



# *Albatross*

*The Newsletter of  
Friends of Valley Gardens, Harrogate  
Autumn / Winter 2015*



## **PEAT GARDEN PROGRESS**

Planting in the Peat Garden is nearing completion thanks to the hard work of the Friends of Valley Gardens volunteers and Harrogate Borough Council gardeners, plus help from Western School children with the bulb planting and not forgetting the Mayor, our very own, Councillor Jim Clark, Mayoress Councillor Shirley Fawcett and MP Andrew Jones. Planting and weeding have continued apace and, with the improved drainage, progress towards completion seems unstoppable. With the clearance of a few more pieces of vegetation and some planting to the west, the background setting to the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room will steadily improve.

The garden now has a variety of native and non-native plants including alpiners, ferns, herbaceous perennials, shrubs and trees. Month by month the area has come alive with beautiful display superseding beautiful display, much admired by the many visitors who can hardly believe the changes that have been made as plants mature affording new panoramas. Initially puzzled by the smell of coffee, the discerning visitor soon realises that there is a thick layer of spent coffee granules round the hostas along the woodland fringe in an attempt to keep the slugs at bay.

As the garden matures and evolves, we hope that more plants will attract the eye, bringing pleasure to everyone.

## **ANNE'S ANGLE**

With the installation of the information boards work on the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room is now complete. We've also come in under budget thanks to the negotiating skills of our committee. The final cost of the restoration is £82,000; but we can't stop there as we need to keep fundraising for the next phase of our efforts in Valley Gardens, restoring the Japanese Garden, the Green Park gates and the improvement of vistas.

Our thanks go to all our members and donors for their magnificent support both financially and physically, especially to the grant-making bodies and companies who have helped us to cover the majority of our costs. A display inside the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room pays tribute to them.

Remember to put 19 June into your 2016 diary to help with the 1940s Open Day; and also to come along and have a great day out. We need to keep increasing the funds we raise year on year to make it a worthwhile event. This year we raised the amazing sum of £7,200, which was £1,200 more than last year. The more helpers we have, the more money we can put towards our next projects. If you would like to help, please get in touch with a member of the committee below.

## **WILFORD'S DILEMMA**

I have been extolling the wonders of the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room for what seems like an age but now have a new toy that makes it easier to entertain.

In the immediate past people listened eagerly to the history of the building, the well and its purveyors, but nine out of ten would ask "can we try the medicinal water?" "No" was all I could say. Now, after many years of fundraising and hard graft, we have a dispensing plinth, sink and pump, and what a difference it makes. I can say "Yes".... But can I? Much as I would like to dispense "the real stuff" from the wellhead, as it was some 150 years back, the reality is that to do so would be nigh on impossible given today's health and safety regime. So all we can do now is run mains water to the pump.

And here's the dilemma. Do I tell the willing "guinea pigs" who throng to try "the cure" that it is Harrogate tap water and not precious mineral water infused from deep in the bowels of the earth? In the end I have decided that, for the integrity of the Friends of Valley Gardens, I have ultimately to tell the truth..... but not without having a spot of fun first. "Here's a sample" I say "and, if you would like to make a donation of, say, £1, you can tell me what you think of it". They sip and gargle like wine tasters in a vineyard, and the vast majority say it doesn't taste much different from ordinary tap water, but the odd one will claim that they can taste the magnesia and thank me for the experience. The look on their faces when I own up is priceless, ranging from embarrassment to a broad grin. To date no one has asked for their donation back, and all have left happy.

John Wilford a.k.a. Robert Grange.

## **SUBS MATTER**

A plea. If you have not paid your subscription and it is overdue, please do so before you forget again. You can do this by sending a cheque for £10 (individual) or £15 (family) to Vice Chairman Jon Collins, 10, Glebe Road, Harrogate HG2 0LZ or, better still, ask our Treasurer, Anne Grange for a standing order and Gift Aid form.

Membership subscriptions are a useful way of helping to maintain "the Friends" in a healthy state financially to enable the valuable work in Valley Gardens to continue.

## 1940s OPEN DAY - ANOTHER "HIT"

No edition of Albatross would be complete without a report on the latest 1940s event. According to official figures issued by Harrogate Borough Council over 27,000 people visited Valley Gardens on 28 June on the occasion of our fifth 1940s Open Day. A full programme of events was held, mainly centred on the bandstand. The day started with "evacuees" from Western Primary School following the Skipton British Legion Marching Band from the entrance. The children were greeted by the Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor and Mrs Nigel Simms and chairman Jane Blayney and each given a packet of sweets. Following this the audience was treated to nostalgic songs enthusiastically sung by three choirs. Next came swing band Echo 4 2 who entertained splendidly until, right on cue, came the highlight of the day, the flypast by a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Spitfire. After a hesitant approach, which the pilot, Wing Commander Helliwell, later explained was due to the unauthorised intrusion of a microlight in his path, there followed a magnificent display of flying that delighted those watching. Echo 4 2 then resumed and, encouraged by Major Swing, dancing continued. Finally another choir concluded the acts. The audience did not want to go.

Elsewhere, there were 1940s re-enactments and a large selection of wartime vehicles with owners dressed in 1940s uniforms. 609 (WR) Squadron Leeming brought a recruitment tent. The Yorkshire Regiment provided a popular obstacle course and a recruitment tent. The Army Foundation College bravely assisted with the collecting buckets. It was good to see the Services so well represented. Harrogate Lions kindly provided an expert team of traffic marshals. There were attractions for young and old alike as well as many stalls in the Sun Pavilion offering a wide choice of wares. Vintage vehicles and two steamrollers completed the motorised attractions. Visitors were able to avail themselves of a wide choice of catering from tea and cakes to fish and chips and a hog roast and Hales Bar offered Pimms and a full bar service.

The day went well. It was gratifying to see so many entering into the spirit of the occasion by dressing in 1940s styles and wartime military uniforms. The £7,200 raised was enough to complete the restoration of the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room and even provide a start for ensuing projects. We do need more man and womanpower to be actively involved in these events. Please contact any member of the committee - see below.

### FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

The Old Magnesia Well Pump Room is at last ready for opening. This would not have been possible without the assistance of the membership and loyal hardworking volunteers and I want to express gratitude to them and indeed to the community and sponsors for their wonderful support, generosity and donations.

Mark Coston, Wayne Trott and Patricia McLaughlin from Harrogate Borough Council have been excellent Clerks of Works and our willing partners in the project. Mike Middleton from Harrogate Borough Council has nobly supported us through our main funding events, the 1940s Open Days, over the last five years. Our gratitude goes also to the Army and R (Aux) AF and especially the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight for providing thrilling aerial spectacles last year and this, helping to attract over 27,000 visitors to Valley Gardens each day.

Our next 1940s Open Day is on Sunday 19 June 2016 and we are already open for stall bookings - contact me, Jane Blayney 01423 505231 or [jane.blayney23@gmail.com](mailto:jane.blayney23@gmail.com)

Simon and Paula Collier and the Valley Gardens Gardeners' Team have been invaluable over yet another year with their support and guidance of members in the development of the Peat Garden, maintaining the dahlia bed and New Zealand Garden and planting throughout the Valley Gardens area. Unfortunately, Tony Sissons is no longer able to organise the Volunteer Gardeners' Team due to ill-health but Liz Chidlow has stepped into the breach and is keeping us all hard at work. We meet fortnightly, email [liz.chidlow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:liz.chidlow@hotmail.co.uk) to join us.

At the last AGM the number of Trustees was extended to six - Jane Blayney (Chairman), Jon Collins (Vice Chairman), Anne Grange (Treasurer), Peter Blayney (Secretary), Councillor Jim Clark and Liz Chidlow (Volunteer Gardener Organiser).

### FUTURE EVENTS

<u>When</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Where</u>
10 - 13 September 11 am to 4 pm	Heritage Open Days	Old Magnesia Well Pump Room
10 September 7 pm	General Meeting with speaker Martin Fish "A Life in Gardening"	St Peter's Church
6 October 4.30 for 5 pm	Grand opening	Old Magnesia Well Pump Room
17 March 2016 7 pm	Annual General Meeting	St Peter's Church
19 June 2016 11 am to 5 pm	6 <sup>th</sup> 1940s Open Day	Valley Gardens

*Chairman: Jane Blayney (01423) 505231, Vice Chairman: Jon Collins (01423) 506935, Treasurer: Anne Grange (01423) 522720,  
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