



Friends of
Valley Gardens
Harrogate

Albatross

The Newsletter of Friends of Valley Gardens, Harrogate

SPRING/SUMMER 2016 (latest edition)



CHAIRMAN WINS COVETED AWARD

Congratulations to our Chairman, Jane Blayney, on winning the Harrogate and District Community Volunteer of the Year Oscar. The award, sponsored by Ackrill Media Group and others, was presented last October at a glittering ceremony at the Old Swan Hotel for Jane's tireless work heading up the Friends of Valley Gardens (FOVG) team responsible, together with representatives from Harrogate Borough Council (HBC), for the restoration of the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room and the rock garden, not forgetting the new sensory garden. Commenting on the award, Jane stated "*This would not have been possible without the hard work of all Friends of Valley Gardens volunteers*".

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION CENTRE

The Old Magnesia Well Pump Room was officially opened on 6 October last by Harrogate historian and Freeman of the Borough, Malcolm Neesam. In attendance were the Mayor, Councillor Nigel Simms and Mayoress, Lynne Simms. Since then a team of volunteers has enabled the building to be open on the first Sunday of every month. This has resulted in a considerable number of visitors eager to learn more about the restoration of the building, the development of the Valley Gardens and Harrogate's spa heritage or just mildly curious to look at the magnificent collection of "Harrogate" bottles and artifacts and to sample "Harrogate" special (tap) water!

ANNE'S ANGLE

As one of the volunteers at the monthly opening of the Old Magnesia Well Pump Room, Anne Grange with husband Robert is keen to encourage visitors to become members of FOVG, emphasising that this does not necessarily involve any commitment to help at events or with volunteer gardening. It is purely to keep up to date with what's happening in the Valley Gardens and to support FOVG financially via the membership fee (£10 individual or £15 Family). Donations received will be put towards the current projects – the restoration of the Japanese Garden and the Green Park entrance (off Valley Drive). Firm prices are being obtained for the work involved and it is thought that the total cost is likely to be in the order of £150,000, which is a big financial mountain to climb! Fundraising continues with approaches to various trust funds as well as talks to local groups given by our Chairman.

JAPANESE GARDEN

The project to restore and revive the Japanese Garden is progressing slowly through the planning stages. The team responsible has discovered that putting in a bid to Heritage Lottery draws on many different skills and initiatives, which is no surprise to anyone who has tackled this before. Because the application is solely based on Outcomes, we are seeking to involve Community Groups and Educational Establishments in our bid by planning interesting events and involving all age groups.

Our garden designer, Graham Hardman, has been involved in Japanese Garden Design for the last fifteen years and is an active member of the Japanese Garden Society. We are finding it very exciting working with him and his ideas will be available as plans and artist's impressions in time for a week's Consultation Exhibition at St Peter's Church from 2 – 9 May. There will also be an on-line Consultation Form to look out for, and we hope that we shall have members' involvement and full support to permit a positive response as part of our Heritage Lottery application process.

GREEN PARK ENTRANCE

Two sets of pillars have been offered by HBC of which those originally providing access from Kings Road to the Rose Gardens, the pillars to the King Edward VII Memorial Gates, are favoured following inspection by the FOVG team. The original gates were given to the people of Harrogate by industrialist W H Baxter and were removed some time after 1994 to make way for exhibition hall space. The gates themselves, five king posts and 19 railings had been purchased from a scrap metal dealer and were located not far from Harrogate. They were offered to FOVG and we have purchased them. They are extremely ornate and have appropriate historical provenance.

Following meetings with David Kendrew of Kendrew Architectural Metalwork agreement was reached to collect the gates, railings and kingposts and store them. We have received budget costs for the necessary work and drawings have been prepared showing the integration of old and new railings and the kingposts in their proposed setting. A topographical survey, supplied and paid for by HBC has been completed. Further drawings have been incorporated into a Planning Application which has been submitted.

Approval in principle has been obtained from North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) for block paving the tarmac pavement and semi-circular area and the necessary paperwork will be submitted shortly. Jenny Love, our very supportive contact with HBC, has obtained a quotation for the cost of paving from approved contractor, Duffields of Ripon.

It has been suggested that it would be highly appropriate to re-name the entrance “The King Edward VII Memorial Entrance”. As far as is known the only reason it has become known as “The Green Park Entrance” is because of its proximity to the Green Park Hotel. The Green Park Hotel no longer exists and so there is every good reason to think again. What do you think? Please send your views to: pjblayney@gmail.com

NEST BOX WEEK

FOVG, HBC's tree team and Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group (HDBAG) recently celebrated National Nest Box Week by installing six nest boxes suitable for a wide variety of birds in the vicinity of the Peat Garden which surrounds the restored Old Magnesia Well Pump Room.

The nest boxes were specially built for FOVG by Horticap at Bluecoat Wood Nursery and the occasion was observed by many.

Liz Chidlow, FOVG Volunteer Gardener Co-ordinator said *“We are delighted to have worked with our local Horticap, who provide such valuable horticultural training and employment for people with learning disabilities and also to have the support of HDBAG. As spring has arrived we hope the birds will soon be nesting in the boxes, providing much needed additional breeding places as natural nest sites decline, and bringing great pleasure to all who enjoy the beautiful garden landscape and bird life in the Valley Gardens”*.

Children from Western Primary School helped by building a bug hotel and log and twig piles in this part of the Valley Gardens last November. These provide a habitat for insects and spiders which in turn supply the birds with food.

National Nest Box Week is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology to encourage everyone to put up nest boxes in their local area to promote and enhance biodiversity and conservation of our breeding birds and wildlife.

WHAT'S NEXT

Don't forget the next 1940s Open Day on Sunday 19 June from 11.00 am until 5.00 pm. It promises to be bigger and better than ever and, weather and operational issues permitting, there will be a flypast by a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Spitfire/Hurricane. It is our major fundraising event – please support it.

Tombola prizes and cakes are needed, as are helpers on the day. Please contact **Jane Blayney on 01423 505231**.

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