



Friends of Valley Gardens

Harrogate's Award-Winning Park

FOVG Newsletter July 2011

Firstly I would like to welcome all our new members who kindly joined during our past events. Friends of Valley Gardens are a voluntary organisation for those who care about our environment, especially the amenities of our Valley Gardens. Anyone who can make a contribution, even in the smallest way, is welcome to join both in the hard graft and also in the social side of getting together in the interests of the community.

Before I go any further I would like to mention the opening of a major new amenity to the park which many of you will have seen by now, and to bring to light our present project, The Old Magnesia Well Pump Room (Witches House).

Opening of the Skate Park

Harrogate's new skate park opened on 23rd May 2011 after much anticipation. The park, which is designed to accommodate skateboards, in-line skates, BMX bikes and scooters, has exceeded expectations both with performers and spectators. Users are effectively managing the park themselves. There are minor issues arising with seating, drainage, seeding and reinforcing. These are being carefully evaluated and will be dealt with. There have been a small number of unruly participants who are breaking the rules by riding in the gardens on their way to the Skate Park. Users of the Skate Park must proceed on foot to the facility. This must be an ongoing concern and discouraged by all those who obey the rules of our Valley Gardens.

Magnesia Well Pump Room Refurbishment Project

As you may already know, two events were held in June to raise funds to restore and refurbish the Grade 2 Listed Magnesia Well Pump Room building into an information and education centre. Later in the year the area surrounding the building will be selectively thinned followed by new planting in the spring of 2012. Landscape architects have drawn up plans and these were put out for public consultation. Volunteer gardeners will work alongside the Harrogate Council Garden Team in the thinning and replanting process.

On completion of the restoration volunteer members will provide guided tours of the gardens explaining their spa heritage and floral attributes. Funds raised in this way will be used to maintain the building, rendering the project 'cost neutral'. The estimated cost of refurbishing the outside of the building is between £25,000 and £30,000.

The 40s Tea Dance was a great success it was held in the afternoon of Wednesday 15th June 2011 at the Cairn Hotel, Harrogate, to the music of Terry Wadkin, who has regularly performed for Tea Dances in the Sun Pavilion. The presence of the Mayor, Councilor Les Ellington, and Mayoress was appreciated by everyone. The ballroom provided a spacious venue for the 50 who attended. Those present included regular tea dancers from as far afield as Lincolnshire and residents of Adelphi and Hampden House who, lacking mobility, were supported by care assistants. All enjoyed the music and 40s themed decorations. For the raffle, Betty's supplied tea prizes; Lengs fruit shop donated a basket of fruit and Mary Smeaton a delightful flower arrangement. Jennifer

Whitelegg donated 40s design flower arrangements for the individual tables. Funds raised by this event were: Gross £515.30, Net £248.80

On the day several requested regular Tea Dances. Hence we are having a Tea dance on Thursday September 22nd: Doors 1.30pm; Dancing 2.00pm-4.00pm at The Cairn Hotel. Music by Terry Wadkin. Depending on support we shall have another Tea Dance in December. Possibly members and persons wishing to support the development of the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room could let us know if they wish to support these events.

Contact Jane Blayney 01423 505231 or jane.blayney 23@gmail.com

The 40s Day Event held on Saturday 18th June 2011 in the Valley Gardens was also a memorable day, which is to be repeated next year on Sunday 10 June. Over £1,500 was raised. The Deputy Mayor Cllr Pat Jones and her consort, Brian, joined in the spirit of the day and were indulged with a lunch of spam sandwiches and 'dandelion and burdock'. Maria Manchester sang 40s songs lustily in the bandstand following the excellent performances by the children of Richard Taylor and Western School. Children's activities attracted many in the park that day. Numerous military uniforms, 40s outfits and army vehicles added to the atmosphere of the day. Two 'Hodges' from Dad's Army directed traffic and announced the events and the siting of the specific stands at regular intervals. Molly Dancers provided a quintessentially English touch to the day. Harrogate 20th Scouts and St Peter's Boys Brigade provided drinks and sustenance to visitors. The Magnesia Well Café and Hales Bar staff dressed 40s style for the day. The local community was very generous in their donations for the tombola. Over 20 stands were booked for the occasion both selling goods and promoting numerous causes/charities.

Tours of the Magnesia Well Pump Room were given. Many had never seen inside this building, also known as the 'Witches House.'

The community and commercial stands were rather spread out over the park as some feared the weather on the day and requested covered facilities. Next year we are hiring the Sun Pavilion to give these excellent stands, especially the 40s themed ones, a better environment. Also this means we can provide music throughout the day. This year we were curtailed by an afternoon wedding. *Funds raised by this event were: Gross £1550.75, Net £1205.85.*

Yes, we are a long way from our goal of £60,000, but it's a great start towards the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room Project and the committee would like to thank everyone involved for their efforts and contributions. Thank you all very much.

Remember for your diary- the next 40s Day is Sunday June 10th 2012!

Future events and what's on:

Volunteer Gardeners - weeding, mulching and picnic lunch

Tony Sissons, one of our founder members, is needing volunteers for weeding and mulching in the New Zealand Garden, Valley Gardens. Tony has arranged with Simon, head gardener in Valley Gardens, for FOVG gardening volunteers to meet on **Thursday 14th and Friday 15th July 2011 at 10:00**. This will be the week before Yorkshire in Bloom Judging Day (Wed 20 July 2011) and they will concentrate on weeding and mulching in the NZ Garden. They will stop for lunch and continue in the afternoon. A picnic lunch should be brought. If they have enough volunteers we will also apply wood preservative to the chainsaw sculptures and weed and mulch other areas in the Gardens. They will make it a social event as well as gardening. You will have a chance to learn about NZ plants besides gaining some useful exercise. They will stop for a 'bring your own' picnic lunch and continue in the afternoon.

Simon has been spraying some outbreaks of Japanese knotweed. It appears that some fragments were brought in with the extra topsoil which was introduced when we were preparing the ground for replanting in 2009. This emphasises the importance of disposing of knotweed fragments on the bonfire and not on the compost heap. Simon seems to have succeeded in killing off the new shoots, but we must be most vigilant for any fresh outbreaks.

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Tony at tony@sissons.demon.co.uk or phone him on **01423 565942**. You are required to complete a Harrogate Borough Council form as a disclaimer for insurance purposes. This is a necessary requirement.

Garden Visit:

Tony would also like to know if any members and friends would be interested in joining him on an outing to Italian garden designer Arabella Lennox-Boyd's garden at Gresgarth Hall near Lancaster. She would be an ideal candidate for designing our stream-side rockery replanting project. Please feel free to take a look at the link: <http://www.arabellalennoxboyd.com/gresgarth/gresgarth2.html> Please let Tony know of your interest with a view to arranging a mutually convenient date: email: tony@sissons.demon.co.uk or phone him on **01423 565942**

Quintessential Concert:

Our next main fundraiser will be the Quintessential concert which will be held on Saturday 16th July 2011: doors open 7:30pm at St Roberts Church and Chapter House, Main Street, Pannel. All proceeds will be in aid of the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room Project. If anyone would like tickets, priced at £10 each, or would like to know more about the event, please contact our secretary Helen McCallum at helenm534@aol.com or Tel: 01423 507208.

Next meeting:

General Meeting: - Will be held Thursday 21st July 7:00pm, Harlow Hill Club, 12 College St, off Otley Road, Harrogate, HG2 0AH, All members welcome.

To Finish:

More Volunteer Friends Needed

If you believe you can contribute a little of your time, skills and enthusiasm to help raise funds, man our stands, or help maintain and develop the gardens, please contact the secretary, Helen, by email at: helenm534@aol.com or Tel: 01423 507208. We have taken on a big task. Your help is needed and will be much appreciated. For any further information please see our website www.friendsofvalleygardens.co.uk

Jane Blayney
Chairman
Friends of Valley Gardens
July 2011