

Friends of Valley Gardens

Newsletter April 2020

No 14

Strange Times Indeed

Just when we thought we were making some real progress with some of our projects we find ourselves placed under house arrest.

Obviously we have had to cancel committee meetings and work parties for the foreseeable future, which is a shame as there were twelve members turned up for the last work party in early March and we got a tremendous amount of work done – Snowdrops transplanted, wildflower seeds sown, flowerbeds tidied and a dozen bags of litter collected. Just think what we might have achieved in the recent spell of sunny weather.

We also had meetings lined up to discuss benches in the park and repairs to railings and the grotto, both of which have been postponed to a date somewhere in the future.

The council garden staff have been transferred to other duties so unfortunately very little maintenance work will be carried out in the near future.

However the most important thing is that we all keep safe and weather the storm so when we are released from our enforced period of hibernation we can set to work on the gardens with renewed enthusiasm.



Sowing wild flower seeds



Transplanting snowdrops

Butterflies

Martin Dove has been butterfly hunting in the fine weather and has so far spotted Small Tortoiseshells, Commas and Peacocks in the park this spring.

News in Brief

Friends of Dean Road Cemetery

Unfortunately the Spring Fair has been postponed until Sunday September 13th. I presume it will become an Autumn Fair.

Fliers

We now have 200 fliers to give out at our next event (whenever that might be) and we might be able to place some in the library and Woodend. Thanks again to McRay Press for doing the printing for free.

Unintentional Consequences

There has been a lot of discussion recently on the improvement of air quality caused by the lockdown in many countries. There have also been a couple of accidental consequences to the lockdown within the park.

There seems to be far fewer ducks on the pond in recent weeks. I presume this is a result of there being less people around to feed them. This is actually a good thing as there were far too many males and this can lead to the females being accidentally drowned during mating in the spring.

The second is the sudden appearance of lots of plastic gloves among the litter, I presume from Tesco shoppers discarding them as they walk through the park.



Floral Sundial

I found this wonderful postcard of a flowerbed in Valley Gardens set up as a sundial and compass. I would guess that this bed was in the same area as the circular beds are now from the position of south on the compass. I have been able to date it to the late nineteen forties or early nineteen fifties. It has no postmark but it was stamped with a brown two pence George V1 stamp and these were only produced from 1950 to 1952.



***There's a flower that shall be mine,
'Tis the little Celandine.
William Wordsworth***

Wordsworth wrote three poems about the lesser celandine and only one about daffodils.

Lesser Celandine

You know spring is on its way when you see drifts of Lesser Celandine appearing under hedgerows and on woodland banks. It is an important nectar source for early emerging bumblebees.

Gardeners see it as a weed to be eradicated but this is quite difficult to do as it reproduces by small knobby tubers and however carefully you remove the plant invariably some of the tubers are left behind to reappear the following year. These tubers were thought to resemble haemorrhoids and the plant was used to treat piles, hence its common name of pilewort.

It was also used as a treatment for scurvy so presumably contains a lot of Vitamin C.

