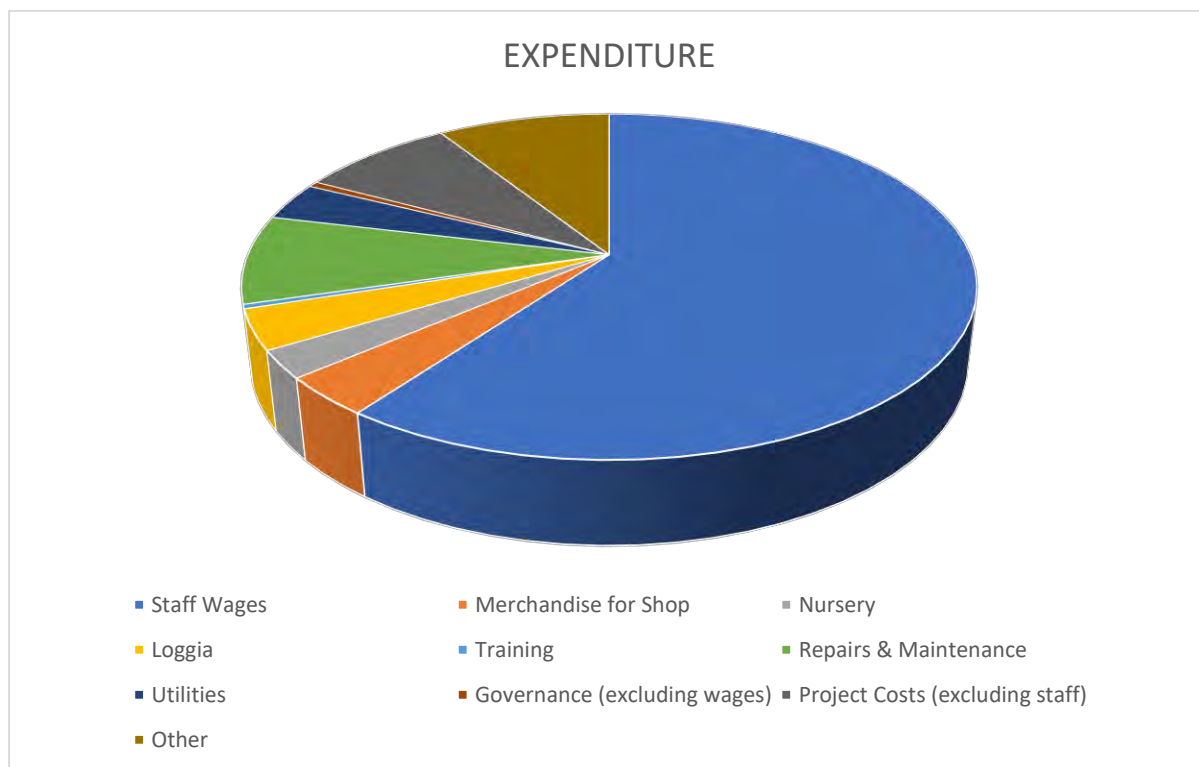
Francis Hamel painting in the early Spring 2023. The Great Dixter paintings will feature in his exhibition “Thirty Gardens” in Autumn 2023.

8. OUR INCOME AND HOW IT IS SPENT

The full accounts can be seen [separately](#).



Total Income: £2,065,912



Total Expenditure: £2,001,002

9. Working at Great Dixter



Photo: Phil Harrison

Before the Season opens in Spring 2023 – staff and volunteers gathered in the Sunk Garden



Photo & words: Andrew Wiley

A Flower from Every Plant

On October 30th, Rob and I went out to the garden and tried to pick one flower from every single plant. I was motivated to do this for three (maybe more) reasons. 1. Michael had shown me a photo during my first week where he had done something similar but on a smaller scale. 2. Fergus' lectures always included photos of different foliage plants and 3. I wanted to see what the eye fixated on most, how colour shifted from one to the next and how your eye moved naturally through this shift.

A big thank you to everyone who has supported Great Dexter this year and allowed us to continue our work.

All photos by Fergus Garrett unless otherwise stated.
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