



FRIENDS OF OLD DURHAM GARDENS

Registered Charity No. 1164516

NEWS ... April 2020

Issue 13



Open days

(Thursdays and Sundays, 2.00-4.00)

The Walled Garden will be closed until further notice awaiting Government advice

☆☆☆ Events Cancelled ☆☆☆
Unfortunately most events planned for 2020 have had to be cancelled.

Dear Friends and Supporters

Sadly the 2020 season looks like it might be a washout although we managed to host one event – our annual Wassail – in January. But now we may have to resign ourselves to a closed season. Everything that we planned to do this year has been shelved. Trustees are cutting the grass in the walled garden and weeding fortnightly, but that is about it.

However, on a positive note this review of 2019 and more recent developments shows all that took place throughout the year.

BUILDING WORKS

At the end of 2018 we were delighted to hear that Durham County Council had secured a budget for repairs to the gardens. Repairs to damaged stonework on the walls and gazebo have been completed and the lower garden south wall has been built up and made safe together with some repairs to the steps. The gazebo now has replacement doors and new steps from the back. Repairs to the window and the replacement of the finial are outstanding but work has ceased at the time of writing.

Many discussions took place with DCC and their contractors to ensure that materials used were historically accurate – and our special thanks go to Martin Roberts for ensuring that the integrity and authenticity of the work was of the highest standard. We are also grateful to DCC for recognising the value of the gardens and for supporting us in our efforts.

GARDENS

Walled Garden Parterre and borders

Once again the parterre borders bloomed beautifully, although the bays struggled once more but fortunately not as bad as in the previous year. The hollies are looking fine and the newly planted tulips (right) have shown their heads



All the yews in the outer squares have now been heavily pruned. Most have survived but a few may need to be replaced. We plan to keep the 4 central yews and, as with all the other yews, they will be reshaped and hard- pruned into a more authentic pyramid shape.

We plan to realign the squares once the dead yews have been removed, and where the yews extended into the path the area has been seeded with grass. The inner diamonds are to be planted with low level box and we have taken multiple cuttings from our own box hedging.

We wanted to tidy up the unruly borders and, after seeking advice on whether this would be acceptable from a heritage viewpoint, we trialled the west border with metal edging. It has made a big difference to the look of the border and we plan to do the other two borders. We will need to apply for a grant if we decide to do the parterre squares.



Website: www.olddurhamgardens.co.uk

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The walled garden north border was planted up by a group of University volunteers. The summer flowering looked great although the planting and positioning will be reassessed.



Lower Garden

Terrace border - This is still a work in progress and something we had hoped to address in 2020.

Pruning the damsons - In May a stalwart band of trustees and volunteers took on the much-needed task of pruning the damson trees. Thanks to all involved.



Lower garden squares – in 2018 we trialled putting down membrane along one of the borders to reduce weeding. We consider that this has been successful and will continue to do the rest of the borders, albeit a mammoth task.

Some Garden Plans for 2020/2021

We decided to prune/train the walled garden fruit trees for aesthetics rather than productivity. The pears on the east wall – two have been cut back and a third will be moved back asap. The Catshead will be reduced to 2ft below the top of the wall. The lower garden squares will have membrane installed. The terrace border will be a priority. A decision will be made regarding the borders in the car park. We will address the issue of Himalayan Balsam.

VOLUNTEERS

The gardens will only survive if we have people to help us. Our regular Thursday gardeners are vital to the upkeep of the gardens and we would struggle without them. We are also fortunate to have support from several university groups (see picture) as well as corporate groups. Thanks to everyone concerned.



EVENTS

Wassail 2020

Our annual Wassail took place on Sunday 19 Jan with over 60 attending. The weather was kind and we were able to hold the event in the lower garden. Thanks to all those who came along enjoyed the event and for their support and vocal enthusiasm. Special thanks go to Tony & Brenda for leading the singing so brilliantly.



Music in the Gardens – 14 July 2019

This was another great event with over 500 people attending. Thanks to the musicians for making this another great occasion: Plot 77, Durham Scratch Choir, Durham Harmonics Choir, Step This Way with Bones Creek Band and Quar Tetes. Thanks also to all those who helped out providing cakes, plants, stewarding on the day and organising the event and of course to everyone who turned up to enjoy the day.



Shakespeare in the Gardens – 16 June 2019 “The Merry Wives of Windsor”

The visit of Durham Shakespeare Group has become a regular fixture in our events programme and one we look forward to each year. There were



some issues with audibility this time which we and the group plan to resolve for the next event which will probably now be in 2021.

Our thanks to the actors for making this such an enjoyable afternoon.

Heritage Open Days: 2019

In 2019 the gardens were open on Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th September and Sunday 22 September.

At the time of this publication, we do not know whether the Heritage Open Days will go ahead this year.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PAUL BEARD

Paul resigned as a trustee at the AGM. He is one of the founder members of FODG back in 2010 and as a member of The City of Durham Trust was instrumental in persuading the Council to do something about the gardens which had seriously declined between 2003-08. Paul's input and garden knowledge will be sorely missed, although I'm sure we will still keep in touch – we can't miss out on his expertise completely!



Thinking about joining us?

Please contact Angela on 0191 3865188 or contact us via our website: www.olddurhamgardens.co.uk