

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Garden Museum	Grant ref: 10409 (CR)	Programme area: London's Environment\ a) Environmental Education
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 20/01/2011: £60,000 over three years (£19,700; £20,000; £20,300) for the salary of a p/t (3 days per week) Schools and Community Officer and associated running costs.		
Visiting Grants Officer: John Merivale	Date of meeting: 14 th March 2013	
Met with: Janine Nelson. Schools Liaison; Belinda Hirst, Fundraiser		
1. Introduction to the organisation: <p>The Garden Museum occupies the old church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, next to the entrance to Lambeth Palace. The rediscovery in the churchyard of the tomb of 17th century plant hunters, the Johns Tradescant (Elder and Younger), led John and Rosemary Nicholson to save the church from demolition and found the Museum of Garden History in 1977. The museum explores and celebrates British gardens and gardening through its collection, temporary exhibitions, events, symposia, education and outreach and its own garden. It was set up to tell the story of gardens in Britain and was the first collection of garden history in the world. It now has a collection of over 5,500 objects.</p> <p>The churchyard, although small, is the burial ground for several historical figures, some with a horticultural connection. Besides being the resting place of the Tradescants, it also houses the tomb of Captain William Bligh (of the HMS Bounty) who spent the last years of his life in Lambeth and who, when in charge of the Bounty, was on a mission to obtain breadfruit. Amongst the recorded burials are six Archbishops of Canterbury.</p>		
2. The project funded: <p>The project is an existing programme of outreach and environmental education, and funding covers the p/t post of Schools & Community Officer and some running costs. The post collaborates with local schools, to give children and teachers the resources and opportunities for hands-on education in horticulture. The project, however, also targets the general local population (through doctors' surgeries and other local groups) so that adults also benefit, not just from the environmental aspect but also through the opportunity to take part in healthy exercise which gardening can provide.</p>		
3. Work delivered to date: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A weekly after-school gardening club at Vauxhall primary School provides seasonal activities in the school's dining room – and in an outside garden newly made by the project. This has attracted regular pupils in manageable groups of up to eight at a time, plus parents and carers from five families. Activities include growing vegetables, harvesting and cooking, making scarecrows and bird feeders, and related art-works. • Six 2-hour length weekly education sessions at Ethelred Children's centre – involving children and adults in food and flower growing, and study of insect life cycles. • Work at a local Doctors' surgery – focussing on patients who are elderly and infirm, promoting exercise and mental wellbeing through gardening. Adult learner days have been held in partnership with South Bank University and Union Learn. 		

4. Difference made:

At Vauxhall primary, the expanded garden now includes a greenhouse made of recycled water bottles, new paths, and a compost area. The school has appointed a part-time teaching gardener, it has worked with the South Bank Centre on the rooftop garden above the Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the whole school has embraced gardening. There has been a marked rise in interest from teachers, who in turn report that children love it.

The Adult Learning Days at Lambeth Walk GP group Practice have given elderly patients the chance of meeting new people, meaningful engagement in physical activity, and improved wellbeing. This is proving replicable, and is providing a model for bids by other surgeries in Lambeth.

This project helps the museum to have a more substantial footprint in the local community and to engage with people of all ages in practical workshops and activities. While long-term benefits are always difficult to gauge with certainty, the indications from enthusiastic responses are clear enough. There can be no doubt that better environmental awareness is promoted among children and adults, along with the obvious physical enhancements to biodiversity. Whereas schools were always keen and used to send those pupils who benefited from free school meals – they are now sending pupils who come out of real interest, not because it is free.

The Garden Museum has been particularly imaginative in using its historical base and collections as a springboard for new work. A current exhibition about the sustainability problems of the cut flower trade has incorporated a remarkable installation sculpture of flowers suspended upside down from a ceiling grid.

5. Grants Administration:

The museum receives no funds from statutory sources and must instead rely on a combination of earned income (entrance charges, etc), donations and grants. In 2010, the recession caused the loss of a major, regular, donor to core costs - someone who previously could be relied upon to donate in the region of £200,000 pa. This has led trustees to re-think its funding strategy - this post was previously funded from the organisation's general income, but funds are now sought from other sources to ensure longer term viability and sustainability.

John Paul Getty Jr is funding some running costs for the next two years.

Furthermore, the museum plans a major new building – part café and part learning space – for which it has just achieved a Round 1 approval from HLF.

The organisation takes carbon emissions very seriously: a sustainability trainee has put in measures including a green wedding reception package – and the traineeship was short-listed for the Museum & Heritage Award in Sustainability.

The project is properly accounted for against the CBT grant – payroll records were seen and are satisfactory.

6. Concluding comments:

The project shows that history – while it is utterly essential as the context of our understanding – is not in itself sufficient subject matter to sustain a specialist museum of this kind. At the Garden Museum, history is also used to inspire and inform new work. The Museum also treats mainstream current environmental issues, and it is offering environmental education comparable to that of many other organisations – but it is all the better for that. While the majority of visitors come from all over London, the museum's particular heritage and building are a lucky privilege for the immediate area too.