



FRIENDS OF OLD DURHAM GARDENS

Registered Charity No. 1164516

NEWS ... April 2021

Issue 14

Walled Garden Open Days

Thursdays and Sundays, 2.00-4.00 pm
15 April to end of October

DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

Covid-19 took its toll on the 2020 season. We were able to do some socially-distanced volunteering with a few of our regulars from June to October on Thursdays albeit with limited numbers. We managed to keep on top of the grass-cutting and borders in the walled garden. Unfortunately the lower garden was left very much to its own devices most of the time. We did hold the annual Wassail in the January but all other events were cancelled.

Not much could be done during the early part of this year either but we have now started our Thursday morning volunteer sessions with reduced numbers and social-distancing and from the 15 April we have been able to open up the walled garden to visitors on Thursday and Sunday afternoons with various restrictions and Track and Trace records in place.

We held a Work Day on Saturday 10 April which was well attended and we managed to get quite a bit done concentrating on the walled garden. Thanks to all those who turned up. We have two University volunteer groups due to help out in April.

During lockdowns we know that the lower garden has continued to be popular with members of the community who find it a peaceful place to walk through or picnic with their family.

BUILDING WORKS

All the conservation building work identified by DCC in their original survey has now been completed. A section of the north east wall in the lower garden – on the bank – remains to be consolidated and FODG is in discussion with County Council officers about bringing this repair programme forward, whilst erecting protective fencing in the meantime.

Website: www.olddurhamgardens.co.uk

Find us on:



☆☆☆ Events ☆☆☆

In keeping with national guidance we have not yet been able to schedule any events for 2021. We will contact you if the situation changes. Please check the website and Facebook for updates

GARDENS

Upper Walled Garden Parterre and Borders

Parterre - We plan to widen the narrow diamond channels in the squares, lay down membrane and plant low box hedging. We took some cuttings from our own box hedge last year and several of these have rooted. However, we need 600 plants to fill the diamonds and will need to purchase the majority. We will also buy 6 yews to replace the ones that did not survive the hard pruning to shape them.

Fruit trees - All the espaliered and fanned fruit trees did well and we had plenty of peaches, apricots, plums and gages. We were delighted that the cherries finally produced a good crop. We covered them with netting and managed to pick some for ourselves before the birds got to them.



We want to espalier a pear tree in the east border which is growing too close to the border edge. On advice from the Council we were given a couple of options, either (1) to uncover the front roots by folding back the turf and pruning only those roots which would allow us to secure the tree in a titled position or (2) plant another behind it and remove the original when the new one is big enough. The alternative is to remove the tree and plant a new one.



Tulips – due to the success of the tulips planted in 2019 we planted another 120 at the end of 2020 and these have bloomed well again this year.

Bays – our bay trees, once again, didn't survive the winter and have mostly turned brown again. We are considering replacing them. We've given them a couple of years but they don't survive the winters.

North border – we are reassessing the planting in the border after two years. Some of the plants have done well, others have been rampant and overshadowed other varieties, and some haven't thrived at all. Our Gardening Committee will be looking at this issue in the next couple of months.

Lower Walled Garden

Orchard – we had a good crop of damsons and apples and after a press release inviting people to come and help themselves most of the fruit was picked. Unfortunately, a few of the trees were damaged by people standing on or pulling down the branches.



We were disappointed to lose the very large pear tree next to the north wall east side. It fell laden with fruit. We were fortunate that the Council agreed to remove the tree along with several other trees and overhanging branches along the west boundary and south wall. We are very grateful for this help.

Apple Trees – Mike Hurst gave the gardens two apple trees (1) Flower of Kent (1630) which is said to be the apple Isaac Newton saw falling to the ground, and a Genet variety (1660). Unfortunately one of these has disappeared and we hope that Mike will be able to graft another for us. We also plan to purchase another 7 trees – and we are very grateful to receive a promise of a donation for these.

Balsam bashing – we spent some time bashing balsam in the lower garden and were grateful to the Council for removing some outside the area of the gardens.

Terrace border – a survey of plants in the border is being assessed to establish which plants are authentic 17th century varieties and which are interlopers. Our plan to work on the border this year has been put on hold but hopefully next year we will be able to address this. In the meantime we will continue to weed and keep it tidy.

Raking the meadow - The meadow was cut in the autumn and a stalwart crew of 5 spent one Sunday raking up the grass.



Socially distanced work in the meadow

GAZEBO REFURBISHMENT

The Gazebo interior has been neglected over the years and we hope to start work on it this year creating shelving in the cupboards and in the fireplace, sanding down and staining the floor and replastering the alcove. Thankfully this does not require listed building consent. We will also look at replacing the furniture and “ornaments” with something more authentic.

FUNDING

Having missed out on our fund-raising events last year – and probably this year too – we plan to seek funding from a variety of sources to finance our ambitious plans.

GALA THEATRE

In lieu of their annual pantomime the Gala Theatre crew filmed “Rottenchops Revenge” in several areas around Durham including the gardens. This was screened on their website in December. The crew enjoyed their visit and hope that they may be able to do something else at the gardens in the future.

NORTHERN SAINTS TRAIL PROJECT

This project consists of six long-distance walks based on ancient pilgrim routes. One of the walks - The Walk of Love - passes by the gardens on the way to the shrine of St Cuthbert in the Cathedral. We are hoping that in time this will bring more visitors to the gardens.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING EVERYONE AGAIN WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO RESUME OUR ANNUAL PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Thinking about joining us?

Please contact Angela on 0191 3865188

or contact us via our website:

www.olddurhamgardens.co.uk