



ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Overview

2018 proved to be a challenge for Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts. Mick Moat, who founded the Association in 2013 and had been the driving force and its most passionate advocate since then, announced that he and his wife would be returning to the UK when they were able to sell their house. They left for the UK at the end of November 2018.

Fortunately, the Association had grown sufficiently by this time to allow the placement of Staff responsible for all the key day-to-day roles ensuring that we were able to continue our normal operations. We did however all recognise that Mick, as President, was going to be a tough act to follow. An existing member of the Conseil was co-opted to act as President until the AGM in February. We believe that we have found a candidate who has agreed to stand for the role of President as from our AGM in February

The biggest difficulty the Association faced operationally in 2018 was the weather. After a wet spring which put many of our garden owners off opening early in the year, we then had a hot and dry summer, which also stopped some garden owners opening for us. Despite this, the Association has enjoyed another successful year, having increased the income from garden open days and a growth in gardens willing to open for the Association too. This allowed us to increase the amount donated to charities in France, as well as the number of charities receiving our donations.

Sponsorship

We have seen an increase in the running costs of the association as it grows. Sponsorship from businesses in France has not been easy to attract. The appointment of part time paid staff and a professional auditor has significantly added to the costs while affording the association a level of stability and continuity that it otherwise would not have been able to sustain. The support of our Sponsors/ Partners played a key role in our achievements, which without them would not have been possible.

Sponsorship is vital to our future and it is the one area in which there was no growth in 2018. We are in discussion with a couple of organisations which offer some prospects for a growth of sponsorship. The support of our existing sponsors is of great benefit.

Area Coordinators

We currently have 32 Area Coordinators, responsible for looking after garden owners registered under our scheme, a complete département or a specific area. Six Area Coordinators are either French nationals or are part of a French household, a significant rise from last year.

Garden Owners

We have 224 Gardens registered as willing to open for the scheme across 39 départements. 87 of these are French, approximately 39%. 152 gardens opened in 2018, others not opening for a variety of reasons including ill health, weather and work being carried out on gardens. During 2018 12 garden owners left the scheme, some due to health but most returning to the UK. However, we registered 59 new gardens during the same period. About 57% of those gardens are French owned, showing an increase in the number of French garden owners. The nationality breakdown of new gardens in 2018 is 25 English, 33 French and 1 Dutch. The nationality split across all garden owners is 132 English, 87 French and 5 Dutch. For 2019 we are introducing a new group called 'Friends of Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts' to include anyone who wishes to help the association in other ways such as helping garden owners on their open days, or at Plant Fairs or special events.

Database/Website

Our database includes all who have 'registered an interest' in our scheme. This includes Area Coordinators, garden owners, Membership Cardholders (past and present), helpers, and anyone who has asked to receive our newsletters. The database is constantly updated and entries are offered the opportunity to 'unsubscribe' whenever Newsletters are sent out. At the end of 2017 we had 2,860 people registered on our database and at the end of 2018 we had 4,016 people.

Our website and data management systems continue to provide vital information about the scheme and our gardens to potential garden visitors and other interested parties alike. They have proved invaluable to the operation of the scheme. During 2018 the website attracted just under 10,000 unique users who visited our pages over 57,000 times. We have noticed a significant rise in the number of French language visitors in 2018, now varying between 30-40% each month.

Social Media

The OGJO Facebook page was used to good effect in 2018 to advertise garden opening days and other local or national events. Links were created to around 60 French and English Facebook Groups in France, seen by over 10,000 people. Social media also provided links with our sponsors and partners. We are conscious of an increase in coverage of OGJO activities in the French media.

Donations to Beneficiaries

In 2018 we donated the 25 500€ to 15 charities (including 5 first time charities) in France. Since the association formed in 2013 (with just four gardens, raising 300€) we have made donations to 17 French charities totalling more than 75 000€. Our main beneficiary continues to be A Chaçon son Everest! and we donated 15 000€ to them again in 2018. The inclusion of this charity, particularly at Chantilly where we are helped by one of the French families who have benefitted from A Chaçon son Everest! (who also act as wonderful ambassadors for us), has gained significant interest from the French media and potential French partners.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
CAUSE CARITATIVE							
A Chacun son Everest	300€	2 500€	5 250€	12 000€	15 300€	15 000€	50 350€
Dauphin Corse			500€	1 000€	1 000€	1 000€	3 500€
Rigolopito			500€	500€	500€	500€	2 000€
Quelque chose en plus			1 000€	500€	1 500€	1 500€	4 500€
Le Rire Médecin			500€				500€
Réseau Bulle				500€	1 000€	1 000€	2 500€
AFS Costello & CFC				500€	1 000€	1 000€	2 500€
Bouée d'espoir				500€	1 000€	1 000€	2 500€
Chiens Guides				500€	500€	500€	1 500€
Syndrome Marfans					500€	500€	1 000€
A bras ouverts					1000€	1000€	2 000€
Languedoc Solidarité Réfugiés					500€		500€
Dessine-Moi Un Mouton						500€	500€
Rayon de Soleil						500€	500€
Fonds Guilhem						500€	500€
P'tits Doudous d'Aliénor						500€	500€
APTED						500€	500€
Total donated by year	300€	2 500€	7 750€	16 000€	23 800€	25 500€	75 850€

Presented at the AGM 27th February 2019

by Richard Ogier.