



Newsletter: September 2018

Welcome to the latest Guy's Cliffe Walled Garden newsletter – the first of a new series of quarterly seasonal updates to keep you informed about forthcoming events and all the busy goings-on in the garden.

From deluge to drought

The year 2018 has been challenging! We had some flooding in spring this year but by the time July and August came around, we were desperate for water. Despite the British weather being so capricious, the garden has flourished and been more productive than ever, thanks to our growing number of volunteers.



Group visits

We continue to increase the public awareness of our work with a rolling series of visits welcoming a wide diversity of guests. Especially gratifying is the increase in first-time visitors, plus a significant number of special interest groups, including horticultural and gardening groups, U3A, art and archaeological societies, WI



groups, community charity groups, the Warwickshire Local History Society and the Warwick Natural History Society. No two visits have been the same and we pride ourselves that we can tailor group visits to suit particular interests.



We're also on the radar of local companies with community support programmes and this year have welcomed Cummings Engineering and JLR to help in the Garden which is much appreciated and welcomed. Cummings helped prepare the Garden for the NGS Open Day. The JLR group did a crash course in lime mortar work and reconstructed three buttresses on the west wall. Better still, they donated a sturdy bench and tools. In the next year, we plan to welcome more educational groups, for the garden is a perfect way to teach the next and current generations, not just about gardening and plants, but about wider themes in maths, art, D&T, geography and history. To promote this we are always pleased to discuss the curriculum opportunities that the Garden offers with local schools and colleges, and also adult groups such as the U3A.

Open days

Once again this year, we opened for the National Garden Scheme and attracted over 250 visitors, and raising nearly £700 towards their cancer charities. Our gates were also opened for Bank Holidays, featuring the interactive display 'Fascination for Ferns', which proved highly popular, even for non-pteridomaniacs, as they might have been called in Victorian times when fern mania was all the rage!



Diary date – Heritage weekend 2018

Each year, some 40,000 volunteers across England organise 5,000 events to celebrate the country's rich history and culture. Guy's Cliffe is part of this exciting event and the garden is open on Saturday, September 15 and Sunday, September 16. Tell your friends and family and do come along to see flowers, ferns, fruits and more and enjoy some refreshments. Find details on the Heritage Open Days website about how this historical and horticultural gem has awoken from its slumber (heritageopendays.org.uk). Keen-eyed youngsters can enjoy a fun ladybird hunt! Free entry but donations always welcome.

Fruits of our labour

The soft fruit bed is now well established. The raspberry crop in particular has proved very popular, with three main varieties including a striking yellow raspberry called 'All Gold'.

Excitingly, this is the first year where the trees have produced a significant crop of varieties that would have been enjoyed in Jane Austen's day, including Mirabelle Ruby and Jubilee plums. In fact, the bullace damson, similar to a modern-day damson, dates back to Shakespeare's day. This is just another example of the historical, social and cultural significance of Guy's Cliffe.

There has been much interest this year in the fern bed which has matured well and attracts many compliments, while the Brassica cages have proved effective keeping off hungry pigeons and caterpillars. Meanwhile, newly laid paved areas have enabled us to erect two greenhouses to help us raise seedlings and tomatoes.



Future plans

We're progressing work on bringing the Peach House back into use and have 'stitched' a problematic crack in the walls using traditional lime mortar techniques. The ultimate plan is to reglaze the structure to provide a sheltered venue for visiting groups with opportunities for educational workshops. This project has raised the most technical considerations that we have so far encountered and we are seeking advice and support from a range of expert sources.



Exhibitions

Given the success of this year's exhibition displays on seeds, bees and ferns we are planning to develop and expand these, with more interactive displays and workshops going forward to next year. These will also include topics such as photography

and plant pests and diseases. There will be another chance to see the much visited 'A Fascination for Ferns' display on the Heritage Days Weekend on the 15th and 16th of this month. The interactive display is a chance to get up close to an interesting and decorative group of plants, and to meet one of their ancestors – a 300-million-year-old fossil!

Accessibility

Since the paths have been completed, it has been our pleasure to invite more wheelchair users to enjoy the garden. To this end, we have also acquired our own chair to make it even easier.

Asters to Zinnias

This year, we planned more diverse flower borders and the results have been spectacular. Rich purple Lavatera, multi-coloured Cosmos, Zinnias, Marigolds, Tagetes, Phlox and Penstemon – a stunning show of colour worthy of any herbaceous border on a grand estate, but in our case, interplanted with vivid red rhubarb chard. All our flowers are grown from seeds, other than the dahlias.



Another puzzle solved

Regular visitors will be interested to hear that we have solved 'the mystery of the missing wall'. It sounds like a ghost story, but one wall really has vanished into thin air. However, it turns out that weather, not supernatural forces, is to blame. In the 1940s, Guy's Cliffe Walled Garden was a market garden. The winter of 1946-47 was very harsh and culminated in a massive gale. Two huge trees toppled into the garden, demolishing the wall. Sadly, all the bricks disappeared too.

In memoriam

Visitors have remarked on the striking 'poppy wall' created by volunteers to honour those who served in the 1914-1918 war, including Algernon Percy, who would have inherited the Guy's Cliffe estate, had he not died at the Battle of Jutland when serving on HMS Queen Mary. His sad and noble demise leaves an intriguing 'what if' question, for his surviving sister married into wealth and had no need of a small estate in Warwickshire. Many gardens declined in post-war Britain, but could Guy's Cliffe have survived in a different form? Visit the garden to discover the true, moving story of Algernon's heroism and ultimate sacrifice.



This year we said a sad farewell to Guy's Cliffe stalwart volunteer Anne Tucker, who was 'always smiling and lit up the garden whenever she arrived'. RIP, Anne.

Milestones



August saw the annual volunteers' barbecue, with a wonderful array of fare and a huge cake to celebrate 20,000 volunteer hours. It has passed 22,000 now, so well done everybody. Let's keep it up!

Our produce is sold via the shop at Hintons and now has a regular clientele and a continual demand for seasonal produce including runner beans, beetroot, carrots, potatoes and courgettes and more.



Don't forget ...

Join us for a cuppa on Friday, September 28, from 10.30am until 3pm, as part of Macmillan's World's Biggest Coffee Morning and do your bit for this major charity.

Our mission

In four years we've come from a rough field to a working kitchen garden. We're proud of the garden and its potential. Ours is so much more than a venue, it's a living restoration project that continues to provide educational and cultural resources for all. No one leaves Guy's Cliffe Walled Garden without knowing more than when they came in.

Join us

New volunteers of any age are always welcome, even if you only have an hour or two. See the website for our regular working days. As we restore the garden, there is a wide range of practical skills that we need. Why not take the opportunity to apply the skills you already have and learn some new ones? Just drop into the garden via Hintons Nursery, Coventry Road, Guy's Cliffe, Warwick CV34 5FJ.



Check out our webpage at www.guyscliffewalledgarden.org.uk or visit our Facebook page at Guy's Cliffe Walled Garden - GCWG and take a look at what's happening.

With best wishes from all at Guy's Cliffe Walled Garden.