

Friends of Valley Gardens

Newsletter June 2019 No 5

News in Brief

Butterfly Walk

We had a very enjoyable butterfly walk in early May even though it was too cold to see any butterflies. 14 brave souls and Alfred the dog made for a very good turnout considering the weather. It was good to chat to other people about the park and to have the time to take a leisurely stroll through the gardens. Thanks to Martin Dove for organising the walk and to Ani for providing tea and coffee afterwards at Londesbrough Lodge. We are still trying to make contact with the Collection's Manager to arrange a visit to the Museum's butterfly collection.

Open Meeting

I think the open meeting on the 7th May was very informative. My thanks to Adrian Perry of South Cliff Gardens, Gill and Ron Wood of Pannett Park and Mick Prince of Weaponess Community Group for sharing their experiences with us.

New Committee

Ten members volunteered to serve on the steering Committee and at the first meeting Felicity Stephenson was asked to chair the group. Jane Millar volunteered as Treasurer and Graham Stephenson was press ganged into being Secretary.

Programme - June, July

Sunday June 9th

Work Party. Meet near Lower Duck Pond at 10am

Thursday June 20th

Committee Meeting, Sitwell Library, Wood End, 7pm

Sunday June 23rd

Great Cake Share and Community Art Event, Crescent Gardens. 1-4pm

Thursday June 27th

10am – Planting of Circular Borders by local school children

7pm – Work party – meet Lower Duck Pond.

Sunday July 14th

Work Party. Meet Lower Duck Pond at 10am.

Saturday July 20th

Festival of Archaeology 10am – 4pm

Thursday July 25th

7pm – Work party – meet Lower Duck Pond.

Further details about these events elsewhere in the newsletter.

Practical Projects

As a committee we decided that choosing regular dates for working in the park would be advantageous. We have chosen the second Sunday morning and last Thursday evening of each month, at least until September. The actual dates are shown above.

As our first practical project we are going to tackle the borders either side of the Crescent Gardens entrance near Londesbrough Lodge. They will need digging over, improving with compost and planting up with shrubs provided by the Parks Department.

Wear strong shoes or boots and bring a pair of gloves. Tools etc will be provided.

The border to be tackled





The state of the Ice House Grotto

Crescent Gardens Get Together Sunday June 23rd 1-4pm

We have been offered the chance to have a stall at this event to promote the work of the Friends. We have jumped at this opportunity but we will have to provide cake. If you would like to volunteer to produce a cake please contact me on friendsofthevalleygardens@gmail.com

Archaeology Festival Saturday July 20th 10am – 4pm

We are looking for volunteers to help at this event. Our main job will be guiding visitors between the three main venues – Wood End, Geology Museum and Art Gallery. It is also an opportunity to publicise our plans as we escort visitors through the gardens. I will provide a crib sheet so you have something to talk about. You are not expected to spend all day there but if you could spare a couple of hours that would be a great help. If you can volunteer contact me on the e-mail shown above.

The view from the Ice House Grotto

The 'Ice House'

I've always known the cave like structure near the bridge over Vernon Road as the Ice House. However I have my doubts that it was actually built as an ice house, I think it is more likely to be a grotto or hermitage, both of which were common Victorian garden features. An ice house would often have an entrance like ours but would then open up into a deep, often brick lined pit where the ice was stored. Chris Cooper and Andrew Clay are going to scour the Wood End records to see if there is any information that might throw light on its origins.

What is not in doubt is the awful state the building is in. It is full of rubbish and needs some restoration to replace missing stones. Putting it right will require the fitting of a strong, possibly steel, door and the employment of a craftsman to restore the stonework. This will require the committee to apply for grants and would be an ideal first project of this type for the group to attempt.

The area surrounding the feature would also benefit from some tidying up and it was suggested that a seat might be placed here to take advantage of the view towards the sea. A certain amount of concern was expressed about this idea as some committee members felt that it would become the focus of anti social behaviour.

However if we wish to tackle anti social behaviour by increasing the number of people using the park then it has to be more welcoming and seating is an important element of that. Of course it is never pleasant when an area is covered in litter or seats are vandalised but should policy be dictated by what a few idiots might do? Clearly, it is important that the matter is very carefully considered before a decision is taken and grants applied for.

It would be interesting to know what other people feel about this issue. Some feedback would be very welcome.

