

SLBI Trustees 2022

Emmanuel Asamoah became a trustee in August 2019. He replaced Marlowe Russell as Treasurer in June 2020. He is an ACCA qualified accountant, has an MBA in Financial Management and MSc in Professional Accounting. He has extensive experience of leading Finance, HR, Governance & IT departments, and of running organisations from resources perspectives within and beyond the UK charity sector. He is currently, Finance, HR & Admin Director and Company Secretary for an International development organisation. His interests include music, drumming, snooker, public speaking, and reading.

Gabriela Avendano joined the SLBI in early 2020, and has lived locally for twenty years. She is fully qualified RIBA chartered architect and has been running her south London based practice with her partner for sixteen years. Gabriela has experience of wide ranging projects from new-build affordable housing schemes and commercial developments to the extensive refurbishment of historic buildings, many of which have also been listed buildings in Conservation Areas. She also has experience of sustainable building technologies some of which could also be applied to prolonging the life of the SLBI's Victorian home. She is looking forward to learning about all aspects of the SLBI from the team.

Paul Bodley is a senior consultant at a leading communications agency where he specialises in brand strategy, integrated communications and content development for some of the world's most innovative companies. Excited by the opportunity to explore the world of botany whilst introducing the subject to new audiences, he joined the SLBI in 2020.

Michael Clarke has been a trustee since 2016 and is a long term local resident. He first encountered the SLBI through bringing his children to a half term workshop. He brings a wealth of management and governance experience to the SLBI from his many years working in Digital Media, Higher Education and charities, and is currently Head of Information and Helpline at Turn2us.org.uk.

Mel Harakis joined the SLBI in 2010. She is a qualified teacher in further education specialising in maths, special educational needs and teacher training. In addition to teaching, Mel has had various roles in the voluntary sector in homelessness, offender learning and mental health, managing both projects and teams. Now living in East London, she grew up in South Devon, where her love of the outdoors and all things green began. A self professed (very) amateur gardener and forager, Mel also enjoys yoga, wild camping and walking.

Olly Parsons

Olly was co-opted to the Board of Trustees in 2020. Olly is Director of the GSMA 'Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation Fund', where he supports the global humanitarian sector to improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance through the use of technology. He holds a BSc in Geography and an MSc in Sustainable Development and Technology, and is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. An avid houseplant collector, terrarium enthusiast and lover of moss, Olly supports the SLBI in enhancing Marketing, Communications and Income-Generation.

Marlowe Russell has been a trustee since 2007, and served as Treasurer for much of that time. Her background includes fine art, business, social policy, community work, anthropology, financial management, teaching and creative writing. She is strongly committed to learning, curiosity and the unexpected delights offered by the SLBI.

Susan Simmonds is thrilled to be a trustee of SLBI. A gardener since she was a small child, a career highlight was winning a medal at the Chelsea Flower Show for a charity garden to raise awareness of aging. Susan has spent most of her career in the charity sector as a CEO, Board Chair and international communications advisor; roles which have taken her to Asia, US and the Middle East. When not growing plants, she is a keen diver, genealogist, jam maker and aspiring amateur archaeologist.

Cherry Simpkin is the SLBI Company Secretary. She has a law degree and has wide experience in charity governance. She is a member of several plant-oriented charities and is particularly interested in the healing effects and environmental importance of plants.

Roy Vickery worked in the Department of Botany at the Natural History Museum from 1965 to 2007, and remains a Scientific Associate at the Museum. His Museum activities now focus on lichen curation, but for many years he was in charge of the Flowering Plant herbaria. His interests are plant folklore and English plant-names. He has been a SLBI trustee for many years, including 10 years as chairman and 8 years as president.

Maria Vorontsova (also known as Bat) has been a grass taxonomist at Kew Gardens since 2010. Her primary research speciality are the grasses of Madagascar and she runs a multidisciplinary research group to investigate their ecology and evolution. Bat is a patriotic Londoner keen on building a better relationship between fellow Londoners and their local plants.