

Friends of Valley Gardens

October 2021 No 31

AGM

Wednesday November 3rd

Woodend at 7pm

We were unable to hold an AGM in 2020, so we are hoping for better luck this year. It will be held in the Conference Room at Woodend. The business part of the meeting should be fairly short and we will then break for a cup of tea and biscuits.

I will then be giving a talk entitled:

***Following in Anne Bronte's Footsteps;
A Walk in the Park in 1840.***

Although the park didn't officially open until 1860, the area known as the Plantation had been used by the great and good of Scarborough for their daily exercise for at least the previous forty years. Using old maps, guidebooks, sketches, paintings and early photographs I have re-created a walk through Ramsdale Valley to the ancient village of Falsgrave, that Anne Bronte might have done in 1840. Along the way we will discover why bleach is called bleach, how cardomania gripped Victorian society, what a talented family the Inskips were and how much it cost to enter Mr Pearson's Subscription Garden.



Fossil Festival and Freshers' Fair

Some of the group helped out at the Fossil Festival. This involved encouraging people to visit the museum and exhibition tents over the weekend. I was impressed with the various activities on offer and it certainly seemed to be busy for most of the time I was there.

Felicity and Mike took a display board down to Coventry University for their Freshers' Fair to advertise both the Friends of Valley Gardens and the Weaponness Community Group. It proved to be a useful exercise and we have added a further eight people to our mailing list.



***Photographs from the top –
Felicity at the Fossil Festival
Early morning in the park
Blackberries below Londesborough Lodge***

Working Parties

Dates for Working Parties

Sunday October 3rd

Sunday October 24th

Meet under the bridge at 10am

We just had the one working party in September. Nine volunteers picked up a lot of litter, began to plant up the wall border parallel to Valley Road, Cut back sycamore saplings and tidied up the shrub border. Thanks to Hazel Chapman for providing the plants for the border.

Our next session is this coming Sunday, the 3rd October. It will be mainly putting in plants and bulbs. On the slope above the urn bed we will be planting purple leafed hazel, foxgloves, primroses, cowslips and chicory, tidying the little rockery and adding phlox and pink strawberry. We will also be continuing with the wall border, planting heuchera, hosta, astilbe, geranium, foxgloves and columbine. We will also be putting in daffodil, crocus and allium bulbs.

No doubt there will also be plenty of litter to remove.



The Corncockle

Recently a very pretty purple flower has appeared in the park. It is the corncockle and it has a very interesting backstory. It was brought to Britain in the Iron Age and became a common weed of arable fields. Unfortunately, all parts of the plant are poisonous causing vomiting, stomach pains and diarrhoea. Until the twentieth century most grain harvests would have been contaminated by the seed. However the increased use of herbicides and the change to winter wheat has meant that the corn cockle is now very rare in the wild. However it hit the news recently when Countryfile gave away wild flower seeds that contained corncockle seeds. A national newspaper reported this and the BBC were accused of putting people's lives at risk by including such a poisonous plant in the seed mix. This led to Wooton Bassett Council hurriedly fencing off a small meadow planted by the brownies because someone had spotted this highly dangerous flower.

As usual this is an over-reaction, corncockle has been included in wildflower seed mixes for years without incident and is probably the source of our plants. In addition, it is no more poisonous than many plants we already have in the park such as the daffodils, foxgloves, ivy, laurels, hydrangeas, Lords and Ladies and rhododendrons.



Photographs from the top
Another Arty Autumn view
Arum Maculatum (Lords and Ladies) in the park
The highly dangerous Corncockle