



Friends of Valley Gardens

Autumn News Letter 2011

Welcome...

Firstly, hello again to all of our 160 members, and a big thank you to *everyone* who helped out over the summer months. FOVG continues to go from strength to strength and that is down to the unwavering commitment shown from all.

The real test comes now, it is important for us to push on during the winter months and keep up the hard work.

The last few months...

After the disgraceful arson attack on the children's play area in early October, it has become of paramount importance to ensure that the park is fully restored as quickly as possible. Consultation took place via our Facebook page, and many of our members took part in a vote to how they would like the new castle built. All the feedback and suggestions have been gratefully received and Harrogate Borough Council is now currently contemplating the best materials with which to rebuild the castle. Harrogate Borough Council's insurers have settled the claim providing the council with just under £48,000. However, the council's insurance excess amounts to £5,000 and after the attack took place many residents and companies offered to help. FOVG have been chosen as the group to receive any donations for the playground appeal and an account has now been set up. Should more than £5,000 be raised, this will be spent on further play area improvements in the Valley Gardens. So far we have gratefully received a number of offers together with a very generous donation of £2,000 from the ladies at Menwith Hill Community Heart Beat. Further information can also be found on our website. Also read the FOVG articles in Neighbourhood News in the Harrogate Advertiser for updates of events and developments.

On a lighter note, the **Big Picnic** was a great success in the Gardens, if not financially, then certainly from a promotional aspect. As the glorious July sun beamed down over the park we managed to turn some heads and get people talking.

Unfortunately the **Tea Dance** failed to attract the same Beatles mania-esq hysteria that had hit the previous dance. However with some very generous donations given by two of our members the event raised £445.35. Sadly due to this event only attracting small numbers, the committee have decided to postpone the next dance until a more affordable venue arises. This news will be very disappointing to the regular attendee's, but I would like to stress that the committee have vowed to do their utmost to find a venue with fewer overheads, so fingers crossed we will see them back soon.

The National Play Day was another promotionally-rewarding event. . It has been suggested that the next Play Day will focus more on promoting the Magnesia Well and FOVG's future projects in the park.

The Allotment Day was similarly promotional rather than a large financial success. Thanks go to the organisers who gave us a better site this year nearer to the hub of the events.

The vocal ensemble 'Quintessential' entertained in excess of 60 paying guests at St Robert's church, Pannal. The choir performed an eclectic range of material much to the delight of the audience. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Peter and Liz Stretton, the event raised £630. Also, many thanks to Helen McCallum and Betty Bentley for their work on the night, and their continuing support. Helen has stressed that Betty needs a special mention as we think she is a credit to our group and full of energy. Throughout summer you will always see her in the Dahlia border keeping it in order.

The Flower Show. FOVG was selected as the 'chosen charity' for the autumn flower show; we had a great opportunity to showcase ourselves to fans of the Gardens from outside the Harrogate area. The enthusiasm of the attendees really emphasised what a special place the Valley Gardens is. Generous donations of £1,845.36p were raised over the 3 days. Thank you to everyone for giving up their free time to shake buckets and especially to our President Martin Fish for recommending us to the selection committee.

The Heritage Open Day Advisory group called for nominations and this became an opportunity for FOVG to boast its own unique piece of history - The Magnesia Well. The committee opened the Old Magnesia Well over a three day period and attracted in excess of 500 visitors.

Thank you to Christine, Tony, Jim, Anne, Bridget, Des and Helen for their help organising the visitors, and thanks to Jane, Peter and Neil who provided excellent presentations on the Spa Heritage of Harrogate, and the history of the building during the open days.

Pictured left to right: Bridget Boden, Jane Blayney (Chairman), Peter Blayney, Des Smeaton and Neil Hughes (Vice Chairman).



Over £200 was raised over the 3 day period along with 8 new members, but again, the real plus came from being attached and associated with National Heritage, after all, our Gardens are a beautiful example of British heritage.

Open Garden. A special mention goes to the ongoing efforts of Pat Clarke. Pat opened her garden to the public and raised a fantastic £212 pounds, a big thank you to Pat.

Waitrose. Friends of Valley Gardens would like to thank Waitrose for selecting us to be one of their three “Green token” charities for the month of September. The proceeds amounted to £425, a nice ‘token’ of appreciation from the people of Harrogate.

Going forward...

The Old Magnesia Well Pump Room will continue to be a primary focus of the FOVG:

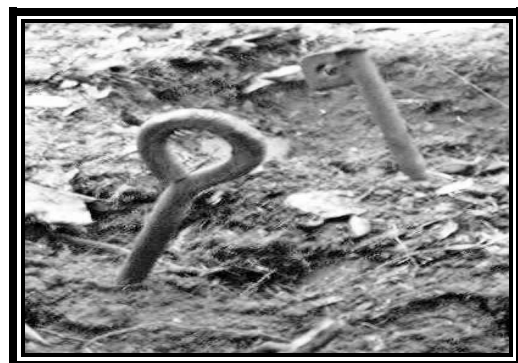
The NEDL boxes (electrical distribution boxes attached on the rear of the building) are being investigated further with a view to relocating them. When it comes to the point of requesting planning permission for the restoration works, plans will need to be submitted to the Planning Committee who will make appropriate recommendations to the Secretary of State. The FOVG committee have been working closely with HBC on the removal of these boxes, and finally this is looking more and more positive with respect to leaving this building in its grade II listed state. A great result for all involved and we will keep everyone posted with future developments.

Work has now begun, *“at last I hear you all say”*, and the 9th of November witnessed an important step in the process of restoring the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room to its former glory. A start was made on the overgrown surrounding area. It had been decided to clear much of the undergrowth together with a few of the previously marked trees and bushes in an attempt to see how best to proceed with further clearance in order to fully reveal this important building.



Pictured here is the first pile of cuttings awaiting removal together with the cutting team.

Left to right: Peter Blayney, Simon Collier (Head Gardener HBC), Tom Holleman and Tony Sissons.



Pictured in the above right are large tent pegs belonging to marquees erected in the days of the Flower Shows were discovered in the area. These had to be dug out and will be put to different uses by HBC Head Gardener, Simon Collier pictured with the team.

Decisions to be made...

Harrogate Borough Council Proposes Design and Location for New Games in Parks Pavilion and Toilets Near Play Area: A proposal for a new Games in Parks Pavilion, including toilets, has recently been presented by HBC for consultation. The plans are on show at the Crescent Gardens offices of HBC and on our website www.friendsofvalleygardens.co.uk . The proposed location is shown on the plans. Your input on these plans is desired and is very important. It appears from the drawing that the pavilion will be placed inside the play area between the two entrances. Is this the best location? It is certainly convenient for those using the play area. Perhaps you would prefer a more inconspicuous location that does not block the view of the play area from the Gardens? The building will contain one male toilet, one female toilet, and one accessible/baby changing toilet. Is this sufficient or should more facilities be provided? Will the toilets be open to all including the users of the tennis courts, skatepark, and golfing activities? If not open to all, how will access be restricted? The design appears to be similar to other toilet blocks around Harrogate with 1930's looking white rendered blocks and red rosemary tiled roofs. This is also similar to the existing Games in Parks Office. Should we consider whether or not the style is in keeping with Valley Gardens which is largely Victorian in style? Would you like to propose an alternate design concept? Do you have other thoughts about the proposal?

If you would like to express your opinion regarding the plans, please contact Neil Hughes, Vice Chair, via email: neil@shelbournehouse.co.uk or write to Neil at Shelbourne House, 78 Kings Road, Harrogate HG1 5JX. Please let us know your thoughts. Please do not forget to leave your names and addresses for HBC confirmation. Let's not forget, it is on these occasions that it is important we speak up.

Here and Now...

Acting Administration Officer. Hopefully you will have noticed the information flooding in from our acting administration officer Sue Clarke. We created this post as a matter of urgency to give better support and enhanced communications to our rapidly growing membership. We now have over 160 members, nearly a third of those members do not have email accessibility.

This time consuming job needs a permanent officer and hopefully by now you will have received a nomination slip. If you would like to put yourself forward (or another) then please contact our Secretary, (Helen McCallum, 54 Swinton Court, Harrogate HG2 0BB or by email to helenm534@aol.com).

A vote will be taken at the next General Meeting on November 17th. There will also be a vote for the position of Marketing / Publicity Officer. I would like to thank Sue for standing in at short notice, updating all emails, home addresses and making contact with all members new and old. Great job, well done.

Up-coming events...

Fish and Chips Quiz Night. We are pleased to announce that our second fish and chips quiz night is to be held on Saturday 26th Nov at 7:00 PM at the Harlow Hill Club (off Otley Road), Harrogate. Tickets are £10 per person with all proceeds going to support the Magnesia Well Project. Let's have a big turn out from all of our members and also try and get some new faces along. The Deputy Mayor, Pat Jones, and her consort have confirmed their attendance. It will be a great night and a chance for all our members to meet and discuss the past year and what's ahead. Who can resist Fish and Chips with a pint of ale?

Santa's Grotto. Plans are underway to make use of the Magnesia Well Pump Room this festive season. The Magnesia Well Pump room will be decorated and turned into a Grotto. Santa will be travelling from the North Pole and listening to all, children will also be able to post their list direct to the big bearded boss himself Mr Clause. Our plan for the day will be to sell festive cakes, decorate biscuits, and taste mulled wine with a choir singing Christmas carols throughout. Santa at the Mag Well Pump Room will be held on Saturday the 17th December 2011 at 11:30 am through to 3:30pm. All donations will go to the Magnesia Well Restoration Project.

1940's Open Day. We can confirm that after the huge success of its maiden event, the Valley Gardens will be hosting another 1940's day next summer on Sunday June 10th, so make a note in your diaries and remember there will be something for all ages. Everyone involved knows what hard work it was but what a special day it turned out to be. Furthermore, lessons were learned and next year's event will be bigger and better. Closer to the date we will be looking for volunteers to help with the set-up and pull down so look out for the notices sometime next spring. With help from our members I am sure we can raise even more money for the trust and have fun at the same time.

Commercial stands will be hired out at £30 and non-commercial at £10. Next year we have the Sun Pavilion and the bandstand for the whole day.

We are now taking reservations so please contact jane.blayne23@gmail.com to reserve your place or telephone 01423 505231

And finally, it is a pleasure to announce the return, by popular demand, of the FOVG's **Photo of the Month** competition. Our last Chairman, Tom Holleman, created a slot on our website for members to send in their favourite snaps. The best photo was then selected as the celebrated 'Photo of the Month', which will now have the added prestige of being placed on Facebook and Twitter. We would just like to take the opportunity to ask every one of all ages, who takes lovely photo's of our beloved Valley Gardens throughout the year to please send them to neil@shelbournehouse.co.uk and who knows, they maybe uploaded onto our site.

Last, but by no means least, it is our absolute pleasure to announce that the Friends of Valley Gardens have now banked, close to £10,000, a truly outstanding figure.

THANK YOU EVERYONE!

Liam Clarke
Acting Marketing and Publicity Officer.